



**“DEMOCRACY LEARNING” PUBLIC UNION**

**REPORT**  
**on the Stage of Candidate Nomination and Registration in Parliamentary**  
**Elections 2010**

**Baku 2010, December**

## **A. ABOUT THE “DEMOCRACY LEARNING” PUBLIC UNION**

“Democracy Learning” Public Union (DLPU) is a local non-governmental organization registered by the state on 15 March 2006. The main objective of the organization is to support the improvement of the election practice and the development of the local democracy in Azerbaijan (see: [www.dlpu-az.org](http://www.dlpu-az.org) for more detailed information about the organization).

DLPU will conduct the observation of the parliamentary elections on 7 November 2010 with its 24 long-term observers. The training of neutral observers was supported by the OSCE Office in Baku and the other observation-related activities were provided through the internal resources of DLPU. During the stage of candidate nomination and registration, the DLPU observation group obtained observation results covering 35 constituencies. DLPU believes that the coverage of the 25% of the constituencies allows for the general evaluation of the elections.

Several trainings were held for the long-term observers (LTO) to improve their skills and knowledge on 03-05 September 2010. Thereafter, the LTOs were specifically accredited by the Central Election Commission (CEC) for the observation of the meetings of Constituency Election Commissions (ConEC) on targeted election constituencies.

The information in the report is directly based on the information of DLPU observers. LTOs obtained the information and facts by participating in the meetings of ConECs and meeting with the candidates and their authorized representatives, representatives of political parties and citizens. Some of the information and facts are directly based on the observations of LTOs.

DLPU hopes that the election observation will contribute to the improvement of the election practice and will facilitate the efficient cooperation with election authorities.

## **B. BACKGROUND**

Under the Constitution, the legislative power in the Republic of Azerbaijan shall be executed by the National Parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Term of authority of each calling of Milli Majlis (National Parliament) of the Azerbaijan Republic is 5 years. Elections for each calling of Milli Majlis (National Parliament) of the Azerbaijan Republic shall take place every 5 years on a first Sunday of November.

The last Parliamentary Elections were held on 06 November 2005. Under the requirements of the Constitution, the next Parliamentary Elections were designated for 7 November 2010 by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The parliamentary elections started from this date.

The parliamentary elections are held on the basis of the Election Code adopted in 2003. Several addenda and amendments were made to the Election Code in 2005, 2008 and 2010. Although some of the previous recommendations of OSCE/ODIHR and the Council of Europe Venice Commission were taken into account during the addenda and amendments, a number of restrictive provisions were added to the legislation. The term of the election campaign was first reduced from 120 days to 75 days and then to 60 days. The term for the pre-election campaign was first reduced from 60 days to 28 days and then 23 days. Deposit for candidate registration and allocation of state funds to the candidates were abolished.

The existing composition of the election commissions executing the organization and management of the elections was formed in 2005. The composition of the election commissions functioning in the system of Central Election Commission, Constituency Election Commissions and Precinct Election Commissions constitutes proportionally the representatives of majority parties and minority parties and neutral representatives at the Parliament. The Central Election Commission is composed of 18 members, Constituency Election Commissions of 9 members and Precinct Election Commissions of 6 members.

There are 53 state-registered parties functioning in Azerbaijan. The New Azerbaijan Party is the largest party in the country for the number of its members and other resources. Azerbaijan Popular Front Party and Musavat Party are the strongest opposition parties that have been opposed to the existing power since that year. The fight for the political power in the country is mainly between these forces.

On the eve of the Parliamentary Elections the consolidation initiatives among the political parties were strengthened and the majority of the parties preferred to participate in the elections as blocs. Consequently, “AXCP-Musavat” (“APFP-Musavat”), “İslahat” (“Reform”), “İnsan Naminə” (“For the Sake of Humanity”) and “Demokratiya” (“Democracy”) election blocs that include several parties were formed. In total, 5 blocs of political parties and 22 parties participate in the elections.

### **C. ELECTION MANAGEMENT**

There were 3 vacancies in the composition of the Central Election Commission at the start of elections. Two of them remained vacant as Musavat Party nominated no candidate. And one neutral member of the CEC was appointed as the member of the Constitutional Court.

At its meeting on 8 October, the Parliament approved three new members of the Central Election Commission. One is from Musavat Party, the other is from United Azerbaijan Popular Front Party and the third is neutral. So, the CEC composition was fully formed approximately 1 month before the election day.

Like in the previous elections, the main opposition parties stated that there is a low level confidence in election commissions and associated it with the fact that the lower commissions are under the control of the ruling New Azerbaijan Party and the majority in these commissions support the interests of these parties. According to the precise information, in some of the lower election commissions the representatives of the parties standing out with their close relation to the authorities and the parties calling themselves “constructive opposition” are appointed by the executive authorities or the ruling New Azerbaijan Party.

Taking into account the reduction of the election campaign duration, the CEC started the election preparation activities a little earlier and adopted several decisions and instructions on the organization of elections before the start of elections. Also, seminars contributing to the more effective organization of elections were held for the members of the election commissions, representatives of executive authorities and police departments. The constituency election commissions managed to conduct the electoral activities in compliance with the schedule at the stage of candidate nomination and registration. At this stage, positive steps were taken in public awareness-raising about the activities of the election commissions. All the decisions and instructions of the CEC were placed on its official webpage. Although with insignificant delays, it was possible to obtain information about the nominated candidates, the obtainment of signature sheets, the status of candidate registration and the dates of the CEC decisions from the webpage of the Election Information Center. Also, most of the circles placed the copies of these decisions on the CEC information boards with some exceptions<sup>1</sup>.

In addition, there were problems regarding the functioning of several CECs with the lack of members in their compositions, the organization of meetings without a quorum<sup>2</sup> in some cases, non-provision of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Gusar Constituency № 51

<sup>2</sup> Kapaz First (Ganja) Constituency № 39, Beylagan constituency № 81, Ismayilli Constituency № 86, Barda Village Constituency № 94, Sheki City Constituency № 113, Goychay Constituency № 88, Guba Constituency № 52, Zagatala Constituency № 110, Ismayilli Constituency № 86, Oghuz-Gabala Constituency № 117, Aghjabedi Constituency № 82 and Gusar Constituency № 51 did not inform in advance some candidates, there authorized representatives and observers about the dates/time of the meetings and the meetings are held in indefinite circumstances. Although the chairman of the ConEC in Gedebey Constituency № 103 informed in advance the observer of the “Democracy Learning” PU in this constituency, the observer who came to attend the meeting at the time appointed by ConEC was informed that the meeting had already finished. This case was repeated for 3 times.

participation of the interested election subjects in the ConEC meetings and lack of transparency<sup>3</sup> during the verification of documents by the working groups and investigation of election complaints.

## **D. CANDIDATE NOMINATION AND REGISTRATION**

### **1. General statistics**

Under the Election Code, the parliamentary candidates can be nominated by the political parties, political party blocs, on the candidate's initiative and the voters' initiative groups. After the approval of the candidate nomination by the CEC decision, 450 signatures shall be collected in support of the candidate and shall be submitted to the relevant ConEC for registration together with other documents maximum 50 days and minimum 30 days prior to the election day. The relevant ConEC shall adopt a reasoned decision on the registration or rejection of the registration of the candidate within 7 days.

According to the information from the CEC as of 17 October, the total of 719 parliamentary candidates was registered in 125 constituencies in the country. Of them, 621 are men and 98 are women. The statistics on the nomination and registration of the party candidates was as follows:

<b>Nominated by</b>	<b>Number of nominated candidates</b>	<b>Number of registered candidates</b>
New Azerbaijan Party	115	113
«AXCP-Müsavat» bloc	92	35
«Karabakh» bloc	99	32
«İslahat» (“Reform”) bloc	106	31
«İnsan naminə» (“For the Sake of Humanity”) bloc	83	19
«Demokratiya» (“Democracy”) bloc	101	17

The other nominated candidates are the representatives of the parties that participate in elections separately and those running their candidacies on their own or nominated by the initiative groups. 30 candidates from the Classic Popular Front Party, 23 from Azerbaijan National Independence Party, 20 from Democratic Azerbaijan's World Party, 7 from Motherland Party, 7 from Musavat Party, 2 from Azerbaijan National Democratic Party, 2 from Azerbaijan Social-Democratic Party, 1 from Azerbaijan National Statehood Party and 1 from Azerbaijan Progress Party were registered. 7 out of the registered candidates were nominated by the initiative groups and 374 run their candidacies on their own initiative. 297 out of 1412 candidates who took signature sheets did not return them. ConECs rejected the registration of 324 candidates and 72 candidates withdrew their candidacies.

In comparison to the parliamentary elections in 2005, the number of those who wanted to participate in elections as candidates was 35% lower. While the number of the candidates whose candidacy was rejected was 4% in the previous elections, 30% of the candidates were rejected during the registration in these elections. According to some assumptions, the removal of the undesired candidates during the candidate registration stage is associated with the amendments to Article 113.2 of the Election Code, which were made in 2008. According to this amendment, the registration of the candidate may only be abolished by the effective court judgment on the criminal case or decision on administrative offence in cases determined by the legislation. And this makes the abolishment of the candidate registration quite

---

<sup>3</sup> The meeting dated 20 September 2010 of the Constituency Election Commission in Gedebey Constituency № 103 was held with the attendance of Chairman, Secretary and Senior Advisor of the Commission. The meeting dated 1 October 2010 of ConEC № 52 was held with the attendance of 5 members of the commission without a quorum. A decision on the registration of Huseyn Karimov, the candidate from the New Azerbaijan Party was adopted at the meeting. The meetings of constituency election commissions in Beylagan constituency № 81, Oghuz-Gabala Constituency № 117 and Aghjbedi Constituency № 82 were attended by 4-5 members, including the chairman.

difficult. On the other hand, that the number of the candidates from political parties and political party blocs is lower than 60 also deprives them of the right to free election campaign.

In the first days of the election campaign, the ConECs demonstrated good cooperation with the candidates and their authorized representatives regarding the approval of the candidate registration notifications (applications) and issuance of signature sheets. Some candidates complained of the delayed receipt of the candidates' applications<sup>4</sup>. Such candidates were explained on illegal grounds that the candidates' applications may only be received by the Chairman of the ConEC.

The candidate nomination and registration process was conducted in controversial conditions, evaluated equivocally by the political parties and neutral candidates. Although the ruling New Azerbaijan Party informed that the candidate nomination and registration process was conducted in line with the requirements of the legislation, the bloc of political parties, political parties and some neutral candidates claimed that it is completely opposite. "AXCP-Musavat", "Karabakh", and "İnsan Naminə" ("For the Sake of Humanity") blocs, as well as the Alliance for Democracy made statements about the intervention of the government authorities in the signature collection in support of candidates and candidate registration process, pressure on candidates and voters and biased activities of the constituency election commissions. Additionally, some of the neutral candidates who run their candidacies on their own initiative and were rejected also said that the ConECs function subjectively and independently.

## **2. Signature collection campaign**

The voter signature collection campaign was problematic for many candidates<sup>5</sup>. The majority of them included the candidates whose candidacy was rejected by ConECs later. According to these candidates, the executive and police authorities created obstacles during their signature collection campaign. It was reported to the DLPU observation group that the individuals collecting signature in support of the representatives of the opposition parties and several independent candidates faced such threats and pressure.

- *The signature collection campaign of Musayev Kamal Gurzali oglu, nominated by Classic Popular Front Party in Gedebe Constituency № 103 was seriously hindered by Hajiyeve Sabir, the representative of the executive authority in Guneshli village, and he threatened to dismiss those who wanted to sign in support of the candidate.*
- *Baghiyev Tofig, the municipal member who was collecting signatures in Mollaisagli villiage of Ismayilli in support of Salihov Pərviz Sabir oglu, nominated in Ismayilli Constituency № 86 was subject to pressure by Hashimov Hashim, the representative of the executive authority in that village.*
- *The signature collection by the representatives of Garayev Zahid Huseyn oglu, nominated by Azerbaijan National Independence Party in Barda City Constituency № 93 was hindered.*

---

<sup>4</sup> Emin Mammadov, the candidate of the "AXCP-Musavat" bloc in Gedebe Constituency № 103 managed to submit his candidacy application to the ConEC only on 04 October and the signature sheets were issued to him only on 8 October 2010, i.e. on the day of deadline for the return of signature sheets. Although Alastun Orujlu, the candidate of "AXCP-Musavat" bloc applied to the ConEC for the first time on 25 September, his documents were only received on 29 September. Although Dayanat Kasimov, another candidate in that constituency submitted his candidacy application to the ConEC on 21 September, he was able to obtain his signature sheets only on 4 October 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Local executive authorities and police departments hindered the signature collection campaign of neutral Atakishiyev Memi and Karayev Fakhraddin, the member of the New Azerbaijan Party, who run their candidacies on their own initiative in Imishli Constituency № 79, Sahib Kerimov, Rashid Najafli, Arastun Orujlu, Perviz Hashimli, Nemet Aliyev, Elnur Majidli, nominated by "AXCP-Musavat" bloc respectively in Sheki City Constituency № 113, Aghjabedi Constituency № 82, Shemkir-Dashkesen № 100, Kapaz First (Ganja) Constituency № 39, Barda City Constituency № 93 and Barda Village Constituency № 94, Elşad Pashasoy who run his candidacy on his own initiative in Yardimli-Masalli Constituency № 72, Musayev Kamal, nominated by Classic Popular Front Party in Gedebe Constituency № 103, Mirzayev Murshud, who run his candidacy in Imishli-Beylegan Constituency № 80 and Abbasov Rashid, nominated by "For the Sake of Humanity" bloc in Kapaz (Second) Constituency № 40. And later, of them, only the candidacies of Sahib Kerimov and Nemet Aliyev were registered.

On the other hand, it was observed that some administrative authorities supported the signature collection campaign of the representatives of the ruling party and parties standing out with their close relation thereto, as well as some of the neutral candidates. Especially, the cases of the mass involvement of the employees of the budget-financed organizations in the signature collection in support of such candidates and the collection of voters' IDs by the management of the local housing offices (ZHEKs), educational and healthcare institutions were observed in several constituencies.

- *In Kapaz First Constituency № 39, Ilgar Mammadov, the Chairman of Housing Office № 11 collected the IDs from the residents of Ali Nazmi street for collection of signatures in support of the candidate of the ruling party.*
- *In Shirvan Constituency № 46, on 20-21 September the employees of healthcare facilities, schools, DRES (Power Plant) and Shirvanoil enterprises were forced to sign the signature sheets that belonged to an unknown candidate. The houses were visited on various reasons and the surnames and ID numbers were learned.*
- *The representatives of Aydin Mirzazade, the current MP nominated by the New Azerbaijan Party in **Mingechevir Constituency № 47** forced the employees of Az.DRES (Azerbaijan Regional Power Plant) and healthcare institutions to sign the signature sheets through the management.*
- *The employees of the Telecommunication Terminal led by Badamov Azer Jamal oglu, nominated by the New Azerbaijan Party in **Gusar Constituency № 51** were involved in filling in the signature sheets and the signature sheets were filled within a day and returned to the ConEC.*
- *According to the teachers and students of the State Socio-Economic College in Guba and Guba Branch of Azerbaijan Teachers' Institute, under the instruction of the director of Guba district Education Department, IDs were collected for signature collection in support of Vagif Arzumanli, a neutral candidate in **Guba Constituency № 52**.*
- *Under the instructions of the Head of Executive Authority in Masalli (at the meeting held on 17 September 2010), the representatives of the executive authority and municipalities were involved in the signature collection campaign in support of Elmira Akhundova, nominated by **Masalli Village Constituency № 71**.*
- *At the meeting with the heads of State Traffic Police, municipal, healthcare, postal and educational institutions during Ayaz Orujov's visit to Beylagan district on 21 September 2010, who has been nominated by the New Azerbaijan Party in **Beylagan District Constituency № 81**, the instructions were given to facilitate the signature collection campaign in support of the mentioned candidate. The employees from municipal, educational, healthcare institutions and trade unions were particularly active in the signature collection campaign in support of the parliamentary candidate, Ayaz Orujov. The voters in this constituency were instructed not to provide signature in support of the other candidates.*
- *The signature collection campaigns of Aslanov Novruzali Davud oglu, the incumbent MP who run his candidacy on his own initiative and Aghayev Firidun Haji oglu, nominated by the New Azerbaijan Party in **Ismayilli Constituency № 86** were organized by the local executive authority. The IDs were mainly taken from the healthcare personnel.*
- *The employees from Gas Department and Water Department in Dashkesen district were involved in the signature collection campaign in support of Mubariz Gurbanli, the incumbent MP nominated by the New Azerbaijan Party in **Shamkir-Dashkesen Constituency № 100**. Inara Gurbanova, the staff member from the department of the local executive authority personally participated in the signature collection campaign. The copies of the employees' IDs at the Central Hospital in Dashkesen district were taken. The representatives of the executive authority in villages took IDs from the personnel at the secondary school in Seyfali village and the residents of Gapanli village for signature collection in support of Mubariz Gurbanli, the candidate of the New Azerbaijan Party.*
- *The Executive Authority in Zagatala district organized the signature collection campaign in support of Atayev Hikmet Ismayil oglu, the incumbent MP, nominated by the New Azerbaijan Party in **Zagatala Constituency № 110**, by using administrative resources.*
- *Under the instructions of Aliyev Majid, the senior doctor of Sheki City Hospital in **Sheki City Constituency № 113**, the medical staff was involved in the signature collection campaign in support of Mahmudov Yagub Mikail oglu, the incumbent MP.*
- *The employees from the schools and hospitals in the district were involved in the signature collection campaign in support of Agiye Habibgizi from Nakhchivan, nominated by the New Azerbaijan Party in **Oghuz-Gabala Constituency № 117**.*
- *According to the residents of Ashagi Goynuk village in Sheki, the teachers from the Ashagi Goynuk school and the representative of the executive authority collected signatures in support of Ali Masimov, the neutral candidate in **Constituency № 114** on 22-23-24 September.*

- On 07 October 2010, Telman Hasanov, the employee of Aghjabedi District Education Department forced the teachers of village schools in Hajibedelli and Parioghlular of Aghjabedi district to sign in support of Sadiqova Aida Tapdiq gizi, a neutral candidate in **Constituency № 82**. Additionally, the IDs of healthcare personnel were taken for signature collection in support of Tahir Rzayev, the current MP, candidate of the New Azerbaijan Party under the instructions of the Head of the Executive Authority. The signature sheets were filled in within a day and returned to the ConEC.
- Elman Huseynov, the Chairman of the ConEC and local executive authority supported the signature collection campaign for Rafiq Mammadhasanov, the incumbent MP and the candidate of the New Azerbaijan Party in **Gedebey-Tovuz Constituency № 104**.

In several constituencies the candidates said that they and their relatives were subject to pressure by executive and police authorities for the withdrawal of their candidacies.

- According to the representative of Gahramanov Vidadi, the candidate from the Civil Solidarity Party in **Shirvan Constituency № 46**, the candidate was put under pressure for the withdrawal of his candidacy under the pretext of his previous conviction. Besides V. Gahramanov, 5 more candidates who took signature sheets withdrew their candidacies. The chairman of the ConEC said that these candidates did in at their own discretion.
- Yunis Nuriyev, nominated by Classic Popular Front Party in **Kapaz I Constituency № 39** and Abbasov Rashid Asad oglu, nominated by the election bloc "For the Sake of Humanity" in **Kapaz II Constituency № 40** were forcedly taken from their houses to the police station by the police officers of Kapaz District Police Department respectively on 9 October and 6 October, and they were demanded to withdraw their candidacies. Arshad Ibrahimli, the authorized representative of Parviz Hashimli, nominated by the "AXCP-Musavat" bloc was threatened by the Chairman of the ConEC with police and admitted to the ConEC meeting on October 7.
- Ibrahimova Surme Khanish gizi, nominated by "Democracy" bloc in **Beylegan Constituency № 81** was offered to withdraw her candidacy by Pasiyev Rafael, the chairman of the district branch of the New Azerbaijan Party.
- Allahverenov Alesker, a neutral candidate in **Aghjabedi Constituency № 82** said that the officials of the executive authority are putting pressure on him for the withdrawal of his candidacy. He was informed that his campaign will be hindered.
- Jabrail Aliyev, the member of the New Azerbaijan Party who run his candidacy on his own initiative in **Barda City Constituency № 93** was seriously subjected to pressure for the withdrawal of his candidacy. Mazahir Gasimov, the First Deputy Head of Executive Authority in Barda district demanded him to withdraw his candidacy by threatening to demolish the shopping facilities of his family members and to create problems with the tax and other authorities.
- There were both personal and occupational pressures on Rasim Zeynalov, the candidate of the "Democracy" bloc in **Barda Village Constituency № 94**, for the withdrawal of his candidacy. The neutral candidate from the same constituency Pari Aghayeva was also demanded to withdraw her candidacy. The Constituency Election Commission did not facilitate adjustments to Pari Aghayeva's registration documents. Aghayeva was unofficially notified that it does not matter because the local executive authority has instructed that she shall not be registered. The Constituency Election Commission has not yet accepted the documents of Elnur Majidli, nominated by Azerbaijan Popular Front Party-Musavat bloc. He was also pressed to withdraw his candidacy.
- Ali Abdullayev, the authorized representative of Karimov Sahib Farman oglu, the candidate of Azerbaijan Popular Front Party-Musavat bloc was taken to the police department for several times in 3 days in **Sheki City Constituency № 113**. There was an illegal intervention in the shopping facility, leased by A. Abdullayev and the copies of his documents were taken. Thereafter, the owner of the leased facility terminated the leasing agreement with A. Abdullayev.
- Najafov Idrak Rafail oglu, nominated by the "Karabakh" bloc in **Sheki City Constituency № 113** was subjected to threats and pressures on 28.09.10 and withdrew his candidacy for this reason.

### **3. Candidate registration**

During the registration stage, the authorized representatives of the candidates, political parties, political party blocs, as well as the observers had a quite limited opportunity to observe directly the functioning of the election commissions, particularly to participate in the verification of documents submitted by the special working groups for registration and attend the ConEC meetings on candidate registration issues.

Assuming as a basis Article 59.2 of the Election Code, the CEC has established a working group that is composed of 6 members (the experts from the Forensic Examination Center of the Ministry of Justice, officers from the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Taxes, Azerbaijan State Real Estate Register Service and Calculation Chamber) and led by one of the members of the election commission. However, the fact that all of the members of the working group represent the state agencies casts doubts on the objective implementation of the signature verification by the group. The election commissions did not use the opportunity to increase the public control and confidence by inviting independent experts to the signature verification process. The similar working groups, established under the auspices of the constituency election commissions verified the documents submitted by the candidates without the attendance of the candidates and their authorized representatives in indefinite circumstances in most of the cases<sup>6</sup>.

In most of the cases, the working group minutes on the results of the document verification were not submitted to the candidates until the ConEC meeting in connection to the issue of their registration. It deprived the rejected candidates of exercising the rights granted under Article 60.4 of the Election Code<sup>7</sup>.

In some cases, the ConECs adopted decisions on whether to register or not to register the candidate before the working group minutes on the results of the document verification were ready. These candidates said that such minutes were prepared subsequent to the meeting of the commissions and submitted to the candidates after being falsified through formalization for earlier dates. In most of these cases, the ConEC chairmen said that they shall or had to submit to the candidates these minutes together with the decision on candidate registration issue within a day under Article 60.2 of the Election Code. Besides the opinions of the working groups, in some cases, the ConECs did not ensure the right to obtain “the copy of the table on verification results”, as provided in Article 59.13 of the Election Code<sup>8</sup>. And this made it difficult for the candidates rejected due to the insufficient number of signatures to find out the reason why the certain signatures were deemed invalid.

The number of the candidates whose candidacy was rejected due to the shortcomings in the signature sheets was significantly high. The candidates said that the working groups acted partially during the signature verification, deemed the signatures invalid on no grounds and discretionary selection in most of the cases and even falsified the information in signature sheets<sup>9</sup>.

---

<sup>6</sup> Atakishiyev Memi and Karayev Fakhraddin in Imishli Constituency № 79, Ahmadov Ahad in Imishli-Beylegan Constituency № 80, Arastun Orujlu and Gasimov Dayanat in Constituency № 100, Sahib Kerimov in Sheki City Constituency № 113, Khalilov Yusif, who run his candidacy on his own initiative and Abbasov Rashid, nominated by “For the Sake of Humanity” bloc in Kapaz (Second) Constituency № 40, Perviz Hashimli, nominated by “AXCP-Musavat” bloc in Kapaz First (Ganja) Constituency № 39, Mammadov Afgan and Taghiyev Aladdin, nominated by “For the Sake of Humanity” and “Karabakh” blocs in Nizami II (Ganja) Constituency № 38, Elchin Mammadov, the candidate in Sumgayit II Constituency № 42, Elshad Pashasoy, the candidate in Yardimli-Masalli Constituency № 72, Yadigar Sadigov, the candidate of “AXCP-Musavat” bloc in Lankaran Constituency № 73, Salihov Perviz, a neutral candidate in Ismayilli Constituency № 86, Ali Bashirli, the candidate of Classic Popular Front Party in Shirvan Constituency № 46, Natig Jafarov, who run his candidacy on his own initiative in Karadagh-Binagadi-Yasamal Constituency № 12, Razi Nurullayev, the candidate of “AXCP-Musavat” bloc in Nasimi-Sabail Constituency № 23, Pari Aghayeva, neutral candidate in Barda Village Constituency № 94, Hajiyeva Yegana, a candidate in Khankendi Constituency № 122 and their authorized representatives could not participate in the signature verification by the members of the working group.

<sup>7</sup> 60.4. If the reasons provided for as in Articles 60.2.2 and 60.2.4 of this Code apply, and if the mistakes and errors can be eliminated from the relevant documents through corrections by the authorized representative of a candidate, political party or bloc of political parties, then the relevant election commission shall notify the relevant authorized representative within 24 hours and register the candidate after the relevant correction(s) is (are) made.

<sup>8</sup> Nasimi-Sabail Constituency № 23, Jabrail-Gubadli № 120, Sumgayit-Absheron Constituency № 44, Nizami I Constituency № 37, Nizami II Constituency № 38, Kapaz I Constituency № 39, Kapaz II Constituency № 40

<sup>9</sup> Ilgar Huseyinli and Alakbarli Iltizam, candidates in Imishli Constituency № 79, Mammadzade Gulnara, a candidate in Gusar Constituency № 51.

It was observed that the working groups took different approaches to the candidates from different positions during the signature verification process. With some exceptions<sup>10</sup>, the candidates of the ruling party, the neutral candidates desired by the power and the candidates of the political parties and political party blocs that referred to themselves as “constructive opposition” did not express their concerns regarding the signature collection campaign and registration procedures. It was possible to observe that the signature collection campaign, verification of registration documents and registration process of the candidates of this group were all very fast and completed in a short period of time.

The document verification of the candidates from the opposite position took relatively longer and was completed at the date of the registration deadline. The “demonstration of high level of accuracy and proficiency” during the verification of the signature sheets of such candidates resulted in the “detection” of many errors and mistakes property and income documents, particularly in signature sheets. The fact that the ConECs adopted decisions on candidate registration issues on the day when the verification ended or 1 day later in the best case did not allow the candidates to eliminate these errors and mistakes.

In some constituencies, the candidates said that they saw the signature sheets in the hands of police and housing (ZHEK) officers and executive representatives in the areas. And the ConECs did not investigate such complaints, claiming that these people were the members of the working groups and their objective was inspection. But in most of the cases the groups of voters appealed to the ConECs for the withdrawal of their signatures after such inspection raids. According to the ConECs, the voters stated in their appeals that they had been deceived by the candidates or their signature sheets were signed by others on their behalf. It arose interest about how the voters got this information and that they acted in such an organized and prompt manner.

The working groups deemed invalid the signatures of such voters assuming as a basis Article 57.1 of the Election Code. And it led to the rejection of their candidacy due to the decrease in the number of valid signatures that were necessary for the registration. The candidates said that the voters were under serious pressure on the purpose of their withdrawal of the signatures.

- *The voters who signed in support of the registration of the candidacy of Yahyayev Nariman in Mingeçvir Constituency № 47 were subjected to pressure by the management of the state-financed organizations where they work on the purpose of their withdrawal of the signatures. M. Pashayev, the senior doctor of the Central Hospital put pressure on Abdullayev Said Anvar oglu, the doctor and Gasimova Almaz Neman gizi, the hospital attendant (sanitary employee) to submit signature withdrawal applications. Also, J.Ismayilov, the director of Music School № 1, named after U. Hajibeyov put pressure on the teachers who signed in support of the candidate to submit signature withdrawal applications.*
- *According to Abbasov Rashid, nominated by “For the Sake of Humanity” bloc in Kapaz (Second) Constituency № 40, on 10 October 2010, in the morning hours, Aydin Dashdemirov, Eldar Yolchuyev and Malik, called the “trio” chairmen of the Shekinski, A. Javad and Youth streets in Kapaz district forced the citizens who signed in support of the candidate to withdraw their signatures. Otherwise, they threatened to call the police. This information was reported to the candidate by the forced resident of the same street. At 12:30 on the same day, Azad Ibrahimov, the chairman of the ConEC deemed illegal the wish of the candidate to appeal to the ConEC together with the voter and threatened to call the police if they did not leave the ConEC area. R. Abbasov evaluated as illegal the fact that the street “trio” chairmen had the signature sheets that he had submitted to the ConEC. The ConEC chairman who tried to justify it said that the street “trio” chairmen are allegedly the members of the working group. The ConEC chairman rejected R. Abbasov’s wish to see the list of the working group members.*
- *The executive and police officers who put pressure on the voters that signed in support of Hasanov Tapdig (Azerbaijan National Independence Party) and Alakberli Iltizam in Constituency № 79 and Gasimli Ali (both from “AXCP-Musavat”) had the copies of the signature sheets in their hands, which they had submitted to the relevant ConECs. All three candidates claim that the ConEC chairmen gave them the copies of the signature sheets. A. Gasimli complained of the local executive authorities and police officers putting pressure on the voters who signed in support of the candidate in Bahramtepe settlement in Imishli district, Sherg settlement and Dunyamalilar village in Beylagan district.*

---

<sup>10</sup> Elchin Mirzabeyli, a candidate in Lankaran Constituency №73

*55 residents of Dunyamalilar village who signed in support of A. Gasimli collectively sent written application to the ConEC, stating that they had been deceived to sign the signature sheets (allegedly the signature collectors did it for the construction of the gas pipeline to the village).*

- *According to Rashid Najafli, the candidate of “AXCP-Musavat” bloc in Aghjabedi Constituency № 82 whose candidacy was rejected the voters who signed in support of him were subjected to pressure and threats by the officials of the executive authority in the district and consequently 60 voters applied to the ConEC to withdraw their signatures.*

## **E. CONCLUSIONS**

- ✓ The technical preparation activities of the election commissions for the preparation and conduct of the elections, as well as their activities regarding the candidacy approval were satisfactory and the terms for the implementation of the electoral acts, provided for in the legislation were observed in general.
- ✓ At the stage of issuance of signature collection sheets, signature collection campaign and candidate registration the candidates were not provided with equal opportunities and were discriminated.
- ✓ In several constituencies the local police and executive authorities intervened in the candidates’ signature collection campaign. Administrative resources were used in support of some candidates during the signature collection campaign.
- ✓ There were problems regarding the opinion of working groups on the verification of the registration documents, ConEC meetings and information of the interested election subjects about their decisions. The meetings of ConECs and the working groups under their auspices were convened untransparently and without the attendance of some candidates and their representatives and observers.
- ✓ In general, the nature and number of the errors in the candidate registration stage restricted the opportunities to hold free, fair and competitive parliamentary elections on 7 November.