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## **ILHAM ALIYEV: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT MAY LOSE AZERBAIJAN**

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Trend

Unfortunately, the resolution adopted by the European Parliament on Azerbaijan a year ago caused a serious regression in relations, said Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev.

The president made the remarks during the meeting with the delegation of the EU- Azerbaijan Parliamentary Cooperation Committee Sept. 20.

This came out as a surprise, said President Aliyev. We, in Azerbaijan, consider this as a step based on a very hostile, inaccurate, false information and bias and as an attempt to harm our country's reputation.

President Aliyev said that it will be difficult to move forward and plan future activities without clarifying this matter.

The president said he has a document about this.

I don't know whether all of you are informed about this. Maybe you are, but I would like to mention some things. There are many issues, but I think that it is worth to mention some of them. Probably, it would be better for you to hear me out, said President Aliyev.

The document also says that OSCE Baku office was closed in July 2015 in accordance with the decision of Azerbaijani government to terminate the memorandum of understanding between the Azerbaijani government and OSCE, said President Aliyev.

It was terminated, but there was a reason, according to the president.

The country representative of the OSCE office, Frances citizen of Azerbaijani origin, was the only Azerbaijani working at Frances Foreign Ministry, said President Aliyev, adding that he is a member of a very famous family.

Members of the family to which he belongs, were among the founders of Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, the first democratic republic in the East, in the Muslim world, in 1918, said the president.

This family enjoys great respect in Azerbaijan, said the president.

After working in Azerbaijan for only one year, he was dismissed as a result of serious interference of the US Representative to OSCE Daniel B. Baer, who blamed him during the standing committees meeting for having a photo with me in his office, said President Aliyev.

The president noted that according to the information he has, pressure was put on the French government and without any notice, the OSCE representative Shakhtakhtinsky was dismissed.

His career was put to an end and he was dismissed from Frances Foreign Ministry just for having a photo with me, said President Aliyev.

What can we talk about, if the US representative to the OSCE thinks that it is a crime to take a photo with me?! What did I say?! I said that if Shakhtakhtinsky is dismissed, the office will be closed down. I warned them, but they didnt listen and we did it. Now they want to resume the offices operation, said the president.

I put forward a condition: Reinstate Shakhtakhtinsky, bring his career back, restore justice, and then we will reopen the office. That is the issue, he added.

Referring back to the document, President Aliyev said that there is a sentence in it that Azerbaijan has closed down the office without any explanation.

Ilham Aliyev further said the US non-governmental organization Freedom House believes that there is no freedom in Azerbaijan, that internet is only partially independent, and that Azerbaijan has lagged the most in the entire Eurasia in the last 10 years in terms of democratic governance.

Can you imagine? This is totally ridiculous, and isn't worth commenting on, added President Aliyev.

As for the Freedom House, this is an organization with which our country has no contact because of its pro-Armenian stance and constant attacks on Azerbaijan, he added. For many years the Freedom House has been headed by [David] Kramer, who was fired from the US Department of State because of various reasons and who has turned into one of the active critics of Azerbaijan.

I would like to say that reports of the Freedom House have no importance for us and I was surprised that this organization had been mentioned in this document, said Ilham Aliyev. This is a non-governmental organization; hundreds of such organizations publish various reports. Saying that Azerbaijan had the biggest lag in Eurasia, this organization and the European Parliament demonstrate their attitude towards Azerbaijan.

He said the document mentions that Azerbaijan was to hold a parliamentary election in November 2015.

The European Parliament declined to send a mission to observe the election. You declined, but others did not. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe was here, observed the election and made a very positive declaration, he added.

Thus, non-participation of the European Parliament didn't change anything, didn't affect the results and positive feedback, President Aliyev said. After that our parliament adopted a resolution. I can't read it all, but I believe you are informed about it, so I won't touch on it.

Now, this is the situation. Actually we have had no relations for a year. This didn't happen because of us. We continue working with other European institutions – the European Union, the Council of Europe, and the OSCE. However, the European Parliament decided to hold this stance regarding Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev said.

According to the information we have, this document was drawn up by the heads of the

organization, especially by Schulz and Lunacek, who, I dont know why, hate Azerbaijan and try all the time to damage our reputation, he said. According to the information we have, this resolution was adopted in violation of the procedures of the European Parliament, said the Azerbaijani president.

The president said some members of the European Parliament have warned the organization not to adopt the document.

I heard one of them saying, We will lose Azerbaijan. Maybe that is so. A commissioner of the European Commission spoke as well, made warnings, but they werent heard. And what happened as a result? There are no ties, no contact, he added.

Ilham Aliyev went on to add that Azerbaijan didnt create a working group in its parliament.

We discontinued our activity in the Euronest. This is the situation. We cant act as if nothing has happened. We have to clarify this. We have to look at what we can do to address this. What can we talk about if this remains the same, if nothing happens? said the president.

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Kaynak/Source: