

MRS. DUNJA MIJATOVIĆ

The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights

Council of Europe, Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights
67075 Strasbourg Cedex, FRANCE

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As a human rights defender from Azerbaijan, I would like to appeal to the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights. Taking into consideration that the PACE Winter Session will start its work on January 21 in Strasbourg, then I hope my appeal will be accepted.

Dear Dunja Mijatović!

We know each other for several years. During the last 7 years, we met at different OSCE events in Warsaw, Vienna and other cities. As the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, you always attached great importance to freedom of expression in the OSCE region. You have always a sensitive approach to Azerbaijan. I highly appreciate your activity.

I remember, you were nominated for the position of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights at the PACE winter session on January 2018. We had a meeting with you during the elections, and as a human rights defender I expressed my full support for your candidacy. You have been elected Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights and took up your function on April 2018.

During our talks with you, I briefed about the captured and missing persons, hostages during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. You said that you are originally from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and you remember the painful memories of the war in your personal life and that you understand the problem of civilians suffering from conflicts. Frankly speaking, your words have given me great confidence and stimulus. And that confidence has led me to appeal you today.

Dear Dunja Mijatović!

As a human rights defender, I protect the rights of Azerbaijani hostages Dilgam Asgarov and Shahbaz Guliyev since July 2014. These two persons, the refugees from the occupied Kalbajar region, Dilgam Askerov and Shahbaz Guliyev, were illegally taken hostage by Armenian soldiers in July 2014. An illegal "court" on the Dilgam Asgarov and Shahbaz Guliyev has been managed in the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh. And by the decision of the "court", Dilgam Asgarov was sentenced to life imprisonment and Shahbaz Guliyev was sentenced to 22 years in prison. Another Azerbaijani citizen Elnur Huseynzadeh, was captured by Armenians in February 2017. These people have been in Armenian captivity for 1655 days, almost 5 years. However, neither the OSCE, nor the Council of Europe, nor other international organizations have taken any steps to protect the rights of these persons.

Dear Dunja Mijatović!

While you were the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, this issue was not in your mandate. But today you are the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights. Last week you made a statement on the rights of Azerbaijani blogger Mehman Huseynov. It shows that you are closely following the processes in Azerbaijan. But I can not understand why you remain silent about the Azerbaijani civilians held hostage in Nagorno Karabakh for 5 years. Remember about 300 000 people who lost their lives in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the 1992-1995 Bosnian war. Think about 2 million people who have been displaced from their homes during that war. And then you will understand me.

I do not want you to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, I do not want you to liberate the occupied Azerbaijani lands, I do not want you to return 1 million Azerbaijani refugees to their homes. No! You do not have the power and authority to do so. I want these 2 persons to be freed from Armenian hostage. They have been subjected to continued torture and inhuman treatment for 5 years. We have no information about their fate for the last 15 months. Their release from Armenian captivity may be outside of your authority. I understand you. You are just Council of Europe Commissioner. But at least do not be silent on this issue. Make your position as Commissioner for Human Rights. Both Armenia and Azerbaijan are members of the Council of Europe. Calling the Armenian government and delegation is within your powers and capabilities.

You can do it. This is also your duty. Show the same sensitivity to the issue of Azerbaijani hostages as you do in respect to media freedom in Azerbaijan.

Otherwise, it will be considered as an indication of your biased and double standard position. I hope this issue will be put on the agenda during the PACE winter session and you will call on the authorities of Armenia to release the Azerbaijani hostages.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Ahmad Shahidov

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