



To: OSCE/ODIHR:

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Stefan Krause, Deputy Head of EOM

Radmila Šekerinska, Head of EOM (2012)

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Eastern Partnership's Civil Society Forum Steering Committee: Krzysztof Bobinski, Member

International Expert Center for Electoral Systems: Alexander Tsinker, President

AN URGENT APPEAL TO INTERNATIONAL ELECTION MONITORS TO ENHANCE FRAUD DETECTION IN ARMENIA

Dear Fellow Stakeholders:

In light of the upcoming February 2013 Presidential election in the Republic of Armenia, we are writing to bring to your urgent attention the latest Special Report by Policy Forum Armenia (PFA). The findings therein highlight our concerns about the integrity of the electoral process in the country—as observed during the May 2012 Parliamentary Election—and its implications going forward.

The Report, entitled “Armenia’s 2012 Parliamentary Election”, is available in its entirety at <http://www.pf-armenia.org>. In sum, it demonstrates that the election fraud in Armenia has taken subtle and sophisticated forms that are difficult to detect because it occurs mostly outside of the polling stations. In fact, while acknowledging some marginal improvements, we believe that the systematic fraud applied by the authorities (and uncovered in the Report via the use of statistical techniques) was sufficient to materially alter the election outcome.

In addressing the international observer community, the Report makes the following recommendations:

- Election fraud in Armenia has adapted to monitoring pressures and is now nearly impossible to detect through typical monitoring approaches. To substantially reduce it, new criteria for assessing election conduct should be established and more candid assessment of the political will, or lack thereof, to conduct freer elections should be made.
- International observers could benefit from a more comprehensive briefing about Armenia's political-economic landscape and history of election fraud.
- Resources permitting, more observers should be dispatched to areas outside of Yerevan, where incidents of fraudulent voter counting and voter list abuse were found to be the highest.

Given the growing sophistication of election fraud in Armenia, the country's electorate and the Armenian Diaspora will likely rely on international observers more than before to properly assess election results in the country.

However, if these new methods of election fraud are allowed to persist the legitimacy of the election outcome in Armenia will continue to be questioned despite declared "progress". Moreover, the credibility of international observers as a force for positive change may be undermined when assessments fail to point that bribery, voter intimidation, and voter list fraud are effectively used as counterweights to free and fair elections.

This situation in Armenia is unlikely to remain sustainable. Disenfranchised citizens may lose faith in the election process altogether and seek alternative ways to express their constitutionally granted right to govern the country, potentially leading to political instability. Yet, unless remedies are put in place prior to Election Day, we expect the well-concealed abuses of the electoral system to continue during the February 2013 presidential election.

To that end, PFA is prepared to assist you and your colleagues in these specific areas:

- Identify the worst-offender polling stations based on the 2012 election outcome to help the observer missions zoom in on them;
- Provide a list of suitable potential observers, who speak and understand fluent Armenian and English;
- Conduct voter list audits prior to the upcoming election.

All in all, we hope you will have an opportunity to study PFA's report and urge you to take concrete steps to enhance your fraud-detection techniques in time for the February election. We and other concerned stakeholders worldwide would appreciate being informed of those steps.

We thank you for your consideration of this urgent appeal and look forward to hearing from you regarding our offer to assist. Please contact us directly by email at forum@pf-armenia.org or at the mailing address above.

PFA is an independent professional non-profit organization aimed at strengthening discourse on Armenia's economic development and national security and through that helping to shape public policy in Armenia. Its main objective is to offer alternative views and professional analysis containing innovative and practical recommendations for public policy design and implementation.

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