



## **Opening of polling stations and voting process by 14:00**

The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) is monitoring the May 19 by-elections and extraordinary elections through nearly 240 short-term observers and 10 mobile groups in all twelve electoral districts.

ISFED observers are represented at all electoral precincts in the electoral districts of Zugdidi, Marneuli and Mtatsminda, where they are monitoring the elections using the Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT) methodology. The PVT allows immediate identification of violations, systemic evaluation of the Election Day process and verification of accuracy of official results.

At this time, ISFED presents information about opening of polling stations and the voting process.

### **Main Findings**

ISFED observers were free to access and observe almost all polling stations. They have reported that at majority of electoral precincts, opening of polling stations and the voting process was free from significant violations. At some polling stations procedural shortcomings were found. At several precincts of Zugdidi and Marneuli, observer rights were restricted. At this stage, most irregularities have been detected at Marneuli polling station no.68, where in addition to restriction of observer rights, ballot stuffing and several procedural irregularities have also been found. Physical confrontation and commotion was found at individual polling stations of Marneuli and Zugdidi.

In most districts, there is a trend of mobilization of party activists outside polling stations, who in most cases are registering voters that arrive at the polls.

### **PVT results**

ISFED received reports on the opening of polling stations from all (**100%**) precincts of Mtatsminda and Zugdidi electoral districts and from **98.9%** of precincts of Marneuli electoral district.

At **100%** of electoral precincts in Mtatsminda, at **97.8%** in Marneuli and **97.2%** in Zugdidi, ISFED observers were free to observe the polling stations.

**100%** of polling stations in Mtatsminda, **97.8%** in Marneuli and **98.1%** in Zugdidi were ready to receive voters by 08:00.

Detailed information about irregularities by 14:00 is below.

## Violations

### Restriction of observer rights

- At **Marneuli** electoral precinct no.68, voter registration process is lacking transparency. The registrars are positioned at registration tables in a way that makes it impossible to observe the process. The commission chair restricted right of ISFED observer to monitor the process. At the same precinct, one of the registrars had a voter sign in a field for a different voter. After ISFED observer reacted, the commission attempted to prepare a protocol (report) of expulsion of the observer from the polling station.
- At **Zugdidi** electoral precincts no.44 and no.100, ISFED observers were not admitted on time and allowed to observe comprehensively.
- At **Zugdidi** electoral precinct no.70, a commission member restricted the right of ISFED observer to take photos and video, in order to prevent the observer from recording the commotion at the polling place.

### Ballot stuffing

- At **Marneuli** electoral precinct no.68, a voter inserted four ballots in the ballot box and ran out of the PEC possibly with several extra ballots.

### Commotion at a polling station

- At **Zugdidi** electoral precinct no.97, there was a commotion and confrontation between the commission chairperson and individuals present at the polling place. They called the police and the situation was defused.

### Interference with work of an electoral commission

- At **Marneuli** electoral precinct no.89, a representative of the *European Georgia* disrupted work of the commission. He was accusing a voter of voting multiple times, however according to ISFED the voter was ink-free and was indeed registered on the list of the electoral precinct no.89. The party representative physically assaulted the commission chairperson. Later the situation was defused and the voting process is now progressing without any disruptions.

### Presence of unauthorized individuals inside a polling station

- At **Zugdidi** electoral precincts no.1, no.10, no.16, no.44, and no.78, individuals without accreditation were present taking photos and recording video. Apparently these were representatives of Imedi TV.

### Violation of ballot secrecy

- At **Zugdidi** electoral precinct no.63, a voter cast a ballot at a registration table.
- At **Marneuli** electoral precinct no.84, a voter that did not need assistance was accompanied by another voter inside the cabin.

### Illegal campaigning

- At **Marneuli** electoral precinct no.52 an individual was present without registration by the secretary. The individual told one of the voters during voting process to mark number “41” on the ballot. After this fact, the commission chairperson expelled the person from the polling station.

### Issuing of extra ballots

- At **Zestaponi** electoral precinct no.44, at **Khulo** electoral precinct no.1 and at **Ozurgeti** electoral precinct no.57, registrars issued three extra ballots to voters.
- At **Zugdidi** electoral precinct no.90, registrars issued 5 extra ballots

### Procedural violations

- At **Marneuli** electoral precinct no.25, casting of lots was done improperly. Following ISFED observer's remark, the commission held both casting of lots according to procedures.
- At **Zugdidi** electoral precinct no.18, a registrar did not sign a ballot and certify it with a seal.
- At **Zugdidi** electoral precinct no.3, a voter inserted a ballot in the ballot box without an envelope.
- At **Marneuli** electoral precinct no.10, commission members that accompanied the ballot box issued ballots to 5 voters without commission signatures.
- At **Khulo** precinct no.8 and **Marneuli** precinct no.25, information about voters on the mobile ballot-box list was not included on the unified list.
- At **Marneuli** electoral precinct no.68, commission members exchange functions determined by casting of lots without documenting appropriately.

### Violation of inking rule

- At **Marneuli** electoral precinct no.84, since the voting began votes were systematically cast without checking the ink.

### Mobilization of coordinators and tracking of voters outside polling stations

- At **Adigeni** electoral precinct no.2, voter lists are used to register voters that arrive at the precinct.
- At **Mtatsminda** electoral precincts no.1, no.22 and no.25, alongside electoral officers that regulated the flow of voters, representatives of a non-governmental organization Union of Unified Youth of Georgia were also checking ID cards of voters arriving at polling stations and were transmitting the identity of voters to unidentified persons via instant messaging apps.
- Outside the **Ozurgeti** precinct no.57, **Zugdidi** precinct no.94 and **Khulo** precinct no.32, the *Georgian Dream* activists are mobilized registering voters that arrive at the polling station.
- Outside **Chiatura** electoral precincts no.19 and no.59, so-called coordinators are mobilized both by the *Georgian Dream* and the *United National Movement*.
- At **Marneuli** electoral precinct no.21, an observer was copying a voter's personal number from the list. After ISFED observer pointed this out, the commission reacted and the person stopped copying the information.

ISFED reminds voters to have an ID card or a passport of a Georgian citizen with them to be able to participate in the elections.

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

ISFED also reminds all stakeholders involved in the elections to respect electoral procedures, facilitate peaceful conduct of the election process and free expression of voters' will.

*The ISFED observation mission is made possible with the support from the American People, through funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The mission is also supported by the Embassy of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Views expressed in this statement belong solely to ISFED and do not necessarily reflect positions of USAID, U.S. Government or the United Kingdom.*

