

EaP CSF Steering Committee statement on the disproportionately violent response of the authorities to the recent demonstrations in Baku, Azerbaijan

Brussels, 3 December 2021

The EaP CSF Steering Committee decisively condemns the disproportionately violent response of police during a protest in Baku on December 1 and restrictions on freedom of assembly guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

On December 1, around 50 citizens, mostly women, civil society members, youth activists, and members of political parties, gathered to raise their voices against the unlawful detention of political prisoners, in particular, Saleh Rustamli, who has been on hunger strike for the last 26 days.

The peaceful rally was violently dispersed by police. Eyewitness accounts describe a brutal intervention by dozens of police officers, which resulted in many protesters being injured, detained and arrested.

One of the leaders of the Musavat party, Tofiq Yagublu, was severely beaten in a police car and at police station #39, in Sabail district. Another participant of the rally, a member of the Azerbaijan Popular Front Party (APFP), Pasha Dadashzade was also severely beaten, and his right arm was broken. The total number of arrests on various grounds reached 40.

The EaP CSF Steering Committee calls on the government of Azerbaijan to respect the constitutional rights of citizens, namely article 49, that guarantees freedom of assembly, as well as its international obligations, namely article 21 of the UN's International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights, protecting the freedom of assembly. All citizens detained on politically motivated criminal charges and administrative charges in connection with these two rallies should be released immediately.

The EaP CSF Steering Committee calls on the government of Azerbaijan to condemn such excessive use of force and the inhumane treatment of citizens and demands that the government hold the police officers involved accountable.

The EaP CSF Steering Committee also calls on the European Council and the European External Action Service to raise questions about the authorities' commitment to protecting and enhancing political freedoms for all.

Members of the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum