

Human Rights Without Frontiers Int'l

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OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

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Working Session 4 : Freedom of Assembly

Azerbaijan: Police crackdown during a meeting of the Muslim Unity Movement in Nardaran

Human Rights Without Frontiers recommends to the Azerbaijani authorities

- To clarify the circumstances of the police crackdown on a meeting of members of the Muslim Unity Movement in Nardaran in November 2015;
- To reveal the names of the seven people killed in the operation, including the two policemen, and the way they lost their lives;
- To allow the participation of international observers during the trial of 18 members of the Muslim Unity Movement.

I first want to congratulate ODIHR for its 25th anniversary and HDIM for its 20th anniversary. For more than two decades these two mechanisms have tremendously contributed to the progress of human rights on the European continent by giving a voice to NGOs and those who were voiceless in their own country. Every year during the last two decades, I have represented our NGO at the HDIM to give a voice to the voiceless and they were heard.

My statement today consists in a series of questions meant to try to clarify the circumstances of a raid undertaken by the Azerbaijani police in late November 2015 in Nardaran to allegedly neutralize the activities of the Muslim Unity Movement which is said to be a non-violent civil society organization. The crackdown was said to take place during a meeting of that group. Fourteen people were arrested.

Seven people died in the operation but the precise details remain unclear. Five members of the Muslim Unity Movement were killed by the police and several others were wounded. Two policemen lost their lives. According to a joint statement by Azerbaijan's Interior Ministry and Prosecutor-General's Office, the men opened fire and hurled Molotov cocktails at the police. The accused, however, insist they were unarmed.

Both parties accuse each other of having used violence first. Many questions remain unanswered in this incident.

Did those arrested use violence during the police operation?

Can the details of the killings on both sides be clarified?

How did the members of the Muslim Unity Movement lose their lives?

How were the two policemen killed? Were they shot dead? If so, did the investigators identify the bullets, the weapons and their owners?

What are the names of these two policemen?

Was an official funeral organized for them?

Did their families get financial compensation from the state?

The eighteen men said to be members of the Muslim Unity Movement, who are accused of mass unrest in order to seize power, are now on trial. They face charges including murder, terrorism, inciting religious hatred, organizing mass unrest, and illegal possession of weapons. All of them without exception reject those charges and claim they are fabricated; several say they have been subjected to torture in an attempt to induce them to incriminate themselves, fellow defendants, and opposition leaders.

And last question: Are international observers allowed to attend and monitor the trial?

I would very much like these questions to be answered by the Azerbaijani delegation.

Willy Fautré, director
Human Rights Without Frontiers