



EPDE Protests against Pressure on its Azerbaijan member Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Centre (EMDS)

On 31 October the General Prosecutor's Office of Azerbaijan conducted a search in the office of EPDE member organization Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Centre (EMDS) in Baku. The search was authorized by the decision of the Nasimi District Court. The search lasted for five hours, in the end 20 folders with project documentation, press releases, reports and financial documents along with two computers were confiscated for further investigation. In the following days members of EMDS were questioned about the activities of EMDS. The investigators were particularly interested in the observation of the 9 October 2013 Presidential elections that was conducted by EMDS in partnership with other local organizations as well as with EPDE. So far, EMDS was not notified about any concrete accusations of violation of law through the General Prosecutor's Office. A document legally preventing EMDS staff members from spreading information about the questioning was signed by EMDS staff.

EMDS staff has been informed that that they were being investigated for receiving grants from foreign sources. They were asked questions about projects, donors and international affairs. The senior staff of the organization is at risk of being criminally charged. The Director of EMDS, Anar Mammadli is expected to be called in for questioning where he may be required to sign a document preventing him from leaving the country.

The European Platform for Democratic Elections protests against the intimidation of its member organization, the Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Centre in Baku. We are worried that the investigations led by the Prosecutor general's office, have political motives, a reaction to the critical statements made by EMDS after the recent Presidential elections in Azerbaijan.

By signing the Paris Charter guaranteeing the right for free elections, the European Convention of Human Rights, protecting the right to association and assembly, and the UN Resolution on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms Azerbaijan has committed itself to guarantee the basic rights of its citizens to free elections and to the observation of the conduct of the elections through its citizens.

We call on the government of the Azerbaijan to respect the right to independently observe elections and to ensure the protection of human rights defenders. We also call on the government to proceed with the legal registration of EMDS, deprived of registration since 2008.

The European Platform for Democratic Elections is an association of thirteen European civil society organizations conducting or supporting citizens' election observation throughout Europe. The Platform has been installed in December 2012 in Warsaw and aims to protect the rights of European voters through the development of citizens' election observation.

For more information see www.epde.org

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