

ELECTION MONITORING CENTER

MONITORING OF CITIZEN-PARLIAMENT RELATIONS



FINAL REPORT

BAKU - 2008

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Within the framework of its Strategic Action Plan “Active Citizen - Accountable Government”, in 2006-2007, the Election Monitoring Center (EMC) implemented several programs on strengthening citizen-Parliament relations, involving citizens in the process of administration of elected state bodies, especially the Parliament, and studying citizen-Parliament relations in the Republic of Azerbaijan. The program of the organization on “Monitoring of Citizen-Parliament Relations” was mainly focused on studying regularity of relations between voters and Members of Parliament (MPs), of voters’ rights protection and accountability before the voters.

In this regard, EMC carried out observation during the 2006 Fall Session as well as the 2007 Spring and Extraordinary Sessions of the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and held 15 Townhall Meetings in 9 election districts (constituencies). At the same time, for the purpose of studying relations between voters and MPs and attitudes of citizens towards activity of MPs, EMC held a survey among 625 people (394 males and 231 females) in 25 election districts. In addition, EMC published and distributed for free 20,000 informational pamphlets which outline the rights and duties of the Members of Parliament and the Milli Majlis.

It must be noted that EMC has already released its Interim Report on this program in February 2007¹. The Final Report includes general results of all stages of the program and EMC’s recommendations.

Analysis of the information obtained by EMC indicates that a small part of the members of the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan were active in problem resolution with regard to the election districts they represent or at the national level. For example, during the 2007 Spring and Extraordinary Parliamentary Sessions, 94 MPs made speeches. 15 of them spoke about problems at the national level and 20 MPs spoke about protection of their voters’ interests. A majority of the speeches were related to the issues on the agenda.

Local offices for the purpose of facilitating relations between voters and MPs were not established in all of the election districts and the existing offices are not technically well-equipped. At the same time, assistants and local MP offices do not use modern know-how and methods to establish and maintain relationships with local constituents.

EMC has noted that in a number of election districts, meeting of MPs with voters either were not held for a long time or were held with the participation of a small number of voters.

Huseyn Abdullayev, an independent MP from Second Nizami Election District # 25, was arrested on the 19th of March, 2007 by a decision of the Nasimi District Court, and his MP rights were revoked. It should be noted that in a sitting of the Parliament’s Spring Session on the 16th of March, 2007 an fight occurred between Huseyn Abdullayev and his colleague Fazail Aghamali. After this incident, in an extraordinary sitting of the Parliament on the 19th of March, 2007, Huseyn Abdullayev’s parliamentary immunity was revoked upon a petition by the Prosecutor General. H. Abdullayev considers this decision unfair and biased.

EMC regrets that relations of MPs with voters, local civil groups and NGOs, local branches of political parties and municipalities for the protection of voter interests are weak. This, in turn, leads to weak voter trust in MPs and in the Milli Majlis.

¹ The Interim Report can be obtained from EMC’s website: www.emc-az.org
Final Report: Monitoring of Citizen-Parliament Relations. Election Monitoring Center, 2008

EMC is pleased to note that the mechanism for informing the Azerbaijani public constantly and without interruption about Milli Majlis actions has been improved. The public notification process is carried out through the official Parliament website. However, reports of the parliamentary sittings on the website are not updated in a timely manner and results of open and name-by-name voting are not published.

Although the framework of the program called for Townhall Meetings (TM) in 25 election districts, MPs were willing to participate in only 9 election districts. A total of 15 TMs were held in 9 election districts, in which 700 voters (467 males and 233 females) and NGO and local media representatives.

EMC regrettably notes certain restrictions in preparing reports on parliamentary sittings and meetings of permanent commissions were put on journalists accredited by the Parliament.

II. INTRODUCTION

The main goal of the “Active Citizen – Accountable Government” program implemented by EMC in 2006-2007 was to assist in the development of civic activity and efficient public administration. Within the framework of this program, certain activities were implemented to increase active citizen participation in public administration, improve accountability in elected bodies (Parliament and municipalities) and monitor elected body activities. EMC carried out these activities in 25 election districts.

The program also had the following aims:

- Involve citizens in elected state body administration
- Study attitudes and relationships between voters and MPs
- Strengthen voters’ relations with Parliament
- Study voter interest protection in Parliament
- Determine effective factors for parliamentary debate and administration development in Azerbaijan

Activities:

In order to attain goals and aims of the program, the following activities were implemented:

- Monitor Parliamentary Sessions sittings
- Inform voters about the functions of Parliament and MPs
- Organize meetings (Townhall Meetings) between voters and MPs
- Study voter attitudes about MP actions through a survey
- Create Voter - Parliament Contact Groups
- Monitor the public notification process for Parliament’s actions

Events held and methods used:

In order to monitor Parliamentary Sessions, EMC hired 3 journalists accredited by the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan and regularly received information from them. At the same time, EMC monitored the state newspapers *Azerbaijan*, *Khalq* and *Respublika* on a daily basis.

In some special cases, information accuracy was verified by MPs who made speeches in relevant sessions. In total, 34 parliamentary sittings were monitored from 2006-2007.

With regard to the activity of Parliament and methods of establishing relationships with voters, EMC representatives learned the opinion of 25 MPs.

In order to study voter attitudes about recently elected MP actions and their relationships and communication with voters, EMC conducted a survey among 625 voters in 25 election districts.

In order to strengthen relationships between voters and MPs, EMC organized 9 Townhall meetings with the participation of 15 MPs and their assistants.

To inform voters about the functions, status and responsibilities of Parliament and MPs, EMC printed 20,000 pamphlets and distributed them through its local representative offices in 25 election districts.

In order to study the mechanisms of media coverage of Parliament actions and reporting to the public about its activity, EMC interviewed journalists, regularly monitored the press and studied the activities of the relevant parliamentary structures in this field.

This program was implemented by EMC's Working Group as well as its representative offices and volunteers in 8 regions of Azerbaijan – Baku, Sumqayit, Ganja, Yevlakh, Sheki, Jalilabad, Geoychay and Khachmaz.

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the US National Democratic Institute (NDI) provided financial and technical support throughout the program.

EMC expresses its gratitude to the MPs, experts, NGOs, media representatives and voters for their cooperation.

III. INFORMATION ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

Established in 2001, the Election Monitoring Center (EMC) is an independent and impartial non-government organization working for the development of the election system and supporting civil society and democracy in Azerbaijan.

EMC observed 8 elections held in the last 6 years and conducted 252 training sessions for more than 5,000 election observers.

EMC is a member of the European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (ENEMO). ENEMO unites 19 NGOs from 17 OSCE member-states.

Within the observation missions of OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), ENEMO, and other organizations, EMC representatives have observed referenda and presidential and parliamentary elections in Albania, Belarus, Norway, Ukraine, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Turkey.

From 2001-2007, EMC presented several Azerbaijani election legislation improvement proposals and recommendations to state bodies, local NGOs, political parties and international organizations.

Since its establishment, EMC has been active in the following fields:

- Voter participation assistance
- Election rights training and education
- Local observer training and election monitoring
- Election legislation improvement
- Efficient elected public body administration development
- Citizen participation in public administration assistance

IV. WORK OF THE PARLIAMENT

In the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Milli Majlis is the legislative (parliamentary) power. The Milli Majlis is composed of 125 seats. Members of the Milli Majlis (MPs) are elected in through a single majority election system by secret ballot. A new Milli Majlis is voted into office every 5 years.

Milli Majlis holds two sessions a year – Spring and Fall. Extraordinary sessions of the Milli Majlis can be called by the Chairman (Speaker) of the Milli Majlis, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan or upon the demand of at least 42 MPs.

The Milli Majlis promulgates Constitutional provisions, laws and decisions that are within its area of competence.

MPs in the Milli Majlis exercise their right to vote personally.

Every MP has the right to participate in the sittings of the Milli Majlis and its bodies; elect and be elected to the bodies of the Milli Majlis; initiate legislation; conduct parliamentary inquiry; receive and spread information; have parliamentary immunity; refuse to give a testimony as a witness in the cases envisaged in the Constitution of the country; and be immediately received by the high-ranking officials.

MP activities are: participation in Milli Majlis sessions and parliamentary commissions; finish tasks assigned by the Milli Majlis, its chair and parliamentary commissions; parliamentary inquiry; and work with the voters.

Within the limits of the competence given to them by the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, for the purpose of protecting rights, freedoms, and legitimate interests of their voters, MPs can raise issues before the central and local executive bodies, judiciary, prosecutor's office and municipalities.

Central and local executive bodies, judiciary, prosecutor's office, and municipalities must assist MPs in implementing their duties.

V. STUDYING ACTIVITY OF MPs IN PARLIAMENT SITTINGS

After the November 6th, 2005 Parliamentary Election held in Azerbaijan, the Constitutional Court approved election results in 115 out of 125 election districts. In the remaining 10 election districts where election results were annulled, repeat elections were held on May 13th, 2006. However, on December 2nd, 2005, the Chairman of the National Unity Movement Lala-Shovkat

Hajiyeva (elected from the Third Yasamal Election District # 17) refused to participate in the Milli Majlis as a protest of the Parliamentary Election results.

Apart from this, independent MP Huseyn Abdullayev (elected from Second Nizami Election District # 25), who was arrested on March 19th, 2007 by a decision of the Nasimi District Court, was deprived of his rights as a MP. On March 16th, 2007, during parliamentary discussions about the Cabinet of Ministers' action report, Huseyn Abdullayev strongly criticized the report and ministers. Following this, an incident broke out between him and another MP, Fazail Aghamali. They attacked each other and started to fight each other. Then, MP Fazail Aghamali complained to the Prosecutor's office about Huseyn Abdullayev. In an Extraordinary Sitting of Parliament on March 19th, 2007, Huseyn Abdullayev's parliamentary immunity was terminated upon a petition by the Prosecutor General Zakir Qaralov. On the issue of terminating H. Abdullayev's parliamentary immunity, 79 MPs voted for, 15 against, and 5 abstained. On March 19th, the Nasimi District Court decided to detain H. Abdullayev for 2 months. However, a decision by the Sabail District Court, dated 18th of May, 2008, changed his arrest warrant - it was replaced by 2-year probation period. H. Abdullayev considers this court decision unfair and biased.

Thus, the number of MPs in the Milli Majlis has decreased from 125 to 123.

For the purpose of studying activity and initiative of the MPs, as well as, their activities towards protection of voters' rights, EMC monitored Parliament's Fall, Spring, and Extraordinary Sessions from October-December 2006 and from February-June 2007. An Interim Report on the Fall Session 2006 monitoring effort was prepared and published*.

According to EMC observations, during this period the Milli Majlis held 15 sittings and 1 hearing on the Khojali Genocide.

EMC has divided its observations about the activity of MPs during the Spring and Extraordinary sessions into the following groups:

- Determining the most active MPs
- MP initiatives regarding national problems
- MP initiatives regarding the problems of their voters (election districts)
- Populist speeches by MPs

An analysis of EMC information and observations shows that during some sittings, several MP's speaking rights were restricted. For example, MP Panah Huseyn noted that he was not given a chance to speak at the sitting devoted to discussions over current issues on February 1st, 2007. For this reason, an argument occurred between him and the Speaker of the Parliament Oqtay Asadov. Speeches by other MPs – Eldar Ibrahimov, Iltizam Akbarli, Jamil Hasanli, Aydin Mirzazade, Mirkazim Kazimov, Shamaddin Hajiyev, Sabir Rustamkhanli and Siyavush Novruzov – were also interrupted during that session.

During the February 28th, 2007 session of the Milli Majlis, MP Iqbal Aghazade was not given a chance to speak about changes and additions to the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Administrative Control over the Activity of Municipalities.

* The Interim Report can be obtained from EMC's website: www.emc-az.org
Final Report: Monitoring of Citizen-Parliament Relations. Election Monitoring Center, 2008

Results of the observations conducted during the Spring and Extraordinary Sessions of the Milli Majlis:

MOST ACTIVE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT:

According to the statistics based on EMC's observations, 94 MPs (except the Speaker and his deputies) spoke about current affairs and discussed various issues during the Spring and Extraordinary Sessions of the Milli Majlis. Based on EMC observations, 38 MPs spoke on six occasions. A list of these MPs is presented in Appendix 1.

INITIATIVE ON THE RESOLUTION OF NATIONAL PROBLEMS:

According to statistics based on EMC observations, 20 MPs spoke about national issues during the Spring and Extraordinary Sessions of the Milli Majlis. In these speeches, various proposals and comments regarding the public-political and social-economic life of the country were made besides current issues. A list of these MPs is presented in Appendix 2.

INITIATIVE TOWARDS SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEMS OF VOTERS (ELECTION DISTRICTS):

According to statistics based on EMC observations, during the Spring and Extraordinary Sessions of the Milli Majlis, 21 MPs spoke about problems of the election districts they represent and in support of the protection of their voters' interests. A list of these MPs is presented in Appendix 3.

POPULIST SPEECHES:

According to EMC observations, some MPs tried to stay in the focus of the public-political processes by making speeches that were relevant neither to the agenda of the Milli Majlis nor to the problems of their district or country. As such, these speeches can be considered as attempts to abuse Milli Majlis sittings in order to gain popularity. They clearly point to populism. According to EMC observations, during the Spring and Extraordinary Sessions, 9 MPs made populist speeches. However, the names of those MPs have not been included in this report.

VI. VOTER – MP RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

In 25 election districts, EMC studied relationships between voters and MPs and worked to strengthen these relationships.

For this purpose, EMC carried out the following activities:

■ Voter education about the functions of Parliament and MPs

EMC printed and distributed 20,000 pamphlets about the functions of Parliament and MPs in 25 election districts. The flyer explains the status, authorities, and functions of the Milli Majlis and MP responsibilities to protect voters' interests in accordance to the Constitution, Law on the Status of Member of Parliament, and Internal Regulations of the Milli Majlis.

■ Organization of meetings (Townhall Meetings) between MPs and voters

In order to strengthen relationships and cooperation between MPs and voters, EMC asked 25 MPs representing 25 election districts to participate in Townhall Meetings (TM).

EMC representatives discussed this issue with many MPs. However, some of these MPs refused to meet with the voters and explained this with the following reasons:

Lack of MPs' material-technical resources to keep in contact and work with voters on a regular basis

- Lack of assistants who would help them to contact and work with voters
- Most complaints are about local problems. MPs want to avoid any controversies with local executive authorities

EMC investigated these reasons appropriately. The results of the investigations showed that in a majority of election districts in the country, especially in rural areas, MP offices do not possess even minimal material and technical resources. Although the March 12th, 2007 Presidential Decree to provide MP assistants has started to be enacted, some MPs still lack assistants.

To date, EMC representatives have held 15 Townhall Meetings in 19 election districts. Meeting agenda, venue and date were agreed upon with the MPs in advance of the meeting. Then, voters, civil groups, media and NGOs were informed about these meetings. Overall, 700 voters (467 males, 233 females), local media and NGO representatives participated in these events.

Election districts where EMC organized meetings and issues discussed:

Tertter Election District #95 (MP Aynur Quliyeva, Independent)

Two TMs were held in this district – on April 21st and August 8th, 2008. In total, 155 people (108 males and 47 females) attended the meetings. Aynur Quliyeva informed voters about her actions as a MP.

Voters discussed the following concerns and problems:

- Bad village road conditions
- Lack of power, water and gas
- Difficult socio-economic conditions
- Low salaries
- Unemployment
- Low pensions

The MP promised to try to solve these problems. Tertter District Local Authority representatives also participated in the meeting.

Second Khatai Election District #34 (MP Nasib Nasibli, *Musavat* member):

Two TMs were held in this election district – on September 23rd, 2006 and June 9th, 2007. Both meetings were held with the participation of Nasib Nasibli. In total, 51 people (45 males and 6 females) attended the meetings. In both meetings N. Nasibli informed the voters about his actions as a MP and heard voter concerns and problems.

Voters discussed the following concerns and problems:

- Lack of power, water and gas
- Bad road conditions
- Unemployment
- Municipality and House Maintenance Department arbitrariness and lack of accountability

The MP stated that he was aware of these problems, and that he had raised these issues before the Khatai District Executive Authority several times. He noted that government officials do not make necessary efforts to solve voter problems.

First Kapaz (Ganja City) Election District #39 (MP Vidadi Mammadov, New Azerbaijan Party):

Two TMs were held in this election district – on October 29th, 2006 with the participation of Vidadi Mammadov and on July 9th, 2007 with the participation of his assistant Elshen Qurbanov. Besides voters, media and NGOs representatives functioning in Ganja City participated in both meetings. In total, 90 people (77 males and 13 females) attended the meetings. In the first meeting, Vidadi Mammadov informed the voters about his actions as a MP and in the second meeting, his assistant explained his actions as a MP.

Voters discussed the following concerns and problems:

- High prices of medical services
- The fact that the Law on Education still does not meet European standards
- Small social subsidies
- Hard mortgage conditions
- Delay in resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and internally displaced persons (IDPs) problems
- Bribery and corruption
- Municipality inactivity

The MP and his assistant promised that they will work on solutions to these problems.

Third Khatai Election District #35 (MP Iqbal Aghazadeh, Chairman of *Umid* [Hope] Party):

Two TMs were held in this election district – on January 22nd and September 15th, 2007. MP Iqbal Aghazadeh and his assistant Anar Rustamov participated in the meetings. In total, 64 people (49 males and 15 females) attended the meetings. In both meetings, N. Nasibli informed the voters about his actions as a MP to solve the district's problems.

Voters discussed the following concerns and problems:

- Lack of power, water and gas
- Communal heating system and lift repair
- House Maintenance Department inability or unwillingness to solve communal problems
- Delayed resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict
- Lack of sewage system in the Nakhimov settlement of the Khatai district
- Bad road conditions in the Abilov settlement of the Khatai district
- Unemployment; non-functionality of previously functional plants and factories in the territory of Khatai district
- Irregular garbage removal

The MP and his assistant told voters that they have appealed to the Khatai District Executive Authority and municipality to solving these problems, but local officials remained indifferent to their appeals.

First Binagadi Election District #8 (MP Arzu Samadov, *Musavat* member):

Two TMs were held in this election district – on December 9th, 2006 and September 21st, 2007. MP Arzu Samadov participated in both meetings and informed the voters about his actions as a MP to solve the district's problems. In total, 48 people (46 males and 2 females) attended the meetings.

Voters discussed the following concerns and problems:

- Delayed resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict
- Arbitrariness of officials and corruption
- Unemployment
- Lack of power, water and gas
- House Maintenance Department inability or unwillingness to solve communal problems
- Violation of the freedom of expression in the country and pressures on media; closure of ANS TV and ANS ÇM radio station. (The meeting, held on December 9th, 2006, coincided with the closure of ANS TV and ANS ÇM radio station.)

The MP promised voters that all of the issues that concern them will be raised in the Milli Majlis.

Narimanov-Nizami Election District #18 (MP Jamil Hsanli, Independent):

Two TMs were held in this election district – on December 16th, 2006 and September 26th, 2007. MP Jamil Hasanli and his assistants participated in both meetings. In total, 37 people (30 males and 7 females) attended the meetings. During the meetings, J. Hasanli informed the voters about his actions as a MP to solve the district's problems. Then, he answered voter questions and commented on their concerns.

Voters discussed the following concerns and problems:

- Bad road conditions in the Keshla settlement
- Delays in salary payment
- Improper installation of gas and electricity meters
- Unemployment
- Problems related with bribery and corruption
- Difficulties concerning uninterrupted education of students
- Low minimum salary and pensions
- Delayed resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

Barda City Election District #93 (MP Zahid Oruj, *Ana Vetən* [Motherland] Party member):

It was possible to hold only one TM in this election district. The meeting held in Guloglular village of the Barda district on January 15th, 2007 was attended by voters from this village and neighboring villages (in total, 46 voters – 27 males and 21 females) and representatives of the District Executive Authority.

District Executive Authority representatives and MP Zahid Oruj spoke about socio-economic conditions.

Voters discussed the following concerns and problems:

- Lack of gas supply in the villages
- Lengthy interruptions in power supply
- Decision of the Tariffs Council under the Cabinet of Ministers to increase energy prices

At the end of the meeting, Zahid Oruj promised that he will work to solve the voters' main concerns. He also noted that local government authorities must take an active role in the solution of local problems. Taking into consideration the complaints heard in the meeting, the MP showed initiative and succeeded in installing a new electricity transformer in Arablar village by the "Ganjaelektikshebeke" state company. Also, by his appeal, an old artesian well in ruins was restored to working order on the same day.

Third Sumqayit Election District #43 (MP Nizami Iskandarov, New Azerbaijan Party member):

It was possible to hold only one TM in this election district. In the meeting, held on September 28th, 2006 with the participation of MP Nizami Iskandarov, 115 voters (107 females and 8 males) participated.

The MP informed voters about his actions as a MP during the past year. He noted that 1,162 voters appealed to him with various complaints and he was successful in helping 662 of them.

Voters discussed the following concerns and problems:

- Disrepair or inexistence of roofs on apartments
- Disrepair of water and sewage pipelines and infrastructure
- Arbitrariness of officials
- Unemployment
- Low salaries
- Water shortages

Second Nizami (Ganja City) Election District #38 (MP Asaf Hajiyev, New Azerbaijan Party member):

It was possible to hold only one TM in this election district. On November 25th, 2007, MP Asaf Hajiyev, NGOs, media and voters participated in the meeting. In total, 50 voters (35 males and 15 females) participated in the meeting.

Asaf Hajiyev reported to the voters about his actions as a MP during the past 6 months.

Voters discussed the following concerns and problems:

- Arbitrariness of the officials in courts, executive bodies and the police
- Unemployment
- Arbitrariness of employers
- Spread of bribery and corruption
- Low salaries and pensions

At the end of the meeting, the MP noted that a number of appeals and petitions submitted to him were related with the courts.

▪ **Attitude of the voters on the activity of the MPs**

In order to study the level of relations between MPs and voters, as well as the attitude of voters towards MP actions, EMC conducted a survey in 25 election districts. There was a total of 625 survey participants (at least 25 voters in each election district).

EMC carried out the survey in public places, among ordinary people and with the condition of anonymity. The Survey consisted of 10 questions – 3 of them were about respondent personal information and the others were about the aims of the survey. Respondents were given the chance to choose all options in the answers.

An analysis of the survey shows that a majority of voters cannot contact the MP representing them in the Milli Majlis. Although during the past year, state-financed local offices of MPs were created and posts of assistants were opened, the voters cannot use this opportunity. Only in 4 election districts – in districts #43, 37, 93 and 96 – about 40% of respondents noted that they were able to contact their MPs through the MP's local office. Apart from these four election districts, in all other constituencies, respondents stated that they could contact their MPs only with difficulty.

In 20% of the election districts 50% of the respondents evaluated the activity of their MPs as “good”, in another 20% - as “partly good”. In 60% of election districts more than 50% of respondents consider their MP's actions as “not satisfactory” or “there is no activity”.

In 24% of the election districts about 40% of respondents think that “it is possible to solve problems partly after meeting with the MPs”. 60% of respondents in 90% of the election districts noted that “it is impossible to partly solve problems after meeting with the MPs”. Only in 3% of the election districts about 50% of the respondents think that “MPs are able to solve problems”. About 40% of respondents in 28% of the election districts think that “MPs are not able to solve problems”.

A majority of respondents are not satisfied with their MP's actions in the Milli Majlis towards protection of voters' interests. Only in one election district – in Narimanov-Nizami Election District #18 – 80% of the respondents evaluated the activity of their MP in this field as unequivocally positive. 55% of the respondents in Firs Nizami (Ganja City) Election District consider the activity of their MP in this field as partly satisfactory. 50% of the respondents in two election districts (Sheki City Election District #113 and Second Nasimi Election District #22), think that their MPs do not do anything in the Milli Majlis aimed at the protection of voters' interest.

An analysis of the survey shows that the level of trust in the MPs can also be considered “very low”. Only 20% of the respondents are ready to vote for their present MP in the next Parliamentary Election.

Broad results of EMC's survey in 25 election districts are presented in the Appendix 4.

VII. INFORMING THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE ACTIVITY OF THE MILLI MAJLIS

Information about Spring, Fall and Extraordinary Session and sittings of the permanent commissions of the Milli Majlis were regularly released to the public through the media. Information and details about new legislative measures and laws were published in the official newspaper of the Milli Majlis – *Azerbaijan* and in the state-financed newspapers *Khalq* and *Respublika*. News about Milli Majlis sessions was published in the majority of daily newspapers.

In depth TV reports about the activity of the Milli Majlis were prepared and aired only on Azerbaijan State Television – *AzTV*. Public TV (*Ictimai Televiziya*) and private TV channels (*ANS, ATV, Lider, and Space*) gave only superficial information in their news programs about the activity of the Milli Majlis.

According to the information given to EMC by journalists, there were certain restrictions on media coverage of Milli Majlis activities. For example, TVs are not allowed to do live broadcasts of Milli Majlis sittings or Milli Majlis permanent commissions. TV channels now receive prepackaged video coverage of Milli Majlis activities produced and edited in Parliament's own studios.

According to the information given to EMC by journalists, the media is not invited to the meetings of the Parliamentary Permanent Commissions on Security and Defense and Economic Policy. The chairmen of these commissions explained the situation by saying that secret discussions are carried out during their meetings. Moreover, as there is no publication (guidebook) providing information about the present composition of the Milli Majlis, it is difficult to find contact information about the MPs. Also, according to the information given by journalists accredited to the Parliament, the media face certain problems and obstacles to making audio and video records of the MPs during their speeches in the parliamentary sittings.

Currently, information about Milli Majlis activities is regularly published on Parliament's official website: www.meclis.gov.az. A presentation on the up-to-date version of this site was held in November, 2007. The website includes a lot of useful information for those interested in the Milli Majlis activities. Internet users can get information about rules for making petitions, meeting with MPs (times of the week to receive petitioners, procedures of making petition, etc) and sending questions.

EMC praises the fact that the website gives information about Milli Majlis working schedule and agenda, records of parliamentary sittings, law drafts and other documents. However, Azerbaijani voters have not yet been provided with the right to receive information about how their representatives voted in the parliamentary sittings. That is, although open and name-by-name voting in the Milli Majlis is carried out through an automated electronic system, the information about who voted for, who voted against, and who abstained is not available to the public. Another issue of concern is that the records of the parliamentary sittings are not regularly updated. For example, the last updated record published on the website is about an Extraordinary Session held on June 16th, 2007. However, the Fall Session started on September 30th and Parliament has held 15 sittings since this date.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS

EMC has carried out appropriate analyses regarding the results of its program on “The Monitoring of Citizen-Parliament Relations”. These analyses are based on the obtained information and facts.

The analyses have been generalized and on the basis of the program results, the following conclusions have been drawn:

- In a majority of the election districts, relations and cooperation between MPs and voters are weak and this, in turn, leads to the weakening of people’s trust in their representatives and in the Milli Majlis.
- Local offices for facilitating relations between voters and MPs were not established in all of the election districts and the existing offices are not sufficiently equipped with technical equipment.
- Assistants and local offices of some MPs are distinguished for their perfect activity for establishing and maintaining contact with voters. However, in the majority of election districts, assistants and local offices of MPs do not use modern know-how and methods in their work.
- A majority of the MPs do not try to inform their voters about the parliamentary sittings and permanent parliamentary commissions.
- During the last sessions of the Milli Majlis, effective and broad debates on the issues of local and national importance were not carried out. Very few MPs spoke in the parliamentary sitting, representing voter interests in 21 election districts.
- Cooperation between MPs, on the one hand, and local civil groups and NGOs, local branches of political parties, and municipalities, on the other, for the protection of voter interests is weak.
- The mechanism for informing the society constantly and uninterruptedly about Milli Majlis activities has been improved and this process is carried out through the official Parliament website (www.meclis.gov.az). However, records of the parliamentary sittings on the website are not updated in a timely manner.
- The public is not informed about the results of the open and name-by-name voting carried out during the sessions of the Milli Majlis.
- Sometimes, journalists accredited to the Parliament face restrictions in preparing reports on parliamentary sittings and meetings of permanent commissions.

On the basis of the results of this program, EMC proposes the following:

- In order to establish regular and continued relationships between voters and MPs, local MP offices in the election districts should be established; the existing local offices must be provided with material and technical resources. EMC proposes to use state facilities including district election commission buildings for this purpose.
- For the purpose of improving MPs’ ability to inform the society about their activities, funds from the state budget should be allotted to create and maintain the official websites of individual MPs (currently, a very small number of MPs have their own official websites). This can increase opportunities for the voters to receive information about the activity of their representatives regularly and continuously, and, at the same time, to communicate with their MPs.
- Activities aimed at strengthening relationships between MPs and voters should be undertaken. For this purpose, amendments concerning cooperation of the MPs with voters and civil groups, as well as, preparation of quarterly reports on the situation in election districts can be made.

- During the sessions of the Milli Majlis, the MPs should be given the opportunity to discuss their voters' local issues of concern more broadly and in-depth; the time devoted to discussion of current issues should be extended.
- Reports of the Milli Majlis sessions and results of the MPs open voting should be published on the official Parliament website (www.meclis.gov.az) in a timely, regular and continuous manner.
- Opportunities must be secured for the journalists accredited to the Milli Majlis to obtain information on the parliamentary sessions and the work of the permanent commissions.

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Supplement #1

**Most Active Deputies
(Topics and Number of Speeches)**

N	Name and Surname	Parliament Daily Agenda Topics	Open Discussion	Other	Total
1	Ali Huseynov	30	11		41
2	Panah Huseyn	20	12	2	34
3	Ziyad Samadzade	33	1		34
4	Fazil Mustafayev	19	4	3	26
5	Siyavush Novruzov	12	2	8	22
6	Sabir Rustamkhanli	13	8		21
7	Gudrat Hasanguliyev	16	3	2	21
8	İgbal Agazade	8	8	1	17
9	Camil Hasanli	8	7		15
10	Nizami Khudiyev	14			14
11	Azay Guliyev	12	1	1	14
12	Ganira Pashayeva	7	6		13
13	Rafael Cabrayilov	13			13
14	Hadi Racabli	11	1		12
15	Ali Masimli	11		1	12
16	Elmira Akhundova	11	1		12
17	Gultakin Hacıyeva	12			12
18	Eldar İbrahimov	10	1		11
19	Rabiyyat Aslanova	9		1	10
20	Mubariz Gurbanli	5	2	3	10
21	Zahid Orucov	8	2		10
22	Vahid Akhmadov	6	3		9
23	Fazail Agamali	7	1	1	9
24	Aydın Mirzazade	6	2	1	9
25	Gulhuseyn Akhmadov	7	2		9
26	Samad Seyidov	8			8
27	Eldar Guliyev	7			7
28	İlyas İsmayilov	7			7
29	İltizam Akbarov	3	3	1	7
30	Elton Mammadov	6		1	7
31	Rovshan Rzayev	7			7
32	Arzu Samadbayli	3	4		7
33	Nasib Nasibli	3	4		7
34	Jale Aliyeva	5	1		6
35	Gular Akhmadova	5	1		6
36	İkram İsrafilov	2	4		6
37	Majlum Shukurov	4	1	1	6
38	Xanhuseyn Kazimli	5	1		6

Supplement #2

NATIONAL PROBLEMS
(MP Speeches about National Issues)

N	Name and Surname	Speech Topic
1	Igbal Agazade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing energy prices and the problems that they have created • Condition of the press: the "Law on Defamation" • Resettling Kurds in the territory of Azerbaijan • Low wages • Lack of response by the Republic of Azerbaijan to the arrest of ethnic Azerbaijanis in Iran
2	Pahan Huseyn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressure on journalists and failure of Azerbaijani authorities to investigate the killing of Elmar Huseynov • Resettling Kurds in the territory of Azerbaijan
3	Camil Hasanli	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press problems: the murder of Elmar Huseynov • Against the establishment of a monument for the genocide victims of March 31^s
4	Sabir Rustamkhanli	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the extradition of Iranian immigrants to Tehran • Political pressure on the press by officials • Construction work in Baku • Advocating for closed sessions of the Milli Majlis while discussion the Karabakh negotiations.
5	Azay Guliyev	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing mortality rates in the army
6	Aynur Guliyeva	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of adopting the "Patriotism Bill"
7	Vahid Akhmadov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About the cemetery, which was found in the territory of Guba • Returning personal property to citizens who lost their cashier's office accounts after the fall of the Soviet Union
8	Arzu Samadbayli	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing arbitrariness of officials in the country • Environmental issues in Baku • Against the arrest of ethnic Azerbaijanis in Iran
9	Gudrat Hasanguliyev	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transporting M. E. Rasulzade's remains from Turkey to Azerbaijan • Azerbaijani football status
10	Ali Masimli	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health care problems • Denouncing Armenian slash and burn policies in the occupied territories
11	İltizam Akhbarov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Against pressure on the press
12	Fazil Mustafayev	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocating for closed sessions of the Milli Majlis while discussing events in Iran • Against the arrest of journalists • Health care problems • South Azerbaijan problems and issues
13	Ganira Pashayeva	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical examination before marriage
14	İkram İsrailov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public authorities' damaging actions against entrepreneurs
15	Nasib Nasibli	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocating for closed sessions of the Milli Majlis regarding the lack of response by the Azerbaijani Ministry of Foreign Affairs to police actions against ethnic Azerbaijanis in Iran
16	Musa Guliyev	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Returning personal property to citizens who lost their cashier's office accounts after the fall of the Soviet Union
17	Mubariz Gurbanlı	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prohibition of smoking in public areas
18	Mehriban Aliyeva	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposing the "Bill on Amnesty"
19	Gulhuseyn Akhmadov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing a Karabakh committee in the Milli Majlis
20	Fazail Agamali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting military intervention in Nagorno Karabakh

Supplement #3

ADDRESSING LOCAL VOTER PROBLEMS
(Deputy, Election District and Number of Speeches to Protect Voter's Rights)

	Name and Surname	Election District	Number of speeches
1	Pahan Huseyn	Sabirabad first ConEC 63	4
2	İkram İsrailov	Sumgait first ConEC 41	3
3	Ganira Pashayeva	Tovuz ConEC 105	3
4	Arzu Samadbayli	Binagadi first ConEC 8	2
5	İgbal Agazade	Khatai third ConEC 35	2
6	Nasib Nasibli	Khatai second ConEC 34	1
7	İltizam Akhbarov	Imishli ConEC 79	1
8	Jale Aliyeva	Zardab-Ujar ConEC 92	1
9	Majlum Shukurov	Shaki second ConEC 115	1
10	Gular Akhmadova	Yasamal third ConEC 15	1
11	Sabir Rustamxanli	Yardimli-Masalli ConEC 72	1
12	Gudrat Hasanguliyev	Goranboy-Agdam-Tartar ConEC 97	1
13	Fazail Agamali	Salyan-Neftchala ConEC 60	1
14	Safar Mammadov	Beylagan ConEC 81	1
16	Ahad Abiyev	Masalli City ConEC 70	1
17	Aydin Hasanov	Jalilabad City ConEC 67	1
18	Gulhuseyin Akhmadov	Saatli-Sabirabad-Kurdamir ConEC 65	1
19	Havva Mammadova	Xankendi ConEC 122	1
20	Aynur Guliyeva	Tartar ConEC 95	1
21	Farrukh Zeynalov	Sabunchu second ConEC 27	1

Supplement #4

<i>Questions</i>	<i>Election District</i>																								
	73	88	90	93	95	96	113	114	8	13	15	29	13	18	22	48	34	35	37	38	41	22	43	44	67
1) Do you know your deputy?																									
a) Yes	15	6	15	13	13	26	16	4	20	6	10	6	14	20	8	11	12	12	21	18	22	7	14	13	16
B No	3	7	4	4	2	1	1	8	2	6	12	5	6	1	7	6	4	6	1	3	5	12	6	7	6
c) I recognize the name.	5	8	1	8	6	1	2	11	2	8	4	10	4	3	5	10	5	7	6	6	2	13	11	6	2
d) I saw deputy during the election.	2	4	5	1	3	1	9	2	5	5	1	4	1	1	5	5	4	4	1	3	1	5	2	4	1
2) How do you assess the deputy's work?																									
a) Good	3	5	7	10	12	20	2	3	16	1	5	4	5	18	4	14	5	14	8	7	14	9	3	11	3
b) OK	6	11	5	5	3	5	6	1	4	8	13	4	13	5	6	6	6	8	14	5	4	10	13	2	7
c) Bad	12	6	4	7	8	4	19	19	6	7	6	8	6	1	6	11	6	6	5	8	10	9	10	10	8
d) No opinion	4	3	9	2	2	1	1	3	3	9	1	9	1	1	9	1	8	1	2	10	2	10	7	7	7
3) Are you satisfied with your deputy's efforts to protect voter's rights in the Milli Majlis?																									
a) Satisfied	2	5	7	12	10	16	1	3	10	2	6	4	6	20	4	3	4	1	4	5	12	1	6	11	2
b) Somewhat satisfied	9	11	4	6	6	6	3	1	10	6	4	5	4	3	2	9	7	8	16	6	6	2	11	4	7
c) Not satisfied	13	5	7	5	6	4	3	12	3	6	7	8	7	1	5	12	10	9	6	13	10	16	11	13	11
d) Deputy does not do anything.	2	4	7	3	3	4	21	10	6	10	8	8	8	1	14	8	4	11	3	6	2	18	5	3	4
4) How do you contact your deputy?																									
a) With the help of NGOs	1	1	5	1	6	3	3	1	1	1	8	1	8	17	1	3	3	6	1	5	2	1	5	11	3
b) Through the deputy's local office	2	6	5	10	2	12	2	2	10	1	1	3	1	10	8	2	18	16	11	4	5	2	14	6	3
c) With the help of executive bodies	1	4	5	7	6	5	1	1	3	4	6	5	6	1	3	5	2	4	1	4	4	2	3	2	2
d) Unable to contact deputy	21	14	10	8	9	16	22	22	15	19	10	16	10	2	13	20	2	3	16	17	19	32	11	11	17
5) After meeting with your deputy, is it possible to solve problems?																									
a) Possible	1	6	7	10	8	11	1	1	7	3	9	6	9	18	1	3	1	1	4	5	7	2	2	11	3
b) Somewhat possible	8	10	6	7	7	12	1	2	10	3	7	6	7	5	4	11	4	8	13	5	10	4	17	3	9
c) Not possible	14	7	7	6	9	5	14	18	10	10	2	7	2	1	15	14	12	7	4	9	11	11	10	15	10
d) Deputy does not want to hear about problems.	2	2	5	3	1	2	11	5	2	9	7	6	7	1	13	4	8	13	8	11	2	20	3	2	11
6) Do you think that your deputy can solve your problems?																									
a) Yes	5	10	8	10	7	18	1	2	9	12	10	10	10	18	1	4	1	10	10	5	15	2	1	12	6
b) No	16	3	6	3	4	3	24	19	10	5	7	3	7	3	13	7	11	6	7	14	8	29	5	14	14
c) No one believes the deputy.	1	5	5	4	5	2	2	4	8	6	3	7	3	1	5	11	5	3	5	4	4	5	14	2	1
d) Deputy is doing what he is able to do.	3	7	6	9	9	7	1	1	2	2	5	5	5	3	16	10	8	10	7	7	3	1	12	2	6
7) Will you vote for your current deputy in the upcoming election?																									
a) Yes	4	10	7	10	8	13	1	1	15	1	10	4	6	20	3	2	6	6	6	7	11	2	2	13	2
b) No	10	9	8	3	6	5	23	1	6	9	7	6	8	2	10	13	9	5	10	19	12	12	4	10	6
c) Not yet sure	10	5	5	9	8	10	2	22	6	12	3	6	7	1	7	9	4	7	9	2	5	4	14	6	6
d) Voting is futile	1	1	5	4	3	2	2	2	2	3	5	9	4	2	5	8	6	11	4	2	2	19	12	1	11