

“Et audiatur altera pars” – or: Never listen only to one side!

A Short Visit of Solidarity with Haqq & Adalet Association

Due to its socio-political tensions, the situation in the southern Caucasus still requires a lot of attention. For cultivating a competent focus with particular emphasis on Azerbaijan, Hans-Jürgen Zahorka from Baden-Wuerttemberg state in Germany met core representatives of the Haqq & Adalet Association (Right and Justice) on October 23, 2012 in Basel / Switzerland. The former Member of European Parliament and Government Advisor since many years who is now also Chief Editor of *European Union Foreign Affairs Journal* said that the objective of this meeting was mutual information, as it would be also necessary to hear other voices than only the official government side.



During an afternoon of interesting talks: Gabil Rzayev, President of Haqq & Adalet (Right & Justice) [2nd from right], Dr. Alec Schaerer, Basel [right], Hans-Jürgen Zahorka [centre], Surkhan Latifov, former President of the European Movement of Azerbaijan [2nd from left].

The broad competence on both sides gave rise to a fruitful dialogue, as much in the immediate pragmatic dimensions (‘tactical realm’) as on the level of secure long-term thinking (‘strategic level’). The discussion evolved of course on how the two domains can reasonably be brought together.

In the post-socialist countries of the southern ex-Soviet union, a socially explosive situation is being bred by a struggle between a helpless populace on the one hand, and on the other hand a selfish and often corrupt government. The most material apple of discord is the benefits resulting from exploiting the natural resources - essentially crude oil and petroleum gas. Another bone of contention is the violent cultural and intellectual paternalism, prohibiting autonomous thinking

and democratic procedures. The crude strife has produced an emotional and intellectual turmoil and massive emigration, mostly to the West, aggravating tensions in the homeland and burdening statehood abroad.



Under the flags of Switzerland, Azerbaijan and the European Union: The very open talk included also issues like European asylum laws, Azerbaijan and European Integration, Azerbaijan and Armenia as well as Nagorno-Karabakh etc. There were no unbridgeable gaps between the participants of the talks – just the contrary. “We would be much further, if Azerbaijan would be an open society which discusses the place of Azerbaijan in the world in a pluralistic way”, said Hans-Jürgen Zahorka, and “the country has now to catch up to prepare for the necessary diversification for the post-oil & gas period, for which no major preparations have been done but for which all the oil & gas revenues also those diverted by some tycoons should be used”.

Haqq & Adalet is committed to producing change by empowering the hitherto helpless populace. This association goes for a stimulating mediation between the government, the destitute political opposition, and the people. It fosters thoroughly transparent procedures, thereby creating also favorable conditions for democratization. The first objective is civic participation, social self-organization, and finally a non-violent but clearly insistent transition to the relaxed order of a functional, open society that allows also the material repatriation of exiled citizens. Violence is generally to be countered by transparency and intelligence.

This activity coincides very well with the basic attitude of Hans-Jürgen Zahorka, as documented in the editorial style of the *European Union Foreign Affairs Journal* and the activities of Libertas – European Institute, a think-tank on European and international governance and economy he leads.

*Basel, October 23, 2012
Dr. Alec Schaerer*