

P6_TA(2006)0069

Cultural heritage in Azerbaijan

European Parliament resolution on cultural heritage in Azerbaijan

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its resolutions of 9 June 2005¹ and 27 October 2005² on Azerbaijan,
- having regard to its resolution of 19 January 2006 on the European Neighbourhood Policy³,
- having regard to its previous resolutions on the South Caucasus and, in particular, its resolution of 11 March 1999 on support for the peace process in the Caucasus⁴ and its recommendation to the Council of 26 February 2004 on EU policy towards the South Caucasus⁵,
- having regard to the Council decision of 14 June 2004 to include both Armenia and Azerbaijan in the European Neighbourhood Policy, in particular for the purpose of fostering good neighbourly relations, especially through respect for minorities,
- having regard to the obligations of Armenia and Azerbaijan within the framework of the Council of Europe, especially through the European Cultural Convention, the revised European Convention for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage, and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, which they have ratified and undertaken to respect,
- having regard to the UNESCO 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its 1954 Protocol, as applicable to occupied territories, to which both Armenia and Azerbaijan are party,
- having regard to the 2003 UNESCO Declaration concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage, by which the international community recognises the importance of the protection of cultural heritage and reaffirms its commitment to combat its intentional destruction in any form so that such cultural heritage may be transmitted to the succeeding generations,
- having regard to the report of the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)⁶ and the UN Committee for Human Rights' intermediary report on freedom of worship and religion⁷,
- having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,

¹ *Text Adopted*, P6_TA(2005)0243.

² *Text Adopted*, P6_TA(2005)0411.

³ *Text Adopted*, P6_TA(2006)0028.

⁴ OJ C 175, 21.6.1999, p. 251.

⁵ OJ C 98 E, 23.4.2004, p. 193.

⁶ World Report on Monuments and Sites in Danger 2002.

⁷ 58th Session of the UN General Assembly, 1/58/296, 19.8.2003.

- A. whereas allegations have been made by Armenia that campaigns to destroy the Armenian cemetery at Djulfa in the region of Nakhichevan were carried out by Azerbaijani forces in November 1998 and December 2002; whereas the most recent destruction took place in December 2005, as evidenced by video footage taken by the Armenian authorities,
- B. whereas there were numerous reactions by the international community to these actions; whereas Azerbaijan has not provided answers to inquiries by Mr Abdelfattah Amor, the former special rapporteur of the United Nations, concerning the events of November 1998 and December 2002,
- C. whereas serious allegations have been raised about the involvement of the Azerbaijani authorities in the destruction of these monuments,
- D. underlining the exceptional nature of the Djulfa cemetery, which still had 6 000 *khatchkars* (crosses carved in stone typical of Armenian religious art) remaining and which testifies to the ethnic and cultural diversity of the region,
- E. whereas the destruction or desecration of any monuments or objects of cultural, religious or national heritage infringes the principles of the European Union,
- F. whereas such destruction is taking place in the context of the suspended conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan on the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh,
- G. whereas there might soon be a favourable outcome to the negotiations on Nagorno-Karabakh and agreement might be reached on the principles for settling the conflict despite the unproductive meeting in Rambouillet on 10 and 11 February 2006 between the presidents of Armenia and of Azerbaijan,
- H. recalling that the European Neighbourhood Policy aims to establish a privileged partnership with Armenia and Azerbaijan on the basis of common values, including the respect for minorities and their cultural heritage,
 1. Condemns strongly the destruction of the Djulfa cemetery as well as the destruction of all sites of historical importance that has taken place on Armenian or Azerbaijani territory, and condemns any such action that seeks to destroy cultural heritage;
 2. Calls on the Council and the Commission to make clear to the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan that all efforts must be made to stop the practice of ethnic cleansing, which has led to such destruction, and to find ways in which to facilitate the gradual return of refugees and displaced people;
 3. Demands that the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan respect their international commitments, notably as regards cultural heritage, and, in particular, those deriving from the two countries' accession to the Council of Europe and their inclusion in the European Neighbourhood Policy;
 4. Stresses that respect for minority rights, including historical, religious and cultural heritage is conditional on the genuine and effective development of the European Neighbourhood Policy, which must also lead to the establishment of good neighbourly relations between all the countries concerned;

5. Demands that Azerbaijan allow missions, such as experts working with ICOMOS who are dedicated to surveying and protecting archaeological heritage, in particular Armenian heritage, onto its territory, and that it also allow a European Parliament delegation to visit the archaeological site at Djulfa;
6. Calls on the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan to comply with their international commitments, in particular as regards culture and the safeguarding of cultural heritage, entered into within international bodies such as UNESCO and the Council of Europe, and calls on both countries to do their utmost to protect archaeological, historical and cultural heritage on their territories in order to prevent the destruction of other endangered sites;
7. Invites the Commission and the Council to incorporate a clause on protecting both territories' invaluable archaeological or historical sites into the action plans currently being discussed in a European Neighbourhood Policy context;
8. Invites the Commission and the Council to make the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy action plans conditional upon the respect by Armenia and Azerbaijan for universally accepted principles, in particular their obligations as members of the Council of Europe regarding human and minority rights, and calls on the Commission and the Council to incorporate into these action plans specific provisions for the protection of the cultural heritage of minorities;
9. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Parliaments and Governments of the Member States, the Government and the President of Armenia, the Government and the President of Azerbaijan, as well as the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Director-General of UNESCO, and the Secretary-General of the United Nations.