

## **"My Vote" statement on the results of the observation of the election process at the election precincts created abroad**

In the parliamentary elections of 2024, the observation mission "My Vote" observed the elections in 48 polling stations through 158 observers, who underwent proper preparation/training in advance.

### **1. Opening insufficient polling stations**

Ensuring voting for immigrants and realizing the rights of Georgian citizens abroad became a serious problem a few months before the election day. Immigrants started self-organization and mobilization campaigns for election participants from the beginning of the election year. They applied all legal and informational ways to ensure the realization of the right of immigrants to vote by the election administration and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Abroad, in big cities where the number of Georgian citizen voters is high, the voters stood at the consular registration and wrote to the election administration and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to open the polling stations, as long as the number of voters exceeded 50 and there was a legal obligation to open the polling stations. The chairman of the CEC responded to the appeals of emigrant Georgian citizens with personal letters. The court did not consider the personal letters as administrative-legal acts and stopped the proceedings.

Finally, despite the emigrants' appeals, the election administration refused to open the required number of polling stations abroad and, referring to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, opened polling stations only in those cities where the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia has diplomatic representations/consulates.

Finally, CEC created 67 election precincts abroad in 53 cities of 42 states.

### **2. The formation of voter lists**

Another artificial barrier that immigrants had to overcome is related to the issue of forming lists, which was related to the issue of creating election precincts.

As of September 26, the CEC, referring to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reported that the number of voters abroad was 65,508 (while the number of voters on the consular register exceeded this number even in August). After the expiration of the deadline for changes in voter lists on October 8, the number of voters living abroad increased to 95,834. For 65,508 election precincts, the CEC opened 60 precincts abroad, and later, it opened only 7 precincts for 30,326 voters.

Consular registration was possible on the special platform of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - online, by announcing in person or by mail, as well as registering in person at the polling stations from October 26 to October 7 at the polling stations created by the CEC.

Despite the fact that Georgian citizens living abroad underwent consular registration in accordance with the instructions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the CEC, they faced additional administrative and bureaucratic barriers, which is why they could not be included in the unified list of voters.

Instead of the quantitative data of the actual consular voters, on September 26, the last day of the CEC precinct creation deadline, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a smaller number compared to the number of consular voters as the basis for the creation of precincts.

So, for example, consular registrations left out IDPs living abroad, whose place of registration is the occupied territory of Georgia, and voters whose registration address is unclear. Initially, the CEC indicated in public statements that it had no legal means of making an alternative decision in favor of universal elections, however, later, the CEC managed to find a proper mechanism and included in the voter lists the registered voters in the occupied territories, who were on consular registration.

Problems with the lists were revealed on the day of voting, when the voters who came to the precincts, despite being on the consular register, did not appear in the precinct lists, or found themselves in the list of polling precincts opened in another country.

### **3. Problems revealed on the Election Day**

According to the information provided by the observers, on the day of the election, as soon as the voting started in the precincts created in the USA and a number of European states, a grim picture was revealed, indicating that the polling buildings, infrastructure, competence of the commission members and the material-technical or human resources allocated to the voting are not related to the activity of the voters. It was completely inappropriate.

As a result of the observation, the following serious violations were identified at problematic polling stations:

- The spaces of the polling stations were insufficient considering the number of voters;
- The proper infrastructure was not arranged for voting and the necessary number of registrar commission members were not allocated, which created queues of many thousands of voters that lasted for many hours;
- There was a risk of violation of vote confidentiality due to unsuitable information structure for the voting building;
- Chaos and a dangerous environment for the health of voters, observers and commission members were created at the polling stations;
- Citizens who entered the precinct after standing in long queues were not found in the lists of the registrars' desks, some of them were found in the lists of the polling stations opened in the consulate of other countries;
- Some of the members of the Precinct Election Commission had not undergone appropriate trainings, therefore they could not properly handle the voting procedures.
- Some of the voters could not cast their votes due to long queues.

One of the reasons for the large queues of voters at the polling stations abroad in the parliamentary elections of 2024 was the lack of registrars compared to the number of voters and inaccuracies in the lists.

According to observers, one secret voting booth was provided for every 1,500 voters and one registrar commissioner for every 1,000 voters.

Whereas for elections held in the same manner in Georgia, at least 1 registrar commission member should be provided for every 300 voters, and 1 secret voting booth should be provided for every 500 voters.

The CEC indicated that the 2013 resolution was used to determine the number of cabins and registrars. However, the content of the resolution indicates that the commission can place more registrars and voting booths than the specified number if necessary.

It is significant that in 2013, when the said resolution was adopted, the number of registered voters abroad was significantly less than in 2024 - 49,981, and the number of participants in voting was 5,056. Therefore, this year, when the number of registered voters has almost doubled, the use of the same standard is unjustified and represents a deviation from the principle of good faith of the administrative body.

According to the observers, along with the lack of voting buildings in most of the precincts, the voting booths were of poor quality and unstable, due to which some of the booths were damaged in the process and threatened the secrecy of the vote.

At #38 polling station in Athens, the "My Vote" observer was not allowed to enter the polling station for a certain period of time, and later, after entering the station, he was not allowed to fully observe: in particular, the right to take photos and videos was restricted, and the commission refused to submit a complaint.

Four polling stations were open in New York, where long-hour queues stood throughout the day. The polling stations could not be monitored and could not handle the flow of voters. In addition, it was difficult to search the list of voters, because not all registrars had the appropriate competence. The flow of voters in the vicinity of the polling station was regulated by the local police, and the process was assisted by volunteers and observers, nevertheless, the voters had to stand for hours in difficult climatic conditions, on the street, where there were no public toilets, to vote. Directly in the building, there was also no air conditioning, due to which the voters faced health problems, and it became difficult for the observers to observe the process.

The exception, observers report, was New York's 6th District, which fared relatively better due to orderly slates and the competence of commissioners.

In #17 polling station of Madrid, 2146 voters were registered in the special list, for which only 2 registrar commission members were allocated. A serious challenge at the precinct was the problem of long, unregulated queues, to which was added the fact that the voters had to stand in a queue not in an open space, but in a closed building on four floors of stairs, and at the same time, it was possible to get to the precinct by means of an elevator, which made it difficult to maintain the queue. Standing in line under these conditions was complicated by the fact that people who got there could neither move forward nor turn back. Finally, observers observed voters returning without participating in the elections due to unbearable conditions.

The space at the polling station #64 in Rome was completely unsuitable for the needs of the polling station and the number of voters. The voting room was very small, which made it impossible to observe and created serious discomfort for the voters. Therefore, there was chaos and long queues in the area.

The situation was similar at the polling stations of Paris, Madrid, Barcelona, Frankfurt, Berlin, and Prague.

In the polling station #29 in Milan 2,252 voters were registered in the voter list, for which 3 registrars and three voting booths were allocated, which was not enough considering the number and activity of voters and caused long queues. The inventory, for example, the flashlight for checking the markings, was often out of order, and because of this, there were cases where several voters could not check their markings before being repaired.

In the polling stations of Milan #29 and New York #7, it was revealed that the list of voters posted on the wall did not match the desk lists used by the precinct commission.

In Milan, about 50 citizens could not be found in the single list of voters, consular registration within the deadline set by the law (until October 7) and despite their active status, they could not be found in the desk lists of the precinct commission and therefore could not participate in the elections. Similar cases were reported in Berlin, New York, Washington, London, Rome, Madrid, Istanbul and Vienna.

Also, 8 voters standing at the consular registration at the Stuttgart polling station, despite being at the consular registration, did not find themselves on the polling station list, however, 6 of them were on the list of the polling station opened in Warsaw. Also, a number of citizens who stood at the consular register and voted in Frankfurt appeared on the electoral roll opened at the Berlin precinct, while voters who voted in Rome appeared on the list of the polling station opened in Milan and New York. It is inexplicable to them how they ended up in the list of other electoral districts.

#### **4. Unauthorized persons at the precincts**

According to the observers, local consuls in several areas were moving to the voting building without status. Such cases were recorded: at the polling stations created in Tallinn, Barcelona, Frankfurt, Riga, Helsinki, Prague, Brussels.

At the Frankfurt polling station, the deputy chairman of the commission, Zurab Kalandadze, verbally abused observers and voters.