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The Speaker of the Sejm of the Republic of
Poland
Ms Elzbieta Witek
Cc The Chairs of the Political Factions of
the Sejm of Poland

Per email

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Politically biased election observation in Azerbaijan

Dear Mrs President, dear ladies and gentlemen,

During the early Parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan held on 9 February 2020, Ms Katarzyna Ueberhan (Member of the Sejm of Poland, Democratic Left Alliance) has been active as an international election observer in the country. Ms Ueberhan 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. 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 mission¹. The findings of this mission sharply 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 organisation².

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 the observer group of the “European Council on Democracy and Human Rights”, stood in sharp contrast to those rules. Moreover, by deliberately contradicting the findings of the ODIHR-OSCE long-term election observation mission, the mission 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

¹ <https://www.epde.org/en/documents/category/observe-the-observer-16.html>

² <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/azerbaijan/445762>

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

observation mission of ODIHR /OSCE and of the Parliaments represented in the observer group – among them the Sejm of the Republic of Poland by participation of Ms Ueberhan.

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 Sejm of Poland?
- Whether the lawmaker has informed the Sejm of Poland about her intention to observe the Parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan?
- Whether the lawmaker has informed the Sejm of Poland who has organized and financed her 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