



EPDE concerned about EP and PACE statement on presidential election in Azerbaijan

Berlin, 14 October 2013: European Platform for Democratic Elections (EPDE) is seriously concerned about the findings and conclusions¹ made by the delegations of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and the European Parliament (EP) after the observation of the Presidential elections in Azerbaijan on 9 October 2013. The joint statement of the mission headed by Robert Walter (UK, PACE) and Pino Arlacchi (Italy, EP) declared that *"on election day we have observed a free, fair and transparent election process"*. The statement further declared that the delegation members did not witness any evidence of intimidation against voters and that *"electoral procedures have been carried out in a professional and peaceful way"*.

This declaration stands in sharp contrast to the findings of domestic election observers and to the observations of the OSCE/ODIHR mission.

EPDE member "Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Centre" (EMDS, Azerbaijan) has revealed multiple voting in 38% of the observed polling stations, ballot-box stuffing in 32% of polling stations, organized group voting in 39% of polling stations and voters being instructed to vote for a specific candidate in 37% of polling stations.² The OSCE/ODIHR observers noted frequent procedural shortcomings on election day: In 12% of observations the voting process was assessed negatively. "Overwhelmingly negative" was the assessment of the vote count procedures by the OSCE/ODIHR observers: 58% of the polling stations visited performed bad or very bad during vote count.³

It is difficult to understand how the two delegations of EP and PACE figuring up to a total of 40 persons (7 MEPs⁴ and 33 members of PACE⁵) could not take notice of any of the systematic and massive manipulations that occurred in such a significant part of the polling

¹ <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/News/News-View-EN.asp?newsid=4699&lang=2&cat=31> .

² http://smdt.az/images/stories/xeberler/emds_preliminary_statement.pdf .

³ <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/106901> .

⁴ The EP delegation: Pino Arlacchi (Italy, S&D, Head of Delegation), Filip Kaczmarek (Poland, EPP), Joachim Zeller (Germany, EPP), Mr Evgeni Kirilov (Bulgaria, S&D), Norica Nicolai (Romania, ALDE), Milan Cabrnoc (Czech Republic, ECR), Fiorello Provera (Italy, EFD).

⁵ The PACE delegation: <http://website-pace.net/documents/10643/110596/20130925-AzerbaijanPresidentialListRev-BIL.pdf> .

stations all over Azerbaijan. It is also astonishing that the delegations did not take into account the environment of human rights abuse and intimidation in which the election took place, an environment both Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly and the European Union repeatedly has criticized.⁶

The credibility of the election observation missions of Council of Europe and the European Parliament must be questioned by the statements published after the Presidential elections in Azerbaijan. The reputation of both institutions - watch guards for European democratic values - is endangered both in the perception of the international democratic community and, especially, in the eyes of voters in Azerbaijan who are deprived the right to free and fair elections.

The joint statement made by the PACE and EP delegations forcefully underlines the need for domestic election observation as well as trained, impartial international election observers.

EPDE asks both missions to reveal how the mission members were selected, how the mission members have been trained and instructed and according to which methodology the mission has collected data. EPDE calls both on the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament to ensure that their election observation missions will meet standards of international election observation in the future.

Contact EPDE Secretariat:

Stefanie Schiffer

European Exchange
Erkelenzdamm 59
10999 Berlin

Schiffer@european-exchange.org
T: 0049 171 9945540

⁶ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-845_en.htm?locale=en .