



Catherine Ashton  
Vice-President of the European Commission  
High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Stefan Füle  
European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy

Brussels, 21 February 2014

Dear Vice-President/High Representative Ashton,  
Dear Commissioner Füle,

We write to you to express our strong concerns about the deteriorating situation of human rights in Azerbaijan.

In what seems to be an escalation in the campaign to silence independent journalists and dissidents, two journalists from the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Khadija Ismayilova and Yafez Hasanov were accused of being "foreign agents". Azeri authorities opened a criminal case against Ismayilova, while Hasanov received death threats via facebook.

Such politically motivated accusations were common during the Soviet era. It is extremely disturbing to see them again in a country that is a part of the Eastern Partnership and has committed itself to democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

These events take place in a broader context of systematic efforts to silence dissent, as seen in the continuing imprisonment of dozens of political activists, including a former presidential candidate Ilgar Mammadov, the head of an independent election monitoring NGO Anar Mammadli and others.

We call on you to make any upgrade in the relations between the EU and Azerbaijan, be it in the form of an association agreement or strategic modernization partnership, conditional on the release of the political prisoners and the end to the harassment of independent journalists, political activists and human rights defenders in Azerbaijan, as stipulated in the European Parliament resolution of 23 October 2013 on the European Neighbourhood Policy.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barbara Lochbihler".

Barbara Lochbihler  
Chair of the Sub-Committee on Human Rights

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ana Gomes".

Ana Gomes,  
S&D Group Spokesperson on Foreign Affairs



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