



To: Ilham Aliyev President of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Your Excellency,

22.05.2015

As you know, the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum was created and operates under the European Union's Eastern Partnership Initiative. The Forum includes National Platforms, which represent the interests of civil society in the Eastern Partnership countries. Each of these National Platforms brings together dozens of NGOs from these countries. The Azerbaijan National Platform is one of these six National CSO networks, consisting of 58 organizations. The objectives of the Forum and of the National Platforms are to contribute to reforms which aim to approximate the Eastern Partnership countries with the European Union.

Unfortunately, after last year's legislative amendments, the activities of the Azerbaijani National Platform became considerably difficult. Three members of the National Platform were arrested and convicted, and four members of the National Platform have had to leave the country fearing unjustified persecutions. Criminal cases have been initiated against a large group of NGOs in the country. NGO leaders are invited for questioning to the Prosecutor's Office on charges of particularly serious crimes. Many NGO representatives are referred to as the "fifth column" and are searched on departure and arrival in the country. The bank accounts of a number of members of the National Platform have been closed. Propaganda against non-governmental organizations in the media has increased. This atmosphere of public condemnation and spreading fear does not contribute to the proper functioning and development of the civil society in your country.

Taking into account this situation, the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum urges you to take steps, using your powers and authority, to normalize the conditions under which the CSOs in Azerbaijan, and in particular, the National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, are able to operate.

Sincerely,

Krzysztof Bobinski

Co-Chair of the Eastern Partnership
Civil Society Forum

Andrei Yahorau

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