



## **FIDE ETHICS COMMISSION**

The Ethics Commission (hereafter called the ETH), sitting in the following composition -

Chairman: Mr Francois Strydom  
Members: Mr Ravindra Dongre  
Ms Yolander Persaud  
Mr Rajesh Hari Joshi

during the meeting held in Lausanne on 23<sup>rd</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> of November 2019, made the following-

### **DECISION**

**Case n. 9/2019: “Alleged discrimination in Sivas Buruciye tournament, Turkey 2019”.**

1. The ETH **confirms** that a quorum is established by the presence and participation of all four (4) of its voting members.
2. The ETH **notes** the report of the **FIDE Presidential Board** (“the PB”), as represented by the FIDE President, submitted against **Mr Mustafa Eroglu (Turkey)** and **Mr Tural Zeyanlov (Azerbaijan)** on 25 October 2019 (“the complaint”), concerning an alleged violation of articles 2.2.3, 2.2.10 and/or 2.2.11 of the FIDE Code of Ethics.
3. The ETH **notes** the statements of the Azerbaijan Chess Federation (“ACF”) to FIDE (30 September 2019) and the Turkish Chess Federation (“TCF”) to

FIDE (undated), both explaining the facts as they emerged from their own investigations into the matter.

4. The ETH **notes** the contents of the defensive statement of Mr. Eroglu (12 November 2019) and e-mail received from Mr. Zeyanlov (14 November 2019).
5. The ETH **notes** subject-matter of the complaint and the defences raised:
  - 5.1 During the period 19 - 24 August 2019 the Sivas Buruciye 1<sup>st</sup> International Open Chess Tournament was held in Sivas, Turkey (“the tournament”).
  - 5.2 Sivas Governorship provided accommodation and transportation for 10 FIDE titled players during this tournament. These players were to be determined collectively by the tournament directorate and Sivas Governorship.
  - 5.3 The respondent, Mr. Mustafa Eroglu, was a volunteer assistant to the Local Organising Committee (“LOC”) of the tournament. He had no authority to represent the LOC.
  - 5.4 Armenian WIM Maria Gevorgyan discussed with Mr. Eroglu (on Whatsapp) her entry into the tournament under the favourable conditions for titled players. On 7 August 2019, at 18:42, Mr. Eroglu confirmed Ms. Gevorgyan’s registration in the tournament and sent her as proof a copy of the registration list.
  - 5.5 However, as the limit of 10 titled players was already met, on 7 August 2019 the tournament director removed the registration of Ms. Gevorgyan who was invited without his knowledge.
  - 5.6 At about 19:41 p.m. on 7 August 2019, Mr. Eroglu sent a Whatsapp message to Ms. Gevorgyan to the effect that Azerbaijani athletes had submitted a petition that they won’t play in the tournament if Armenian

players participated and accordingly the tournament coordinator had cancelled Ms. Gevorgyan's registration in the tournament.

- 5.7 On 8 August 2019 Ms. Gevorgyan requested Mr. Eroglu that a copy of the Azeri petition be sent to her, but received no reply.
- 5.8 Also on 8 August 2019, Ms. Gevorgyan posted screenshots of her conversations with Mr. Eroglu on Facebook. On 14 August 2019, Mr. Eroglu demanded in a threatening manner the removal thereof on the grounds of privacy.
- 5.9 The ACF became involved after the Armenian Chess Federation lodged a formal complaint with FIDE. The Azeri participants in the tournament categorically denied the existence of any petition against the Armenian players' participation.
- 5.10 The TCF President personally investigated the matter and found Mr. Eroglu was unable to produce any evidence of the alleged petition by Azerbaijani athletes. All Mr. Eroglu could apparently produce was an e-mail correspondence with the second respondent, Mr. Zeynalov. This correspondence was not provided to ETH.
- 5.11 Mr. Zeynalov is an amateur chess player from Azerbaijan and a former official coach of the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic's chess federation.
- 5.12 The ACF statement also mentioned that, after the incident on 7 August 2019, Mr. Eroglu drafted a letter alleging as if the Azeri team had opposed the participation of Armenian players in the tournament, and for two days he tried to persuade the Azeri participants to sign the letter. Mr. Eroglu was apparently unsuccessful in his attempts to obtain any signatures. This alleged letter was not provided to ETH.
- 5.13 The ACF statement reiterated the commitment to the segregation of sports and politics from each other, and stressed that Azerbaijan has a record of hosting many international competitions where Armenian

sportsmen are featured among all others. The ACF letter stated that Mr. Tural Zeynalov had already been discharged from his duties for his inconsiderate and adverse actions.

5.14 The TCF informed ETH that it commenced disciplinary proceedings against Mr. Eroglu, but ceased same upon the matter becoming a FIDE disciplinary matter.

5.15 In his defensive statement before the ETH, Mr. Eroglu extends his apologies to Ms. Gevorgian and the entire FIDE chess family for the 'misunderstanding'. He however denies any discrimination on his part. Mr. Eroglu claims that he wrongly assumed, without checking with the LOC, the reason for Ms. Gevorgyan's de-registration was due to the demand from Mr. Tural Zeynalov for the exclusion of Armenian players. Mr. Eroglu acknowledges that he has advised Ms. Gevorgian inaccurately of the reason for her de-registration. He asserts he learnt the true reason (that quota of 10 foreign titled players was full) a bit later and informed Ms. Gevorgian accordingly. He had previously apologized to the Complainant and offered to host Ms. Gevorgian in his city Karaman as his guest.

5.16 It is significant that Mr. Eroglu failed to respond to the allegation of the ACF (despite having received a copy of the ACF statement) that he tried to obtain the signatures of the Azeri players afterwards (see para 5.12 above) and he omitted to supply the ETH with copies of his alleged e-mail correspondence with Mr. Zeynalov.

5.17 In a short e-mail statement forwarded to the ETH, Mr. Zeynalov claims that he shared his thoughts with the organizer (presumably Mr. Eroglu) and that he was 'provoked' by the organiser. Mr. Zeynalov states he has already been punished (presumably by the ACF) and now finds himself in an unemployed situation.

6. Against the above background, the ETH **observes** and **finds** that:

- 6.1 FIDE is concerned exclusively with chess activities. It rejects discriminatory treatment for national, political, racial, social or religious reasons or on account of gender. (FIDE Statutes, Chapter 1, art. 1.2).
  - 6.2 The purpose and aim of FIDE are the diffusion and development of chess among all nations of the world, as well as the raising of the level of chess culture and knowledge on a sporting, scientific, creative, educational and cultural basis. FIDE supports a close international cooperation of the chess devotees in all fields of chess activity, thereby also aiming to improve friendly harmony among all peoples of the world (FIDE Statutes, Chapter 1, art. 1.3).
  - 6.3 The game and concept of chess is based on the assumption that everyone involved / concerned observe existing rules and regulations and attaches the greatest importance to fair play and good sportsmanship (Code of Ethics, art. 1.1).
  - 6.4 Mr. Eroglu clearly acted in an politically-insensitive, irresponsible and grossly careless manner by relying, in his own version, on the e-mail allegations of a single person and subsequently tried to seek justification for his behaviour by approaching the Azeri participants, as described in para 5.12 above. His actions caused an international consternation involving FIDE, as well as the Armenian, Azerbaijan and Turkish chess federations. Further harm was only avoided by the sensible interventions and co-operation of the leaders of the federations concerned.
  - 6.5 Although Mr. Zeynalov is implicated to a degree by the statements of Mr. Eroglu and the ACF, the ETH cannot judge his guilt in the absence of proof of the exact tenor and contents of his alleged e-mail communications with Mr. Eroglu. The evidence adduced is insufficient at present to find Mr. Zeynalov guilty of the violation of one or the other article of the Code of Ethics.
7. Accordingly, the ETH, by unanimity of the members, **decides** that:

- 7.1. **Mr Mustafa Eroglu** is found **guilty** of a violation of art. 2.2.3 of the Code of Ethics (Organizers, tournament directors, arbiters or other officials who fail to perform their functions in an impartial and responsible manner);
- 7.2. **Mr Mustafa Eroglu** is sanctioned with a 12 months' suspension from the date of this written decision. During the period of suspension Mr. Eroglu shall not act as arbiter, organiser, member of or assistant to the LOC of any FIDE, ECU and TCF international tournament or representative of his federation. Mr Eroglu would be free to work in TCF internal tournaments with no international participation.
- 7.3 The case against **Mr Tural Zeyanlov** is declared **not admissible** and **dismissed** in the absence of *prima facie* evidence of a violation of the Code of Ethics;
8. The ETH **requests** the FIDE Secretariat to communicate forthwith the decision to the FIDE Presidential Board, Messrs. Mustafa Eroglu and Tural Zeyanlov, as well as the Turkish Chess Federation and the Azerbaijan Chess Federation, and to publish in due course the decision on the FIDE website.

DATED ON THIS THE 23rd DAY OF DECEMBER 2019.

*F P Strydom*

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CHAIRMAN

FIDE ETHICS COMMISSION