

Release of political prisoners in Russia, Azerbaijan and Belarus

The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party convening in Oslo, Norway on 9 May 2015:

Note:

- the systematic use of criminal justice against recognised and vocal political opponents in Russia, Belarus and Azerbaijan which has recently lead to long-term imprisonment of civil society activists Rasul Jafarov, Intigam Aliyev and Musavat Vice-Chairman Faraj Kerimli in Azerbaijan; to numerous cases prolonged pre-trial detention, including that of Leyla Yunus, Arif Yunus and Khadija Ismayilova in Azerbaijan, and prosecutions against YABLOKO politicians and their supporters: environmentalist Evgeny Vitishko in the Krasnodar Region; regional MP Anastasia Kravchuk, Petrozavodsk City Councilor Olga Zaletskaya, Deputy Mayor of Petrozavodsk Evgenia Sukhorukova and Alexandra Kornilova in the Republic of Karelia, ongoing politically motivated reprisals against Vasily Popov, Chair of Karelian YABLOKO, and Galina Shirshina, Mayor of Petrozavodsk, and use of the judiciary as a tool for reprisals against the dissenting and negligence of governors' arbitrary rule and unlawful actions;

Regards:

- the government's acceptance of political opposition and the existence of an institutional representation of political opposition as preconditions for the democratic operation of institutions and government;
- political opposition as a core pillar of democracy, allowing expression to all voices and opinions within society and ensuring the government is held to account;
- cases of political imprisonment as a breach of human rights, democracy and the rule of law;
- freedom of speech as an essential human right that must be protected by governments;

Calls on:

- the governments of Russia, Belarus und Azerbaijan to release the above mentioned political activists, journalists and all other prisoners of conscience;
- the governments of Russia and Azerbaijan to fully grant their citizens all freedoms laid down in the European Convention on Human Rights which they adhered to;
- the governments of Russia, Belarus and Azerbaijan to stop politically-motivated use of justice;
- governments to urgently take legal action against those top officials who suppress the freedom of speech and criticism and exercise arbitrary rule;
- all governments in Europe to make sure that members of the opposition can play their vital roles in democracy of holding those in power to account and to be able to do so without fear;
- the European Union, its constituent member states, the EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy as well as the Council of Europe and its organs to strongly condemn the imprisonment of

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political opponents and to put pressure on governments that imprison political opponents to respect democratic values and assure the independence of the judiciary.