

PA launches election observation in Turkey, meeting with officials and stakeholders



Ignacio Sanchez Amor and Margareta Cederfelt in Istanbul, 26 October.

As part of the OSCE PA's observation of the 1 November early parliamentary elections in Turkey, senior parliamentarians and staff are holding meetings in several cities across Turkey this week. Ignacio Sanchez Amor (MP, Spain), appointed as Special Co-ordinator and leader of the OSCE short-term observer mission, and Margareta Cederfelt (MP, Sweden), Head of the OSCE PA observer delegation, began their observation in Istanbul on Monday, continuing on to Erzurum and Diyarbakir respectively.

Supported by Director of Elections Andreas Baker and Programme Officer Loic Poulain, Sanchez Amor and Cederfelt held a series of meetings with the Governors of

Erzurum and Diyarbakir, senior representatives from the election administration, political parties, as well as journalists, analysts, representatives of civil society groups, and ODIHR long-term observers in the various regions.

The meetings focused particularly on issues already addressed by OSCE observers in the preliminary post-election statement from the 7 June 2015 parliamentary elections. In particular, freedom of expression and media were raised by interlocutors as an important issue. The observation mission for the 1 November elections is the fourth mission that the OSCE PA has deployed to Turkey. The PA observed the parliamentary elections in 2011 and June 2015, and Turkey's first-ever direct presidential election, held in 2014.

The OSCE PA observer mission consists of almost 50 parliamentarians and staff, who will be thoroughly briefed in Ankara before deploying to several cities across the country for election day. The OSCE PA is working closely with observers from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and with the limited election observation mission deployed by the OSCE/ODIHR.

Combating anti-Semitism in focus at event hosted by Special Rep Cardin

United States Senator Ben Cardin, the OSCE PA's Special Representative on Anti-Semitism, Racism, and Intolerance, hosted an event last week in Washington featuring youth from diverse communities leading efforts to combat anti-Semitism. Speakers at the 20 October event, "Conversation on Combating Anti-Semitism in Europe," included Jane Braden-Golay, the outgoing head of the European Union of Jewish Students; Siavosh Derakhti, head of Young People Against Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia in Sweden; and Niddal El-Jabri, organizer of the human ring formed around the Copenhagen Synagogue in March of 2015.

Each of the speakers noted that anti-Semitism is a problem for all of society, not just the Jewish community. Cardin highlighted the importance of youth and coalition efforts in the fight, but also stressed the need for additional action from governments to accurately collect and report hate crimes data, as well as to focus on educational initiatives to reduce societal prejudice. In the context of the current refugee crisis and



Ben Cardin addresses anti-Semitism event in Washington on 20 October.

upticks in violence and prejudice, he noted that diversity is a strength, not a weakness.

Other participants in the meeting included OSCE Personal Representative on Combating Anti-Semitism Rabbi Andrew Baker, U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism Ira Forman, officials representing the U.S. and OSCE participating States, and representatives from civil society. Braden-Golay, Derakhti, and El-Jabri were visiting the U.S. to receive awards from Human Rights First for their work in combating anti-Semitism.

Deputy SG Pallares delivers lecture at Spanish Atlantic Institute in Madrid

Last week in Madrid, OSCE PA Deputy Secretary General Gustavo Pallares participated as a lecturer in the programme of Government, Leadership and Public Management of the Spanish Atlantic Institute. The Institute is a prestigious academic institution and think tank bringing together scholars and professionals from the public and private sectors for debate on transatlantic issues.

Pallares presented the work and objectives of the OSCE and the Parliamentary Assembly, discussing their role in the current international context. He also addressed specifically the rise of populism and populist political movements in northern Europe. Pallares described the impact these political movements are having within European institutions, including the OSCE PA.