

PRESS-RELEASE

On December 30, 2005 Prof. Oleg Manaev, Director of IISEPS (Vilnius) was invited again to the General Prosecutor Office of the Republic of Belarus where he got "Official warning about inadmissibility of law violation" signed by Deputy General Prosecutor Nikolay Kupriyanov.

The warning states that "according to publications in "Nasha niva" and "Belgazeta", IISEPS that is neither registered nor got accreditation according to law, conducts sociological research on the territory of the Republic of Belarus and informs public about their results". Quoting the Resolutions issued by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus on August 28, 2002 and November 8, 2005 about conducting public opinion polls and publication of their results in mass media, the General Prosecutor Office concludes that "conducting by you public opinion polls was realized with violation of legislation demands", "public opinion poll conducted within the period of preparation and organization of presidential election without getting accreditation according to the above Resolution ... is another violation of election legislation and constitutes corpus delicti specified in the article 167-3 of the Code for Administrative Infringements of the Law". The warning stresses that "in case if you conduct public opinion poll within the period of preparation and organization of presidential election with violation of the existing order your activities will be assessed as another violation of election legislation, and you could be put on trial according to responsibility determined by legislation".

In this regard we state that, firstly, after IISEPS was liquidated by the decision of the Supreme Court and registered in Lithuania in 2005, the Institute does not conduct sociological research on the territory of the Republic of Belarus. IISEPS Director Prof. Manaev together with his colleagues conducts sociological and other research as private persons, and provides scientific consulting for sociologists and other experts. Results of these researches are published in various mass media as private experts' comments. Resolutions of the Council of Ministers mentioned in this warning regulate activities "conducted by juridical persons". Scientific researches conducted by private persons in Belarus, as well as in other countries, are regulated not by legal but by professional norms, and therefore do not constitute corpus delicti. Observance of professional norms of sociological and other researches conducted by Prof. Manaev and his colleagues is ensured by their high scientific reputation inside and outside the country.

Secondly, we consider these actions of the Directorate of Public Prosecutions for Constitutional Legality do not have legal ground and violate the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus. Its Article 34 stipulates that "everyone is guaranteed freedom of opinion, ideas and their free expression". That's why we are going to appeal against these actions. Growing pressure by the Belarusian authorities on the civil society, liquidation of its leading structures forces thousands of citizens to continue their public activities as private persons. The next step will be either attempt of state-run regulation of private life of Belarusians or illegal intervention into it. For millions of our fellow-citizens as well as for the rest of the world it will mean that Belarus is transforming from authoritarian rule to the totalitarian one.

IISEPS Press Service (Vilnius)