



Statement

by the Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Centre

On the serious violations of the freedom of assembly during the recent peaceful demonstrations in Baku

The peaceful rally planned by the National Council of Democratic Forces (NCDF) on the 19th of October has been accompanied by brutal interference by dozens of police officers which resulted in scores of citizens getting bodily injured, detained and arrested. In the run-up to the rally, politically-motivated criminal cases were filed against 2 members of Popular Front Party of Azerbaijan, whereas 17 members faced administrative detention. Currently, at least 28 persons from Popular Front and 3 from Musavat with most of them being functionaries of the parties are in detention.

On 20th of October, both rally-goers and journalists faced brutal interference by police officers and got various bodily injuries during the rally demanding ‘No Violence Against Women’.

EMDS notes that the stoppage of the work of the transport and blockage of service by telecommunication companies around the subway of “28th May” on 19th October are sought to restrict the freedom of assembly of citizens alongside the consumer rights by illegal methods.

EMDS regrettably informs that rally participants including the leader of the Popular Front Party of Azerbaijan, Ali Karimli, reported that they were beaten, exposed to insults and inhumane treatment both in police vehicles and stations.

EMDS reminds that the freedom of peaceful assembly has special importance to ensure the pluralism by playing a crucial role in the activities of political parties and civil society organizations. The denial of the freedom of peaceful assembly amounts to the denial of free and fair elections, political pluralism, freedom of assembly and finally the democracy.

EMDS notes that, Azerbaijan, by the article 49 of its Constitution and by the international documents she is party to – article 21 of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights and article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights – has agreed to implement relevant obligations to ensure the enjoyment of freedom of peaceful assembly and protect it from third-party restrictive attempts.

EMDS, especially informs that if any unauthorized rally is peaceful, the duty of the police is to ensure the safety of participant citizens.

EMDS stresses that the police interferences with the rallies on 19 and 20th of October were inadequate, did not pursue legal aim and Law Enforcement Bodies failed to show reasonable ground for the interference and disproportionate use of force by police officers.

EMDS strongly condemns the arrest, torture and other inhumane treatment citizens faced for enjoying their freedom of peaceful assembly. Sequentially, EMDS demands the immediate release of citizens who are facing politically motivated criminal charges and administrative arrests regarding their participation in rallies and to hold police officers responsible who took part in violent and inhumane treatment of political activists and journalists and calls the Government to implement its international obligations in relation to the freedom of peaceful assembly.

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