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The Speaker of the British House of  
Commons Sir Lindsay Hoyle  
The Chairs of the Political Factions of the  
House of Commons

Per email

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## **Politically biased election observation in Azerbaijan**

Dear Sir Lindsay, dear ladies and gentlemen,

During the early Parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan held on 9 February 2020, Mr Bob Blackman (Conservative Party) has been active as an international election observer in the country. During his stay in Azerbaijan the lawmaker gave overwhelmingly positive public assessments of the elections. His findings contradicted the conclusions of the international election observation mission of the ODIHR-OSCE and of the independent local citizen election observers' organization "Election Monitoring and Democracy Study Centre" (EMDS) – the local EPDE member organisation<sup>1</sup>. EPDE has recently published a research on politically biased election observation of these elections in Azerbaijan. In this research you may find more background information on this non-official mission<sup>2</sup>.

The Code of Conduct for International Election Observers states that international election observation missions must be of sufficient size to "determine independently and impartially the character of election processes in a country and must be of sufficient duration to determine the character of all of the critical elements of the election process in the pre-election, election-day and post-election period."<sup>3</sup>

The assessments presented by the Mr Blackman stood in sharp contrast to those rules. Moreover, by deliberately contradicting the findings of the ODIHR-OSCE long-term election observation mission, the lawmaker aimed at misinforming the Azerbaijan audience about the real international perception of the electoral process. This can be seen as an attempt to damage the reputation both of the international observation mission of ODIHR /OSCE and of the British Parliament.

EPDE has reasons to believe that the lawmaker was accredited as an international election observer on invitation and financed through the Authorities of Azerbaijan, which calls into

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/azerbaijan/445762>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.epde.org/en/documents/category/observe-the-observer-16.html>

<sup>3</sup> Declaration of principles for international election observation and code of conduct for international election observers, <https://www.ndi.org/DoP>.

question the strict political impartiality as required by the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers.

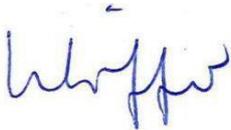
EPDE therefore kindly asks you to provide information on the following:

- Whether the lawmaker was member of an official delegation of the British Parliament?
- Whether the lawmaker has informed the British Parliament about his intention to observe the Parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan?
- Whether the lawmaker has informed the British Parliament who has organized and financed his participation at the elections in Azerbaijan?

EPDE is a network of independent citizen election observers in Europe aiming to defend the integrity of elections and to improve civic oversight over electoral processes. EPDE is concerned about ongoing efforts of some states to whitewash fraudulent elections with the help of international politicians who participate in politically biased "election observation missions". We encourage all affected European Parliaments to protect their international reputation and to monitor the integrity of international activities of their members. We encourage Parliaments and political factions to adapt their Rules of Procedure and Codes of Conduct accordingly in order to inform and prevent their members from intentionally or unintentionally participating in such harmful activities.

We would be glad to receive answers from your side on the upon-mentioned case and stand ready from our side to provide any further information on the topic if needed.

Yours faithfully,



Stefanie Schiffer  
Chair EPDE