PRESS RELEASE

Interim Report presentation

Election Observation Mission

March 29, 2018

GISDI is honoured to be in Azerbaijan and organize an international observation mission in Presidential Elections upon invitation by CEC. The mission is jointly conducted with "Legal World" – Legal Advocacy Public Union, based in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

For this Presidential election observation mission, GISDI registered more than 80 international observers – most of them are MP, university professors, layers, specialists of public communication. All of them come from Europe – West and Central Europe, Scandinavia and Baltic states, Balkan Peninsula and of course from Bulgaria. All of them are short term observers. They will work in pairs in different regions of Azerbaijan. Each pair will observe 4-6 PS in 5 time zones

- Opening of PS at 8.00 a.m. and an hour latter;
- Voting before 1.00 p.m.
- Voting after 2.00 p.m.
- Closing at 7.00 p.m.
- Counting and completion of the PS protocols after 8.00 p.m.

The information will be registered in **GISDI Report Form for Polling Station Observation**. The questionnaire will be attached to our Interim Report.

GISDI is the oldest Bulgarian NGO in the field of election observation. It was established 28 years ago – in the first post-soviet democratic transitions in Bulgaria. GISDI means "*Civil Initiative for Free and Democratic Elections*".

GISDI has observed the first democratic elections in Bulgaria (June 1990) following international standards in election observation. GISDI also conducted Exit poll and Quick count for the first time in Bulgaria – as instruments of democratization of electoral process and achievement of genuine election results.

Up to now GISDI has more than 20 successful domestic election observation missions in national (presidential and parliamentary) and a lot in local elections. GISDI has participated in some international election observation missions.

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Azerbaijan Presidential Elections / April 11th, 2018

GISDI has been observing elections in Azerbaijan from 2003 till 2008. Alongside it have been conducting Exit poll in this period of time.

We are providing this briefing after our first week of field work in Azarbaijan. Durring the week our Core team conduct some very interesting meetings and discussions. Some of our preliminary views were corrected – we can say in a positive direction, as an improvement of electoral process. We were provided with rich information and a lot of interesting details.

We will need 3 days to work it up and finalize our Interim Report. After that it will be send to each of you and published on our webside.

GISDI expert Core Team

Mrs. Katia Mihailova. – Deputy Head of Mission. Professor of sociology of communication.

Mrs. Elena Yoncheva – Media Analyst. Member of Bulgarian Parliament and a well-known Bulgarian journalist.

Mr. Omourtag Petkov – Legal Analyst. Attorney-at-Law qualified to practice in Bulgaria and New York. Chairman of the British-Bulgarian Business Association.

Prof. Ivan Danov – Civil Society Analyst. Recent minister of Ministry of Investment Planning, professor in architecture.

Mr. Rasho Tarlyovski – Election Analyst. He has been observing Azerbaijanian elections since 2004.

INTERIM REPORT: TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Macropolitical environment and frame
2. Azerbaijan pre-election situation
3. Legal framework and election administration
4. Voters lists and voter registration
5. Voter education and empowerment
6. Candidate nomination and registration
7. Election campaign
8. Media in election process
9. Pre-election surveys and exit polls
10. Complaints and appeals
11. Election observation
12. GISDI observation focuses in e-day at polling stations

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GISDI

CIVIL INITIATIVE FOR FREE AND DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS

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FINDINGS

Macropolitical environment in the country favors the conduct of free and democratic elections.

We have not observed any threat to the free exercise of the people's voting rights and the organization of the electoral process.

The analysis of the Election code and other related laws and regulations allows to conclude that the electoral legal framework complies with most international standards for free and fair elections.

The observation we have conducted on the work of the election administration provides enough evidence for us to give it a positive evaluation.

The voter lists are updated regularly, and the overall process of maintenance and update of the lists is transparent and well organized. There is an efficient system of voter de-registration cards allowing the voters to fully exercise their right to vote.

The procedure and requirements for nomination and registration of candidates are fully and clearly set out in the law. Although two of the candidates were rejected and other five dropped out from the process, we consider that all fundamental democratic principles have been respected.

The media monitoring shows that one of the candidates – the incumbent president – has more media presence than the other candidates. This is explained by the fact that the media are covering his activities as president as well as his campaign.

There have been no violations of the electoral legislation in the first ten days of the campaign. No complaints and appeals have been filed so far.

Some of the parties boycott the elections. However, we expect that their boycott will not hinder the overall electoral process.

In conclusion,

GISDI considers and would like to state that all fundamental conditions and prerequisites for conducting fair and democratic elections in accordance with the international standards exist in the Republic of Azerbaijan. Voters can freely and fully exercise their constitutional right to vote. We hope that our observation of the electoral process until and on election day will not encounter any facts or hear any arguments that could make us change the conclusion we have as of today.

We as an organization would like to wish the Azerbaijani people to have a fair, transparent and successful elections.

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