
Armenia : 'Few Tangible Results' On PACE Demands So Far Says Monitoring Committee

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The Monitoring Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), meeting in Kyiv on 26 and 27 May 2008, welcomed the initiatives taken by the Armenian authorities to address the issues contained in Resolution 1609 (2008) on the functioning of democratic institutions in Armenia. However, it is concerned that, to date, these initiatives have led to only a few tangible results regarding compliance with the demands of the Assembly as set out in this Resolution, CE headquarters told ArmInfo.

In Resolution 1609 (2008), the Assembly resolved to consider the possibility of suspending the voting rights of the Armenian delegation at the start of its June 2008 part-session unless considerable progress is made on the following requirements:

- * to revoke, in line with Venice Commission recommendations, the recently adopted amendments to the Law on Conducting Meetings, Assemblies, Rallies and Demonstrations;
- * to start an independent, transparent and credible inquiry into the events on 1 March 2008, as well as the circumstances that led to them;
- * to release the persons detained on seemingly artificial and politically motivated charges;
- * to initiate an open and serious dialogue between the political forces on the reforms demanded by the Assembly.

The committee noted that the required changes to the Law on Conducting Meetings, Assemblies, Rallies and Demonstrations have been passed at first reading by the National Assembly of Armenia and expects them to be adopted and promulgated before the start of the June part-session of PACE. It welcomes the steps taken to initiate a dialogue on the reforms requested by the Assembly, most notably with respect to the electoral system and the status and rights of the opposition. It expresses the hope that those opposition leaders who to date have been reluctant to participate in this dialogue will now consider joining. That said, the committee is seriously concerned about the lack of any noticeable progress on the opening of an independent and credible enquiry. The format envisaged of a parliamentary ad hoc committee to carry out the inquiry into the events on, and leading to, 1 March will lack the requisite independence and credibility demanded by the Assembly, unless the participation of extra-parliamentary opposition, civil society and international experts is guaranteed. The committee also regrets that no progress has been made regarding the release of persons detained on seemingly artificial and politically motivated charges.

The committee is convinced that, although time is limited, it is still possible for the Armenian authorities to address the requirements of the Assembly in time for the visit of the co-rapporteurs of the committee in the week before the June part-session. Therefore, the committee instructed its Chair to ask on its behalf for a debate under urgent procedure during the June 2008 part-session of the Assembly if the co-rapporteurs, following their visit to Armenia on 16 and 17 June, conclude that insufficient progress has been achieved by then.
