

Defender's Comments and Suggestions to the Central Electoral Commission on the Ink of the Stamps

Dear Mr. Mukutchyan,

In accordance to the RA Electoral Code “for the purpose of putting a stamp in personal identification documents, precinct electoral commissions shall be provided with a substance that stays for at least 12 hours after use, after which it disappears.” Based on the international experience study it can be concluded that the two-level system of voter verification is an effective mechanism for preventing violations, that is not only the regulations of the voter list compiling, maintaining, their publicity, voter identification document data input in the voter list in the precinct centers, but also their stamping and inking the fingers of the voters (Egypt, Latvia, India, Mexico and a number of other countries).

During the RA Parliamentary Elections 2012 64 calls were received in regards to the stamping of the personal identification document. Those calls referred both to the disappearance of the stamps earlier than prescribed by the Code and to their staying longer than the prescribed 12 hours. During the RA Presidential Elections 2013 68 calls were received which referred to the personal identification document stamping procedure. The calls again referred to either earlier disappearance of the stamps or their staying longer than 12 hours. The alerts were also related to the fact that the stamps can easily be removed. The erasing of the stamps is of concern as it does not correspond to the purpose of the two-level system of voter verification and, moreover, it creates favorable conditions for election frauds.

It is no coincidence that a number of international organizations positively assessed the inclusion of the stamp provision in the new RA Electoral Code adopted in 2011, as it should have been a mechanism to prevent electoral violations. However, the CEC has so far not been able to obtain a substance that would satisfy the requirements of the Electoral Code and international standards.

The recommendation of the Central Electoral Commission dated 01.08.2012 on the organization and holding of the May 6 of the RA Parliamentary Election 2012 and on the proposed legislative changes suggested to remove the provision of the stamping from the Electoral Code. At the same time a number of international organizations expressed the opinion that the two level voter system of verification is necessary, however on the stamping they stated that finger inking is more classical and experienced method than the institution of stamping.

Based on the above mentioned, we ask to clarify within five days whether it is possible to obtain such a substance for stamping, that would correspond the requirements of the RA Electoral Code and international standards. Otherwise, we consider that for the exclusion of public concern and risks of electoral fraud it is necessary to make amendments in the RA Electoral Code replacing the stamping by another mechanism, that is finger inking.

Best Regards`

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