

Azerbaijan's Council of Europe Chairmanship: A Case for Human Rights

Join us for a fascinating discussion on the persecution and on-going harassment of human rights defenders, journalists and activists in Azerbaijan.

At this event, independent civil society experts from Azerbaijan will explain how Azerbaijan's government implements tough measures against nongovernmental organizations and clamps down on the dissenters.

They will share their vision of the Chairmanship, as well as the role they see for the Council of Europe, both bilaterally and within the PACE towards the country, during chairmanship and beyond.

We would be delighted if friends of Azerbaijan and those committed to Council of Europe's human rights values would join us for what promises to be an interesting event.

Co-sponsors:

Mr. Pieter OMTZIGT, the European People's Party

Mr. Robert BIEDRON, Socialist Group

Speakers:

Mr. Rasid HAJILI, Director, Media Rights Institute

Mr. Intigam ALIYEV, Chairman, Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety

Mr. Rasul JAFAROV, Director, Legal Protection and Awareness Society

Ms. Aygun PANJALIYEVA, NIDA Civic Movement

Date/time:

Monday, June 23, 1-2 PM

Venue:

Room #6, Palais de l'Europe

Three Things You Might Not Know About Council of Europe's Chair:

- **Press freedom** in Azerbaijan is alarming, with repressive legislation and increased hostility towards critical press from the government. The country holds the regional record for locking up journalists, leaving Belarus, Russia and Uzbekistan scrabbling in the dust, with ten reporters and seven free speech activists currently behind bars.
- The PACE had conditioned Azerbaijan's admission on, inter alia, guarantee of the "release or new, fair trial" for scores of political prisoners. The Azerbaijani authorities have unequivocally failed to implement this requirement. Right now **29 human rights defenders, journalists, bloggers and political activists are behind bars on politically motivated charges in connection with freedom of expression, assembly and association.** This is in addition to dozens of cases of arbitrary arrest and detention, politically motivated imprisonment, lack of due process, executive influence over the judiciary, and lengthy pretrial detention for individuals perceived as a threat by government officials, while crimes against such individuals or their family members went unpunished.
- **Human rights defenders** who have sought to speak out about the crackdown on the international stage have been especially targeted. Official intimidation tactics have included, inter alia, the wave of inspections of Azerbaijani non-governmental organizations by the country's law enforcement and tax authorities; the publication of defamatory articles against civil society members in the press; denial of permission to civil society groups to hold meetings in public spaces; and so on.