

PRESS RELEASE

Promo-LEX is deeply concerned by the harassment and intimidation of members, observers, reporters and supporters of the Russian election monitoring organization Golos.

Furthermore, Promo-LEX is profoundly disappointed by the unilateral decision of the Russian authorities to open polling stations on Moldova's territory at variance with the norms of international law and against the will of Moldova's legitimate authorities.

The non-governmental organization Golos has been carrying out short-term and long-term election monitoring missions in Russia since 2000. Golos has been conducting its work in full conformity with the Russian legislation, being properly registered as a non-governmental organization, and receiving funding according to democratic rules, in a transparent manner and from open sources, offered by various international donors. These sources don't differ from country to country or from organization to organization, are regarded as assistance and support in various areas and are greatly appreciated by the states and a modern and civilized civil society. Moreover, Golos has an irreproachable reputation at national and international level (being a member of the European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (ENEMO) and of the Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM)).

Just a few days before the elections on 4 December 2011, Golos has been subjected to coordinated pressures by governmental structures. Those actions have been directed exclusively against the image and reputation of the organization Golos, against its independent activity, specifically taking the form of obstacles in monitoring the elections and counting votes.

At the same time, Promo-LEX Association is profoundly upset by the unilateral decision announced on 28 November 2011 by the

Russian Embassy in the Republic of Moldova to open 25 polling stations on Moldova's territory, at variance with the norms of international law and against the will of Moldova's legitimate authorities. Promo-LEX Association is also concerned that the great majority of these stations – 24 – will be opened on a territory that is not under the control of Moldova's legitimate authorities, in the Transnistrian region, which once again compromises the status of the Russian Federation as a mediator, peace-keeper and impartial negotiator in the Transnistrian settlement format.

We draw attention to the fact that the right of Russian citizens to vote is guaranteed by Russia's legislation, and Russian authorities are obliged to make maximum efforts to ensure the exercise of this right. Thus, we are certain that conducting of elections on a territory which is not under the control of legitimate authorities, where basic elements for the recognition and validation of results are missing, may partially or totally compromise the outcome of elections in Russia.

Furthermore, Promo-LEX Association calls the attention of the Russian authorities, Russian citizens residing in the Republic of Moldova and of all those concerned to the fact that according to the Russian federal legislation the Embassy was required to open the polling stations 50 days before election day. The Russian Embassy had the possibility to use a legal method, which is also used in the Russian Federation, and allow voters to exercise their right to vote starting 15 days prior to election day.

This way, the Embassy had the legal possibility to extend the period to exercise one's right to vote from 12 hours to 15 days, specifically by using the method of sending a mobile ballot box in localities which are controlled by legitimate authorities. This would have been in compliance with Moldo-Russian bilateral agreements, with international law principles, with Moldova's sovereignty and integrity, and with

the human rights law. It should be remarked that the Russian Embassy used this method on the territory controlled by Moldova's legitimate authorities (in the towns of Comrat and Balti) only for a period of 12 hours.

In connection with the formulated concerns and regrets, Promo-LEX Association is asking the Russian Embassy to convey to the federal authorities of Russia the following requests:

1. To stop the harassment and intimidation campaign against the members, observers, reporters and supporters of the Russian organization Golos;
2. To abide by the legislation of Moldova, the norms of international law and the principle of mutual respect when initiating procedures of opening polling stations in the Republic of Moldova, including the Transnistrian region;
3. To use legal methods of exercising one's right to vote, such as mobile ballot boxes and advanced voting, and to ensure that such violations do not repeat themselves during Russia's presidential elections which are scheduled for March 2012.

Sources for additional details:

<http://www.golos.org/news/4492>

<http://www.mfa.gov.md/comunicate-presa-md/489833/>

http://www.moldova.mid.ru/press-slujba/pr_10_129.htm

European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations[1] (ENEMO) expresses its support to the "GOLOS" as an organization and its members and fully seconds the activities that are part of the organizations' mission to work on the development of the democratic processes.

[1] <http://www.enemo.eu/>