UPR 16, April 30, 2013

Recommendations by Canada

**Azerbaijan**

**Question**

In response to one of Canada’s 2009 recommendations, Azerbaijan agreed to improve respect for the right to freedom of assembly in line with its domestic legislation and its obligations under article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Could the delegation of Azerbaijan inform us on the status of the legal review process, progress achieved so far, and plans for further improving the right to freedom of assembly?

**Recommendations**

Canada recommends that Azerbaijan:

1. Reform its legal framework on freedom of religion by streamlining, facilitating and increasing the transparency of the registration process for religious organizations, including eliminating the obligation for religious groups to seek prior authorization to gather, and removing limitations on the printing, import and distribution of religious materials.

2. Refrain from initiating defamation lawsuits against civil society activists and journalists, and put an end to the practice of detaining these individuals engaging in the exercise of their legal civil and political rights.

3. Expand media freedoms across print, on-line and in particular broadcast platforms, notably by ending its ban of foreign broadcasts on FM radio frequencies, and eliminating new restrictions on the broadcast of foreign　language television programs.

4.  Take adequate measures for the safety of civil society, including political activists and journalists; conduct impartial, thorough, and effective investigations into all cases of attacks, harassment, and intimidation against them; and bring perpetrators of such offenses to justice.

**Observation (if time allows):**

Canada remains concerned with the overall administrative burden on NGOs working in the country, in particular registration procedures, obligations for civil society organizations to provide an application letter and notarized copy of grant agreements to the Ministry of Justice, and excessive Ministry of Justice supervision of NGO activities.