

February 12th, 2013

STATEMENT

ON DETAINMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIVISTS IN KHACHMAZ REGION OF AZERBAIJAN

On February 12th 2013, the civil society activists- **Gunay Ismayilova** and **Javid Nabiyev** faced police pressures and detained while they were holding a training on citizen participation in public policy in Khachmaz region of Azerbaijan; Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Center (EMDS) assess the detainment of these activists as the next step to roughly violate the freedom of association, freedom of assembly and freedom of expression in Azerbaijan.

To note, EMDS together with Democratic School of Journalism is conducting trainings in the regions of Azerbaijan to increase citizens' abilities on citizen participation in public policy, as a part of the project **Citizen Participation and Accountability of Elected Bodies**.

EMDS agreed with the owner of Sahil hotel management to give venue to hold the next training on citizen participation in public policy in Khachmaz region of Azerbaijan. Before the training, two trainers- EMDS employee, Javid Nabiyev and Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety (IRFS) lawyer Gunay Ismayilova visited the region to make technical preparations for the training. However, an hour after the training began, a group of police officers including Amil Tahirli, chief of the Criminal Investigation Department of the Police Station in Khachmaz region, together with civilian clothed persons attacked the hotel and confiscated the the documents of the participants. They treated roughly towards the trainers and the participants and expelled them from the conference hall saying that they will not allow to hold training. After that EMDS searched for an alternative place to hold the event; it got permission from the Khachmaz Local Community Information Center. However, soon after EMDS began the training, the police interfered and training participants.

It is with great concern that EMDS informs that the training participants and trainers faced harsh treatment by Amil Tahirli, chief of the Criminal Investigation Department of the Police Station in Khachmaz region; he insulted Javid Nabiyev and Gunay Ismayilova as well. When refused against unpleasant things happened, Nabiyev faced physical assaults by the police officers: he received damages on his head and body. Then, they were taken to the police station and detained there for 5 hours without telling their parents. Unfortunately, no medical care was provided for Nabiyev who was physically assaulted by the police.

Regarding the incident, interrogation was launched at at 18:00 in Prosecutor's Office of Khachmaz region; after that both trainers were set free, and additional inquest was laucnhed.

EMDS considers that police officers' illegal and rough treatment against civil society representatives is the indicator of the police arbitrariness; thus EMDS assess this as a restriction to socio-political opportunities and political freedoms during the run-up to 16 October 2013 presidential election.

Showing calls the Azerbaijani government to respect the rule of law, to defend the violated rights of Javid Nabiyev and Gunay Ismayilova, who faced physical and psychological assaults, and bring the culprits into liability. EMDS also deems the incidents happened in Khachmaz region as a next step to pose pressures against civil society representatives in Azerbaijan, as well as calls the local and international organizations to express their attitudes towards the incident.

The Board of Directors,

Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Center,

Baku, Azerbaijan

Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Center (EMDS), the state registration of which was revoked on May 14th 2008, is an independent and impartial non-governmental organization which work for holding free and fair elections, development of civil society and democracy in Azerbaijan.

Being members of the European Network of Election Observation and Monitoring (ENEMO), Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, European Platform for Democratic Elections (EPDE), Parliament Monitoring Organizations Network (PMO) and Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM), EMDS attended the monitoring of more than 20 elections in Azerbaijan and abroad.