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Ambassador Vaqif Sadiqov

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Mission to the European Union

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Honourable Ambassador,

As Members of the European Parliament we are writing to you concerned about recent events in Azerbaijan regarding the LGBT community.

On May 23, LGBTQI+ activists in Baku, Azerbaijan, gathered to protest against the recent arrests of several members of the trans community. The detentions occurred on May 22 following confrontations between the police and three trans women in Baku's Khatai district, which were captured on videos that circulated widely on social media. In the footage, the trans women were seen being detained by the police after an altercation. According to a statement given to Meydan TV by one of the trans activists, the incident stemmed from the alleged disrespect and degradation of the trans women's honour and dignity by the police. Next day, on May 24, to demand the release of the detained community members, trans community and activists advocating for LGBTQI+ rights gathered in front of the 37th Police Department in Baku. They were there to show solidarity with the community and also observe the situation and document, and provide assistance when needed.

Shockingly, these activists were also subsequently detained by the police. A spokesperson for Azerbaijan's Interior Ministry told MeydanTV that, in total, seven individuals were detained at the protest, adding that two other people were initially detained on 22 May. Their detention involved physical contact, threats, and confinement in a small, airless room. Subjected to medical tests without a court order.

Two of the individuals, after being kept for almost 18 hours, they were brought to the Khatai district court at noon on May 24. By the court the activists were released and fined, however they were not immediately released. Instead, they were forcefully returned to the cramped room where they had been held. The police allegedly pushed and hit them, exacerbating an already distressing situation. Others were detained for 15 administrative days.

Azerbaijan's treatment of LGBTQI+ community has drawn criticism in the international stage. The latest edition of ILGA-Europe's Rainbow Map and Index, which benchmarks LGBTQI+ rights across Europe, ranked Azerbaijan at the bottom with a score of 2%. In their Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans,



and Intersex People in Azerbaijan for 2022, released in February, ILGA-Europe highlighted the need for improved legal and policy measures to protect the rights of LGBTQI+s in the country.

Therefore, as Members of the European Parliament we call on Azerbaijani authorities:

- 1) to conduct a prompt, independent and impartial investigation into the excessive use of force by the police and ill-treatment, and hold those responsible accountable through fair and transparent judicial processes;
- 2) to inform us about the progress in the abovementioned investigation;
- 3) to inform us about the policies and actions undertaken by the authorities to ensure the freedom of action of LGBTQI+ organizations in the country.

Yours Sincerely,

Robert Biedroń MEP

Dimitrios Papadimoulis MEP

Pierre Larrouturou MEP

Sara Cerdas MEP

Petras Austrevicius MEP

Dietmar Köster MEP

Rasmus Andrsen MEP

Assita Kanko MEP

Karen Melchior MEP

Monika Vana MEP

Vera Tax MEP

Kim van Sparrentak MEP

Fabio Massimo Castaldo MEP

Attila Ara-Kovács MEP

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Geert Bourgeois MEP

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Irene Tolleret MEP

Radka Maxova MEP

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Grace O'Sullivan MEP

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