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Preliminary report regarding the election process for mayoral elections in Municipality of Rahovec

Prishtinë, 23 November 2010 – The network of non governmental organizations “democracy in action” has monitored the election process of the extraordinary elections for Mayor of Rahovec organized on 21 November 2010. During the monitoring of the election process, Democracy in Action engaged 71 observers in all polling stations and few mobile monitoring teams.

The centre of the DiA was established in the premises of local NGO ‘Hareja’ in the town of Rahovec, where through press conferences and press releases informed the wider public on the election process, till the publication of the preliminary report at 22:00 hours.

Based on the data provided by the observers of the DiA in all polling stations there are 49 272 eligible voters in the municipality of Rahovec, while only 19676 (39.93%) or voters exercised their right to vote. The number of the conditional ballots was 472 while only 160 were void.

Administration of the election process

Organization of the extraordinary elections for mayor of Municipality of Rahovec emerged as the result of the resignation of the ex-mayor of Rahovec Qazim Qeska from PDK, which returned back to office after 47 days. Constitutional Court of Kosova decided that on case Qeska there was a constitutional violation.

This elections were organized and administered completely by the national institutions respectively Central Election Commission (CEC). The general organization of the process and administration of the elections in the municipality of Rahovec could be evaluated as good and fulfilling standards of the free and democratic.

Election Complaint and Appeal Panel

Based on information that were provided by the CEC regarding the election process in municipality of Rahovec, this institutions received complaint of the political entity Alliance for Future of Kosova regarding the allegations that irregularities were identified in three voting centres which damaged their candidate Mr. Smajl Latifi. Centres 1612/a, 03/R; 1603/a, 01/R; 1623/a, 01/R.

It is important that ECAP to review carefully all complaints, and it is responsibility of all actors to support, inform and respect the work of the CEC, ECAP and Courts, that are responsible to review all irregularities and contested results; which means it could take time to make sure that all have the confidence in the final results of this report.

The findings during the Election Day

Based on the findings provided by the DiA observers, this report offers a detailed description on the performance during the Election Day held on 21 November 2010. Beside the fact that most of the universal elections standards were respected such as free, fair and equal elections, the Elections Day in the Municipality of Rahovec was characterised with a number of violations, and according to the provided data, they have mostly been of the same nature in most of the polling stations, beside some polling stations where the irregularities were higher. Family voting still remains the most serious and common violation in Kosovo. There have been registered cases where commissioners were replaced by observers of political parties, then a group of youngsters attempted to cast their ballot under conditional procedure even though they had already voted in a different village, and the findings that show the existence of deceased people on the voters list.

Also, during this process it has been reported that there have been frictions between the observers and the commissioners of the political parties, resulting in around 1 hour delay / interruption in the voting process, from around 7:30h until 8:20h. There were also identified cases of presence of more than one person behind the cabin of the voting during the voting process.

There are some isolated cases where the DiA observers were threatened or felt threatened for the work they did. In this regard it is worth mentioning the case in Krusha e Madhe village where DiA observers were threatened that they were providing inaccurate data for the polling stations they were observing, the data that were made available and public to the media by DiA immediately and during the whole day of the entire process.

However, the electoral process in this municipality was passed with fewer tensions and fewer irregularities; although voter turnout was slightly lower than in the previous elections. These problems exist and should continue to be addressed in order to continue improve the democratic electoral process in Kosovo.

1. Tendency to vote more than once

During the voting process in the Municipality of Rahovec, there were identified cases of attempts to vote more than one time. Such a case includes the one when a group of youngsters attempted to cast conditional ballots (Qifllak village) even though they had voted once in another village (Denjë).

2. Family voting and assistance to more than one person

Family voting or the presences of two or more persons in the voting cabin have been very present in a lot of polling stations. There have also been cases when a person assisted and followed to the cabin of voting more than one voter. Such cases were present in big numbers in the Municipality of Rahovec, including the villages: Polluzhë, Drenoc, Qifllak, Krushë e Madhe, Rahovec, Senoc, SOpniq, Nagavc, and Reti e Poshtme. There have been identified three cases when a person has assisted 4 (four) other persons (Polluzhë).

3. Irregularities in the voting lists

Confirmation of the presence of deceased persons in the voting lists as well as missing of names in the lists, have also been evident in this electoral process. Such problems obliged many voters to wonder from one polling station to another.

4. Irregularities by the commissioners and political parties observers

In some polling stations some irregularities by commissioners and political parties' observers were confirmed. According to some provided information there has been a case evidenced in Ratkoc village, where due to some disagreements and verbal arguments among the commissioners and some political parties' observers the voting process was disturbed for about 1 hour. Meanwhile, another concern has been the presence of the enormous number of observers by the political parties in the polling stations, who have created mess and disturbed the normal development in the voting process. The mentioned case has happened in the Ratkoc village.

Another case of irregularities by the commissioners and the political parties' observers has been registered in Polluzhë village, when an observer from political party has replaced the commissioner of the same political party.

5. Presence of political parties' symbols

During the voting process in the Municipality of Rahovec, the presence of symbols of political parties within the space forbidden by Law on Polling Stations was also evident. Such cases were in the village of Drenoc, where very nearby the polling station there were present two propagandistic posters of political parties.

6. The opening and closing of polling stations

Delays in the opening of the polling station were from around 10 to 20 minutes. On the other hand, referring to the closing of the polling stations, there hasn't been reported any problem or irregularity.