



YERKIR

Union of NGO for Repatriation and Settlement
Union d'ONG pour le Rapatriement et la Réinsertion
Союз общественных организаций «Еркир» по репатриации и освоению
Հայրենադարձության եւ հիմնավորման կազմակերպությունների միություն

Press-release
June 2, 2010

JAVAKHETI ARMENIANS BOYCOTTED THE ELECTIONS OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT BODIES OF GEORGIA

On May 30, 2010 the elections of local self-government bodies of Georgia were held under the conditions of their actual boycott by the Javakheti Armenians. Although according to the official figures the turnout of the voters in the Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda districts was 72% and 75% respectively, the actual turnout, according to the opinion of local and international observers was much lower, less than 20%. The local organizations protecting the rights of the Javakheti Armenians also made statements on non-recognition of the rigged elections.

The Javakheti Armenians by their actual non-participation in the elections have expressed their attitude towards the policy of repression that has been undertaken by the Georgian authorities in Javakheti in recent years, the policy the main elements of which are:

- Condemnation of the Javakheti Armenian political activist Vahagn Chakhalyan to 10 years of imprisonment on the basis of trumped-up charges, illegal large-scale persecutions of the Javakheti Armenian activists;
- Control of Georgian law enforcement agencies over the social and political life of Javakheti;
- Refusal to register local Armenian political organizations, defending the rights of the Javakheti Armenians;
- Flagrant violation of socio-political, linguistic, educational, cultural and religious rights of the Javakheti Armenians, guaranteed by the international standards of protection of the rights of national minorities.

It has already become apparent that by rigging the results of local elections in Javakheti the Georgian authorities contributed to further deepening the alienation of Javakheti Armenians from the internal politics of Georgia, - thus increasing further the misunderstanding gap between the authorities and the Armenian community.

This is a situation fraught with peril and unpredictable consequences, of which "Yerkir" Union has been signaling for a long time now. However, the attention and interest shown towards the alert signals of our organization by the international organizations and relevant structures of the United States and European Union have not yet led to concrete and efficient steps aimed at improvement of the excising situation.

In terms of flagrant violations of basic human rights of the Javakheti Armenians, in this case - the right to free and fair representation in the local government, - failure of international institutions and partner countries of Georgia to react will only exacerbate the frustration of the Armenian community of the country to democratic values and procedures, will further strengthen the processes retreat of democracy in the region as a whole. Avoiding this scenario of the development of the situation is the direct responsibility of all States and organizations interested in stability in the South Caucasus region.