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ELECTIONS
20'14:



DEMOCRACY
DISQUALIFIED

Elections 2014: DEMOCRACY DISQUALIFIED

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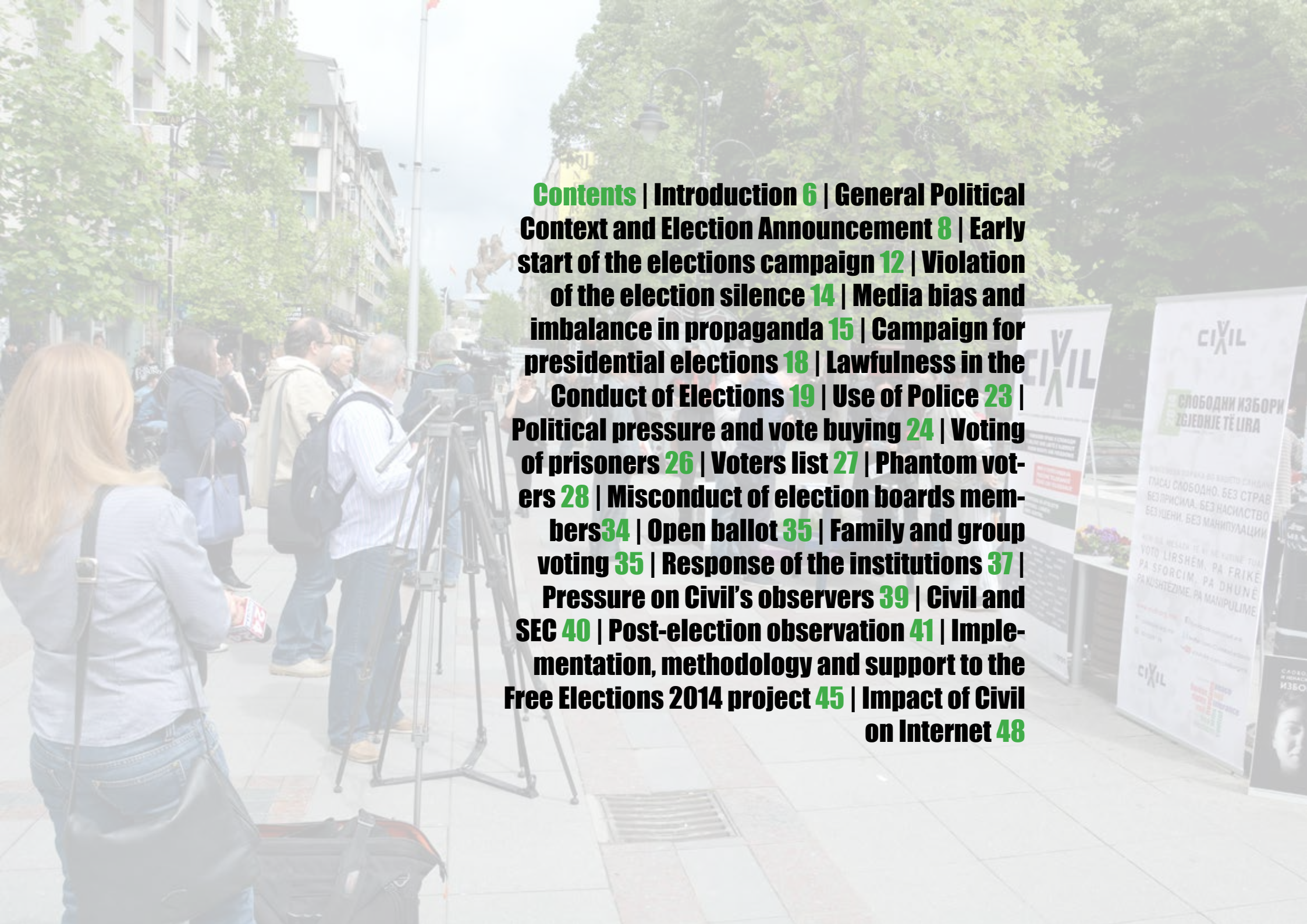
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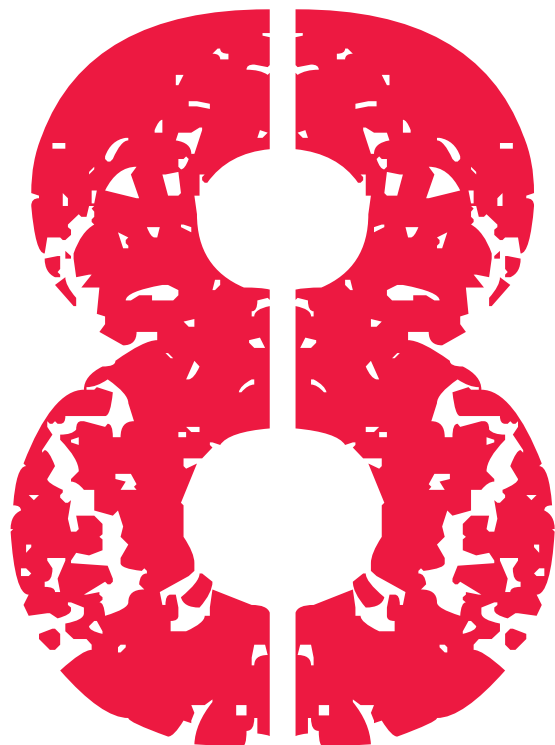
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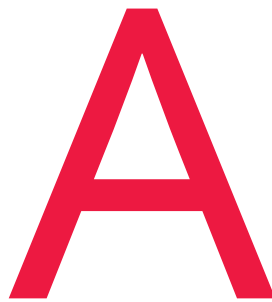
years after VMRO-DPMNE came to power, and after eight election cycles at all levels of government, the best description of the current state of Macedonia's electoral democracy is to imagine a football match between political rivals being played on a field on which the government has placed its goal on top of the hill, the opposition's poles are situated in the swamp at the foot of the shore, the referees are offered "sweeteners" to support the government, the ball is exchanged for a hockey puck, instead of football boots the opposition players jog around in thongs (flip-flops), the audience consists mainly of public servants, one of

the government's smaller coalition partners holds the monopoly on peanut & refreshment sales, and the rights for direct and objective broadcast of the competition has been exclusively won by TV Sitel.

Most of the other important elements of the election process - such as the dimensions of the voting booths and the design and colour of the ballots – comply to the high Scandinavian election standards.



Introduction



Country where the government controls all levers of power, including the judiciary and the electoral process, does not tolerate any minority or conflicting viewpoints, and uses fear and intimidation to impose its authority on society - wrote Erwan Fouere, the former Special Representative and Head of the Delegation of the European Union in Skopje (2005 – 2011) recently for Balkaninsight¹ from Brussels. Fouere concludes that “democracy has lost its sense in Macedonia”

This is probably the shortest, but most accurate and comprehensive description of the status of the Macedonian democracy, stated by a well-intentioned and long-time friend of the Macedonian state and the people who live in it. In the past eight years, Macedonia slowly regressed from the level of an emerging underdeveloped democracy, with a series of elements earmarked for improvement with every subsequent democratic election, to an obviously undemocratic country - or, as Freedom House² stated in its latest rankings for 2014., “Macedonia is governed by a pseudo-democratic regime which they qualify as a “hybrid democracy” - where only some elements resembling normal democratic standards are in existence.

Hence, the mission of the OSCE / ODIHR in its Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions of the Macedonian elections in 2014³, declared that the elections were “efficiently” conducted, adding many remarks regarding the violation of fundamental democratic aspects during (and in) these Macedonian elections: inadequate separation of party and government resources and activities, vot-

¹ <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/democracy-has-lost-its-meaning-in-macedonia>.

² <http://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2014/macedonia#.U56qsnbm5ws>

³ The Report of OSCE/ODIHR in the country was published on April 28, 2014. For more information please visit www.osce.org/odihr/elections/116272

er intimidation, excessive pressure on ethnic Albanian voters to boycott the presidential elections, major media bias in favour of the ruling party and its presidential candidate, inconsistencies and ambiguities in the electoral legislative regulations, concerns about the accuracy of the electoral rolls, ineffectiveness of the mechanism for resolving election disputes, etc.

All of this is transpiring in an enduring atmosphere of hatred speech, indirectly promoted and encouraged by the government through electronic and print media, most of which have editorial policies under the direct control of the government; in the absence of political dialogue as a result of a fierce confrontation between the government and the opposition in the country; and with serious irregularities and erosion of democratic standards in all spheres of the functioning of a normal parliamentary democracy. In addition, the electoral process is conducted in combination with a highly charged political atmosphere, weak and politicised government institutions, widespread social insecurity and poverty, low public awareness and continuously fuelled ethnic tensions.



General Political Context and Election Announcement

The presidential and pre-term parliamentary elections in 2014 were organised in conditions of political crisis in the country. The political crisis, existing for several years with differing intensity, culminated with the violent expulsion of journalists and opposition members from the Macedonian Assembly on December 24, 2012. This occurred while the Parliament was passing the Budget for 2013, which the opposition vehemently opposed and by applying the method of parliamentary filibustering, tried to slow or block the process. The local elections in March 2013 were conducted amid conditions of political crisis, boycotts, a series of protests and intensive international diplomatic mediation - the opposition participated in those elections as a result of the strong international pressure.

The year following the local elections, resulting in an overwhelming triumph for the ruling coalition at the central level (VMRO-DPMNE and DUI), was marked by bitter inter-party bickering, and increased inter-ethnic tensions often promoted by the ruling coalition partners. These trends intensified, especially after the commencement of the process of nominating the presidential candidate for the ruling VMRO-DPMNE party. Following the decision of the party to again run the current Macedonian President George Ivanov as its electoral trump card, the coalition was shaken when VMRO-DPMNE declined the request of its coalition partner DUI to go with a "consensus presidential candidate" backed by a broader civic and multi-ethnic support. A minor political crisis followed which, for the ruling parties and their parliamentary majority, presented a good excuse for announcing pre-term parliamentary elections.

In fact, many independent political analysts and numerous opposition officials commented that, due to the lack of agreement on a common "consensus" presidential government candidate, and given the cen-

sus (40%) of voter turnout in the second round of voting for the presidential elections, VMRO-DPMNE and DUI suspected a collapse in the presidential elections due to a possible opposition boycott and inadequate voter response.

To intercept the resulting political crisis in the country, for which they themselves can be blamed, and the consequences of which would be difficult to mitigate, the ruling Macedonian party VMRO-DPMNE and its Albanian governing partner DUI, negotiated a scenario away from the public eye and at the highest level of the party, that would prove to be a winner for both nationalist structures of government: to go to the presidential and parliamentary elections, with sufficiently high level of nationalist confrontation fabricated and controlled by VMRO-DPMNE and DUI over the "disagreement" in the selection of an ethnically "consensual" Macedonian president. This would assist in the re-election of Ivanov as president, and in suppressing adverse social and economic election topics with the use of the well-known political vocabulary and argumentation of covert and overt nationalism. This would consolidate their power in Parliament.

To better understand the political, social and psychological context in which these Macedonian elections were prepared and conducted, data from a recent survey of the NGO Macedonian Centre for European Training (MCET) is very illuminating, relating to the sense of freedom and fear amongst Macedonian citizens. The MCET studies show that 53% of respondents believe that Macedonian citizens do not freely express their opinions, and 81.3% of those with this belief "fear of consequences for themselves and their family." The overwhelming majority of 63.6% of respondents believe that "secret services in Macedonia eavesdrop on communications of people whom they consider adversaries," while only 20% do not believe in that statement. With this personalized fear among citizens and a sense of personal insecurity, it is not surprising that 57.7% of respondents believe that the Macedonian government has a way of discovering how they themselves vote in elections.

It was in under this political and social context in which the presidential elections were announced by the President of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, Trajko Veljanovski, on February 1 this year. In accordance with the electoral schedule, the first round of presidential elections were scheduled for

⁴ Maricic, B., and Petkovski, Lj., "Eurometal", draft version on the preliminary research results obtained by MCET in Macedonia for the period 01.03.-19.03.2014. The research was based on a sample of 1.2000 individuals.

April 13 and the second round for April 27, 2014. In accordance with the agreement reached earlier between VMRO-DPMNE and DUI on March 6, Veljanosvki announced early parliamentary elections for April 27, the same day of the second round of presidential elections.

Once the elections were announced, the State Election Commission (SEC) announced the statutory requirements for the commencement of the campaign: the campaign for the presidential elections commenced on March 24 and for early parliamentary elections on April 5, 2014.





Early start of the elections campaign

With eight completed elections - twice local, twice presidential and four both regular and pre-term parliamentary elections in the eight years of VMRO-DPMNE's reign of continuous power in the country (2006-2014), the Macedonian society is in a state of a permanent election campaign. Constant party-political mobilisation is one of the important conditions of the ruling party's right-wing populism in the country. The ruling party is always present at grass roots level, micro-managing the requirements of its members and supporters, and many other Macedonian citizens, party neutral, who seek to address major social and economic problems in their daily lives - elections present new opportunities to strengthen the clientelistic government with promises of new jobs in the public sector, the payment of arrears and promised agricultural subsidies, for promotions in the bureaucracy at local and national level, for unfettered abuse of all state resources for partisan election purposes, but also for the injection of "fresh" money from the state budget through local party organizations and structures of the ruling parties, especially those of VMRO-DPMNE. Because of the intensity and number of elections, the prime minister and ministers, directors of public companies, the heads of other government agencies or institutions are in constant election mode and it is difficult to distinguish the conduct of the government from party activities.

As a result, the early commencement of the political campaign in this election is evidently problematic, although it was difficult to pinpoint the exact moment of campaign commencement, as Macedonian society has been targeted by continual, aggressive, party-government propaganda.

Additionally, it was difficult to distinguish between the presidential candidate's campaign and that of the party's campaign for the parliamentary elections, especially in the case of the ruling party VM-

RO-DPMNE in both directions. The presidential candidate of VMRO-DPMNE led a campaign on behalf of the party, whereby the party launched its election program in parallel with the presidential campaign, covering-up his political “insufficiencies” among potential voters.

Although on a smaller scale, SDSM also led a campaign that made it difficult to distinguish the presidential from the campaign for parliamentary elections. Both parties violated the statutory commencement date by starting their meetings with citizens and other smaller events throughout the country at an earlier time. The parties GROM and DPA, announced their presidential candidates, launching the campaign before the legal commencement date.

DUI also violated the democratic legislation and practice in this context. Apparently dissatisfied with the rejection of the concept of “consensus presidential candidate,” DUI called for a boycott of the presidential elections and organised a series of events across the country to present their reasons for calling a boycott, making it unclear whether a campaign was underway for the pre-term parliamentary elections. Later, during the elections this campaign will develop to an active blocking of the right of voters to vote in the first round of presidential elections.



Violation of the election silence

The election silence was openly ignored throughout the country during the entire election process.



Most notable acts of open agitation were committed by VM-RO-DPMNE party activists through distribution of promotional material, door to door agitation, agitation at polling booths, social networks, and bribery of voters on the election days of 13 and 27 April.

The case of the letter that was sent to voters for supporting the presidential candidate Gjorgje Ivanov signed by the Mayor of the Municipality of Aerodrom, Skopje, Ivica Konevski, using his name and position during the period of electoral silence is quite illustrative. Besides violating the electoral silence, the letter represents abuse of public resources, that is, the position of mayor, for partisan purposes.

On a smaller scale and with less intensity, observers from Civil noted instances of election silence being violated by party activists of SDSM, DUI, DPA, GROM and the People's Movement of Macedonia party.



Media bias and imbalance in propaganda

M

edia coverage of the ruling VMRO-DPMNE's campaign was incomparably greater than all the other parties combined, right from the very beginning.

VMRO-DPMNE's campaign was accompanied by an extremely ruthless political vocabulary and disentitlement of the opposing SDSM party as well as aggressive nationalist rhetoric directed against their coalition partner DUI. Emphasis in the public appearances of the leader of VMRO-DPMNE was placed on his call to elect 62 MPs in Parliament "so no one can blackmail the Macedonians."

At the top of the list of threats to the electoral process in the country, ethnic issues were once again obviously the main topic, jeopardising the fragile inter-ethnic relations, and providing opportunities for the escalation and deterioration of the situation long after the completion of the election process. And in the context of the media, misuse of public resources (programs at the public broadcaster MRTV) was evident even before the official start of the campaign.

Lack of balance and bias towards the government in the reports made by most of the media in the country also characterised this election campaign. This results from the financial strength of the ruling party and the direct benefit that media owners have from supporting the government. This becomes quite obvious when analysis are made of ads placed by the ruling party (VMRO-DPMNE), for example, the print media in Macedonia.

The quantitative analysis of advertisements published in daily newspapers throughout the entire election campaign for the presidential and parliamentary elections displays striking differences in the promotional power of the government and the weakness of the ethnic Macedonian opposition in the political scene of the country⁵. Adding up the published whole page (1/1) and half page (1/2) advertisements

on a daily basis throughout the election campaign for both the presidential and parliamentary candidates and published advertising banners (largely printed on the front pages of newspapers), the distribution of advertisements through numbers is as follows:

	1/1	1/2	Banner
UTRINSKI VESNIK			
VMRO-DPMNE	63	18	24
SDSM		1	
GROM	20		
DNEVNIK			
VMRO-DPMNE	73	23	31
GROM	10		
VEST			
VMRO-DPMNE	59	17	18
Coalition for Positive Macedonia		3	
GROM	12		
VEČER			
VMRO-DPMNE	61	23	26
SLOBODEN PEČAT			
SDSM	23		24
Coalition for Positive Macedonia	2	4	
NOVA MAKEDONIJA			
VMRO-DPMNE	68	15	24
Coalition for Positive Macedonia		21	

⁵ Advertisements published in six daily newspapers in Macedonian language have been analyzed: "Utrinski vesnik", "Nova Makedonija", "Dnevnik", "Sloboden pecat", "Vest" and "Vecer". Albanian daily newspapers "Koha" and "Lajme" did not publish any advertisements of candidates running in the election race.

The table below displays the total data:

TOTAL NUMBER OF AD-VERTISEMENTS	1/1	1/2	Banner
VMRO-DPMNE	324	96	123
SDSM	23		24
GROM	42		
Coalition for Positive Macedonia	2	29	

The data from the table above shows that the advertising ratio between the two main opponents competing for power in the country - coalitions led by VMRO-DPMNE on one side and SDSM on the other – is 16:1⁶, which means that for every one-page of advertisement of the opposition (and only published in a daily newspaper “Sloboden Pecat”), the government responded with 16 advertisements (published in five daily newspapers)! Such promotional disproportion in daily newspapers has not been noticed in any other elections in the past 24 years since democracy was introduced in Macedonia.

In fact, VMRO-DPMNE declares in its official financial election reports that the combined budget for presidential and parliamentary elections allocated nearly 2 million Euros for presidential and parliamentary election campaigns, while for SDSM this figure is approximately 145 thousand euros, which is about 13 times less than what the VMRO-DPMNE party budgeted in propaganda. No further comment is necessary.

⁶ The ratio is calculated in such a manner in which the total number comprising the whole page and half page advertisements is divided by two, which gives the number of whole page advertisements. So, VMRO-DPMNE has 372 advertisements vs. 23 advertisements of SDSM. In terms of published banners, the ratio is almost 5:1 in favor of VMRO-DPMNE.

Campaign for presidential elections

The official start of the campaign for presidential elections was accompanied by intensified abuse of public resources and media for partisan purposes. CIVIL observers monitored the election campaign throughout the country, as did the journalists from Civil Media, a journalist desk created shortly before the campaign. Many irregularities were detected at the very beginning of the campaign.

Just in the first week after the official start of the campaign, CIVIL registered 72 events in total out of which (27) were organized by VMRO-DPMNE, (29) by SDSM, (9) by GROM and (7) by DPA. These political gatherings were used by parties for promoting their presidential candidate, but did not refrain from promoting the parties themselves and their election platforms. DUI, however, held 10 events calling for a boycott of the presidential elections. They also promoted their political program.

The abuse of public resources at the central and local level could be noticed at almost all events, especially by government coalition parties. In this elections too CIVIL noted the obligation being put upon the public servants to agitate and bring audience to the party gatherings.

CIVIL alerted the public about the abuse of children and young people in the campaign, especially in their engagement as audiences, and also for agitation on the social networks.

The reports of the CIVIL observers also refer to lists being made of guaranteed voters, pressure being made on voters by phone and at work, and excessive promises being given of new jobs or other benefits like agricultural subsidies, welfare, building permits etc..

CIVIL revealed a number of phantom voters in the municipalities of Kisela Voda and Center in Skopje during the period from March 20 to April 11.

Lawfulness in the conduct of the elections

When it comes to elections, the Macedonian public has for quite some time, in a legal sense, gotten used to avoiding drastic election abuses or incidents that might compromise the legitimacy of the entire electoral process in a very obvious way. Instead, during elections extensive “minor” violations are massively made - especially by the government - which, apparently, are not of substantial nature, but greatly contribute to unfair and uneven positioning of the participants in the competitive electoral process.

According to published reports and conclusions of national and international associations and organizations, in the electoral process during the regular presidential and early parliamentary elections, a series of legal shortcomings were identified. Most of these shortcomings repeat themselves in several elections in a row, which speaks that any failure to comply with the Electoral Code is advisedly tolerated for the political benefit of those who have power to influence the preparations for the elections.

One of the problems that are constantly present during the elections for many years is related to omissions in terms of keeping record of the eligible voters, or anomalies of the Voter List. In this sense the NGO CIVIL has noticed the following problems:

- Mismatch of Excerpts of the Voter List for elections which were conducted simultaneously - regular presidential and early parliamentary elections;
- Inconsistent on-line version of the Voter List and Excerpts of Voter List for certain election districts, some municipalities and polling places.
- Erroneous records of deceased persons and “phantom voters” in the Voter List, as citizens who have right to vote.

On the Election Day of the first and the second voting round, CIVIL noted shortcomings in the work of the Election Boards commonly related to incorrect identification and determination of the identity of the voters; incorrect records/registration of voters in the Excerpts of the Voter List; no removal of party promotional materials in the polling places; failure to provide regularity and secrecy of the vote; and failure to provide a free and peaceful voting.

These elections too were attributed with many shortcomings with regard to the voting which led to a violation of the principle of equal voting right. Thus, as being seen on several elections in the past, there were frequent cases of family and group voting rather than voting in person; public, rather than secret ballot; mobilization and agitation among voters, as well as instances of threats and bribery of voters.

Omissions in the election campaign had many adverse effects on the conduct of fair elections. Government again did not shirk from making massive payments out of the budget or the state public funds during the election campaign. There were numerous legal breaches of the provisions of the Electoral Code also due to media presentation of the participants in the campaign during the election silence, as well as media coverage in order to support a particular election campaign, which unlawfully influenced the voters' decision. There were cases of displaying posters of party campaigns at the polling places, and the destruction of posters or putting their promotional material on top of the posters of other participants in the election campaign.

In these elections, the number of cases of severe disturbance of the peace and order at the polling stations, as well as the emergence of unauthorised persons, even armed men in the buildings and premises where voting was conducted or in their vicinity, seriously questioned the role and work of the police. There were records of police being ignorant (lack of response) on charges of disturbing the peace and order at polling places, demolition of party headquarters and fights between opposing party activists. There were instances where the police tendentiously intervened.

In the context of legal violations of election legislation it should be mentioned that children and young people were systematically abused throughout the election campaign. The political parties sent children and youngsters in masses to attend party meetings and conventions, even at the time they were supposed to be at school. On the social networks children and youngsters appeared decorated with party symbols. Children and youngsters were flag bearers during the party events and while carrying out party activities. This was particularly noticeable at VMRO-DPMNE and DPA events, while minors with

shirts and other party symbols could be seen with the parties: VMRO-DPMNE, SDSM, DPA and DUI.

For the first time, CIVIL observers noted in these elections a serious of irregularities related to the political abuse of children or minors at the polling station no. 0337 in Gevgelija where the CIVIL Team observed minors who voted.

During the elections, government institutions and public administration were to a large extent put in function of the government, i.e. the governing parties and their electoral interests. Enhanced political activity of the public servants during the entire election process by performing party duties and tasks as their working tasks was observed.

Numerous remarks on irregularities in the election process, submitted by CIVIL to the State Election Commission, were treated only as “unbinding” information. They were not reviewed nor considered in the SEC assessment of the electoral process, nor in SEC decision making upon the submitted objections (based on the insight into the election material and other evidence, according to the Electoral Code). All that questioned the legal protection of the right to vote.



During the elections,
government authorities and
the public administration
were put in function
of those
in power



Don't skip pages!
I take you in custody!



The background image shows a scene of heavy police presence. In the foreground and middle ground, several police officers in full riot gear, including helmets and shields, are visible. Behind them, there are large, grey armored vehicles, likely riot vans. The scene appears to be outdoors, possibly at a polling station or a public gathering. The overall atmosphere is one of tension and security.

Use of Police

The massive presence of police forces, in some places with the presence of special units and armoured vehicles parked in front of polling stations, indicate tensions, lack of a democratic atmosphere, which is disturbing to voters. The presence of armed policemen at the polling stations was perceived particularly as problematic. This situation caused tension throughout the entire Election Day, especially on April 27.

According to our observers and other sources, an increased presence of the police was noted in Strumica, Tetovo, Bitola, Butel, Centre, Cair, Aerodrom and Aracinovo. The presence of armed policemen inside the premises of the polling places were noticed in Stip, Demir Kapija, Karpos, Aerodrom, Cair and Bitola.

In some cases the police actively exercised their power and took measures in relation to electoral events on Election Day. Thus, the mayor of Kumanovo, Zoran Damjanovski, an opposition figure, as well as several other activists of SDSM were arrested on April 26 and taken to the police station to be questioned, under the explanation that they violated the election silence. The candidate for parliamentary elections from the People's Movement of Macedonia party, Sase Ivanovski, was arrested on April 12, in Sveti Nikole for violating the election silence.

How the police was used for party purposes of the ruling party is stated in the report from Kumanovo issued at 2:30 pm, as of April 27: "Party activists of both DPMNE and SDSM are transporting voters to polling stations. Until 2:00 pm there were no incidents, but now the police began to stop and check the vehicles. The police stopped the vehicles transporting voters who are assumed to be SDSM voters, while those vehicles transporting voters for VMRO-DPMNE are being let go."

Political Pressure and Vote Buying

During these elections, CIVIL observers reported many examples and forms of pressure made on voters by political parties, especially by the parties in the governing coalition.

For example, during the election campaign a series of cases were registered in the Municipality of Veles in regards to pressure on voters. Among other things there have been cases where the monthly benefits payable to some welfare beneficiaries had been revoked given the explanation that they failed to promptly submit necessary documents – but the statements of the witnesses proved that most of these welfare beneficiaries were opposition followers or they belonged to the category of unbiased voters. Corruptive activities were also practised in this municipality by giving money to employees in a company under bankruptcy or by granting subsidies to grape vine growers.

Voters were bribed almost across the entire country. Our observers reported a 500 denars award for a vote in the presidential election and a 500.00,- denars award for a vote in the parliamentary elections, offered by the members of VMRO-DPMNE. This was noted in Strumica, Sveti Nikole, Kocani, Kicevo, Kumanovo, Bitola and Suto Orizari, but also in some other municipalities, the names of which will not be mentioned in this publication because our sources of information fear that if their identity is revealed they could become a victim of revenge. For these “stimulated” voters transportation has been organised from various locations to polling stations.

Political party activists of VMRO-DPMNE, SDSM, DUI and DPA were carrying voters with a variety of vehicles, including the case of the “party” tractor. Vehicles used for this purpose in Suto Orizari were marked with the party symbols of VMRO-DPMNE. Transportation of voters was organised in the following municipalities: Kicevo, Resen, Staro Nagoricane, Radovis, Veles, Demir Kapija, Gevgelija, Sveti Nikole, Kocani, Aerodrom and Gazi Baba in Skopje. In the Municipalities of Aerodrom and Gazi Baba lines with 20 vehicles filled with voters have been reported.

There were cases when “obedient” voters were not given money on hand, but were given tangible goods and vouchers for shopping in local stores, as in the case in Sveti Nikole where corrupted voters as compensation for supporting the candidates of a particular party were allowed to purchase market products worth 2,000 denars in the local store.

During the campaign there were employments and promises of jobs. Observers of CIVIL investigated the case of employments in “Jugohrom” from Tetovo before the elections. Employees at this plant claimed that they were put under great pressure in order to vote for the governing party.

There were also cases where voters were under various constraints. ID Cards of voters were collected by the police officers or by party activists of VMRO-DPMNE, in order to ensure voting in Suto Orizari, Kisela Voda, Bitola and Strumica municipalities.



Photo of a 500 MKD “voucher”; submitted to a CIVIL observer

Voting of prisoners

In the first as well as in the second round of elections, a convict imprisoned in Prilep was not registered in the Voter List and therefore could not exercise the right to vote. "Although the competent authority has taken responsibility to correct the mistake, it has not been done so far, claiming everything was done on their part. Last year I voted in prison, and this year, according to my wife, my name was in the Voter List of the place of my residence", says our source from prison.

CIVIL also noted inconsistencies in the voting procedure in the prison in Stip from where we received information that the prisoners were given suggestions for which party and candidate to vote for. Prisoners were bribed to vote for VMRO-DPMNE, and they have been rewarded for that with soap, two wafers and two razors. They were bribed with 100 grams of coffee, juice and waffles.

Similar irregularities in terms of prisoners voting were noted in the prison in Suto Orizari, Skopje.



Voters List

Questions regarding the scope and accuracy of the Voter List in Macedonia have been discussed for many years before, and this year the public inter-institutional debate more strongly addresses the issue in regards to who is competent for the preparation of an updated list of voters in the State. While the Ministry of Interior appoints the State Election Commission as being fully responsible for the preparation of the Voter List, Mr. Nikola Rilovski, the Commission President states that SEC has its “hands tied” when it comes to the Voter List because they can’t make any “additional check” on the validity of the data obtained from the competent authorities in the country.

Subject to article 41 of the Electoral Code it is the SEC that manages the Voter List, but pursuant to article 43 the Ministry of Internal Affairs provides SEC with the information on citizens aged over 18 with valid IDs as well as on deceased people, for persons who have moved in or moved out/to another municipality, or have their names or surnames changed, or gained citizenship or lost their citizenship or persons who temporarily work or reside abroad. This large scope of issues for which MOI is responsible raises dilemma about the reliability of the data available, but cannot be controlled by SEC. Consequently, even for these elections CIVIL has registered serious problems with voter records in all municipalities in the Republic of Macedonia in the two rounds of election. This system anomaly again casts a serious shadow on the electoral process as a whole.

The problems with the pressure on voters were conveyed in many different ways. For example, there is a large number of cases where voters could vote for parliamentary elections but their names were not in the Voter List for presidential elections and vice versa.

There are numerous reports from observers of CIVIL which state the fact about voters whose names were not in the Voter List. Some of the voters declare that their names appeared in the on-line version of the Voter List, but could not be found in the list when they went to vote at the polling place.

There were cases where voters voted for parliamentary elections in one municipality but were directed to another municipality to give their vote for the presidential candidate.

Phantom voters

Unfortunately, the Voters List in Macedonia has yet another rare specialty: it has voters who are registered in the Voter List, even they do not exist in reality - those voters are named by CIVIL as phantom voters. The two-week research carried out by CIVIL, based on the onsite reports issued by its observers, as well as reports of citizens and the work of the CIVIL journalist team, a conclusion can be made that several thousand cases of phantom voters exist who have no place of residence, but have IDs to addresses in Skopje, and their names appear in the Voter List. Some of these voters are people with Macedonian ethnic origin coming from the village Pustec, Albania, and some come from other municipalities in Macedonia.

The demographic “intervention” in the Macedonian elections was first revealed and documented by CIVIL and by some independent media during the local elections in 2013. The most visible manifestation of this rough manipulation occurred during the voting in the Municipality of Centre in Skopje. The same “phenomenon” was registered during these two elections this year. Even until today it is not fully known how these residents of Pustec, Albania, manage to have their names registered in the Voter List in Macedonia, but their presence is evident and is contributing to the electoral process in the country. Despite indications of CIVIL and those of independent media, and of the coalition government partner, DUI, no legal action has been taken to this date to clarify these issues.

This year, according to sources available to CIVIL, the Pustec voters first voted a day earlier in Tirana, Albania, in their capacity as members of the diaspora, and the next day crossed the border with Macedonia, carried by secured transportation under the coordination of a political party, to vote in Struga, Resen, Bitola, Kicevo and Skopje.

According to the report of the CIVIL observers at the polling station no. 1642 in Resen, four voters appeared there from Pustec, Albania. Their IDs stated that they lived on the street “Boris Kidric” BB in Resen. The street does exist, but the number of residence is unknown. The report of the CIVIL observer in Resen, recorded that most phantom voters were enrolled in this manner, only the street name was given, but not the number of the residence located on that street.

Our observers in Kicevo registered voting by persons from Pustec who on the Parliamentary Election Day at 13.00 hours were brought by bus near the polling station no. 0279, and where after distributed by cars at various locations across the municipality in order to vote. Fatmir Dehari, the Mayor of Kicevo, declared in his video statement for CIVIL that he witnessed the voting of people from Pustec in his municipality.

At the polling station no. 2849 in municipality of Centre a voter from Pustec came to vote with already marked thumbs of both hands. The members of the Election Board reacted and the voter escaped running out of the place.

A voter from Pustec having already marked thumbs attempted to vote in the Municipality Kisela Voda in Skopje (polling station no. 2849) and Pustec voters were witnessed at the primary school "Braka Miladinovci" in the municipality Aerodrom in Skopje, as well as at several polling stations in Butel Municipality. They have been brought and driven to all these locations by vans with license plates from Albania which has been documented with photographs.



Mihail Cakov street, Nr. 7, Kisela Voda

According to one CIVIL observer, on April 26, (Saturday), the day before the voting, ID cards had been distributed among people who are assumed to be from the Albanian village of Pustec in front of police station no. 1 (better known as Police Station "Beko") in the Municipality of Centre in Skopje.

Exactly how many of these "phantoms" voted during the electoral process, still remains unknown but their number was hundreds of thousands of people, and with careful planning and deployment of their votes as "additions" to the votes at polling stations and electoral units they can seriously affect the outcome of the elections. Just to mention that these election deviations at

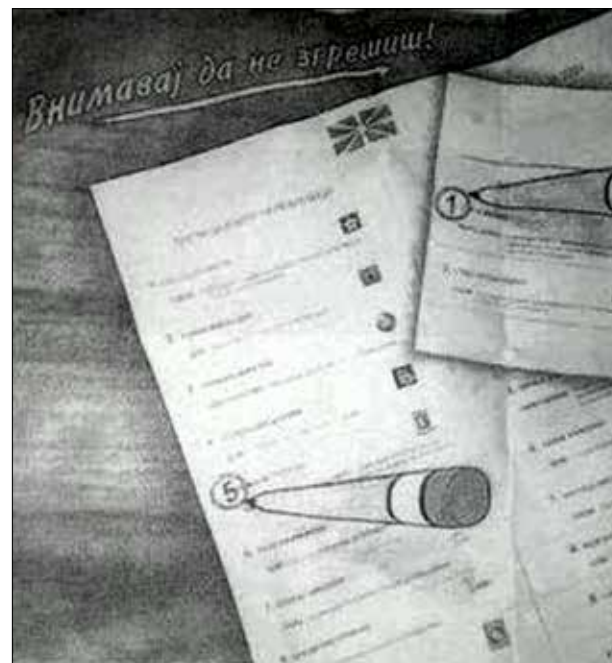
least partly refer to the problems with the marker where the mark may be deleted immediately after voting for part of voters who have already performed it. All these cases have been registered by observers of CIVIL in the first round of presidential elections and on the election day of the second round of the parliamentary elections. This problem has been registered in everywhere in Macedonia.

Here, we present some typical examples of the multitude of “phantom” cases that exist as well as “invented” voters..

On the Skopje Street “Peter Deljan” in the Municipality of Kisela Voda in Skopje it was discovered that in multi-storey buildings with two entrances and 17 apartments per entrance (respectively 34 residential flats in each building), according to the Voter List several more entrances and flats had been “added”: each entrance is shared by 25 flats and every building has more that two entrances. Hence, multi-storey building no. 11 located on the above-mentioned street has nine entrances according to the Voter List, although the onsite inspection of CIVIL confirmed the existence of only two entrances to the building. A similar situation was detected with buildings no. 1 and no. 7. Although there isn’t any building no. 10 located on the street “Peter Deljan”, nevertheless it is included in the Voter List with a multitude of “tenants-voters” in it.

Furthermore, the building located on the street “Mihael Cakov” no. 7 in the Municipality of Kisela Voda in Skopje has in reality only three entrances, while in the Voter List there are six! According to the information which the observers and journalists of CIVIL came across, 15 persons were discovered to be registered in the Voter List as residents at that street although the addresses of their residences do not exist at all.

Moreover, for a family which lives in one of the flats of the building located on the street “Puskinova” no.



Voting
“instructions”

2, the Voter List contains four more members of a certain family Pancevski on that address even though they have never lived at that address. "We don't know how this family came to be registered at the address of our apartment. We reported this everywhere, but nothing happened, "said the resident of" Puskinova ", on whose address four more voters were registered in the Voter List.

Civil encountered a similar situation in another flat in the same building ("Puskinova" no. 2). There lives a family of four members, whereas in the Voter List there are seven members. A certain family Petrusovski was registered there as well. "We do not know who these people are. The police come once and checked, and we told them that they do not live in this apartment", said the resident of the "Puskinova" street.

The building no. 2 at the "Puskinova" street has two entrances, but the Voter List states that the building has three entrances. From the third, non-existent entrance, there are about thirty (30) voters enrolled in the Voter List. According to sources in the field, some of them have foreign names and surnames.

These and similar incidents which were registered occurred in the Municipality of Centre in Skopje, on the streets "Aminta III", "Miroslav Krleza", "Orce Nikolov", "Franklin Roosevelt", "Crvena Voda", "Dimitrie Cupovski" (former "Veljko Vlahovic"), "Maksim Gorki", "Nikola Trimpare", "Kiro Krstevski-Platnik",

"Kole Nedelkovski", "Petar Poparsov", "Stale Popov", "Svetinikolska", "Vasil Gjorgov" and boulevards "Ilinden", "VMRO" and "Straso Pindzur". From this large number of phantom voters discovered in Centre Municipality - and who knows how many undiscovered - one gets the impression that in this municipality in Skopje someone has been practicing forgery voting from previous local elections.

For example, according to the Voter List in the apartment no. 27 at the address "Vasil Gjorgov" Street no. 24 dozens of people live there and all are eligible to vote! CIVIL inspected the site and even from the front door, which was virtually de-



Pustec in the Municipality of Butel

stroyed, you can immediately notice that the apartment is vacant and nobody lives there. When we asked the neighbours they testified that “no one lives here for 20 years.”

On the left side of the street “Naroden Front” in the neighborhood named Kapistec, in the Municipality of Centre, there are multi-storey residential buildings with odd numbers, while on the right side of the street there are no houses, but several restaurants, car washes and one mounting parking garage. According to reports of CIVIL observers and statements of citizens, residential buildings on the right side of the street are included in the Voter List.

Over 20 people are reported to live in the “Kiro Krstevski - Platnik” Street no. 11, all with voting rights. When CIVIL visited this address, a middle-aged man opened the door who said that he was aware that about thirty (30) people had been reported to live in his apartment, but he did not make any notification on that.

Phantom voters were detected in the Municipality of Aerodrom. The buildings on the “ASNOM” street no. 3, 5 and 7 (polling station no. 2708), “Vladimir Komarov” Street no. 81 (polling station no. 2686) and “Kosta Novakovic” Street no. 21 and 51 (polling stations no. 2687 and 2688) - in reality do not exist. The person with initials M.Ch. who allegedly lives at this address, boulevard “Jane Sandanski” no. 60/2/18 Municipality Aerodrom is enrolled in the Voter List at the polling station no. 2754, although flat no. 18 does not exist at that address.

The existence of phantom voters in the Voter List before the first round of presidential elections run is witnessed in the municipalities of Ohrid, Resen, Kicevo, Bitola and Kumanovo. For example, CIVIL observer in Bitola reported that one person had voted presenting his/her ID with the address of residence on “Mirce Acev” street no. 31-A, although after checking the site it was discovered that no one lives at that street and that number of residence.

Observers of CIVIL registered cases in which some voters could not exercise their right to vote because someone else has already signed as a voter in the Voter List instead of them. Such are the cases in Kumanovo (polling station no. 1000/1), in Gazi Baba Municipality in Skopje (polling station no. 2505) and many other polling stations.

⁷ CIVIL publicized witness videos on www.civil.org.mk

Even members of the election boards faced voters who had ID cards with the same address as their residential address. Such a case was registered in Bitola with two voters at the same address "Vtori August" no. 31 - identical to the address of residence of a member of the electoral board of the polling station no. 0060. The same happened in Prilep, where a voter lives at the address that matches the one of the election board member of the polling station no. 1414. Notwithstanding the objections, the person was still allowed to vote.






Misconduct of the election boards members

Reading out the voters' names loudly for their identification has become almost common experience in the Macedonian electoral practice although it is prohibited by law. In the village Studenicani, however, the people who were reported to be ill on the day when sick and bedridden persons should vote were given only paper ballots for parliamentary elections by the members of the Election Commission. When some of the voters requested to vote for presidential candidates as well, members of the Election Board replied that these elections are insignificant.

One voter from the village Opae was told by a member of the Election Board that he would regret voting for a presidential candidate, which he did despite many persuasions not to do so. No marker pens were ever used in the village Neraste for those who exercised the right to vote.

At the polling station no. 2146 in Veles, after the intervention of the President of the Election Board, all Election Board members signed the minutes before the counting of paper ballots ended.

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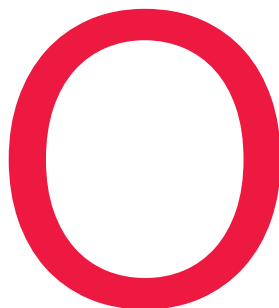
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Open ballot



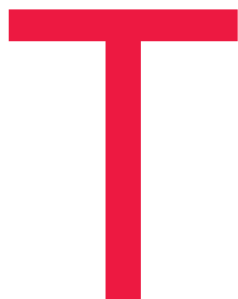
Open ballot practice which is illegal was registered in Bitola by CIVIL observers at polling station no. 0120/1, in the Municipality of Gorce Petrov in Skopje at polling stations no. 2570 and no. 2568, in the village Studenichani at polling station no. 2341, and in Kicevo at polling station no. 0279 (in the village Lisicani).

In the village Cresevo, Municipality of Gazi Baba in Skopje, Voter Lists and paper ballots were taken out of the polling station and brought to the car parked in front of the polling place. The driver himself circled the favouring candidate of the paper ballots. Afterwards the lists and the paper ballots were returned back

at the polling place.

In Studenichani it was noted that the voting booths were turned next to the wall, so that anyone from the front door could see which candidate was chosen by the voter.

Family and group voting



The cases of family and group voting, and the abuse of the legally foreseen assistance during voting are registered in 37 polling stations in the following municipalities: Aracinovo, Bitola, Veles, Gevgelija, Gradsko, Demir Kapija, Demir Hisar, Karpos, Kisela Voda, Kicevo, Kocani, Kumanovo, Prilep, Probistip, Rankovce, Resen, Sveti Nikole, Staro Nagoricane, Studenichani, Cair, Stip and Suto Orizari.

One voter at the polling place no. 2346 in Studenichani presented 7 IDs and was given seven paper ballots by the Election Board after which he voted without any interference.

In Radovis, with permission from the Election Board, one person voted instead of 30 people who claimed to be illiterate.



The response of institutions

To the numerous shortcomings in the organisation and execution of the elections, as well as many cases of violations of the Electoral Law and other laws during the presidential and early parliamentary elections in 2014, which CIVIL publicly and argumentatively indicated, government authorities and the ruling VMRO-DPMNE party responded with severe and politically motivated attacks against CIVIL and with personal disqualifications and hate speech against the president of CIVIL, Xhabir Deralla.

There were no other (relevant) responses. The institutions that were asked to respond to these serious doubts about the flaws and irregularities during the electoral process, generally denied the existence thereof, passing the responsibility to each other or attributed the causes to the problem to other times or other officials.

Thus, the Ministry of Interior has repeatedly shifted the responsibility to the State Election Commission, but on one occasion placed the responsibility on other times, citing legal responsibility for decisions made during the reign of SDSM, more than eight years ago, or on previous administrations of MOI, at the time of SDSM, of course. The Ministry of Interior, although it admitted the existence of 54 “phantom” voters in the municipality of Kisela Voda, severely attacked CIVIL and expressed discreditable attributes to this organisation claiming that it is misleading the public!

The Communication Centre of VMRO-DPMNE, on the official website of the party on several occasions tried to discredit CIVIL and its leadership and described them as a “Sorosoidal” organisation which supports the opposition.

The portal “Courier”, as well as several others portals that are similar to the previous according to their editorial policy and known by their implicit loyalty to the ruling VMRO-DPMNE, continuously tried to discredit the work of CIVIL using the hate speech and slander. A good illustration of this dirty propaganda is the article published at noonday on the election day of the second round of presidential and early parliamentary elections, in which the president of CIVIL, Xhabir Deralla in “treacherous” context is qualified as “Albanian”, “Sorosoid”, “Protector of the Albanians’ rights”, “Protector of gay rights” and as a “striking fist of the opposition SDSM party.”⁸

⁸ <http://kurir.mk/makedonija/vesti/156094-Koja-e-nevlatinata-Civil>

Violence

The violence during these elections was present more as a latent threat throughout the electoral process, although on several occasions, cases of violence have been registered in the most direct physical form.

For example, such a case is an attack of a leader of one party in the governing coalition, Amdi Bajram, to the vice president of the opposition SDSM party, Radmila Sekerinska at the first round of elections on April 13, at the premises of a polling station at the primary school "Braka Ramiz Hamid" in municipality of Suto Orizari in Skopje.

A physical attack was noted of the activists of VMRO-DPMNE to the activists accompanying Stevo Pendarovski, the presidential candidate, during the election campaign between the two rounds, on April 16, at "Gjorgi Kapcev" street in Lisice settlement, Aerodrom Municipality in Skopje.

During the election process and even on the election days a dozen fights and minor physical confrontations or kicking and pushing among party activists in Plasnica, Strumica, Kumanovo, Lubanci, Brnjarci village, Radisani and Gazi Baba were registered.

A particularly symptomatic incident that should be mentioned is the fight that took place in Radisani on April 13. There, the activists of VMRO-DPMNE physically attacked an Albanian family which is an apparent example of ethnic violence, an ethnic hate case. For this incident, the police did not react promptly.



Pressures on Civil's observers

During these elections, we have registered 21 cases in total of obstructions made to CIVIL observers during election days on April 13, and on April 27. The work of the observers was obstructed in the way that their access to the polling station was not allowed, the police unlawfully applied identification procedure rules, disinformation was spread, and there were cases of attempted threats and assaults on our observers. In one of the cases where our observers were verbally abused, the assaults were expressed on an ethnic basis.

In many cases, our observers were endlessly interrogated by members of election commissions or observers and activists of the ruling party, only to be treated with derision. In most cases of obstructions, the members of election commissions and even in three cases, the police officers were requesting additional documents from our observers thus breaching the Observers Code of Conduct. When we referred to the Observers Code of Conduct, they usually stepped back.

In two cases, when our observer was removed from the polling station under unsustainable excuses, our observers were admitted again after CIVIL got involved and phoned the SEC. We do not know what happened at the time when our observers were out of the polling place at which they were deployed.

In two separate cases attempted physical attacks on our observers were registered. There were attempts of physical attacks on our observers in municipalities of Suto Orizari and Strumica.

Especially indicative is the case in Strumica. A group of angry activists of the ruling party verbally abused and threatened with physical attack two CIVIL observers. Although they sought police protection, the police rejected their assistance. Our team managed to pull out thanks to some well-meaning and kind citizens who happened to be bystanders at the scene of the incident.

Although CIVIL made a notification to SEC and showed its reaction in public and in the media, SEC responded neither to this nor to the application submitted by CIVIL for disturbing the work of their legally registered and accredited observers.

Civil and SEC

The State Election Commission (SEC) will not consider irregularities nor review the commentaries thereon which were sent by the NGO CIVIL on Election Day. The Commission will consider the comments of CIVIL only as information and therefore cannot make any decision thereon. This was stated by the Chairman of SEC, Nikola Rilkovski, at one of their press conferences.

“We have received many objections from the NGO CIVIL, but for us it is only supplying the informative material. We may not treat them as relevant data on which we can specifically discuss. We will only decide on what we receive as the official data from the complaints”, said Rilkovski.

Vice-President of SEC, Subhi Jakupi, for CIVIL Media states that the organisation of CIVIL is not an active subject in the election and it is the political parties only which can use the observations indicated by CIVIL.

“You are not active players during elections, although you have observers. Your reports are not binding on us to respond, they are just information. We have no obligation to react. Political parties within 48 hours can take your remarks as information and react,” stated Jakupi.

CIVIL has submitted an application to SEC which contained nearly 250 cases of irregularities noticed on Election Day. Two comment letters and the report on irregularities were submitted to the SEC during the pre-election campaign, and a day after the election day of the first round of elections.



Post-elections observation

Fear, shutting down of the only source of income for opponents and frequent inspections could be seen in a number of municipalities in the post-election period. Civil Mobile Team visited 15 communities across the state and recorded numerous examples of human destinies and talked to people fearing for their existence because they thought differently or during the election did not act as they had been instructed by the government.

One of such examples of human destinies is that with the family SJ in the municipality in South-Eastern Macedonia, who were literally left without any means of support exactly one day after the election. The only income that the four-member family had was from a small shop in the city, with an income to only barely survive. Speaking anonymously, under the current circumstances, this family decided to tell us their story, the only reason being – they were not members of the governing party. The next day, after the elections on April 27, a prominent member of VMRO-DPMNE from the Municipality came to visit the family.

“This is a small city, we all know each other. Everybody knows that we are not members of VMRO-DPMNE and because of that we have always been ‘a thorn in the eye’. The man came into our shop and addressed us with the words: “Your relationship with SDSM is not very smart thing. It will be smarter for you now to close the shop,” says SJ.

The family was shocked and disbelieved what they heard. Their local shop worked for more than a decade.

“We did not know what to do. We have had pressures before, but now what we heard was staggering. We knew that the inspection would be at our door the next day, and if the inspectors want to find something - they will do. I told my husband, they cannot harm us more than this, close the shop. We decided to give up the only source that brings income in our home. We are now left with nothing. I hope they are happy now and will no longer disturb us,” says the wife in tears.

Members of the Civil Mobile Team described this and many other situations they heard about at the meetings they had with citizens in Macedonia by the expression “rule of fear”.

The case illustrated here is a typical one out of dozens of cases which the Mobile Team recorded in its short tour across the country.

It may sound strange for a man to abandon his existence just because of one threat, but from what Civil Mobile Team saw, this post-election atmosphere becomes a “normal” living environment in the small cities in the country. “Better to close the shop than to endure threats to my children or be stressed and under pressures facing inspections every day”, bitterly emphasised SJ to the members of the Civil Mobile Team before leaving.

These and similar cases of post-election pressures and threats were recorded by Civil Mobile Teams in the post-election observations in Stip, Strumica, Kavadarci, Prilep, Bitola, Resen, Ohrid, Gevgelija, Struga, Kicevo, Tetovo, Gostivar, Brvenica, Kocani and Negotino. Immediately after the election, the local and state public service inspectors were sent in a political “punishment” campaign in pharmacies, small stores, barber shops and other small businesses in already impoverished areas. Smaller businesses, citizens say, are first on the list of this campaign in the post-election period.

The impression among the people is that even the electricity cut-off immediately after the election is selective, reported CIVIL observers based on testimonies of people.

“If you’re not with them, you will have no electricity. If you’re with them, they will look away”, said our source.

From all meetings that the Civil Mobile Team had with the citizens, the observers noted indications of prolonged pressure on citizens and widespread fear. In many cases, people are afraid to speak out, and if they decide to do, they select the meeting place and time very carefully, asking for anonymity as they fear revenge.

The Mobile Team noticed revenge on those who did not vote, or on those who did not support in any way the ruling coalition parties during the elections. An increase in the number of party employments in the post-election period is noticeable, including employments with the private companies that are under pressure from the ruling party.

After the election, especially in smaller communities, the government propaganda machine widely promoted the image of VMRO-DPMNE as unbeatable party. It is accompanied by calls to the citizens to join the ruling party and become its members. If they do not do it, the citizens are threatened to lose their jobs or other legal benefits that they rightfully enjoy.

In the weeks after the election, many farmers were pending payment of subventions that were promised before the election. Farmers feel anxiety because there is still no sign that this will happen.

Many volunteers in the public administration hope to obtain permanent employment. Only some of them will be employed, in fact only those who have fully performed the party activities, including creation of the lists of "guaranteed voters" during the electoral process.

One-two-three...
Let's all sing together!
Denes nad Makedonija
se ragja novo sonce na
slobodata...

Today, new sun of freedom is born over Macedonia...



Teams of Civil - Center for Freedom, volunteers and activists, colleagues from many other NGOs accross the country, as well as many citizens, made their personal and professional commitment to the Free Elections 2014 project. At the cost of many detriments and risks, our main objectives were the facts and the truth. The need for democratic, free and nonviolent elections is overwhelming in order to ensure rule of law and respect for human rights and freedoms. This project has left a testimony to a turbulent time and a deep political crisis in the recent history of the Republic of Macedonia.

Implementation, methodology and support to the Free Elections 2014 project

The “Free Elections 2014” project has provided a long-term monitoring and analysis of the political situation and social processes in the context of elections. Different teams of CIVIL have collected an extensive material with information obtained from their daily monitoring of the situation throughout the country. This material, systematised and subject to a comprehensive analysis, may serve as evidence for the situation in the Republic of Macedonia and as a document that can be used as a basis for further researches, as well as a guide to positive change in the society and state.

The monitoring, media work and analysis provided by CIVIL provided politically unbiased, objective and neutral information about the electoral process and related political processes and events in the period from November 2013 to the end of May 2014.

Long time before the project commenced, CIVIL has established a team of long-term observers who worked as volunteers until the project commenced. As soon as the project started, the team of long-term observers increased and a team of short-term observers was established. Furthermore, mobile teams were created to monitor and provide support, and their role among other things, was to check the facts presented by observers and support observers who were suppressed as well as visit the regions where excessive number of election irregularities had been identified.

The observers were from all over Macedonia, and they were deployed in other parts of the country but not in their communities.

Hereto we will give a reduced description of the methodology, which nevertheless, contains much more detail and is built on the basis of CIVIL experience gained from research projects and observations performed during electoral processes over the past years.

The monitoring process itself includes elements of research work, individual and group interviews, communication with parties concerned and a range of other actions which provide a complete insight into the situation and individual cases that have been detected. Every observer was obliged to deliver at least two reports during the week of the pre-election campaign, while on election days they were

required to submit a report to the CIVIL analytical team every two hours or even more frequently. The submitted reports were completed application forms in electronic or paper form, and phone reports in a 24-hour basis.

CIVIL has design the website Free elections for reporting the irregularities in Macedonian, Albanian and English language , available to all citizens. The applications from citizens were verified by the mobile teams for monitoring and support to CIVIL.

Concurrently to these structures that have established to monitor and regularly submit their findings, CIVIL has created a journalist desk within the organisational unit of CIVIL Media. This team of professional journalists followed the daily operation of the monitoring teams and selected the articles out of the material which was delivered to the analytical team of CIVIL.

Journalists followed the track of information contained in the material delivered by observers of CIVIL and conducted research independently from the work of the monitoring teams. Moreover, the journalists from CIVIL Media made a number of video interviews with experts and offered equal space to the candidates from political parties who participated in the election race. Additionally, the redaction published numerous other articles, analysis and commentary with reference to the electoral process.

All articles were published on a redesigned website of CIVIL (www.civil.org.mk) as well on other online channels of the organization following the requirements set out by the Creative Commons, and any publication thereof was allowed and costless for all other media. In that sense, there were over 500 downloads of the articles published by CIVIL by the media in the country and abroad.

A special Public Relations team was created the assignment of which was to organise press conferences and media briefings and promote the activities of CIVIL Media online which brought about the public awareness of the electoral culture to increase and strengthen.

The CIVIL Public Relations Team organised more than twenty press conferences and held about a hundred (100) individual briefings for the period of three months. Moreover, CIVIL opened a press centre in the GEM Club in Skopje on the election days which operated for 17 hours, and the media appearances were available via live video streaming provided by the MOF radio team.

During the implementation of the project and particularly on the election days the support from the experts of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia was more than appreciated.

¹ www.slobodniizbori.info, www.zgjedhjetelira.info, www.freeelections.info

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Great and significant support to this project was provided by a large number of citizens and civil society organisations which generously offered their assistance to CIVIL teams in terms of information, logistics and moral support encouraging them to persevere in their efforts.

CIVIL - Centre for Freedom with the project "Free Elections 2014" tried to contribute to creating democratic, free and non-violent environment for elections and establishing the respect for the rule of law and for the human rights and freedom. This project will be a witness of a turbulent time and of a deep political crisis in the recent history of Macedonia.



The impact of Civil on the Internet

The website of CIVIL was upgraded with the latest version of software and accessories which enable users to enrich their experience. A series of modifications were made, optimisations and redesign, it is adjustable to all electronic devices (desktop computers, laptops, tablets, smart phones, etc.). We made endeavours and guarantee successful delivery of articles regardless of the access of the users – while walking, on the bus, in the favourite coffee shop, at the office desk or at home - always just one click.

Apart from the official website of the organisation, CIVIL has designed a special multilingual website for the project “Free Elections2014”, launched just before the elections. On the website the citizens were able to report electoral irregularities, to get informed about their voting rights and to watch live videos of our press conferences held on election days or search later our video archive.

This tool has proved to be extremely productive for dissemination of the presented data at the press conferences held by CIVIL among the media and journalists who because of the volume of their work during the election days could not manage to attend the press conferences at the press centre but they followed then live via the website.

More than 500 headlines in media refer to CIVIL.

The statistics for April and May, when CIVIL Media was fully engaged, over 35,000 visits were recorded or interactions of the audience with the websites of CIVIL, while the number of individual pages that were viewed exceeds 80,000, or two pages an average per visit. Approximately 88% of visitors were from the Republic of Macedonia, while the remaining 12% from 93 countries in the world. Going deeper into demographic statistics about the visitors from the Republic of Macedonia, the most numerous are the visits from Skopje (66%), Bitola (9%) and Stip (6%), while the total number of cities in-country and abroad from where internet addresses of Civil were accessed exceeded 940. The majority or 77% of the

visitors used their personal computers to access, and 23% accessed through their tablets and smart phones.

Social networks played a key role in animating the public and generating traffic to websites. In fact, almost 66% of the visits were made through links shared by friends and followers of users, of which 97% on Facebook, less than 3% on Twitter and an insignificant percentage on other networks (Google+, LinkedIn, etc.). The remaining traffic comes from direct visits to our web addresses (20%), limited browses to search engines (8%), reference links from other websites (5%) and 1% from other sources.

One of the most popular articles published by the information desk according to the number of visits is a story titled "Thousands of Voters Revealed in Centre" created by the journalist Meri Jordanovska from the CIVIL Media Team, posted on April 25, 2014 with 2784 visits, and shared 428 times.

The second most popular publication is the "Video: Voters Buy Off" made on April 20, 2014 by one of the observers of CIVIL. The article was viewed by 2045 visitors, and shared 355 times.

The third place belongs to the unpopular "Statement of the Ombudsman Ixhet Memeti for the irregularities during voting in prisons" published on April 26, 2014. The article had 1701 visits, and was shared 244 times.

These publications on our website besides being visited and shared, they also generated great interest in the media, which have been regularly briefed by CIVIL by sending them daily newsletter with articles published by the information desk of CIVIL Media.

Large video production for the project "Free Elections 2014", which was placed on the internet through YouTube Channel of CIVIL also proved to be a popular and attractive media to the public. The uploaded videos had 35,000 views, and the visitors have spent more than a hundred thousand minutes for viewing.



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