



## **Opening and Setting Up of Polling Stations**

The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) is monitoring the October 28, 2018 Presidential Elections in all electoral districts around Georgia. ISFED Observation Mission consists of **800** short-term observers deployed at precincts, **73** observers deployed at district electoral commissions and **78** mobile groups. PVT and Incident Centers are in the central office with **15** operators and **10** lawyers.

ISFED's observation of the Presidential Elections is based on the Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT) methodology, which enables us to timely detect violations, systematically evaluate the entire Election Day process and verify the accuracy of the official election results.

In this statement, ISFED presents information about opening of polling stations and commencement of voting.

### **Key Findings**

Almost all ISFED observers had the opportunity to access and monitor their polling stations. However, several cases were identified of interrupting observer's right to monitor the election process. One case of an attempt to pressure upon observer was identified.

Based on the information provided by ISFED observers, the opening and setting up process at the majority of polling stations took place without substantial violations. However, cases of procedural violation of casting of lots and inadequate handling of electoral documentation was observed at several polling stations.

Party activists and so-called "coordinators" are mobilized at polling stations. They meet voters before entering the PECs in order to record voters in their list. ISFED observers identified cases of inappropriate communication, including cases where party activists were campaigning and telling voters to bring supporters. Representatives of certain non-governmental organizations were using similar methods. Attempting to pressure voters is a threat to their rights. We call upon political parties, electoral subjects and candidates, as well as other organizations to immediately stop attempting to influence voters in front of the polling stations.

At the moment of the statement, ISFED has filed **21** complaints at the Precinct Electoral Commissions (PECs) and **9** complaints at the District Electoral Commissions (DECs).

### **Detailed Information from the PVT**

ISFED has received reports on the opening of polling stations from **99.5%** of PVT observers.

Almost all of ISFED observers were free to observe the opening process of the polling stations. This matches the same data from 2013 Presidential Elections (99.8%).

**98.5%** % of the polling stations were ready to receive voters by 8:00am, this is a slight improvement compared to the same data from 2013 Presidential Elections (95.7%).

### **Violations**

In the evening of October 27, ISFED observer was informed about the facts of alleged pressure on voters in Lagodekhi.

The citizens of the village Tsodniskari, Nunu Jorjadze and Tedo Khachiashvili, whose family members are military servicemen, allegedly accused “Georgian Dream's” coordinators - Nano Lomidze and Ia Jokhadze of pressuring them. Jorjadze says that Lomidze and Jokhadze came to their family and said they should vote for Salome Zourabichvili. If they do not vote for her, they threatened that her son, who is a military serviceman, would have had “problems.” Jorjadze also said that the representatives of "Georgian Dream" told her to say the same to Khachiashvili's family and to warn him as well. Two family members of Khachiashvili family are military servicemen.

In addition, cases of the alleged pressure upon voter were reported to ISFED observers on the night before the elections in Gurjaani and Dedoplistskaro.

As of now, ISFED observers have reported following violations:

### **Violations identified during opening the polling stations**

#### **Alleged attempt to influence the voters' will**

- Several cases of mobilization of party activists/representatives and so-called “coordinators” are observed near polling stations in different municipalities. At the polling station #2 of the election district #12 (Gurjaani); at the polling station #1, #4, #14 and #59 of the election district #67; at the polling station #12 of the election district #19 (Tianeti), at the polling station #6 and #52 of the election district #79 (Batumi), at the polling station #29 of the election district #57 (Tkibuli), at the polling station #7 of the election district #11 (Sagaredjo); at the polling stations #24 and #25 of the election district #17 (Telavi). These persons check the identity of voters and are campaigning. Among them are representatives of self-government bodies and certain non-governmental organizations. Cases of demanding that voter bring people to vote were observed in Sagaredjo and Batumi. The voter answered that he/she already brought people to vote and also will bring one more voter to vote. This is mainly done in favor of the ruling party “Georgian Dream”.
- At the polling station #2, #8 and #26 of the election district #62, persons with the observer’s documentation from “Georgian Barristers and Lawyers International Observatory” are sitting in the cars near polling station, they have lists and simultaneously they are campaigning in favor of Salome Zurabichvili.

#### **Alleged pressure upon observer**

- At the polling station #8 of the election district #11, the policeman asked the ISFED’s observer, which organization they were representing and also to present their personal information. After he found out that the observer was from Sagaredjo district he told them “you are from Sagaredjo and my advice is not to be too strict”.

#### **Limiting the rights of observers**

- At the District Electoral Commission #49 (Terjola), ISFED observer was not allowed to be present in the room where members of the Commission were working. The Chair of the Commission told them to leave the room and sit in the meeting room, which was empty.
- At the polling station #6 of the election district #60 (Ozurgeti), ISFED’s observers were restricted to enter the polling station, with the motive that they were late and the secretary of the Commission did not have time to register them. After allowing observers to enter the station, the Commission’s secretary pointed at the particular place from where they were to observe the election process. The incident is a restriction of free movement at the polling station.
- At the polling station #47 of the election district #56 (Tchiatura), ISFED’s observer was not allowed to enter the polling station until 8am.

- At the polling station #10 of the election district #70 (Poti), the chair of the Commission restricted the right of the authorized persons at the polling station to take photo and video, saying that only media has the right to take photo and video.
- At the polling station #38 of the election district #30 (Kaspi), ISFED's observer was not allowed to make an entry in the record book.

#### **Procedural violation of casting of lots**

- At the polling station #20 of the election district #60 (Ozurgeti), the member of the Commission refused to exercise the function allocated to them by casting of lots. The chair of the Commission assigned other member of the Commission to perform the task without properly casting lots again.
- At the polling station #4 of the election district #70 (Poti), the member of the Commission from the "European Georgia" refused to participate in casting of lots.
- At the polling station #9 of the election district #9 (Didube), after the casting of lots, two representatives from "Georgian Dream" were chosen to accompany the mobile ballot box. One of them refused to accompany the box, while representatives of other parties refused to participate in casting of lots for mobile ballot box. The Chair of the Commission was going to cancel casting of a vote through mobile ballot box, however, after filing the complaint by the observer the chair casted of lots again and revealed the second person to accompany the mobile ballot box.
- At the polling station #7 of the election district #83 (Khelvachauri), the member of the Commission changed the task allocated by casting of lots. After ISFED's observer pointed to this incident, the chair of the Commission casted lots again.
- At the polling station #10 of the election district #1 (Mtatsminda), two members of the Commission, representing the ruling party were allocated to accompany the mobile ballot box after casting of lots. Later the chair of the Commission decided to change one of the member of the commission.

#### **Inaccurate filling in of the ballot box control sheet**

- At the polling station #85 of the election district #3 (Saburtalo), the ballot box control sheet was placed in the main ballot box before receiving the first voter at the station. Consequently, the information about the first voter was not indicated on the control sheet.
- At the polling station #59 of the election district #59 (Kutaisi), information regarding the first voter and their signature was not indicated in the ballot box control sheet.

#### **Violation of inking procedure**

- At the polling station #38 of the election district #30 (Kaspi), a voter was not inked. The incident was resolved after the ISFED observer pointed out the problem.
- At the polling station #22 of the election district #63 (Abasha), a voter was allowed to enter the station without being properly checked for ink.

#### **Failing to check voter identification documentation:**

- At the polling station #65 of the election district #22 (Marneuli), the registrar allowed the voter to vote without checking their identification documents.
- At the polling station #24 of the election district #2 (Vake), the first voter was allowed to vote without being properly checked for ink and without verification of his personal information. The ballot box control sheet was filled as well. Voter's personal information was verified only after these procedures were conducted and it was revealed that he/she was not registered at that station.

#### **Improper issuance of the envelope**

- At the polling station #10 of the election district #2 (Vake), the envelope was given to a voter by a supervisor of the ballot box, before the voter entered the cabin.

### **Improper signing in the voter list**

- At the polling station #51 of the election district #67 (Zugdidi), the registrar incorrectly signed in the list next to another voter's signature.

### **Improper placing of the ballot in the ballot box**

- At the polling station #59 of the election district #59 (Kutaisi), a voter placed the ballot in the ballot box without the envelope.

### **Late opening of the polling station**

- At the polling station #32 of the election district #81 was opened late, because ballots were incorrectly printed. Specifically, candidate with number "51" had number "5" on the ballot paper, also instead of "48" it was written "18". Voting process continues at the polling station despite the fact that ballot papers were not correctly printed. ISFED appealed the District Election Commission to stop the voting process at the polling station.

### **Presence of unauthorized persons at the polling station**

- At the polling station #19 of the election district #28 (Dusheti), a member of the parliament was present at the polling station without being properly checked and he/she was not a registered voter at that specific station.

### **ISFED reminds voters to have one of the following documents with them to be able to participate in the elections: Georgian citizen ID card or Passport of a citizen of Georgia.**

ISFED reminds voters that voting is secret and pressure on voters and control of free will is a criminal offense. Also, in order to detect voter's choice, it is enough that voter indicates support to a particular candidate on the ballot paper. If a voter is asked to cast a vote in a certain way and take a photo of it, voter can then cross the first choice (or cross all candidates) and chose the candidate they want to vote for with a different mark.

ISFED calls upon all eligible voters in Georgia to go to the polls and express their free will by voting in favor of a candidate of their choice.

ISFED allows citizens to follow the election process online via Elections Portal – [www.electionsportal.ge](http://www.electionsportal.ge), where election violations are immediately posted on the elections map. In addition, anyone can report violation of the electoral process by sending a text to a toll-free number **90039**.

### **ISFED will release its next statement at 15:00**

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