

საქართველოს ახალგაზრდა იურისტთა ასოციაცია GEORGIAN YOUNG LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION



GYLA's assessment of the 2017 Local Self-Government Election Day

The electoral process throughout the country was mostly peaceful, without violent incidents. However, a number of violations were revealed, beyond merely procedural violations.

Throughout the election day, GYLA observers lodged 147 complaints (66 of which - to the district election commissions) and 162 remarks to the logbooks.

In Tbilisi, the ruling party arranged a wide-scale and well-organized voter data collection and mobilizing voters to the polling stations to vote.

Those actions represent control over voters' will, which damaged the principle of voters' freedom.

It is concerning that in its statement, the Central Election Commission (CEC) has attempted to justify and thus encouraged such facts, instead of condemning them.

Control of Voters' Free Will

Throughout the entire day, in the polling stations, the representatives of political parties "Georgian Dream", "Leftist Alliance" and observer organization "New Word" were standing near the registration table or queue supervisors and copying the identity data about voters.

Throughout the day it became clear that political subjects were interested in not merely estimating the number of visiting voters, but also their identity, to identify the absent voters. A number of our observers has confirmed that after the party representatives have copied the identities of voters, outside the polling station - the party coordinators discussed the identities of absent voters and mobilizing them to vote.

On the election day, at 10:00, GYLA publicly evaluated those facts as the control over voters' will, which contradicts the legislation and the [principle of free expression](#) of voter's will. GYLA has [publicly called](#) upon the election commissions to terminate such practices. Unfortunately the CEC, instead of acting in accordance with the legislation, has attempted to justify and thus encouraged this tendency in its public statement and oral interpretation, given to the district and precinct administrations.

Undue Communication with the Election Commission Members

At one of the polling stations in Gldani, the member of the election commission has received an SMS, requesting *"the information about the number of visiting voters, mayor supporters, Georgian Dream supporters and invalidated ballots - immediately."* According to our information, the upper electoral commission has called the precinct election commission, instructing them to not answer to the request. We immediately called the number in question and the owner of the number responded and introduced himself as the Georgian Dream campaign representative.

Obstructing the Work of Observers

Throughout the election day, GYLA was making statements regarding the obstruction of observer rights, expulsion from the polling station (or threats regarding expulsion), verbal insults or creating unfavorable working conditions. Such cases intensified in particular, after our observers have indicated the violations and lodged complaints or remarks.

Observation in the District Election Commissions - problems related to spatial arrangements

Despite the Guiding Instructions, adopted by the CEC on August 25/2017 in its decree #40, which instruct the district election commissions to hold electoral processes in a unified and transparent space, the monitoring results revealed that this recommendation is not being followed in a number of cases:

The spatial arrangement of the district election commissions does not create proper conditions for comprehensive observation of the electoral processes. There were cases, when some of the commission members gathered to discuss various issues separately; those discussions were being held in parallel with the ongoing electoral processes, behind the closed door. The content of those discussions is not open nor accessible to the observers. Such facts damage the transparency of the electoral processes in the district election commissions.

In other cases, the district election commission did not provide the precinct election commission summary protocols to the observers. In some cases, the delivery of the electoral documentation from the precinct election commissions was chaotic.

Yesterday, as a result of the CEC involvement, such cases were resolved.

Such problems, characterizing the 2017 local elections, are not new to the electoral processes. It is important to make a timely intervention to resolve this tendency at the institutional and regulatory levels.

Problems, related to Accessibility of the Polling Stations for the Persons with Disability

The observation has revealed that part of the polling stations was not adapted for the persons with disabilities.

Vote Count and Results' Summarization Process

Lack of balance and problems with the summary protocols were revealed in a number of polling stations. For example, certain problems characterized the vote count and result summarization process at the polling station #27 of Telavi, where mayor

საქართველოს ახალგაზრდა იურისტთა ასოციაცია GEORGIAN YOUNG LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION



elections summary protocol was lost. Also, shortcomings were revealed during the vote count at the polling station #31 in Poti, where the authenticity of ballots was disputable.

GYLA's Observation Mission for the 2017 Local Elections was made possible through the funding, provided by the EU, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden, Norwegian Embassy in Baku, National Endowment for Democracy (NED), US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF). The opinions expressed in the statement belong to the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) and its content may not reflect the opinion of its donor organizations.