



CE - 037/23

**Ms Dunja Mijatović**  
**Commissioner for Human Rights**  
**Council of Europe**

*Strasbourg, 20 July 2023*

Dear Madam Commissioner,

Referring to your letter from 13 July 2023, I would like to transmit herewith to your attention the information addressing the issues raised in your above-mentioned letter.

It is also requested that the attached information be published together with your letter.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fakhraddin Ismayilov'.

Fakhraddin Ismayilov  
Permanent Representative

Encl. 2 pages

## **Information on the issues raised in the letter of the Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Dunja Mijatović regarding the events that took place in the Soyudlu village of the Gadabay district of the Republic of Azerbaijan**

118 out of 2,067 residents of Soyudlu village of the Gadabay district of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which consists of 940 houses, work for the “Azerbaijan International Mining Company Limited” company and get high salaries. While the company was in the process of constructing a second lake to discharge waste water, several persons of Azerbaijani origin living in the Russian Federation, in order to implement their biased and provocative intentions, in February 2023, lured 409 residents of the village to a WhatsApp group which was created 4 years ago, and encouraged them to take part in mass protests, to actively resist state institutions, to incite riots, to damage the construction machinery, and they had conducted continuous discussions with the members of the group on these topics.

In order to make the process long-term and acute, those persons had prepared various protest posters in Ganja city and distributed them to the residents of the village so as they can use them in riots, purchased 7 mobile phones for the residents of the village with the purpose of video recording of protests and communication, and directed journalists known for their radical views to the said area. One of the organizers of the protests, who came to the village from a foreign country had been there for 14 days and actively preached that the gold mine did not bring profit and benefit to the local residents, that they deserved a better life, that they should have been compensated and the construction of the lake should have been stopped due to damage it had caused on their health.

After this person left the country on May 23, protests intensified, and local residents interfered with the creation of the new lake 4 times - on June 3, 16, 20 and 21, causing obstacles, damaging the equipment and trying to stop the work.

During each intervention, the leadership and personnel of the district police department came to the area and prevented illegal acts, as well as conducted preventive conversations and explanatory work with the residents about the inadmissibility of the relevant acts.

According to the appeal made on June 20 on the WhatsApp group, up to 150 residents of the village came to the area and destroyed the iron net fences there, stopped the operation of the machinery, attacked the construction workers with stones and pieces of wood and caused physical injuries to them.

6 residents of the village, namely Seymur Ismayilov, Samir Alakbarov, Zahid Zeynalov, Shahbaz Abdullayev, Nuru Mehdiyev and Leysan Mammadov were detained for deliberately disobeying the legal demands of the police who acted to prevent actions that violate public order and were brought to administrative responsibility.

The local residents who came to the area again based on the repeated call of the WhatsApp group organizers on June 21 to hold a protest and actively resist the police, injured some of the police officers with stones who demanded to stop their illegal act.

Apparently, the organization of violations of law had been discussed many times in advance, and propaganda and agitation work had been carried out with participation of more than 400 residents of the village who were members of the WhatsApp group under the leadership of certain persons. Necessary preparatory work had been carried out intentionally, such as, ordering posters, purchasing communication tools. The conduct of each action has been directly monitored, managed and directed by persons in foreign countries via mobile connection. As a result, public order was violated in the village, several police officers and people working in construction were injured, the company's property was damaged, and relevant images were published on social media in order to expand the scale of illegal acts.

However, the police officers acted restrainedly against those who grossly violated the public order and tried to provoke them, and they, first of all, repeatedly warned to stop illegal actions and leave the area according to Article 14 of the Law on Freedom of Assembly.

Those who deliberately did not obey the legal requirements of the police and injured the police officers throwing various blunt tools including stones on them during the rallies which resulted in the violation of public order were handled with humanity and they were subjected only to administrative penalty measures.

A special tool (pepper spray) has been applied in a very limited way, guided by the principles of expediency and proportionality.

No resident was handed over to the Main Organized Crime Department for committing various illegal acts, resisting the police and causing injury during the illegal rallies.

No one has been arrested for any critical comments, and the entry of outsiders, including journalists, to the village was stopped precisely in view of their personal safety for a short time.

It should also be stated that the situation in the village is stable at the moment. Elders, intellectuals and youth of the village made an appeal through social media networks calling on outsiders to stop their incitement and attempts to escalate the situation. The organizers of the illegal acts admitted that they were on wrong way and that they regret it.

In general, statutory duties in the field of protection of public order, human and civil rights are performed on the basis of concrete standards and procedures, including by taking into account the requirements of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

In this context, the restraint and tolerance demonstrated towards the people who deliberately engaged in provocative actions, resisted and injured the police officers performing their statutory duties in the Soyudlu village of the Gadabay district, is exemplary and it is an indicator of the level of professionalism, and positive outcome of relevant trainings of police officers held in our country as well as in foreign countries with support of international organizations.

With regard to the above-mentioned particularities, improvement of police tactics in dealing with the crowd is permanently kept in focus and relevant activities in this field are being implemented within training programs on the management of public assemblies.