

REPORT ON THE OBSERVATION OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS IN THE EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION IN MACEDONIA 2016

The Center for Understanding and Institutional Cooperation (QMBI) took part as observer of the electoral process in the early parliamentary election held on December 11, 2016. The observation was carried out by appointing activists/members at polling stations in some of the cities of the Republic of Macedonia, including: Skopje, Kumanovo, Tetovo, Gostivar, Kichevo, Debar and Dollnen. Our goal in this regard was to provide a positive contribution as non-governmental organization to the course of this election, in terms of respecting the free will and vote of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia.

Upon accreditation from the State Election Commission (SEC), we appointed observers on 3 levels, as follows: 1 observer in State Election Commission, 5 observers in the Municipal Election Commissions and 38 observers in the Electoral Boards.

In order to inform our observers about their rights and obligations, we carried out two training courses, and it was required from them to comply with the electoral regulation and perform their duty with responsibility and fairness.

Furthermore, three days before the election, QMBI, by means of public communication, called for a free, fair and democratic electoral process.

The electoral process on election day was also followed by means of our statements, which were made at certain hours, such as: the first at 12:00, the second at 16:00 and the third at 19:00. These statements were made based on data that we obtained up to the statement time by our observers stationed at polling stations, municipal commissions, as well as the State Election Commission.

According to our observers, the voting process has largely started at the time prescribed by law, namely by opening the ballots boxes at 7:00 am, with the exception of some polling stations, including:

- Polling station 2341/1, PS. “Naim Frashëri”, village of Studenichan, delay of 6 minutes;
- Polling station 2887, PS. “March 7”, Chair, delay of 7 minutes;
- Polling station 2348, PS. “Naim Frashëri”, village of Morane, delay of 10 minutes;
- Polling station 1036, Polyclinic “Tode Mendoll”, Kumanovo, delay of 15 minutes.
- Polling station 1125/1, PS. “Faik Konica”, village of Slupchane, delay of 17 minutes;
- Polling station 2452/1, PS. “Bajram Shabani”, village of Kondovo, delay of 30 minutes.

In general, according to data collected by our observers, we conclude that the voting process has largely been conducted in peaceful and democratic atmosphere, without emphatic incidents.

However, during this electoral process as well, there were irregularities, some of which were recorded by our observers, including:

Skopje:

– Polling station 2887, PS. “March 7”, Chair: Electoral Council has been uninformed about the electoral process. Some citizens were told that they were not found on the electoral list, but after their insistence and a second checking, their names were found registered on the electoral list. Furthermore, in the same polling station, while assisting two people with disabilities, panic was raised in the classroom in the presence of over 15 citizens waiting to cast their ballot. As a result of anger and dispute, two citizens refused to vote and left the polling station. One of them, although registered and signed the electoral list, did not take a ballot and refused to vote.

– Polling station 2890, PS. “Liria”, Chair: Agitation for a political party has been observed.

– Polling station 2503/1, PS. “Krste Misirkov”, Skopje: Inappropriate preparation of the Electoral Council, lack of information about the course of the preparation of electoral material; lack of records for NGO observers.

– Polling station 2452/1, PS. “Bajram Shabani”, village of Kondovo: A case of family voting has been observed.

– Polling station 2447/1, village of Llaskarce: Our observers were forced out from the polling station; ballot box stuffing attempt.

Gostivar:

– Polling station 410: The Commission has not properly checked certain persons on the electoral list. They were found on the list after a second check by SEC.

– In several polling stations in the technical high school in Gostivar, problems has occurred while obtaining election materials.

– In the village of Lakavica, polling station 520, there has been observed agitation by some people.

– In many polling stations, there has been observed absence of citizens on the electoral lists.

Tetovo:

– Polling station 1928, PS. “Naim Frashëri”, Tetovo: A person has photographed the ballot, whereas at the request of the electoral council president, the person has been arrested by the police.

– Many complaints have been issued by citizens that had not been found on the electoral lists.

Kumanovo:

– Polling station 1040/1, PS. “Naim Frashëri”: A member of the electoral commission has suggested voters to cast ballot for certain political party.

– Polling station 1125/1, PS. “Faik Konica”, village of Slupchane: Voters absent on the electoral list; occasionally, family voting has been observed.

– Polling station 1126, PS. “Faik Konica”, village of Slupchane: UV lamp malfunction and cases of voting for someone else.

In general, our observations would have been summarized as follows:

- Delayed starting of the voting process;
- Manipulations of citizens by electoral councils, telling them they are not found on the electoral list, and then opposite was proven;
- Family voting;
- Agitation in favor of certain political parties;
- Photographing of ballots;
- Lack of election material;
- Violation of the secrecy of voting;
- Uninformed electoral councils about the electoral regulation, which regulates the voting process voting;
- Expulsion of our observer from the polling station;
- Refusal by electoral councils to accept suggestions from our observers about flaws and irregularities during the voting process.

BENEFITS FROM ELECTION PROCESS:

First, we hope to have made a modest contribution to the course of the voting process and respect towards free will of the citizens in polling places we stationed observers to carry out their work responsibly and with maximum accuracy.

Second, we believe this was a new positive experience for us as a non-governmental organization, as it was the first time for us to take role in the electoral process as observers, thus paving the way for us to play an even greater and more important role in this regard in the future.