

Results and Conclusions of Election Campaign Observation Mission over 2013 RA Presidential Elections

/Based on results of observation mission conducted in Lori and Tavoush
regions of the Republic of Armenia/

Within January 21- February 15 of 2013, the pre-election phase of February 18, 2013 RA Presidential Elections, Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Vanadzor conducted a long-term observation of election campaign in the cities of Vanadzor and Ijevan throughout Lori and Tavoush regions, respectively. The observation mission was carried out by 7 observers in Vanadzor and 4 observers in Ijevan.

In the framework of the long-term observation mission, the observers attended meetings with presidential candidates in Vanadzor and Ijevan cities, had a discourse with some of the meeting participants or the presidential candidates and their representatives at availability, visited election campaign headquarters of the candidates and conversed with their heads.

Abuse of Administrative recourses

In the pre-election campaign phase of 2013 RA Presidential Elections, RA Presidential candidates, Serzh Sargsyan, Raffi Hovhannisian, Hrant Bagratyan /2 TV broadcasting in Vanadzor and 1 meeting in Ijevan/ visited the cities of Vanadzor and Ijevan. Central headquarters staff of Paruyr Hayrikyan's only visited Vanadzor (a meeting, which was actually cancelled, as only 5 activists supporting Paruyr Hayrikyan were present at the meeting).

The results of observation mission conducted by the Organization and the alerts received from citizens confirm that the administrative resources were once again used to the benefit of the government's candidate during the campaign of current presidential elections.

Hence,

- Prior to and on the very day of Serzh Sargsyan's meeting with Vanadzor electorate some citizens informed the Organization that state institution staff members and parents at kindergartens were ordered to mandatorily attend the pre-election meeting with Serzh Sargsyan.

One of the citizens complained to the Organization representative, “As if you are not aware, you came here with as much desire as I did. I took an offense, we are obligated to attend the meeting with passports, they gather everyone and later order the Police officials to clear the area. Who forced you that you are so uneasy? A teacher cannot be treated like this, you must mandatorily attend the meeting, it is obligatory, but they never consider if we wish it or not.”

Whereas, 5 and another 10 citizens who had partaken in a meeting with Hrant Bagratyan and Raffi Hovhannisian, respectively, responded to the same question by mentioning they attended the meeting by their own initiative and accord.

During the campaign of RA Presidential Elections Artur Baghdasaryan, Chairman of "Orinats Yerkir" Faction and Secretary of the National Security Council held a meeting with his co-partisans at Vanadzor State Theatre House after Hovhannes Abelyan in Vanadzor and at the Cultural Palace in Ijevan, where he urged them to actively participate in the elections and at the same time presented the faction's cooperation with RPA Party and their joint goals.

Pre-election campaigns in favor of Serzh Sargsyan were conducted by Vanadzor Mayor Samvel Darbinyan, and RA NA Deputy, RPA faction member Karen Saribekyan. There was a line of citizens in one of the election campaign headquarters of Serzh Sargsyan in Vanadzor while the head of the headquarters had a list on his table. The observer wanted to clarify what list it was and the head of the headquarters responded that it contained names of state institution employees.

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Serzh Sargsyan's pre-election headquarters is also located in the Lori Region Alaverdi Municipality building. At the same time, the Organization observers were informed by the citizens that:

- Gatherings in Vanadzor schools were set up where the school headmasters



asked the teachers to vote for Serzh Sargsyan without taking money in return for a vote.

- 2 employees of Vanadzor state register were forced by the RA Ministry of Justice to present 2 obligatory voters' list to the incumbent president of RA, each of them containing data of minimum of 10 citizens with their precinct number.
- Several of Vanadzor schools and institutions not only demanded the teaching staff to provide lists and passport data of their family members, but also their signatures.
- Lists were handed out throughout #18 school and Evrika College in Vanadzor and each employee was required to present 15 names, who would be committed to vote for Serzh Sargsyan.
- Propaganda in favor of Serzh Sargsyan was initiated by Vanadzor State Pedagogical Institute lecturers and students during the classes.
- The classes at Akori village school of Lori region finished earlier than usual in order to participate in the meeting with RA NA Deputy, RPA faction member Karen Saribekyan dedicated to election campaigns in favor of Serzh Sargsyan.
- Employees of Serzh Sargsyan's headquarters would call apartments and inquire about the citizens' decision who to vote. Employees of state institutions venturing to answer "it is a secret" or "it is not your business" are called to the principals, while in case the headquarters activists reply with the same answers, they are deprived of their money.
- On February 14, the personnel of Vanadzor State Pedagogical Institute were given lists to call students and inquire who they were going to vote for. According to the information provider, if they replied in favor of Serzh Sargsyan, the caller would say, "Then, please, by all means go for voting ", and in case the response was negative the caller would merely say, "all right".
- On February 14, the "trustworthy" village residing students of YSU Ijevan Branch were given a list with names of their fellow villagers to verify whether or not those students on the list were going to vote for Serzh Sargsyan.

Benevolence, Concealed Election Bribery

During these elections as well the Organization's observers confirm that cases of concealed and open election bribes are recorded in favor of the Government representative based on their observations and information received from the citizens.

Hence:

- During the pre-election campaign an order was given out at Vanadzor schools that 70% participation must be ensured in the elections to uphold Samvel Karapetyan's/Tashir Samvel/ name, since he awarded the Lori region responsible, while, the latter, in his turn, rewarded 2 teachers in each school (/1 senior and 1 young teacher) with 100.000 AMD during elections.
- Heads of 2 campaign headquarters in Ijevan stated that 2 citizens had come up to them with requests which were submitted to the Regional Central Headquarters by them.
- One of the heads of Serzh Sargsyan's pre-election headquarters noted, "The district residents turn to us with requests to settle district related issues. For instance, the residents of 36-37 buildings of Arda district have turned to us for district lighting because one of residents fell into a pit and hurt his leg. Mayor Samvel Darbinyan promised to resolve the issue in the near future. The Municipality will take care of electric columns, the Avagani member will provide "Akan" type of light bulbs while the community office will provide necessary quantity of cords."
- At around 12:00 p.m. on February 6, 2013, Vanadzor Mayor Samvel Darbinyan in a meeting with citizens at "Bellissimo" celebrations hall addressed to even 60-year old and above men, "You are our activists, you'll receive your wages by February 15."
- At around 12:00 p.m. on February 14, 2013 "election bribes" under the name of "wages" for activists were distributed at "Bellissimo" celebrations hall in Vanadzor.
- At around 14:00 p.m. on February 14, 2013 money, termed as wages, was also handed out at Dimats district condominium of Vanadzor city.
- A citizen gathered passport data of residents of Vahagni village in Lori region to settle his house related issue through Lori region Governor.

- A citizen called at toll-free hotline and informed the Organization that election bribes would be distributed in a bus by the head of Electric Networks of Armenia at Taron II district of Vanadzor city. According to the information provider, the head in person wanted to see who he was giving money to.
- The staff member of one of the headquarters located in Taron II district of Vanadzor informed that the employees of Vanadzor branch “Tashir” pizzeria came to the headquarters and said, “As you know our relative Tashir Samvel has sent you the election wages”.
- With an aim to collect votes for Serzh Sargsyan 5000 AMD was distributed in the Khndzorut district of Vanadzor, moreover, if the family was comprised of 3 and more voters, maximum 15000 AMD was provided.
- The election bribes were handed out to citizens in the Khndzorut district of Vanadzor by one of the district shop assistants.
- In one of the residential buildings in the vicinity of “Iceberg” café in Vanadzor, some woman by name Alvard, who worked at the Post Office, distributed 30000 AMD to each family from home.
- Citizens were promised to receive 10000 AMD for 1 passport in Serzh Sargsyan’s election headquarters located in the 3rd district of Vanadzor, but when the citizens went to receive the money only 7500 AMD was offered which led to disputes.

In the pre-election phase of 2013 RA Presidential Elections the election campaign headquarters of only one presidential candidate Serzh Sargsyan functioned in Vanadzor and Ijevan cities. It should be noted that 1 mobile election campaign headquarters of Raffi Hovhannisian also operated in each of the aforementioned cities. Pursuant to the information provided by Hrant Bagratyan’s representative, they made an attempt to set up pre-election headquarters in Vanadzor and Ijevan cities, but due to some reasons, which he didn’t want to specify, they couldn’t locate an appropriate site.

The observers conducted interviews with the heads of Serzh Sargsyan’s 5 and Raffi Hovhannisian’s 1 election campaign headquarters in Vanadzor, and those of Serzh Sargsyan’s 8 campaign headquarters in Ijevan. In conformity with the data provided by the heads of Serzh Sargsyan’s campaign headquarters, 57 headquarters of Serzh Sargsyan function in Vanadzor and another 7-35 in Ijevan. In Vanadzor only 2 of the interviewed 5 heads of

campaign headquarters replied to the above-mentioned question, while in Ijevan, 5 out of the interviewed 8 heads mentioned the operation of 35 campaign headquarters, 1 noted 34 and 2 heads suggested 7 campaign headquarters.

According to the heads of Serzh Sargsyan's campaign headquarters, there is a paid personnel in 3 of the headquarters/2 headquarters in Vanadzor and 1 in Ijevan/, while the staff members volunteer in the remaining 10 headquarters/2 in Vanadzor and 8 in Ijevan/.

Hence, on the whole, 14 out of the headquarters staff members hold paid positions and 45 of them work voluntarily. According to the data provided by the head of Raffi Hovhannisian's mobile election campaign headquarters in Vanadzor, they work on voluntary basis.

Meanwhile, a citizen, who didn't want to introduce himself, phoned at Organization's hotline and informed that 3 persons are employed in each of Serzh Sargsyan's campaign headquarters in Vanadzor and each of them represents a family comprised of minimum 3 voters, moreover, each staff member mandatorily presents passport data of another 2 citizens, who become committed to give their votes to Serzh Sargsyan.

In this manner, each staff member provides minimum 5 votes in favor of Serzh Sargsyan by receiving 30 000 (thirty thousand) AMD in return, which is issued as a salary. According to the information provided by another citizen, under the decree issued by Serzh Sargsyan's Central Election Headquarters, all of its members must present themselves as zealous party activists, who work voluntarily.

Even while summarizing the observation results, it becomes clear that only the heads of those headquarters noted they worked on voluntary basis, that were attended by the observers on the first few days of the election campaign.

Dissemination of Campaign Materials

Within the frames of the observation mission, cases of posting campaign posters of RA presidential candidate in prohibited sites were recorded. Hence, campaign posters of RA presidential candidate Serzh Sargsyan were posted in the area of Ijevan stores.



In this regard, one of the heads of election campaign headquarters stated, “Random people enter the headquarters, who can take the posters and post it in legally prohibited sites” by turning to the observer with a request to be more attentive and report on such cases. By the way, the posters were removed from the aforementioned prohibited sites. The head of Serzh Sargsyan's election headquarters in Ijevan notified the observer that Raffi Hovhannisian’s posters were posed in prohibited sites, particularly, in the villages.

Manya Ayvazyan, head of Paryur Hayrikyan’s Central Headquarters notified the Organization’s observer they had faced obstacles during dissemination of campaign materials, particularly, it was stated in Ushi village of Aragatsotn region that only Republicans had a right to conduct campaigns.

Issues regarding Voters' lists

Within the framework of 2013 RA Presidential Elections, a number of concerns regarding the voters' list have been recorded. Specifically, 2 heads of Serzh Sargsyan's election campaign headquarters in Vanadzor noted that names of deceased citizens were included in the voters' lists. "1730 citizens are included in the voters' list, 11 out of which are dead", noted one of the headquarters' heads.

Summary:

Hence, the observation mission, conducted by the organization over the study of pre-election campaign within January 21- February 15 of 2013, revealed:

- During the pre-election campaign phase, only RA Presidential candidate Serzh Sargsyan's pre-election headquarters functioned in Vanadzor and Ijevan cities.
- During the pre-election campaign, legally prohibited means were used in favor of RA Presidential candidate, incumbent president Serzh Sargsyan, particularly, by abuse of administrative levers, the citizens were forced to mandatorily attend the pre-election meetings of Serzh Sargsyan. Serzh Sargsyan's pre-election headquarters were located in some of the buildings of local self-governing bodies.
 - Pursuant to the alerts received from the citizens, monetary means were distributed to make citizens to vote in favor of RA Presidential candidate Serzh Sargsyan, which is prohibited by RA Criminal Code.
- As in case of 2012 RA Parliamentary elections, during the current elections as well, posting of campaign posters of RA presidential candidates in prohibited sites was recorded.

Hence, in the pre-election campaign phase of RA Presidential elections in Lori and Tavoush regions:

- The pre-election campaign was carried out with violations of stipulated law.
- RA presidential candidate, incumbent president Serzh Sargsyan had apparent advantage towards other candidates from the standpoint of administrative, human and financial resources.
- Administrative levers were widely used in favor of the incumbent



president for mandatorily forcing the citizens to participate in his pre-election campaigns.

- It is impossible to evidently differentiate the RPA financial and human resources from those of local self-governing and state bodies.
- The pre-election campaign was of non-competitive nature.