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PRESS STATEMENT

Bogus “international observation” of the illegitimate Russian “elections” in temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories on 8-10 September 2023

On 10 September 2023, Russian authorities held the annual “single voting day” across the country as well as in Ukrainian territories temporarily occupied by Russia in the period between 2014 and 2022. Those included the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol (occupied and attempted to annex in 2014), parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts (occupied in 2014, attempted to annex in 2022), and parts of the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts (occupied and attempted to annex in 2022). In some instances, the “elections” also took place on 8-9 September.

The European Union (EU) strongly condemned the holding of the Russian elections in temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories as illegitimate and strongly rejected “this further futile attempt by Russia to legitimise or normalize its illegal military control and attempted annexation of parts of Ukrainian territories”. The EU also declared that it did not and would not “recognise either the holding of these so-called ‘elections’ or their results”.

The United States referred to “the sham elections in occupied areas of Ukraine” as “nothing more than a propaganda exercise”, and stated that it “will never recognize the Russian Federation’s claims to any of Ukraine’s sovereign territory”. The US also reminded “any individuals who may support Russia’s sham elections in Ukraine, including by acting as so-called ‘international observers’, that they may be subject to sanctions and visa restrictions”.

With the aim of providing a degree of international legitimacy to the otherwise illegitimate Russian elections in Ukrainian territories, Russian occupation forces brought a number of foreigners to the occupied parts of the Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts to perform a role of “international election observers”.

This followed a **long-established Kremlin’s practice of what we consider as politically biased international election observation** — a form of political activity performed by international actors and aimed at advancing interests of politicians and political forces by imitating credible election monitoring during electoral processes. **For around two decades, Russian authorities have employed “international observers” to try to whitewash fraudulent elections, legitimise illegitimate plebiscites, and/or advance their foreign policy interests internationally.**

The exact number of “international observers” involved in Moscow’s propaganda exercise on 8-10 September 2023 is currently unknown, but our research and analysis suggest that the Kremlin sent four groups of up to 10 “international observers” to the temporarily occupied parts of the Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts.

We have identified 34 non-Russian foreign persons involved in the “international observation” of Russian “elections” in occupied Ukrainian territories. See the table below.

Name	Country of origin	Visited Ukrainian region
Enrique Javier Refoyo Acedo	Spain	Kherson Oblast
Fauzan Al-Rasyid	Indonesia	Donetsk Oblast
Purnima Anand	India	Kherson Oblast
Robalino de la Torre Mishelle Andrea	Ecuador	Luhansk Oblast
Lubica Blašková	Slovakia	Zaporizhzhia Oblast
Dário Abdula Camal	Mozambique	Kherson Oblast
André Chanclu	France	Donetsk Oblast
Giorgio Descovich Deschi	Italy	Luhansk Oblast
Arnaud Develay	France	Kherson Oblast
Henrique Domingues	Brazil	Kherson Oblast
Mirjam van den Ende	Netherlands	Kherson Oblast
Sonja van den Ende	Netherlands	Kherson Oblast
Steve Gill	USA	Donetsk Oblast
Israel Arconada Gómez	Mexico	Zaporizhzhia Oblast
Vito Grittani	Italy	Luhansk Oblast
Mohammad Hamzeh	Iran	Donetsk Oblast
Konráð Magnússon	Iceland	Kherson Oblast
Fernando Moragón	Spain	Zaporizhzhia Oblast
Erna Ýr Öldudóttir	Iceland	Kherson Oblast
Srđan Perišić	Serbia	Donetsk Oblast
Goran Petronijević	Serbia	Zaporizhzhia Oblast
Camelia Dorina Pop	Romania	Luhansk Oblast
G. Kline Preston IV	USA	Donetsk Oblast
Wyatt Reed	USA	Zaporizhzhia Oblast
Manuel Vaz Pires da Rocha	Portugal	Donetsk Oblast
Thomas Röper	Germany	Zaporizhzhia Oblast
Pasquale Salatino	Italy	Luhansk Oblast
Sebastian Salgado	Argentina	Zaporizhzhia Oblast
Goran Šimpraga	Serbia	Zaporizhzhia Oblast
Volker Tschapke	Germany	Luhansk Oblast
Janlísbert Velasco	Venezuela	Luhansk Oblast
Clarisse Wiydorven	Cameroon	Donetsk Oblast
Nathalie Yamb	Switzerland	Donetsk Oblast
Carlos Andrés Muñoz Yanes	Ecuador	Luhansk Oblast

By entering Ukrainian territories illegally, all “international observers” have violated Ukrainian laws, and **we call on relevant national authorities to inform their citizens of the consequences that they may face for their participation in the Russian propaganda efforts.**

We also call on the EU to consider imposing sanctions and visa restrictions on the non-EU citizens involved in illegal activities in Russia-occupied territories of Ukraine.

Anton Shekhovtsov, Chair of the Centre for Democratic Integrity

Stefanie Schiffer, Chair of the European Platform for Democratic Elections