



Brussels, January 23, 2014

Jean-Claude Mignon
President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
Strasbourg

Dear Sir,

I am writing to draw your attention to the fate of Anar Mammadli, the head of EMDS, a respected election monitoring organisation in Azerbaijan, who was imprisoned on December 16 last year under a three month detention order arising out of charges against EMDS of evasion of taxes on grants received by his organization to fund election monitoring including the presidential election in Azerbaijan last October.

The detention of Mr. Mammadli, a former member of the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF), has been followed by a number of high level protests and the Parliamentary Assembly's co-rapporteurs for the monitoring of Azerbaijan have also expressed their concern. The Steering Committee of the EaP CSF has demanded Mr. Mammadli's release and the dropping of all charges against him. Protest petitions have attracted several hundred signatures and a petition on the www.change.org website has seen many of his colleagues from around the world testify to his professionalism.

The case against Mr. Mammadli is widely seen as an attack by the Azeri authorities on the very principle of free elections and the right of citizens to monitor the conduct of those elections.

Mr. Mammadli is the latest of a growing number of political prisoners in Azerbaijan in an escalating campaign against civil rights in that country which belies the statements the Azeri authorities repeatedly make about their commitment to democracy.

I would ask you as the **President of the** Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to consider raising the case of Mr. Mammadli at the Assembly's forthcoming spring session.

Indeed, has not the time come for the Assembly to join the proposal by the EaP CSF and the Association of European Journalists that the holding of the chair of the Council of Europe's committee of ministers by Azerbaijan starting in May this year be postponed? Would it not be appropriate that this obligation should be deferred until such time as Azerbaijan releases Mr. Mammadli and his many fellow political prisoners in a sign of the government's true commitment to observation of civil rights which it agreed to when it joined the Council of Europe?

Yours sincerely

Krzysztof Bobiński
Former co-chair of the EaP CSF Steering Committee
Head of the EaP CSF elections sub group