

Council of Europe
The Secretary General

Strasbourg, 21 March 2011

Excellency,

I write to you about the situation regarding the pluralism of political debate and of opinion, freedom of expression, and freedom of association in Azerbaijan. Several developments are causing concern with regard to the commitments and obligations in the fields of the protection and promotion of human rights, pluralist democracy and the Rule of Law that Azerbaijan subscribed to on becoming a member State of the Council of Europe.

I am concerned, first, over the number of reports of arrests of youth activists and representatives of opposition political parties in Azerbaijan, particularly prior to the demonstrations held in Baku on 11 and 12 March last.

Freedom of assembly is a vital component of an open and democratic society, a means through which plurality of opinion can be expressed and be seen to be expressed by the population of any given State. I would therefore urge that the very restrictive approach to where demonstrations can be held be changed, again in a spirit of allowing full freedom of expression by all sectors of society.

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H.E. Ilham Aliyev
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I must also state my disappointment at the continued failure of the Azerbaijani authorities to implement the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Mr Eynulla Fatullayev. I would insist that the decisions of the Committee of Ministers in this case be respected; the failure to look into all possible means of ending his detention gives a highly disturbing signal, and the authorities should also ensure that Mr Fatullayev has access to the just satisfaction decided upon by the Court. I would be grateful too for assurances that the alleged intimidation and harassment of Mr Fatullayev, as highlighted by the OSCE Media Freedom Representative, Mrs Donja Mijatović, has been dealt with by the authorities.

Allow me to stress that the Council of Europe has always made clear its willingness to help with your authorities in order to bring both the legislation and the administrative and judicial practices in protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms to the level expected from a member State of our Organisation. In my capacity as Secretary General, I remain deeply committed to this task.

I should also like to add that I am ready to visit Azerbaijan, and I would welcome the opportunity to discuss the issues raised above with you and your administration during the course of such a visit.

I look forward to hearing from you, and I remain,

Yours sincerely,



Thorbjørn Jagland