

Press Statement

ESISC PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION IN AZERBAIJAN

As announced earlier, ESISC conducted an independent observation mission in Azerbaijan for October 9 Presidential elections.

The 9 member experts team was organized by ESISC, but involved 7 independent personalities and experts selected on their personal experience.

The team members were:

- **Claude MONIQUET**, ESISC CEO, Chief of Mission
- **William RACIMORA**, ESISC vice-CEO, deputy-Chief of Mission
- **Paolo CASACA**, former Member of the European Parliament (Socialist), Founder and Executive Director of **ARCHUMANKIND** and of the **South Asia Democratic Forum**, (Portugal)
- **Ilan MIZRAHI**, former Head of the **Israeli National Security Council** (Israel)
- **Gil. L. BOURDOUX**, President of the **Centre d'Etude de la Police**, Honorary council of **Standing Police Monitoring Committee** (Belgium)
- **Israel FELDMAN**, psychiatrist and specialist in victimology, **President of « Israel-France association of victimology »**, **Professor Chair UNESCO/UNITWIN of teaching on violence, Tel Aviv University.** (Israel)
- **Thierry COOSEMANS**, Phd in political sciences, **independent electoral expert**, Member of the **Belgian Association of Political Science** (Belgium)
- **Simon PETERMANN**, doctor in Political sciences, Emeritus Professor of the **Universities of Brussels and Liege**, Expert in Human rights for several international organizations and Judiciary Expert, (Belgium)

- **Renaud FRANCOIS**, Former French Army Colonel (retired), former **Director of Intelligence and Operations cell of the OSCE (Conflict Prevention Center) during the Karabagh war**, (France)

The observation mission was organized in **strict observance of the relevant international standards (including OSCE and European Union guidelines)**. Each expert had to visit several Polling office and one or more vote-counting offices.

The mission was preceded by **three pre-electoral missions** realized on the field by **Claude MONIQUET** and **William RACIMORA**. In those missions the two ESISC experts met NGO's members, diplomats, local journalists and several candidates from the opposition including Mr Jamil HASANLI, main Challenger of the incumbent President.

On **Wednesday October 9**, all together **the team members visited and observed**:

- **200 Polling stations, in Baku, Sumgaït and rural areas**
- **11 vote-counting stations**

The visited polling stations included:

- One **mobile station for disabled and old isolated persons**
- One **“special polling station” in a prison (“Penitentiary center number 11 in Baku”)**
- Two **“special polling stations” in military barracks in Baku**
- One **“special polling station” for displaced persons** in Sumgaït

Some of those polling stations were observed at different moments by different members of the team.

In all the polling stations they visited, **they observed** (and were particularly impressed by):

- The **large and even prominent participation of women** both in local electoral commissions and in the national observers missions: most of members of those group and most of the Presidents of Polling or vote counting stations were highly educated women
- A strict but human respect of the electoral code
- A massive presence of **Azerbaijan national observers** (members of political parties, NGO's and independent citizen).
- The **very large number of young women and men** among the voters

In addition, **they were also impressed by:**

- The fact that voting is allowed in prisons and the way this activity was conducted in a difficult context where tensions and security concerns are a very real concern;
- The fact that this strong will of encouraging an active citizenship and participation even in difficult conditions was also found in the organization of mobile voting facilities for disabled and old isolated persons

In the vote counting offices, they noticed the same strict respect of the law, including the active participation of the national observers. Nevertheless, in one counting office (on the eleven visited), in which a great tension existed between an opposition observer and the President of the office, a possible lack of professionalism provoked a dispute regarding the number of valid ballots. The representative of the opposition announced his willingness to solve the issue in justice courts.

As a conclusion, ESISC Electoral Observation Mission assessed that October 9 elections were conducted with a **high level of transparency and a strict respect of international standards.**

Even if Azerbaijan is still a country in transition and in stabilization, **it satisfied all the due criteria of free, fair and transparent elections.**

ESISC was particularly impressed by the openness of the relevant authorities (including the Central Elections Commission) and its willingness to collaborate with the international community. It especially acknowledges the effort made to facilitate the work of the hundreds of foreign observers present in Baku for this important occasion.

Baku, October 10, 2003

All the members of the team signed this statement without any reserve

Claude MONIQUET

William RACIMORA

Paolo CASACA

Ilan MIZRAHI

Gil BOURDOUX

Israel FELDMAN

Thierry COOSEMANS

Simon PETERMANN

Renaud FRANCOIS