

Treatment of LGBT+ people in Azerbaijan

The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party convening in Amsterdam, the Netherlands on 1 to 3 December 2017:

Recognises that:

- there have been a growing number of allegations of mass arrests and abusive treatment of LGBT+ people by police and government authorities in Azerbaijan in recent weeks;
- the Azeri Ministry of Internal Affairs has confirmed that 56 persons have been detained in the second half of September 2017;
- activists have reported that detainees have been subjected to beatings, verbal abuse and forced medical examinations. In some reported cases, trans women's heads were forcibly shaved and they were only released once they had provided addresses of fellow LGBT+ community members. This amounts to innocent people being threatened and tortured into outing closeted friends in exchange for their freedom and some have still been detained for 20-30 days for administrative detention despite cooperating;
- Azeri authorities have justified these recent threatening actions and arrests of LGBT+ people in public statements claiming that those arrested were detained for having multiple sexually transmitted diseases or for being in possession of narcotics. Disturbingly, neither of these claims appear to have any hard evidence to suggest they are true;
- government-friendly press has amplified the issue by saying "hunting season on gays is open" and a party close to the government has called for the operations to continue, stating that "these creatures who are sources of immorality, dangerous diseases, and who have been cursed by God, Western circles are trying to destroy our national traditional values under the name of human rights". These alarming statements appear to echo similar calls in Chechnya by Ramzan Kadyrov who has justified systematic abuse of LGBT+ people;
- homosexuality was decriminalised in 2001, allowing Azerbaijan to join and benefit from trade with EU nations, despite Azerbaijan being ranked last, among 49 European Countries, in the ILGA- Europe Rainbow Index.

Calls for:

- ALDE Party members to unreservedly admonish Azeri authorities and pressure its fellow states in the Council of Europe to hold it to its international commitments to the European Convention on Human Rights;

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- the ALDE Congress to immediately take up the cause of the plight of LGBT+ people in Azerbaijan and intervene to raise awareness internationally of their increasingly dangerous situation;
- acknowledgement of the importance of improving the rights and freedoms of all citizens of Azerbaijan to the success of talks between the European Union and Azerbaijan;
- the ALDE Party and its member parties to push further generally for LGBT+ people's rights worldwide, and momentarily to focus especially on the federal subject of Russia Chechnya.

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