



**DÖRDÜNCÜ ÇAĞIRIŞ
AZƏRBAYCAN RESPUBLİKASI
MİLLİ MƏCLİSİNİN DEPUTATI**

“09” aprel 2013-cü il.

Krzysztof Bobinski
Co-chair, Civil Society Forum

Dear Mr Bobinski,

I consider it significant to answer your several comments regarding my country as stated in your intervention to the Euronest Committee on Social Affairs, Education, Culture and Civil Society, which you held on the 19th of March this year.

First of all, Mr Bobinski, I want to tell you that I personally, as both an elected politician and a citizen, appreciate deeply the work done by civil society worldwide, especially in Europe and most of all in Azerbaijan. I believe a healthy state is one where citizens take an active part in the daily well going of their lives and I have nothing but a deep respect for those who dedicated their lives for the betterment of the lives of others.

However, just as we the politicians are accountable to the laws of our countries and to our voters, just so it is understandable that anyone should be accountable to such laws. Unfortunately, potentially harmful activities can be done, as you know very well, by anyone, anywhere. And when we are talking about a country like Azerbaijan, which stands with a part of its territory unlawfully occupied, which has been slowly transitioning from a dark communist past, it is our duty as law makers to insure that the legal system creates no loopholes for anyone to influence the good functioning of our society.

That is why, because we will soon have new elections, we are trying to regulate and cover everything covered, actually, in most EU member states, including Poland. NGOs, just like any other organisations, should be transparent and accountable for the funding they receive, foreign and national. Otherwise, what legitimacy could such an organisation have, especially when they have a non-patrimonial nature? And why would a foreign donor not want it to be known that they are funding anyone, inside any country, unless they would have something to hide from the media or the government?

I would also like to take this opportunity to address all your other comments. Azerbaijan is a country that fully respects international treaties and conventions, and which has established in its legislation the international and legal standards to which it joined. We are actually deeply concerned about the need for all to do the same – if Armenia would also do this, we would have over 20% of our territory liberated. We respect freedom of assembly, free speech and media freedom and we have a lively media environment, both on and off line. That being said, there are rules and permits needed for rallies and demonstrations – just as they are in the legislation of Azerbaijan and all EU Member States. Our libel laws are much more protective of journalists than those of some European Union countries, but still they are accountable for what they publish in the cases where they might wrongfully publish information.

Therefore, I find that your comments are rather beyond reality and non-objective. I witnessed myself demonstrators being taken into custody in Brussels when they were rioting without permits and the European Court of Justice has been known to dismiss cases brought to it by journalists arrested or condemned in EU states (Denmark or the UK, for example). Should we also accuse these countries? I think not, and I would appreciate it if, when dealing with such a distinguished level of discussions such as Euronest, you would be so kind as to show in what way Azerbaijani authorities broke any laws, or at least provide actual proof to sustain your accusations.

Mr Bobinski, we appreciate and find very disturbing your comments on Armenia. Indeed, it is highly regrettable how the establishment in that country chose to conduct elections and how they continue to ignore international law. Little surprise they have no qualms in ignoring correct and democratic rules internally.

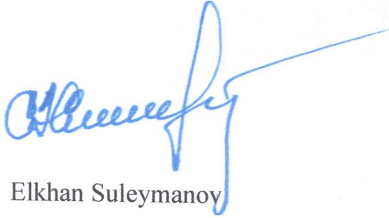
But please note that it is rather alarming to already draw parallels to Azerbaijan, a country that has little in common in its practice and respect of international laws and European values with Armenia. Thus, Armenia keeps 20% of neighbouring Azerbaijani territories under military occupation for almost 25 years, the rights of civilians have been massively and grossly violated as a result of ethnic cleansing policy in the occupied territories, and about 1 (one) million people live the lives of refugees and internally displaced people so far. Therefore, I am disappointed that you have not yet expressed your attitude towards the evaluation of presidential elections of 18th February in Armenia in the light of democracy, human rights, and rule of law by international organizations and the appraisal of the re-election of Serzh Sargsyan, one of the authors and participants of genocide crimes committed in Khojaly against civilians on February 26, 1992, as Armenian president, and this casts doubt on your sincerity.

On the other hand, we could also interpret, at this time where elections and the electoral campaign in Azerbaijan are still a while away, that your comments could be meant to give edges to one side or another in the upcoming debate. To already deplore things that have not and would not happen is alarmist and unprofessional, and I do hope such taking issues out of context should be avoided in the future.

Azerbaijan is a free and democratic country that respects values which Armenian soldiers ignore daily when they occupy our land. We are working hard to insure transparency and freedom in the

upcoming, and any other, electoral process and we assure you, Mr Bobinski, that our elections will be nothing but the democratic and free expression of the will of Azeri people.

Respectfully yours,



Elkhan Suleymanov

Chair of the Azerbaijan Delegation to EURONEST
Member of the Parliament of Azerbaijan