

Unofficial translation

To my OSCE PA colleagues

The 23rd Annual Session of the OSCE PA has already been completed. All of you have returned to your homes and countries safe and sound and have already been relieved from your physical fatigue. In fact, for some of you traveling to Azerbaijan was an inherent part of your post-leisure time and touristic journey very much needed after a long parliamentary year. For us – the Azerbaijanis hosting this session, it was a great pleasure to provide assistance to all of you. It was also a very good opportunity for the traders and businessmen in Azerbaijan.

However, this is not what I intend to write. All we share the same opinion that during this trip the issues we discussed and decisions we adopted and their follow-up implementation are of great importance for every parliamentarian. Of course, every day and minute of the intensive working week we spent together was a vivid proof of it.

At the same time, I am convinced that during this visit to Azerbaijan some saw a country not known to them before, or some had wrong perceptions about, while others visited a country which was very familiar and close to them (in all meanings of the word).

The way how humanism and core values of mankind and society are close to Azerbaijanis, so everything you have seen here should also be so close to your hearts and easily understandable.

And though each of us has his/her own language, own history, and own culture, all of us share a common history, culture, and language, – history of humanism, culture of mankind and language of democracy.

To my mind, a communication on this basis shall be easy for everyone; a world based on these values shall be safe for every one of us, and the rights and laws emerged thereby shall be supreme for each of us.

The Baku discussions have confirmed this reality for many of us. Though the national interests of our states prevailed in our decisions, positions and thoughts, we tried to at least express it within the framework of the OSCE region. Though we spoke very openly for the sake of objectiveness, we made decisions in the spirit of respecting the opinion of the majority, even if in some cases it was unjust.

What drew my attention were the thoughts of some of my colleagues that did not fit into any boundaries; I could not remain indifferent to that, and had to respond as much as I could within the ethic norms and timeframe allocated to me. Nevertheless, I know for sure that not once did I lose my sense of justice and I invited our friends to speak logically. Being the host also played an important role in this. I should say that it is a holy feeling for Azerbaijanis. It makes us treat even our most violent enemies in a respectful manner. I take pride in this quality being an integral part of our national values.

You have already returned back to your homes and I am speaking with you as a colleague.

We had a great, tense and interesting discussion around a very important issue. In fact this issue, “Helsinki +40” and violation of its principles, has left its mark on all our discussions that we have conducted during the recent years. I want to ask you a few questions just to think about.

- What do you think, are these principles acceptable for everyone in the OSCE region?

Have they been used for the same purposes in all times and all cases?

Do we all, as countries and individuals, demonstrate a correct position?

Are we able to always be fair?

Personally I have been further convinced of the contrary during these days. For instance: 1. To what extent was Mr Alan Neri right, a member of the French delegation, Vice-President of the OSCE PA and my friend, when he, grossly breaching the procedures of the OSCE PA, voted instead of his colleague who had visited Nagorno-Karabakh in an illegal manner without the due permission of the authorities of Azerbaijan and thereby was denied the entry visa to Azerbaijan?

Although the Azerbaijani MPs and I considered him to be an objective parliamentarian and voted for him in all elections for we believed that he would fight for the protection of the OSCE values and rules. Apparently, we were mistaken. Starting from the very first moment, not only did he fail to make a right conclusion out of it, but also showed that he did not refrain from violating demonstratively the rules of procedure of the OSCE PA for the sake of the

interests of his colleague, forgetting thereby that Nagorno-Karabakh is an integral part of Azerbaijan.

What can you say about the OSCE PA Vice-President's actions? Was he right in doing so?

2. The same attitude was demonstrated by my Danish colleague Karsten Lauritzen in his speech delivered on the last day of the session.

Referring to the visa denial for the above mentioned person he also spoke of a ban on holding OSCE PA meetings in our country in the future.

Unlike Alan Neri, I do not remember this MP making statements on any issue and demonstrating a principal position. If he nominated his candidacy to any post, neither I, nor my colleagues, or even to my mind the majority of you would have voted for this person as we did not know him and were not aware which values might be his preference. Socrates, who we all know very well, has said: "Speak so that I may see you".

I think that those who have not lost their sense of justice could see him very well. Here I want to ask you another question.

Don't you think that Azerbaijan is right to apply a visa ban to persons who openly violate its boundaries, border rules and sovereignty, to those serving the interests of Armenia which has occupied 20% of the territory of Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh and 7 adjacent regions) and violated all 10 principles of the Helsinki Final Act and supporting a separatist regime with this occupation and trying to achieve its acceptance and recognition in the world?

Taking into account that on these grounds we apply the ban only to different individuals, then the question is, what do you think of the statements calling to put a ban on holding international events in Azerbaijan just because of a visa denial for one person (even if he is a member of the French Parliament) violating the borders (There is a civil and constructive way of solving this problem – that person could simply write to the relevant authorities of Azerbaijan). Doesn't it mean to punish the state of Azerbaijan and its people because of one person?

And yet, who will restore the violated rights of one million Azerbaijani citizens? Or at least are you ready to recognize these rights?

You are demanding a visa for a French MP to allow him to freely move in the OSCE region. This is in the hands of the Government of Azerbaijan. A visa can be issued for him with no obstacle if he applies to the relevant authorities according to the established rules.

And who will give the permission to one million Azerbaijani citizens including myself – Bahar Avaz qizi Muradova, an IDP from the Fizuli region adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh, Deputy Speaker of the Milli Majlis (parliament) of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Head of the national delegation to the OSCE PA – not just to visit the countries in the OSCE region, but to return to my homeland Fizuli, to Karabakh – which is an integral part of Azerbaijan?

Would you like to answer this question of your colleague, whom you know and who is calling for the equal protection of the rights of both ethnic Azerbaijanis and the Azerbaijani citizens of Armenian origin, who have become the minor hostage of the idea of “Greater Armenia” and are suffering from economic and social difficulties in Nagorno-Karabakh?

I invite all of you to think about it and look forward to getting an answer from my friend Alan Neri and my Danish colleague, whom I have just been acquainted with.

Sincerely,

Bahar Muradova,
Deputy Speaker of the Milli Mejlis (Parliament)
of the Republic of Azerbaijan,
Head of the Delegation of Azerbaijan
to the OSCE PA