

Human Rights Council
16th Session of the Working Group of the Universal Periodic Review

Review of AZERBAIJAN

Statement by AUSTRIA

H.E.
on Peter Raschelt

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Austria welcomes H.E. and the delegation of Azerbaijan to the UPR.

Austria thanks Azerbaijan for accepting most of its recommendations made during the first UPR cycle. Austria also welcomes Azerbaijan's accession to OPCAT and CRPD since its last review.

Austria is concerned about excessive restrictions on **freedom of expression**, inter alia through restrictions on the freedom of information, the use of criminal libel charges against journalists and reoccurring incidents of physical attacks against them. Austria recommends that Azerbaijan **reform its defamation legislation in conformity with Article 19 of ICCPR** and that it **investigate all incidents of intimidation and violence against journalists, bringing perpetrators to justice.**

Austria is also concerned about de facto and de jure restrictions of the **freedom of assembly** significantly curbing the space for civil society. Recently adopted amendments to the Criminal Code and the Administrative Code have increased penalties for organizers and participants in "unauthorised" gatherings. Together with the blanket ban on protests in Baku city centre, these measures are likely to have a further negative impact on freedom of assembly. Austria recommends Azerbaijan to **invite the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association to visit the country.** Austria further recommends the **revision the Law on Non-Governmental Organizations to comply fully with international human rights law.**

Austria commends Azerbaijan for the introduction of a legislative framework to fight **corruption**, including the launch of a national action plan and its accession to the International Anti-Corruption Academy. We recommend Azerbaijan to **cooperate with civil society in the monitoring of the implementation of its anti-corruption legislation at all levels.**

I thank you.