

League of Nations promoted a Convention to Suppress the Slave Trade and Slavery. Three years later, Stalin's USSR started setting up the vast and cruel system for extracting forced labor known as the Gulag. A few years after that, Hitler came to power in Germany and began steering that powerful nation on a course that would, among its other horrors, bring the enslavement of some twelve-million people from across Europe as laborers forced to serve the Nazi Reich. In the second quarter of the twentieth century, slavery returned to the European continent in a way "that had not been seen in Europe since the time of the Roman Empire." When shame is gone, morality changes.

In a March 2015 speech, Ilham Aliyev explained that international treaties are "only a piece of paper that aren't worth anything . . . We see it and everyone else can see it too. We see this throughout the world—might is right." There are no moral principles or international human-rights obligations. There is no voice for the powerless. There is no room for shaming. Once torturers are treated with respect, even torture will cease to be considered shameful. In the past decade, Aliyev has managed to steal a series of elections with impunity. But his biggest coup was to steal the soul of the Council of Europe. He locked it up, along with his country's dissidents, in an Azerbaijani prison. There it sits, waiting to be rescued.

NOTES

1. Azerbaijani Latif Huseynov was elected chairman of the Committee for the Prevention of Torture in 2011. "Latif Huseynov Elected Chairman of European Committee for Prevention of Torture," *News.az*, 12 March 2011, www.news.az/articles/32756. In public, he has consistently supported President Aliyev and praised prison conditions in Azerbaijan: "I can state with the whole responsibility, as for how employees of local penitentiary institutions treat prisoners, the situation in Azerbaijan is better than that in an overwhelming majority of European countries"; see Eynulla Fatullayev, "Head of European Committee: 'Azerbaijani Prison Conditions Are Better Than in Most European Countries' (Exclusive)," *Azeri Daily*, n.d., <http://azeridaily.com/politics/3771>.

2. "The List: 98 Political Prisoners in Azerbaijan, August 2014," 10 August 2014, www.esiweb.org/pdf/THE%20LIST%20-%2098%20political%20prisoners%20in%20Azerbaijan%20-%20August%202014.pdf.

3. Eurostat, Imports by Country of Origin, 2003 to 2012, Azerbaijan to EU-28; Vesela Tcherneva, Louisa Slavkova, and Chi Kong Chyong, "Europe's Alternatives to Russian Gas," 9 April 2015, www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_europes_alternatives_to_russian_gas311666.

4. Quoted in European Stability Initiative, "Disgraced: Azerbaijan and the End of Election Monitoring as We Know It," ESI report, Berlin, 5 November 2013.

5. Thorbjørn Jagland, "Azerbaijan's Human Rights Are on a Knife Edge: The UK Must Not Walk Away," *Guardian*, 3 November 2014, www.theguardian.com/commentis-free/2014/nov/03/azerbaijan-human-rights-uk-tory-echr.