



DRAFT STATEMENT

On “It’s Your Choice” NGO monitoring mission carried out during the RA National Assembly elections on May 12, 2007.

14, May, 2007

On the election day the electoral procedures and vote counting process were organized in a comparatively quieter environment. However, outside the polling stations there were numerous shortcomings and violations that don’t comply with the standards of democratic elections.

“It’s Your Choice” NGO monitors observed the parliamentary elections in all the polling stations and precincts of Armenia.

During the monitoring mission of the pre-election procedures IYC registered a number of shortcomings such as unequal campaign conditions for parties, use of administrative resources during the official campaign period, absence of an election alternative in some precincts and misbalanced power distribution in electoral commissions. There were also serious violations such as electoral bribery in the form of human and other aids, misbalanced campaign Media coverage, cases of preventing official campaign and shortcomings in voter lists.

Indeed during the pre-election monitoring mission IYC observed a number of positive changes and developments in the electoral procedures, which inspired hope that the participants of the electoral procedures would organize democratic elections on the election day.

On the previous day before the election day IYC monitored the sittings of electoral commissions and the anticipated procedures of that day.

On the election day IYC monitored the work of electoral commissions, the legitimacy of vote count processes, the environment inside and outside polling stations, how the voters were able to exercise their voting right and free will.

IYC finds that on the election day the voting and vote count processes in most polling stations were organized comparatively in a quieter environment. Voter lists were comparatively improved and there were fewer shortcomings in them. During these elections there were fewer voters recovering their suffrage via court appeal than during the previous elections. Also, the commissions have started relating to proxies and monitors in a better manner. According to the monitors, also the police was legally neutral and did not intimidate in electoral processes.

Notwithstanding, in parallel with the mentioned positive improvements there were also electoral violations and other shortcomings, which affected the legitimacy of the elections and are not considered democratic.

The following findings are of concern:

- Violations of electoral procedures,
- Cases of illegal voting,
- Illegal intimidation on voters' free will,
- Illegal campaign,
- Gatherings of voters and artificially created lines,
- Presence of unauthorized people in polling stations,
- Abuse of proxies' rights,
- Violation of proxies' and monitors' rights,
- Inadequacy of polling stations,
- Shortcomings in final voter lists.

There were a number of violations such as illegal voting, illegal intimidation on voters' free will, electoral bribery and limitation of monitors' rights that are very difficult to prove "de jure", are inherited, still exist, which are affecting the positive findings in the pre-election period.

We are strictly condemning any attempts targeted to limitation of monitors' rights. Domestic monitors are more interested in the fairness, transparency of the electoral processes and the democratic future of the country than the other participants involved in electoral procedures.

"It's Your Choice" NGO hopes the violators will be punished according to the law. We also hope that IYC's findings and concerns will be considered by the institutions in charge of organizing elections in the future, particularly during the upcoming presidential elections.

IYC finds that the electoral procedures have been significantly improved in Armenia, but meanwhile states that Armenia still has to take efforts to improve the democratic electoral traditions.

There is a need to improve the Electoral Code to fully comply it with the international standards and create such mechanisms, which will provide adequate independence and balance in electoral commissions.

There is a need to provide necessary conditions for the complete formation of the political system and follow the traditions aimed to improving the electoral procedures.

IYC is still in the process of studying the reports of its observers concerning their parliamentary elections monitoring findings, which will be published in its final reports.

It's Your Choice is a nonpartisan NGO and the largest domestic election monitor in Armenia with 4,000 volunteers, and offices and chapters in all Marzes and 12 communities of Yerevan. IYC's mission is to promote transparent elections and democratic processes in Armenia; establish true self-governance and accountability within the government; encourage citizen participation in community governance; and provide objective, reliable and timely information to Armenian voters about electoral processes.

Since 1999 IYC has been involved in monitoring activities in different levels of elections. IYC has monitored two parliamentary, three local government elections, the presidential elections of 2003 and the Constitutional referendum of November 27, 2006. After the elections IYC made reports and developed recommendations to the RA "Electoral Code".