

## Azerbaijan

- having regard to the European Parliament resolution on Azerbaijan of 21 June 2005 supported by the ALDE Group,
- having regard to the EU Presidency's statement of 19 May 2005 on Azerbaijan, welcoming President Ilham Aliyev's decree on improving the practice of elections in Azerbaijan,
- having regard to Azerbaijan's membership of the Council of Europe, to the European Convention on Human Rights and to the many resolutions by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the situation in Azerbaijan,
- having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and in particular Articles 19 and 21 thereof, which guarantee the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly,
- having regard to the joint recommendations of the Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR of 1 June 2005 on the electoral law and the electoral administration in Azerbaijan.

### Whereas:

- opposition parties were refused permission by the Mayor of Baku to hold a rally in Baku on 21 May 2005, contradicting the spirit of the 12 May 2005 presidential decree which ordered the local administration to authorise political rallies and find appropriate venues for them,
- an attempt by the opposition to hold the rally on 21 May 2005 in Baku met with violence and police brutality against journalists and individuals taking part in the rally, of whom a number were detained for several days,
- on 31 May 2005, the Azerbaijani authorities detained dozens of youth activists for distributing leaflets,
- a new demonstration by the opposition took place without incident in Baku on 4 June 2005 after an agreement had been reached with the authorities,

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1. Regrets the decision taken by the Mayor of Baku to deny permission for the opposition's rally called for 21 May 2005 to take place, and strongly condemns the disproportionate use of force by the police against members of the opposition and youth movement activists exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly;
2. Calls upon the European Union to demand the Azeri to meet its Council of Europe obligations to enable the creation of a genuinely independent television station, including observing the code of ethics for the coverage of election campaigns;
3. Calls upon the Azeri government to ensure that the forthcoming parliamentary elections in November 2005 will be free and fair and that opposition activists and candidates do not suffer repression in any shape or form;
4. Calls upon the Azeri Government to accept the joint recommendations of Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR regarding the electoral law and the electoral administration in Azerbaijan;
5. Calls upon ELDR member parties to support a united democratic opposition and an active civil society by taking a firm stance against human rights abuses and by providing technical support for a strong and effective party system (e.g. training) through engagement with the appropriate Azeri opposition parties, as being the key contributor to the development of liberal democratic political parties and civil society in transitional post-Soviet countries.

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