

Outgoing president Ilham Aliyev re-elected for a third mandate in Azerbaijan

Corinne Deloy

Translated by Helen Levy

Results

Outgoing president of the Republic Ilham Aliyev (New Azerbaijan Party, YAP) was re-elected on 9th October during the presidential election in Azerbaijan. In office since 2003, taking over from his father, Heydar, who led the country almost non-stop between 1969 and 2003, he will now be undertaking a third five year term as head of the country.

According to still partial results Ilham Aliyev won 85% of the vote against 5% for his main opponent Jamil Hasanli, the National Council of Democratic Forces' candidate. The opposition, which mainly boycotted the previous presidential election on 15th October 2008 came to agreement this time to support a joint candidate. After the Electoral Commission's refusal to register Rustam Ibragimbe-kov because of his dual Russian/Azerbaijani nationality, historian and former MP Jamil Hasanli was chosen to stand for the opposition.

Turnout was slightly lower than in the previous presidential election: 72% (-3.64 points).

Ilham Aliyev focused his campaign on his results, the promise of stability and continued economic progress. Azerbaijan, a country with a wealth of natural gas and crude oil, is famous for its sharp economic growth. The GDP has risen from 850\$ to 7,850\$ over the past 10 years, i.e. the greatest increase by this indicator in the world. Baku recorded 5% growth of its GDP in the first half of 2013. The country is suffering however from a lack of diversification in terms of its economy and from its dependence on hydrocarbons. Many experts say that the probable decline in revenues from oil will cause discontent amongst the population, which the authorities might find difficult to contain. Hence over the last few months claims have been made by society notably against corruption and an increase in inequality.

The opposition forces noted some irregularities, notably ballot stuffing. "Fraud took place across the entire country," declared Jamil Hasanli. "The opposition does not acknowledge the results of this presidential election which was neither free nor fair," stressed the opposition's chief of staff. More than 55,000 local and international obser-

vers monitored the election [1]. On 3rd October last the European Union said it was concerned about the "pressure" placed on the opposition, civil society and the independent media and by "recent developments in Azerbaijan which had affected both the pre-electoral period, the respect of Human Rights and political freedom," according to the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton and the Commissioner for Enlargement Stefan Füle, who spoke of "intimidation, arrests based on questionable charges and convictions which did not respect international standards."

"Many people are upset about the unequal distribution of oil revenues, of the arbitrary, the lack of access to education and quality healthcare. But the opposition was unable to transform this discontent into any real movement of protest," analyses Togrul Djuvarly, a political expert and head of the National Public Committee for European Integration. "Although the political system is not democratic Ilham Aliyev does not have any credible adversary," stresses Alex Nice, a Caucasus specialist at the Economist Independence

1. <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/106908>

Unit. Finally Leyla Yunus, chair of the Peace and Democracy Institute indicates that the lack of any

"middle class capable of making any claims" explains in part the present situation in Azerbaijan.

02

You can read all of our publications on our site:
www.robert-schuman.eu

Publishing Director: Pascale JOANNIN

THE FONDATION ROBERT SCHUMAN, created in 1991 and acknowledged by State decree in 1992, is the main French research centre on Europe. It develops research on the European Union and its policies and promotes the content of these in France , Europe and abroad. It encourages, enriches and stimulates European debate thanks to its research, publications and the organisation of conferences. The Foundation is presided over by Mr. Jean-Dominique Giuliani.