



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT BY SWITZERLAND AND NORWAY ON THE HUMAN
RIGHTS SITUATION IN AZERBAIJAN**
As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
14th February, 2013

Mr. Chairman,

I speak on behalf of Switzerland and Norway.

We share the concern expressed by our distinguished Irish colleague on behalf of the European Union over the recent arrests of Mr Yagublu and Mr Mammedov. I would also like to note Mr Mammedov's role as the Director of the Baku School of Political Studies, a close co-operation partner of the Council of Europe. We join the call on Azerbaijani authorities to refrain from hindering journalists and political activists who seek to exercise their fundamental rights and freedoms.

Likewise, we support the invitation to Azerbaijani authorities to review the charges against participants in a peaceful solidarity demonstration held on 26 January in Baku, and to ensure that allegations of ill-treatment of detainees participating in this demonstration and the January Ismayilli protests are credibly investigated.

Mr. Chairman,

We have noted with some concern that new legislation is being proposed which, if adopted, would impose new restrictions on the ability of Azerbaijani NGOs to receive financial support from international donors. Similarly, in Armenia, a presidential advisory body recently tabled proposals on NGO financing that, if implemented, could increase government control over civil society. Just as we have voiced our concern over new, more restrictive NGO legislation in Russia, we call on the authorities of Azerbaijan and Armenia not to restrict the scope for civil society to receive international funding.

Lastly, we were disturbed to learn that the acclaimed Azerbaijani writer Akram Aylisli has been receiving threats against himself and his family after he published a novel dealing with painful historical issues. We call on Azerbaijani authorities to do their utmost to ensure that freedom of expression applies even for controversial statements and opinions, which should not carry a risk of reprisals.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.