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The Speaker of the Assemblée Nationale
Mr. Gilles Le Gendre
Cc The Chairs of the Political Factions of
the Assemblée Nationale

Per email

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Politically biased election observation in Azerbaijan

Dear Mr President, dear ladies and gentlemen,

During the early Parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan held on 9 February 2020, Mr Jean-Luc Reitzer (Republicans) has been active as an international election observer in the country. Mr Reitzer was a member of the non-official observer group of the “European Council on Democracy and Human Rights”, chaired by Mr Janusz Niedzwiecki, a notorious organiser of fake-election observation missions with close contacts to Russian and Azerbaijan governmental circles.

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 organisation¹. 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 mission².

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.”³

The assessments presented by Mr Reitzer 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

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

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

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

reputation both of the international observation mission of ODIHR /OSCE and of the Assemblée Nationale.

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 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 Assemblée Nationale?
- Whether the lawmaker has informed the Assemblée Nationale about his intention to observe the Parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan?
- Whether the lawmaker has informed the Assemblée Nationale 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