



OBSERVERS
IN ACTION



Warsaw, February 20th, 2020

Statement:
Videobservation of the early parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan
February 2020
Electoral irregularities on a mass scale: multiple voting, inflated turnout, “dead souls” and falsified PEC protocols

Executive summary:

- The work of 6 PECs in two regions of Azerbaijan (the capital, Baku and Qax in the northwestern part of the country) was analysed by Polish observers who used the footage from cameras installed in polling stations, which was publically available online
- In nearly all observed polling stations we discovered a significant inflation of turnout. In 4 out of 6 polling stations the official turnout was at least two times higher than the real one.
- nearly 1 500 - the total number of so called “dead souls” we discovered (people who cast their ballots, according to official data, but never made it to the polling stations). PEC protocols were falsified in order to account for those “missing voters”
- Some of the numbers were falsified through multiple voting by an organised group of people who were cooperating with the PEC members.

The early parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan took place on February 9th, 2020. As part of this election, citizens of Azerbaijan elected deputies to the unicameral National Assembly. On the same day elections to the Supreme Assembly of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic took place.

Azerbaijan is one of the few countries that have installed cameras in some of the polling stations¹. These cameras broadcast online directly from polling stations on election day letting the citizens of Azerbaijan as well as foreigners conduct electoral videobservation by monitoring the conduct of voting in selected polling stations. The Political Accountability Foundation (PAF), which is engaged in videobservation of elections since 2018, has used this opportunity to observe live the situation in polling stations across Azerbaijan.

¹ In February 2020 cameras were installed in 1000 out of 5573 precinct election commissions.

A group of 7 experienced observers analysed the video from polling stations (both live and from recordings) in two electoral districts located in different parts of Azerbaijan. We chose District 25 - Nizami II located in the capital Baku, and District 112 covering the multiethnic province of Qax located in the northwestern part of the country. We observed 3 polling stations in each district, which amounted to 10% of all polling stations in District 25 and 5% of polling stations in District 112. In 3 out of 6 polling stations we conducted the observation from 8:00 till 19:00 (the entire voting period), whereas in the remaining 3 polling stations we started observing the voting process with a 18, 30 and 45 minute delay, due to technical reasons.

The observers working with PAF focused on the number of people who cast their ballots in the premises of the polling station.² We were able to determine the turnout in the polling station by adding up the number of people who voted in that particular polling station. Additionally our observers looked out for other election irregularities they were able to observe thanks to the feed from the cameras - these were, in particular, instances of multiple voting. The experience gained as part of the [Observers in Action](#) project shows that such forms of falsifications are popular in the post-Soviet space and are easiest to spot by using online cameras.

As part of the videoobservation process on February 9th, 2020 we discovered a significant difference between the turnout observed in 5 out of 6 monitored polling stations and the one reported by the election authorities. In 4 out of 6 polling stations the observed turnout was at least two times lower than the official turnout. This means that in these PECs it was necessary to falsify the protocol in order to achieve the reported turnout. Additionally in one polling station we observed several instances of multiple voting.

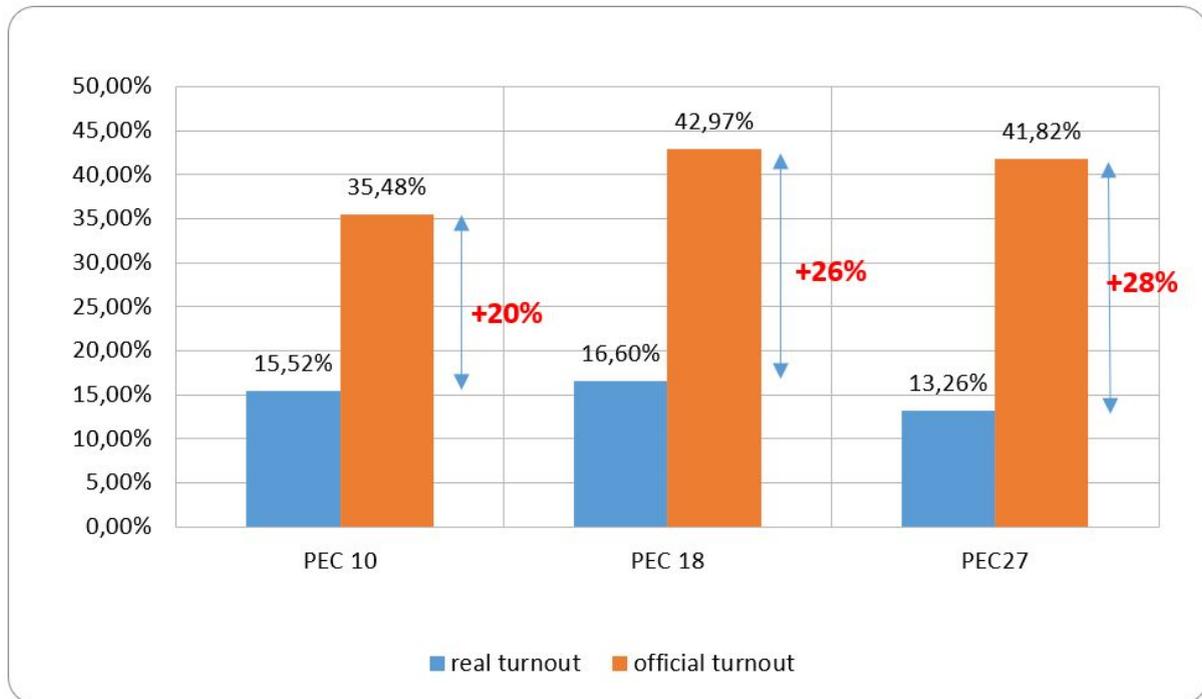
We are fully aware that the districts and the polling stations we chose to observe are not representative of the situation in the entire country and thus our results cannot be extrapolated to describe the conduct of this year's early parliamentary elections. However, signals coming from our partners - independent Azerbaijani NGOs, point towards a mass occurrence of the electoral irregularities we observed.

² In our analysis we did not take into account ballots cast during homebound voting.

Appendices:

1. Results of the early parliamentary elections that took place on February 9th, 2020 - specific PECs in Baku's District 25 - Nizami II

Official vs real turnout (without homebound voting) in specific PECs in District 25

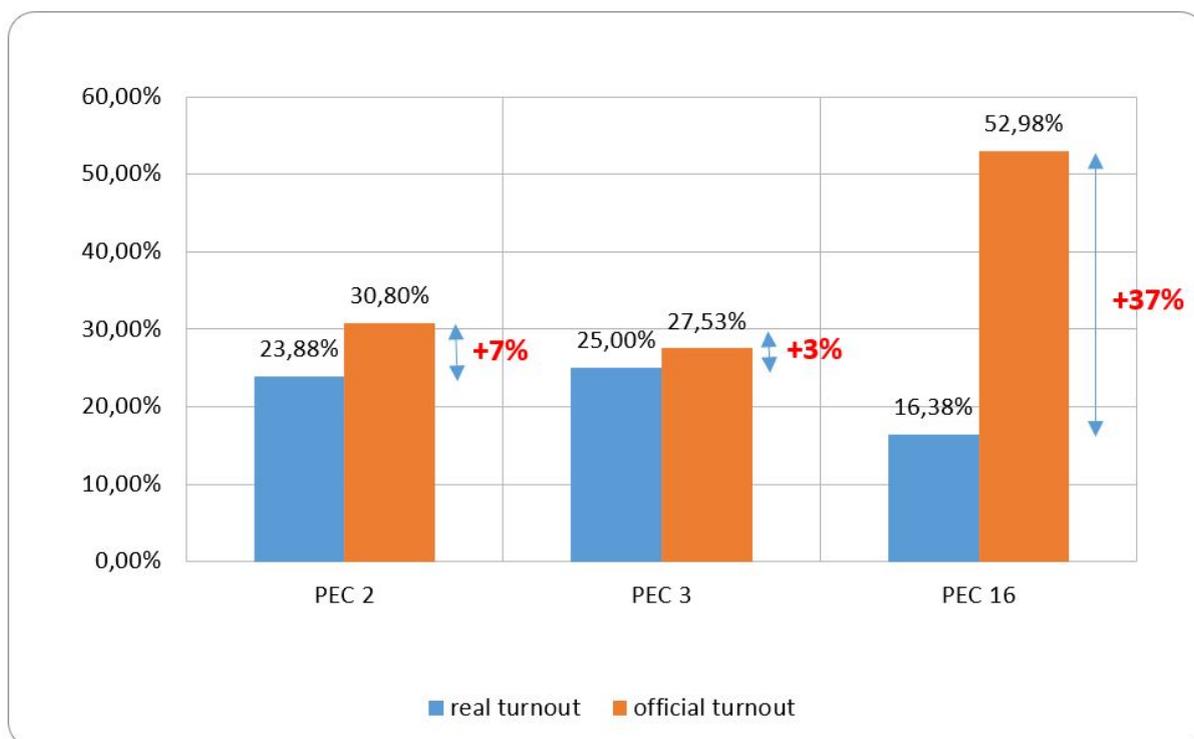


PEC № and observation time	The number of people who voted only in the premises of the polling stations (official figures)	The number of people who voted in the premises of the polling stations (according to our observation)	By how many voters was the electoral turnout inflated in this PEC?
PEC 10 (8:00-19:00)	528	231	+297
PEC 18 (8:45-19:00)	642	248	+394
PEC 27 (8:30-19:00)	514	163	+351

In District 25 located in the Nizami raion in the capital Baku, in all observed PECs the official turnout was at least two times higher than the one observed by our observers. Even taking into account the margin of error connected with the exhaustion of observers who have been analysing the video footage for multiple hours at a time, we have no doubt that the turnout in these PECs has been artificially inflated and the protocols have been falsified.

2. Results of the early parliamentary elections that took place on February 9th, 2020 - specific PECs in Qax - District 112

Official vs real turnout (without homebound voting) in specific PECs in District 112



PEC № and observation time	The number of people who voted only in the premises of the polling stations (official figures)	The number of people who voted in the premises of the polling stations (according to the camera)	By how many voters was the electoral turnout inflated in this PEC?
PEC 2 (8:00-19:00)	273	352	+79
PEC 3 (8:18-19:00)	247	272	+25
PEC 16 (8:00-19:00)	184	595	+411

In District 112 located in the Qax province in northwestern Azerbaijan the official turnout was inflated in 2 out of 3 monitored polling stations. The biggest difference was observed in PEC 16 where the official turnout was nearly three times higher than the one we observed. A much smaller, albeit still significant, difference can be observed in PEC number 2. Thus in PECs 2 and 16 the protocols had to be falsified after the closing of the polling station. On the other hand, the difference observed in PEC 3 (2,53%) is within the margin of error and

therefore we cannot describe the turnout figures in this PEC as falsified. That being said, the results of our observation do not take into account the actual voting results in PEC 3 as our methodology does not allow for a genuine assessment of the counting of ballots, especially in situations where the quality of the transmitted video is low and there is no sound.

3. Examples of multiple voting during the early parliamentary elections that took place on February 9th, 2020 - PEC №16 in Qax - District 112

Observation target: a man in glasses with a badge (observer or PEC member)



Voting nr 1: from 17:41:10 - 17:41:20



Voting 2: from 18:01:46 - 18:01:56



Voting 3: od 18:03:37 - 18:03:56



Voting 4: from 18:30:07 - 18:30:22

Observation target: a woman with a bun on her head, wrapped in a beige blanket, familiar with some of the PEC members



Voting 1: from 18:02:43 - 18:02:50



Voting 2: from 18:04:43 - 18:04:50