



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1003
Vienna, 5 June 2014**

**EU Statement on the EMDS Verdicts and the Deteriorating
Human Rights Situation in Azerbaijan**

The European Union learned with regret of the harsh prison sentences delivered in the trial of Anar Mammadili, Chairperson of the Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Centre (EMDS) Bashir Suleymanli, the EMDS' Executive Director, and Elnur Mammadov, President of the Volunteers of International Cooperation Public Union (VIC), by the Baku Court of Grave Crimes on 26 May 2014. We note the concerns expressed by ODIHR Director Lenarčič, on the 27 May 2014, about what he described as “a concerted campaign of harassment and intimidation of Anar Mammadili and his election monitoring organisation by the authorities.”

The European Union reiterates its deep concern at the detention on 19 April of Rauf Mirkadirov and the circumstances of the interrogation on 29 April of Arif and Leyla Yunus. We also reiterate our concern about sentences passed on eight members of the “NIDA” and “Free Youth” civic movements. The numerous shortcomings observed during the trial, which was closely monitored by the EU, and reported allegations of ill-treatment of the defendants, are alarming.

We also recall the statement of the Representative on Freedom of the Media on 15 May on the case of the journalist, Parviz Hashimli, in which she said “I am appalled by today’s court decision”. “I call on the authorities to stop locking up members of the media to silence them.” She also referred to a number of other disturbing cases, including those of Nijat Aliyev, Sardar Alibeyli, Rashad Ramazanov, Abdul Abilov and Omar Mamedov.

We have heard and considered carefully the responses provided by Azerbaijan to previous statements on similar cases. Unfortunately these do not appear to address the underlying issue: that the authorities continue to use judicial means to clamp down on civil society and restrict the space for public and democratic discourse in Azerbaijan.

We consider these prison sentences and detentions to be the latest element in a campaign by the authorities of Azerbaijan to silence individuals and organisations working to ensure the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the country.

This is contrary to Azerbaijan's international commitments to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms. We therefore call on Azerbaijan to respect and honour its international obligations and its commitments made in the OSCE.

Finally, we would encourage the government of Azerbaijan to promote a fully inclusive national discourse in line with its responsibility as the current Chair of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers. We also urge the government of Azerbaijan to honour the obligations and commitments it subscribed to as a member of the Council of Europe, to act upon the recommendations of the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muižnieks, in his recently published report on Azerbaijan, and to take the necessary steps to ensure the implementation of the recently launched Council of Europe Action Plan for Azerbaijan.

The Candidate Countries MONTENEGRO* and ICELAND+, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate ALBANIA, and the EFTA country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area align themselves with this statement.

* Montenegro continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.