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BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The results of the 19th precinct were counted in the Batumi District Election Commission based on a complaint from ISFED. As the chairman of the district, Tsiala Shavadze noted, there were exactly as many ballot papers in the sealed packages and distribution of votes as indicated at the beginning, the result remained the same. According to her, there was a defect in the summary protocol and the number of voters was incorrectly indicated, which, according to the decision of the district commission, was assessed as a technical error and the chairman and secretary of the 19th precinct were given a warning.

According to her, technical shortcomings in the polling stations were facilitated by the large flow of voters, a large number of ballots, and a tense environment.

However, this was not the only case. The CEC stated that discussions have already been held in 15 district election commissions and the results have been recounted - of these, 11 DEC's amended 20 results.

CEC says 11 DEC's amended 20 results



► 9 people including 3 opposition United Georgia party members were detained during the clashes with police in Tbilisi.

"The discussion process in the district election commissions started on November 3 and will end today. The decision of the District Election Commission can be appealed in the relevant district city court within 2 days, which, in turn, will consider the appeal within 2 calendar days," announced the head of the CEC Human Resources Management Department Giorgi Kalandarishvili yesterday.

At 15:00 yesterday, as CEC informed, recounts have been carried out in 15 district election commissions, of which 13 district election commissions have conducted recounts on the basis of applications-complaints, and 2 - on their own initiative. By relevant decisions, 11 DEC's amended 20 results, invalidating the data of 3 mobile ballot boxes, and correcting the results in 9 cases, both proportional and majoritarian. It is also noteworthy that in 8 cases the data remained unchanged.

As CEC emphasized, almost all the sessions were attended by representatives of local observer organizations, as well as representatives of the relevant election subject and, in some cases, accredited media outlets.

Accredited media representatives, one representative of an election subject

in the District Election Commission, one observer of a local observer organization, and no more than two observers of an international organization registered with the CEC together with an interpreter have the right to attend the commission session.

"Although all parties involved in the elections, including representatives of political parties, majoritarian candidates, know who is legally the person authorized to attend the DEC session, they demand that the commissions violate the law and allow unauthorized persons to attend the sessions. However, they all have their own representative authorized to attend the meeting. Despite this, they spread false information, deliberately try to disrupt the process, discredit the election administration, and the election process in general," explained Kalandarishvili.

According to Kalandarishvili, there were also complaints filed by unauthorized persons, due to which the commissions did not have a legal basis for their consideration.

Kalandarishvili appealed to all parties involved in the elections to actively observe the current events with the district election commissions and directly at the sittings and to objectively evaluate the on-

going processes, which avoids spreading inaccurate, damaging information about the election process to the public.

Soon after this address, the movement Shame held a protest performance in front of the Central Election Commission.

The protesters brought symbolic gifts to Tamar Zhvania at the CEC building - a math book and a report book.

According to Giga Makarashvili, a member of the movement, rigging the elections will cost Tamar Zhvania and the Georgian Dream dearly.

Yesterday night representatives of the National Movement and Strategy Builder gathered in the 6th election district of Samgori and approached the district election commission. They protested against the decisions of the district election commission and demanded that their complaints be upheld.

Meanwhile, the complaints were being considered in the district commission, the session which was left by the member of the commission from the National Movement, arguing that commission does not actually consider the complaints and the members of the commission only write explanations.

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Post-Election Panorama

By MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

After the October 31st parliamentary elections, Georgia found itself in a deep political crisis. The government and the opposition have the opposite view of the elections. According to the Georgian Dream, the elections were held under democratic standards and he rightfully won the third term.

For its part, the opposition was unanimous in its assessment - it considered the elections to be rigged, refused to enter parliament, and demanded a rerun of the parliamentary elections, along with the punishment of the current head of the election administration.

A difficult situation was created before the October 31st elections. "Georgian Dream" was talking about its inevitable convincing victory. The party's leader, Bidzina Ivanishvili, who rarely appeared in public during a pandemic, said at the ruling party's last pre-election event that 'according to their polls,' they would get about 60 percent of the vote.

The opposition had the opposite opinion about the results of the upcoming elections. The opposition, citing other opinion polls, argued that a majority of citizens, about 60%, wanted a change of government in the country. Based on the party ratings of the same survey, it was estimated that the Georgian Dream would win about 40% of the votes, with the majority of seats in parliament in the hands of opposition parties.

They were also discussing whether any of the opposition parties in the parliament would make a deal with the Georgian Dream. In their opinion, it was inevitable that the Georgian Dream would join the opposition and form a coalition government by the opposition parties.

Part of the opposition did not like Mikheil Saakashvili, the candidate of the Prime Minister of the strongest opposition party National Movement, but the third president of Georgia in Ukraine

said that he wasn't going to take any position in the government after the elections.

The results of the elections announced by the CEC showed a convincing victory of the Georgian Dream: in the proportional elections, the Dream received 48.15% of the vote (926,959 votes), the National Movement - 27.14% (522,463 votes). 7 more parties announced to overcome the 1% threshold - European Georgia - 3.78% (72,752 votes), Lelo for Georgia - 3.15% (60,691 votes), Strategy Builder - 3.15% (60,592 Vote), Alliance of Patriots - 3.14% (60,493 votes), Girchi - 2.89% (55,600 votes), Citizens of Elisashvili - 1.33% (25,534 votes), Labor Party - 1% (19,281 votes). Initially, Nino Burjanadze's United Georgia - Democratic Movement entered the parliament, but then found itself beyond the threshold - 0.85% (16,328 votes). According to these results, the Georgian Dream won 61 seats in the proportional system in parliament, but in the majoritarian elections, it seems that all 30 seats will be in the hands of the ruling party.

91 seats in the 150-seat parliament is a comfortable majority for the Georgian Dream, which is ready to run for a third term. The country is facing more problems today than it was in 2012 when Bidzina Ivanishvili came to power with his 'dream'.

But something unexpected for the Georgian Dream happened - the opposition unanimously refused to acknowledge the election results, considering it to be falsified. Opposition candidates have refused to run in the second round of majoritarian elections, with no opposition parties planning to enter parliament, and have signed a joint document. The protest included not only the pro-Western opposition, which government officials call 'unconstructive', 'radical' opposition but also the so-called openly pro-Russian opposition, which is considered 'satellites of the Georgian Dream.'

The opposition also unanimously demands the annulment of the election results, the punishment of the head of the Central Election Commission Tamar

Zhvania for rigging the elections, and the re-election of the new election administration. Georgian Dream obviously does not want to hear this request and according to them, Zhvania not only deserves to be punished but also deserves a reward for so many unfounded accusations.

Both the government and the opposition use the assessments of international observers, and in these assessments, both parties read useful parts for themselves - the government actively uses the phrases such as 'competitive elections' and 'legitimacy of the elections', while the opposition focuses on the violations.

Besides, opposition parties have made numerous allegations of manipulation at polling stations public, and local NGOs have also assessed the situation as grave.

The government found itself in a tricky situation - it has to hold the second round of majoritarian elections alone in 16 constituencies, show a complete victory, and then convene the parliament of the 10th convocation by December 20th. The meeting will, of course,

be under the existing law, but consisting only of representatives of the ruling party.

Therefore, one of the main tasks of the Georgian Dream for the rest of the period will be, on the one hand, to convince the opposition MPs who passed the second round to participate in the elections and, on the other hand, to negotiate behind the scenes with some parties, promising that CEC will increase their representation. In return, these parties must agree to enter parliament.

After the elections, the opposition is permanently holding protest rallies and is organizing a large protest rally on November 8th in front of the parliament building in Tbilisi. Against this background, the local opposition boycotted the results of the Adjara Supreme Council elections and protests are taking place in Batumi as well. The further course of events will depend on the scale and duration of the protests.

(Translated from Georgian by Mariam Mchedlidze)

CEC says 11 DEC's amended 20 results

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According to UNM representatives, a member of the commission from European Georgia as well as observers, representatives of non-governmental organizations were present at the sitting of the commission. Similar protests were held at Isani, Vake-Saburtalo, and Mtatsminda district commissions in Tbilisi, as well as in Kutaisi. Opposition members confronted the police, demanding that their complaints be fairly reviewed, all the parties asked to attend the process, but police did not allow them into the DEC's buildings.

Georgian Dream leader Irakli Kobakhidze called the ongoing processes the demonstration of low political culture "as indicated, for example, by the head of the mission of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe."

"When the vote-counting was taking place, which, let me remind you, is an unprecedented event in the history of Georgian elections, (that



Opposition politicians and their supporters gathered yesterday evening at various DEC's in Tbilisi and regions where the election administration was reviewing the election-related appeals

the Central Election Commission made a decision considering real votes) instead of taking a constructive approach, opposition members are holding rallies in parallel with this process, which is unacceptable, and once again

proves their low political culture," Kobakhidze said.

President of Georgia, Salome Zurbishvili addressed the public, calling on everyone to remain calm and respect state institutions.

"We also urge you to strictly

follow all the recommendations that are necessary to avoid the spread of the Covid-19," the president announced, adding that it is the responsibility of all political parties, their leaders, and each participant in the rally.

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 6

Day Rain likely
High: 16°C

Night Partly cloudy
Low: 11°C

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 7

Day Partly cloudy
High: 15°C

Night Clear
Low: 11°C

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NDI publishes a report on the parliamentary elections in Georgia

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) published a report on October 31st, 2020, parliamentary elections in Georgia on November 4th. The report released by the organization states that the NDI analysis is carried out in accordance with the Declaration of Principles of International Election Observation and notes that due to the existing restrictions in the light of the global COVID-19 pandemic, additional international observers could not be sent to Georgia. Thus, the organization has made relevant changes to the methodology to ensure intensive remote engagement.

The report reads that the voting on election day was largely in accordance with the rules established by law. According to the preliminary results of the Central Election Commission, the voter turnout was 56.11%. 9 parties have exceeded the established limit by the proportional system, and the second round will be held in 16 out of 30 majoritarian constituencies. However, international and domestic observer teams highlighted, among other issues, violations of the results protocols and the secrecy of the ballot. They reported cases of physical confrontation outside polling stations, obstruction of work for journalists and observers, alleged cases of voter bribery and vote-rigging, and the presence of party coordinators and activists outside most polling stations, creating an environment of intimidation. Opposition activists staged large-scale protests after election day, with many demanding that the vote be counted or that the results be annulled and re-elected.

NDI notes that flaws in the results protocols, reports of possible intimidation at and outside polling stations, delayed publication



► Before the run-offs, NDI recommends all stakeholders to make efforts to de-escalate tensions, follow established protocols for pursuing alleged election-related irregularities, and facilitate a peaceful environment.



► Tamar Zhvania, head of the CEC chairperson says she will resign if any result is not counted correctly or is not responded to as needed.

of results, and persistent abuses of power in the run-up to October 31st, 2020, parliamentary elections have undermined significant legislative and administrative improvements.

“Government leaders and the election administration will need to take special steps to summarize the results of the first round and prepare for the second round scheduled for November 21st in response to doubts raised during the election process, as well as to increase public confidence in the election process and the final results.”

Overall, the legal framework provided a solid basis for elections. Speaking to NDI, most of the stakeholders positively assessed the constitutional changes and legislative reforms adopted in June and July, noting at the same time that several issues remained a challenge. The administration of pre-election procedures was generally assessed as competent, law-abiding, and transparent, however, partisanship bias, especially in lower-level commissions, was the subject of constant criticism from opposition parties and civil society

organizations. Most of the parties, with special exceptions, positively assessed the measures taken to protect public health during the coronavirus pandemic.

Low public confidence in Georgia's judiciary has led to a distrust of civil society and opposition parties towards election complaints and appeals. The ruling Georgian Dream had a huge advantage in financial resources, which exacerbated concerns about the fairness of the campaign and party funding system.

Changes in the electoral sys-

tem have facilitated the participation of new parties in the elections, some of which have won parliamentary seats. However, due to media polarization, the parties had unequal access to television coverage. “The campaign messages were focused on criticizing the opponent rather than constructive and different political visions and decisions,” the NDI said.

Numerous cases of violence or threats against journalists have been reported. The televised debates between the candidates were limited, so this opportunity could not be properly used to inform the voters. Information manipulations were widespread, especially on Facebook. Fraudulent information within the country turned out to be a bigger problem than misinformation coming from outside the country.

According to the organization, as for the pandemic, it had less impact than expected on campaign strategies.

Georgia has taken important steps to ensure greater inclusiveness and diversity in politics. The report highlights the importance of introducing a mandatory gender quota. The newly elected parliament is expected to include at least 28 women, slightly more than the current number.

“Despite this progress, women, ethnic and religious minorities, people with disabilities, and members of the LGBT+ community are still underrepresented in the new parliament, as well as in party organizations and their platforms. The media environment is diverse and open, yet politically polarized, which manifests itself in biased coverage and prevents voters from making informed choices.”

In the 19 pages preliminary report, the NDI also issued recommendations for all sides including media, parties, and the central elections commission to follow during the period before the runoff, for the Electoral Framework and Administration, and the campaign environment.

The organization underlines that official results are not final, the filing and consideration of election complaints have not been completed, and the results of the second round will not be known for at least the next three weeks. Finally, the credibility and legitimacy of elections are determined by the Georgian people. NDI plans to continue to monitor the election events and, if necessary, will issue further statements.

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EU provides additional emergency aid for civilians affected by conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh

The EU has allocated an additional €400,000 in humanitarian aid to cover the most urgent needs of civilians affected by the conflict in, and around, Nagorno-Karabakh.

With this emergency support to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Red Cross of Armenia and the Red Crescent of Azerbaijan will deliver food packages, blankets, hygiene items and other essential help to civilians who were forced to flee because of the conflict. Since early October, when the hostilities started, the EU's emergency humanitarian aid has reached €900,000.

