



ISFED

The Preliminary Assessment of the Pre-Election Period and Election Day for the By-election of Parliament of Georgia of October 2, 2011

International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (hereinafter ISFED) observed the By-election of Parliament of Georgia of October 2, 2011 in #17 Telavi District. Hereby the organization presents the preliminary assessment of the pre-election campaign and Election Day processes.

Pre-Election Campaign

There were candidates of three political parties participating in the election, namely №3 VasilArabuli – ‘Topadze – Industrialists’, № 5 VasilDavitashvili – Political Union ‘United National Movement’, and №10 NikolozLashkhi–‘GiorgiTargamadze – Christian Democrats’. All three election subjects carried out active pre-election campaigns. The candidates preferred the face-to-face meetings with general public as means for the pre-election campaign.

Election Administration: ISFED finds it positive that Precinct Election Commissions (hereinafter PECs) were not composed of any of those persons who had been held accountable for electoral violations during the last parliamentary or local elections.

Intimidation of Voters: As for the intimidation of voters during the pre-election period, according to representatives of Christian Democratic Movement (hereinafter CDM), one of the citizens participating in the public meeting with the party representatives in KvemoKhodasheni was subject to the pressure by the village proxy after the meeting.

Media: The pre-election period was covered by the local media outlets. The electoral subjects had the opportunity to address the district electorate on local TV stations.

Election Day

The turnout and vote distribution: According to ISFED, the total number of voters as of the opening of the polling process was 56 907. 35% of the voters participated in the elections.

According to the information collected by ISFED, the votes were distributed to the electoral subject in the following way: №3 VasilArabuli received 4.72% of the total votes cast, № 5 VasilDavitashvili received 84.33% of the total votes cast, and №10 NikolozLashkhi received 10.95% of the total votes cast.

The Voting Procedures

The Election Day went mostly in the calm environment. However, the tension between the party proxies and members of PECs has been observed at certain polling stations.

Ethnic minorities: The flaws in adhering to the voting procedures were mostly observed at #37, #38, #39 and #54 polling stations of Karajala Village. At these polling stations, the majority of voters were not able to cast their votes independently using the ballot papers in the Georgian language. Voters inside

the voting booths were in need of receiving assistance from their family members or other voters present at the precinct which led to the unorganized implementation of voting procedures. Voters present at the polling stations often told each other which election subject to vote for.

ISFED believes that the Central Election Commission (hereinafter CEC) shall ensure printing of ballot papers for the villages inhabited mostly with ethnic minorities in the languages that are familiar to them. Otherwise it is not possible for the voters to make an informed decision on the Election Day.

Attempt of voting on behalf of another voter: It was observed at #52 polling station that the voter attempted to cast a ballot on behalf of another voter. The observers and political party proxies interfered and the incident was resolved.

Recording of the voters who had come to the polling stations: Just like during the 30 May 2010 Local Elections, it was observed today as well that persons present in the surrounding area of the precinct recorded the voters who had shown up at the polling stations.

ISFED considers these facts to constitute the action prohibited by the election code, specifically control of voters. This type of facts may influence the free expression of voters' will as well.

Proxies of political parties: Similarly to the last elections, the facts of staffers of local self-government bodies being accredited as proxies of political parties have been massively observed. #28, #47, #50 and #54 polling stations are worth of noting in that regard. It has been made clear during the observation that abovementioned persons can influence election administration's actions or decisions given their positions.

Accordingly, we believe that the legitimacy of staffers of local self-government bodies becoming proxies of political parties shall be maximally restricted for the next elections in order to ensure the independence of election administrations on the Election Day.

People with disabilities: #42 polling station was not built in a way that would enable people in wheelchairs access the polling station. Therefore, the voter with disabilities who had come to this polling station faced problems while exercising his/her right to vote.

Election administrations should pay special attention to designing polling stations in a way that would enable voters with disabilities to exercise their right to vote at the polling stations.

Complaints: As of today, the ISFED observers have filed one complaint at #47 polling station requesting annulment of the PEC results and accountability of the observer representing the Centre for Strategic Researches of State Administrative-Territorial Arrangement on the grounds of interfering into the official duties of the PEC members. The complaint is at the Telavi District Election Commission and will be adjudicated within two days.

ISFED is observing the process of summarizing the election results at the Telavi District Election Commission and will publish the final assessment of the elections once the complaints are adjudicated and the election results are summarized.