



Preliminary Results of Observations of the RA Parliamentary Elections 2012

Implemented by HCA Vanadzor Office

«Hayeli» club, Yerevan

May 8, 2012

Press release

Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Vanadzor Office emphasizes the role of free, fair, and transparent elections as one of the important preconditions of democracy, and for this reason it implements long and short-term observations within the territory of the RA.

The experience of the observations implemented by the organization proves that violations of electoral rights are systemic and the legal mechanisms of their prevention are not effective. We think that the observation mission is a potential preventative means which can, and does, influence the electoral process.

The monitoring of the parliamentary elections was implemented within the framework of the project "Capacity Development for Civil Oversight over the Parliamentary Elections 2012" which will ensure democratic processes that will support free, fair, and transparent elections.

The project is funded by Counterpart International Armenia Office, Open Society Foundations Armenia and Helsinki Foundation Norway.

Within the framework of the project, 94 observers of the HCA Vanadzor Office implemented a short-term observation over the parliamentary elections on May 6, 2012 at the Malatia-Sebastia District N 7 in Yerevan, Vanadzor, Ijevan and Gyumri. By mandate of HCA Vanadzor, 104 observers implemented observation by request of the Goris Women's Resource Centre» NGO.

Short-term observations were conducted on the day of voting in the parliamentary elections, during which they monitored:

- Protocol of work of the local electoral commission before opening the polling station
- Process of voting
- Counting of voting results.



The violations registered by the observers of the organization related to the process and results of the voting.

On May 6, 2012, while implementing observations of the parliamentary elections, Helsinki Citizens Assembly Vanadzor Office registered a number of violations, namely:

Violations related to the passport stamp

The observers of HCA Vanadzor office registered that in the 30/07, 30/22, 31/05, 30/37, 29/3 polling stations in Vanadzor and in the 33/77 polling station in Gyumri, the stamp put in the passport vanished within 15 minutes. While, according to Part 5, Article 66 of the RA Electoral Code the local electoral commissions are provided with ink to stamp the passports which is meant to remain for at least 12 hours.

Mass use of election bribes

On May 5th, the day previous to the Parliamentary Elections of 2012, and on May 6th, on the day of the Elections, Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Vanadzor Office received numerous calls from citizens related to distribution of bribes. Employees of HCAV responded immediately to citizens' calls; however, as soon as HCAV arrived at the scene of where violations were mentioned to have taken place, the coordinators immediately left the scene. The RA Police took no measures to prevent the alleged violations.

An alert was received that an election bribe was being distributed near the 30/32 polling station, in the RPA office. The observers of the organization went to the mentioned place at about 7:30 p.m. The doors of the campaign office were closed but a woman and a man waiting in the yard stated that the employees of the office went to get some money and they were waiting for it. They persuaded the observers to stay. A man standing near the office said that they could go to the polling station and someone called Vazgen would possibly give them the money.

- Lack of professional training of the local electoral commission
- Lack of awareness of the law
- Inadequate management

At the 7/02 polling station of the Malatia-Sebastia Community of Yerevan, the head of the commission did not allow the observer of Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Vanadzor Office to participate in the session of the commission. He reasoned it by saying that Point 1 of Local Observer Certificate of the RA National Assembly given by the RA Central Electoral Commission states that an observer does not have the right to be present at the session of the Electoral Commission. The organization filed a complaint with the RA Central Electoral Commission immediately, and following notification, the observer was allowed to be present at the session.

In the 7/08 polling station, one package of majoritarian ballots was not stamped.

In the 7/20 polling station, the chairperson of the commission stated that an observer does not have the right to be present at the session of counting the voting results. However when the observer mentioned the appropriate provision of the law, he was allowed to be present at the session.

In the 7/6 polling station, a citizen helped a woman, who could not vote by herself, however, the citizen did not have a passport so the data were not recorded. The observer warned the chairperson of the commission but the case was not recorded.

The members of the commissions, despite their party distribution, had a similar behavior and, as a rule, introduced the interests of the Republican Party.

In the 7/35 polling station, members of the local electoral commission periodically studied the lists of voters and provided information by phone on the people who had not voted after which a flow of voters was observed. Such violations were registered in other polling stations.

Violation of the voting privacy.

There were registered cases of violations of voting privacy:

- In the 30/36 polling station of Vanadzor, the voting booth is located so that it will not ensure the voter's right to privacy as prescribed by law.
- The 7/30 polling station of Malatia-Sebastia Community in Yerevan is located on the first floor and the voting booths were located in front of the windows, which violates voting privacy.

After intervention by the observer of the organization, the violation was eliminated.

- In the 7/27 polling station, a voter took a photo of the ballot.

Obstacles to free expression of voters' will

During the entire pre-election campaign an atmosphere of distrust of not preventing election crimes and impunity had its negative effect on the day of voting.

In the 7/6 polling station of Malatia-Sebastia in the Community of Yerevan, according to an observer, Armen Israyelyan, the proxy of the candidate to the Parliament, Vardan Vardanyan, directed voters. After voting, people signaled the proxy about having voted.

“Merry-go-round”



In several polling stations, empty envelopes were removed from the ballot boxes during the counting of the voting results. This raises suspicions to wonder if the ballots were given to the voters beforehand which gave an opportunity to control the voting process (in 30/07, 29/11, 29/3, 7/35 and other polling stations).

Cases of repetitive voting

In the 7/10 polling station, a voter wanted to vote a second time; however, recognizing him, the commission did not let him do it. The voter did not agree saying that he had not voted yet. The observer of the organization appealed to the head of the commission to initiate a protocol. The latter responded that the voters were sisters and he confused their passports.

In the polling stations observed by HCA Vanadzor office, there were no cases of violence directed towards the members of the commission, observers and proxies.

In the 30/18 polling station of Vahagni Village of Lori Region, the village mayor, who was a proxy of ARF, hindered the voting process. In the presence of the observer, he quarreled with the chairperson, then with a member of the commission. A protocol was set by the intervention of the observer.

Thus, on the basis of the results of the observation data of the pre-election campaign and the day of the voting conducted by HCA Vanadzor, it may be registered that systematic violations of expression of the voters' free will was registered: in the use of administrative resources, and this was apparent during the entire pre-election period and on the day of the voting and had an influence on the results of the outcome.

Some organizations conducting observation mission, did not support prevention of the election violations.

A complete report will be presented on May 12th.