

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

His Excellency Elmar Mammadyarov
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Dear Minister,

As the world celebrates the International Women's Day, Ms. Khadija Ismail, Radio Liberty Azerbaijan Bureau's correspondent and radio host, has received her own very particular "gift": a package with 6 pictures of an intimate nature and a note that contained insulting, derogatory language and a warning to stop her journalistic activities or face the consequences.

We believe this is an act of intimidation related to her professional activities. This should not happen in a democratic country. We are also concerned because this is not the first time Ms. Ismail has been subject to attempts to silence her because of her work.

This disturbing event took place in a broader context of deteriorating environment for democracy and human rights in Azerbaijan. The attacks on the journalists and the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators create a climate in which journalists see the ability to carry out their professional activities severely curtailed. The murder of an investigative journalist Elmar Huseynov, committed seven years ago, is still unsolved.

We would like to remind that Azerbaijan is a signatory of numerous international documents on human rights and fundamental freedoms. Freedom to receive and share the information is a fundamental right. Its exercise does not weaken the state, but promotes democracy, accountability and transparency which are all necessary for Azerbaijan to continue its progress on the path of modernisation and development.

Azerbaijan is a European country and a neighbour of the European Union. We value the role of Azerbaijan as a founding member of the European Union's Eastern Partnership and cooperation with your country in a number of important areas. To further develop this cooperation, we call on you to ensure the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in your country. We appeal to you to do your utmost to protect the dignity and integrity of Khadija Ismail and other journalists and human rights defenders and guarantee their right to exercise their profession without the fear of intimidation, blackmail and violence.

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Sincerely yours,

Elmar Brok

Barbara Lochbihler

Ana Gomes

Richard Howitt

Nicole Kiil-Nielsen

Jo Leinen

Ulrike Lunacek

Marietje Schaake

Andrey Kovatchev

MONICA MACOVEI