



## Analytical Report № 5.

### **Compliance with the Principles and Standards of Democratic Elections in the Initial Campaign Stage in the Election Scheduled for September 13, 2015**

The long-term election observation program by the Interregional **Public Foundation for Civil Society Development “Golos-Ural”<sup>1</sup>** and the movement **“Golos”** (hereinafter **“Golos”**) in 2015 includes random monitoring of regional and municipal election campaigns for compliance **with the principles and standards of free and equal democratic elections**. “Golos” is conducting a long-term observation of the elections in 21 regions. “Golos” also analyses information from other regions, received via the website “Map of Violations” ([www.kartanarusheniy.org](http://www.kartanarusheniy.org)).

In preparing **Analytical Report No. 5**, long-term observers paid special attention to how election participants — authorities, election commissions of different levels, and the media — observe the principles and standards of free and equal elections **during the media election campaign<sup>3</sup>**.

Emphasis was also placed on how widely administrative resources were used for election purposes and whether or not the principle of equal rights and opportunities of candidates and parties was observed. Finally, “Golos” considered how institutional, informational, financial, and other public resources were used during the campaign — legally or illegally, appropriately or wrongfully.

In addition to their inclusion in federal and regional laws, these principles and standards were adopted in the **“Convention on the Standards of Democratic Elections, Electoral Rights, and Freedoms in the Member States of the Commonwealth” (Chisinau, October 7, 2002)**.

“Golos” uses internationally accepted election monitoring standards and strictly observes political neutrality, which is one of the basic conditions for independent and impartial election observation. The long-term election observation program by expert and regional observers from the movement “Golos” includes a release of weekly analytical reports.

This is the seventh analytical report issued by “Golos” — and the fifth focusing specifically on election campaign monitoring for the Election Day of September 13, 2015.

At this stage in the long-term election observation process, we are looking into:

- Cases of refusal to register lists of parties and citizens nominated as candidates, as well as withdrawal from the election of registered candidates;
- Cases in which administrative (institutional) resources are used to increase voter turnout and/or put pressure on individual candidates;
- Abuse of power;
- Violation of the rules of street and outdoor pre-election campaigning;

- Cases of vote buying.

## 1. Summary

In the process of registration, candidates and parties must pass a “signature filter,” i.e. they must collect a certain number of signatures to qualify for registration. Refusals to register a candidate or party occur for other reasons as well, and these can impact even candidates and parties exempt from signature collection. Election participants often find their nomination and registration obstructed by election commissions organizing the elections as well as by local administrations.

Public administrative resources are used massively and widely at the pre-election campaign stage. These resources are used not just to benefit individual candidates and parties, but to ensure election turnout and put pressure on other election participants.

A characteristic feature of this stage of the elections are violations of street and outdoor campaigning rules, which are linked to the increase in activity of election candidates and parties on the eve of the final campaign. Rather than being the work of one specific party or candidate, such violations are often committed by different election participants and, as a rule, are curtailed by law enforcement agencies.

There are, however, increasingly more cases being reported of hindrance of lawful campaign activities, and law enforcement agencies do not always intervene to prevent such acts — which have now become habitual for the pre-election period in Russia.

Notable in the current election are documented cases of vote buying, which have been observed not just in the municipal elections, where this type of violation is not uncommon, but also in the regional election campaigns of governors and legislatures.

## 2. Refusals to Register, Appeals of Registration, and Other Cases of Withdrawals from the Election

**In Analytical Report No. 4**, we described in detail the results of signature collection and registration. We concluded at the time that signature collection for the election of regional governors, as well as for the elections to the regional and municipal representative bodies, is arbitrary and discriminatory, casting doubt on the legitimacy and authenticity of such elections.

A number of candidates were withdrawn from the elections because signatures for them were deemed to be invalid and void, and candidates who were not obligated to collect signatures also faced arbitrary and unreasonable decisions.

A big election scandal occurred **in the Rostov region**. The Novocherkassk City Court withdrew the registration of three candidates from a general civil coalition running on the lists of the Communist Party: Leonid Novikov, Victor Moyseyuk, and Alexander Popov.

All three candidates are well known for their social and human rights activism. In particular, Leonid Novikov advises citizens on protecting their rights, and has prepared complaint samples in connection with the improprieties committed by Novocherkassk city administrators in regard to their public amenities and landscaping duties. Victor Moyseyuk is a current member of the City Council and an outspoken advocate against cutting down the town’s only “Red spring” grove. Alexander Popov is also a member of the City Duma and the leader of the public movement “Patriots of Novocherkassk.”

Grounds for withdrawal, handed down by three judges, were the diacritical marks above the letter “ё”: the candidates’ documents contained a reference to a “Будённовская Street,” but as the plaintiff pointed out in court, the official name of the street is “Буденновская.” Because on this instance of data falsification, the plaintiff demanded withdrawal of registration. The court agreed.

The request for registration withdrawal came from the “technical” candidates. In the course of the hearings, official representatives of the territorial election commission and prosecutors insisted on maintaining the registration of Leonid Novikov, Victor Moyseyuk, and Alexander Popov as candidates for deputies of the City Duma. However, three judges of the Novocherkassk court decided differently<sup>4</sup>.

There was also disturbing information about pressure on the candidate from the Communist Party from the Kaliningrad region. After repeated threats on the lives of his children, Nicolai Darius withdrew from the election of the deputies of the District Council of the “Zelenogradsk district” municipal formation.<sup>5</sup>

A curious situation is unfolding in Dagestan, where “Golos” does not conduct long-term observation. According to the co-chairman of the movement “Golos,” Andrei Buzin, in the village of Endirey, Khasavyurt district, with a population of not more than 8,000, there is “some kind of election” taking place. In Dagestan, the representative bodies of rural settlements are elected using a proportional system. Endirey villagers will have to make a choice between the programs of the political party “United Russia,” the Communist Party, “Fair Russia” and “Yabloko.” “Yabloko” put forward a list of 16 candidates (for 19 seats), after which “propaganda” work began in earnest. According to Buzin, “First, the Municipal Commission did not register the list of candidates, citing the fact that its chairman, after interviewing (!) the candidates, learned that they were not members of the party “Yabloko.” The decision, however, was overturned by the higher commission. Then, the municipal commission failed to register the list because 10 out of 16 candidates reportedly withdrew their nominations. It appears that some of the requests to withdraw were made verbally; some of these statements are being withheld from authorized persons, and some statements were simply forged. The decision to refuse to register the candidates — and the minutes from the meeting which document this decision — were issued to the authorized person from the party after 6 days. The minutes of the meeting read: “Aydemirov M.A, Municipal Commission Chairman briefed the members of Commission 1575 about the fact that a number of candidates from the party “Yabloko,” for the positions of deputies of the municipal formation “the village Endirey,” “filed a statement to the effect that they wish to resign as candidates in “Endirey village” from the party “Yabloko” according to the following list...<sup>6</sup>

**In the Republic of Yakutia** — where “Golos” also does not conduct long-term observation — there are reports of yet another method of removing unwanted election participants. Candidate for mayor of the Aldan Sakha City from the party “Fair Russia,” Alexander Plotskiy, was banned from participating in the elections by means of a few simple tricks. Officially, the Election Commission banned him on the grounds that Plotskiy had not opened an election account, but he could not do so because the head of the election commission was hiding from him. “While the commission was registering my papers, the chairman of the electoral commission of the municipality, Nina Vorontsova, disappeared from the commission premises and appeared only at six o’clock in the evening. That is, she was gone for more than four hours. All that time, I was trying to find her to get a permission to open an [election] account. When she appeared in election commission room, the banks were closed,” Alexander Plotskiy told the publication “Notepad of Yakutsk.” The MP appealed to the prosecutor’s office, which routed the case to the territorial electoral commission of the Aldan region. However, its chair said that he could not gather the commission members as “it is summer and everyone is on holiday.” This happened a month before the election, and the election campaign is now in full swing. Plotskiy said that he was informed about the meeting, which decided the fate of his registration in the election, just a few minutes before the meeting started, and he simply could not make it on time<sup>7</sup>

**In St. Petersburg**, six candidates from the party “Fair Russia” were refused registration for the election of the deputies of the municipal formation “Solnechnoye.” The official reason for refusal: failure to meet the requirements for the design of the first financial report. One of the

candidates claims that they had to take the financial report from the federal election law, as the Commission did not provide them the report form — although the commission now claims that the requisite forms were posted on the information board for all to see. The day before, when the district election commission made a decision on candidate registration, “Fair Russia” learned that the local electoral commission had adopted its own form of the report with additional columns: accounting income and expenditure of the election funds of the candidate. This information was not in the “Fair Russia” reports. Candidate Boyarchenko claims that the form approved by the commission was given to him only after the deadline for the correction of the documents had passed.

**In elections in Russia, the decision of a handwriting expert, who declares signatures invalid, usually puts an end to the prospects of a party or candidate to take part in the elections.** However, election commissions are known to ignore such decisions in cases of administrative or technical candidates. For example, **in the Moscow region**, during the by-election to the Board of Deputies of the Volokolamsk district, a working group verifying signatures (and consisting of officials from the district administration) did not take into account the opinion of an expert from the Ministry of Interior, who bluntly pointed out that “the dates of voter signing on all the signature lists were written by one person — the signature collector.” The working group proceeded to register the candidacy of Sergei Yegorov — who, additionally, used the city administration newspaper for his hidden campaigning<sup>9</sup>.

Occasionally, information on putting pressure on the election commission members comes out if the members do not wish to comply with the demands of their superiors, as happened in the **Ivanovo region**. According to the website 1000inf.ru, on August 12, at a meeting of the territorial election commission of the city of Shuy, a scandal occurred during the registration of the lists of candidates from the “Russian Party of Pensioners for Justice” and the “Against All” party. A member of the territorial election commission from the Communist Party accused the electoral commission of falsification and forgery of documents for these parties, in particular the signature sheets. During the meeting, it became clear that the oldest member of the city commission of Shuy, Alexander Morozov — who was a member of a working group tasked with the verification of signature sheets — wrote a statement of withdrawal from the commission because he was put under pressure. On August 22, activists from the Communist Party in Shuy planned a protest against election fraud, demanding the resignation of the chairman of Shuy city Election Commission. Representatives of the “Fair Russia” party were going to appeal the commission's decision in court<sup>10</sup>.

Public and media attention has rightly focused on cases of registration refusal where the principal offending cause was the “signature filter.” However, candidates and party lists exempt from collecting signatures were also often refused registration, and instances of direct obstruction of nomination and registration by election commissions were frequently observed — which, of course, is unacceptable. In addition, there are notable cases of obvious selectivity on the part of election commissions, wherein requirements are lowered for one party and inflated for another.

### **3. Use of Administrative Resources at the Pre-Election Campaign Stage**

Practice shows that, during Russian elections, taking unfair advantage of official administrative positions and resources happens at all stages of the electoral process, including the election campaign period.

#### **3.1. Abuse of Institutional Resources**

It is well known that “United Russia” (as the party in power) and the so-called “administrative” candidates have exclusive access to the institutional and organizational capacity of the government, state and local government agencies, and budgetary organizations.

### 3.1.1. Abuse of Institutional Resources during an Election Campaign

A typical example comes from the **Irkutsk region**. According statements by employees of the State Construction Supervision Office, the Head of the Office, M.E. Lee, recruits his subordinates to vote for Sergey Eroschenko in the Irkutsk region gubernatorial elections, and threatens to deprive them of bonuses or even fire them if they refuse to comply. According to reports, the Office is not the only state body of regional government where such practices are common<sup>11</sup>.

**In the Vladimir region** in Yuryevets, part of the district of Vladimir city, the Office of Youth Affairs (which is headed by a candidate for deputy city council and number two on the list of “United Russia”) held an outdoor film screening. Before the event, posters were plastered all over the micro-district. The posters had an image of the candidate Sergey Kiselev, also nominated by “United Russia” but registered in a single-mandate constituency. Rightfully or not, the head of the city election commission made no comment about this, saying only that the city administration conducted and will conduct events “regardless of the elections.”<sup>12</sup>

**In the Voronezh region**, council officials of the Central District of the Voronezh city are recruiting voters for “United Russia” at their workplaces. Voronezh district councils held a series of meetings with officials from housing committees. A local reporter went to one of them in the Central area of the city. On July 22, at 2:00 p.m., a working meeting took place, headed by an employee from the department on landscaping, current state of area highways, Valentina Kuznetsova. The meeting was attended by the house committees’ members of the Voronezh “Center of protection of citizens’ rights “Fair Russia.” However, they could not stay for long. They were detected by the deputy head of the council, Sergei Pusharsky, who accused them of planning a provocation: “You are ruining a closed meeting, which is only for chairmen of street committees! It looks like a provocation. Call security!” On the premises at that time, however, there was a “United Russia” candidate for the City Council of Voronezh, Alexander Sysoev. Sergey Pushkarsky did not respond to the request of the House Committee to present evidence of the meeting’s closed nature. At the meeting, the council employee, Valentina Kuznetsova, smoothly changed the topic to the upcoming elections. She talked about how the audience should hold meetings with prospective voters and began to openly recruit for the party “United Russia”: “We have the “United Russia” party and LDPR [Liberal Democratic Party] and will have [candidates] from party lists. So see for yourself and make decisions. Do not go with the flow: recruiting for the Communist Party, for the Liberal Democratic Party, or for the “Fair Russia.” We have, you know, “United Russia,” which unites all the people of our great and mighty homeland.”<sup>13</sup>

According to the law, if premises owned by the state or by a municipal entity are being used for the purposes of election campaigning in support of a candidate or electoral association, the owner of the premises is obliged to notify the electoral commission, which, in turn, informs the other candidates and parties about the possibility of using the premises on equal terms. Otherwise, the act should be regarded as taking unfair advantage of an official position. For example, closer to the finale of the election campaign, **in the Chelyabinsk region** in the Karabash local branch of the “United Russia” party, meetings are held with residents of constituencies and labor unions. The meetings are attended by Pavel Kiselev, coordinator of the public reception of “United Russia,” as well as by “United Russia” candidates for deputies of the local parliament. The first meeting took place in the Department of Social Welfare with its employees. The candidates then went to the family library on Gagarin Street, where the residents of neighboring houses were waiting for them.<sup>14</sup>

On August 8, in Chesma village in the Chelyabinsk region, the Commissioner for Children’s Rights in the Chelyabinsk region and a candidate for the Legislative Assembly, Margarita Pavlova, organized a meeting in the House of Children’s Creativity for mothers of large families,

representatives of budgetary organizations, young families, and Chesmensky area residents who had questions or suggestions. Pavlova spoke about her work. The audience watched videos. Pavlova spoke about the role of “United Russia,” the party’s project “Every Child Is Important for Russia,” and the work being done within the framework of this project.<sup>15</sup>

**We stress that the use of business trips by officials for election campaign purposes is a common case of using administrative resources during elections in Russia.**

City Day celebration in Trekhgorny City, a formal event organized by the municipal authorities, was used by the “United Russia” party for election campaign purposes. The regional party’s website reports: “A festive procession of labor collectives along the main street ended a cascade of events devoted to the City Day and the 60th anniversary of the first production at the Instrument-Making Plant... Then, in the evening, the townspeople waited for the concert on the square near the Palace of Culture “Icarus”... The mayor, the acting Secretary of the Political Council of the local branch of “United Russia” Evgeny Leonidovich Sychev, the deputy of the Legislative Assembly of Chelyabinsk region of the Y convocation Leonid Urmashov, and the deputy candidate to the Assembly Oleg Tsepkin, all congratulated the townspeople from the stage.”<sup>16</sup>

### **3.1.2. Use of Administrative Campaign Techniques to Increase Turnout in Elections**

In the Kemerovo region, authorities have resorted to customary Russian administrative campaign techniques to raise turnout in the upcoming gubernatorial elections. Various discounts for goods and services await local citizens at polling stations on Election Day. News about the discounts was announced by the deputy governor of the Kemerovo Oblast, Ilya Seredyuk. According to Seredyuk, on Election Day at each polling station in the region there will be three to twenty food retail stations. The voters will be offered a wide range of food products, including different kinds of sausage, dairy, eggs, sunflower oil, and so on. However, as Seredyuk stressed, there is currently a campaign among local producers to promote their products through traditional price cuts near polling stations.

**In the Voronezh region**, direct pressure is being exerted on voters. From July 29, Voronezh began issuing absentee ballots, which can be used to vote in the September 13 elections for the city and the regional Duma. Local publication “Aware” (“V Kurse”) received a letter from a reader who asked to remain anonymous. The letter reported that some workers were asked to bring copies of their passport, so that they can be given absentee ballots to vote in one of the schools in the Soviet district. It is important to note that according to the principles of the Russian electoral legislation and the international standards of free and equal democratic elections, participation in elections is a voluntary act.

Hoping to change the balance of the elections in their favor, local authorities sometimes resort to rather unusual methods. By a decree issued to the Legislative Assembly of the Chelyabinsk region and the local governments, Stanislav Tretyakov, head of the city administration **in Miass City, Chelyabinsk**, officially changed Miass’s City Day from November 18 to September 13 (i.e. to Election Day). Mayor Igor Voinov — a “United Russia” deputy candidate to the Council of Miass urban district — claims to have been unjustly accused by some candidates of illegal money extortion from acting deputies of local councils and from electoral candidates. Voinov claims that such instructions (to give money) were never issued, and that the rumors got started because of the preparations for the holiday.<sup>19</sup>

**Regional and local administrations are already concerned about turnout in the upcoming elections. To this end, downstream of the campaign there will be various measures to ensure turnout. Quite often, these measures are in violation of the principle of voluntary**

citizen participation in elections, guaranteed by paragraph 3 of Article 3 of Federal Law № 67-FZ, “On Basic Guarantees of Electoral Rights and the Right to Participate in Referendums for Citizens of the Russian Federation,” and paragraph 2 of Article 8 of the “Convention on the Standards of Democratic Elections, Electoral Rights, and Freedoms in the Member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States.”

### **3.1.3. Administrative Pressure on Candidates**

**There are recorded cases of officials using their administrative positions to force candidates to withdraw from the elections.** In the Voronezh region, for example, direct pressure was exerted on the nominated candidate. The regional office of the party “Fair Russia” in the Voronezh region is preparing an appeal to the General Prosecutor's Office to open a criminal case against Natalia Novomlinskaya, chief physician of the Ramon Hospital. In a phone call, the chief of the hospital bluntly threatened to dismiss her subordinate, medical assistant Lyudmila Ryzhova, nominated by “Fair Russia” in the election of the head of rural settlement Novozhivotininskoe in the Ramon district of the Voronezh region.<sup>20</sup>

**In the Tver region** in Sonkovsky District, “Fair Russia” initially registered six candidates in the elections. There are reports that local candidates of the party were pressured by the district administration. After a private conversation with the district administration (whose employees are members of the “United Russian” party), two candidates from “Fair Russia” were forced to withdraw their candidacies. The district administration hinted to the nominees that they might have “problems.” Relatives of the candidates work in the public sector, which is subordinate to the existing municipal authorities.<sup>21</sup>

No less a resonant incident was recorded in the **Krasnoyarsk Territory**. Bolsheuluysky District deputies approached the editors of news agency “Zapad24” and told them about unlawful actions by governing officials in the district administration. Candidate for the post of the Head of Bolsheuluysky District Sergey Lyubkin, head of district administration Sergei Rilov, or deputy chairperson of Bolsheuluysky District Council Vladimir Heinz would invite candidates to conversations and try to persuade them to withdraw from the election. Candidates who did not agree to withdraw were threatened by restriction of work, power outages, and even difficulties with enrolling their children in schools. This information was disclosed by Timothy Zanko (“Fair Russia”) and Alexander Olohov (“Patriots of Russia”). To this date, out of the eight candidates from the “Fair Russia,” four have withdrawn their applications.

## **3.2. Abuse of Power Aimed at Putting Pressure on Individual Candidates and Parties**

Law enforcement officials can influence opposition candidates and party lists that constitute a serious threat to incumbent authorities. We have unfortunately observed such practices in the run-up to the current elections.

Candidates are sometimes physically attacked. In Buryatia, in the village Ivolginsk, there was an attack on Alexander Sakharov, a candidate for National Hural of Buryatia, nominated through self-nomination for Electoral District No. 5. On August 5, traffic police officers stopped Sakharov’s car and asked him to come with them. His eight-month pregnant wife remained in the car. During the conversation with the traffic police, another car drove up and two armed men jumped out of it. They overpowered Sakharov, shoved him into their car, and drove away in an unknown direction. Local journalist Arkady Zarubin links the attack on Sakharov to the fact that, as a candidate for a deputy of the People’s Khural of Electoral District No. 5, Sakharov was a threat to the success of the Hural candidate from the “United Russia” party. However, according to a FlashSiberia source in the regional Interior Ministry, Sakharov was arrested by the police and taken

to the regional Interior Ministry department. The agency's informant did not specify the status of the deputy candidate.<sup>22</sup>

One of the most notorious cases of the 2015 election campaign is the refusal to register the regional list of the "RPR-Parnassus" party in the Novosibirsk region. After the Central Election Commission refused to satisfy the complaint of the party contesting the decision of the election commission of the Novosibirsk region to refuse to register the list, the story got an unexpected twist. On August 12, Leonid Volkov, the head of the electoral headquarters of the Novosibirsk "Democratic Coalition" (based on the party "RPR-Parnassus"), was summoned to the Investigation Department of Novosibirsk as a suspect in a criminal case of obstruction of a journalist, filed on request of a Lifenews TV channel employee. According to Volkov on "Twitter," a criminal case was opened under Part 3 of Article 144 of the Criminal Code (obstruction of journalistic work by damaging property).<sup>23</sup>

Later it became known that the investigating authorities of the Novosibirsk region opened a criminal case against unidentified persons from the authorized representatives of an electoral association of the party "RPR-Parnassus" based on the alleged falsification of signature sheets in order to participate in the elections to the Legislative Assembly of the Novosibirsk region (for the crime under Part 2 of Article 142 of the Criminal Code, falsification of election documents). These signatures — more than 1,300 of them — were handed over to the Election Commission of the Novosibirsk region and found to be invalid.<sup>24</sup>

#### **4. Violation of the Rules of Street and Outdoor Campaigning**

Violation of the rules of street and outdoor campaigning is traditionally one of the most common types of infractions at this stage of the election campaign.

**In the Samara region,** the center of Samara City was flooded with large banners recruiting voters for the "governor's team" and reminding them of the elections on September 13. The people depicted on the banners are registered candidates in the municipal elections, and the banners — clearly intended to be part of the election campaign — are not in compliance with the law in terms of their required content. A vast number of such print campaign materials is currently in circulation. In addition, there is a video on the internet on how management companies are recruiting voters for the "right" candidates in the elections under the pretext of doing house repairs.<sup>26</sup>

In the same region on August 5, Samara City Manager Oleg Fursov, together with the head of the Kirov region administration, met with the staff of the Samara power plant and campaigned for "the governor's team — a team of professionals." Formally, the name of the meeting was "Information on the Reform of Local Government in Samara." A large part of it was devoted to urging people to vote for candidates representing "the governor's team."<sup>27</sup>

As a rule, different candidates and parties commit violations in street and outdoor campaigning, irrespective of their views and attitudes towards the "administrative resource." In this regard, the "Fair Russia" party did something peculiar in the Voronezh region: it announced the collection of signatures against capital housing reconstruction payment until 2020. This initiative was brought forward by the party leader Sergei Mironov. In Voronezh, signature collection is conducted by the Center for the Protection of Citizens' Rights. According to the publication "Aware" ("V Kurse"), young people who work from 10 to 13 hours and from 17 to 20 hours are accepted as activists. The problem is that the signature collectors are often minors. Journalists talked to one such collector, who looks no more than 16 years old, and who said, "We are not asked about our age. They take everyone. If someone wants to earn some money, it's a good job for young people." Meanwhile, the existing election law prohibits involving minors in election campaigns.

Lack of output data is a common violation — and not only from the party in power. Campaign leaflets in support of Sergey Levchenko, a Communist Party candidate for governor of the Irkutsk region, do not contain the output data required by the law (information about producers, customers, circulation, information that it is paid from the election funds of the candidate, and so on).

**In the Ryazan region**, Viktor Malyugin, the Communist Party faction leader in the regional Duma, complained to the election commission about illegal campaigning in favor of the “Communists of Russia” party. The Commission found that the campaign materials presented by Malyugin did not contain the requisite output, their samples were not sent to the electoral commission, and the content was contrary to the law provisions, creating a positive party image for the voters. All this was the reason for an appeal to law enforcement agencies to prevent any further distribution of the materials.<sup>29</sup>

**An integral part of the unfair competition in the elections is the damage, destruction, or removal of campaign materials, which is reasonably and legitimately seen as obstructing lawful campaign activities.**

**In the Orel region**, in the late evening of July 28, Sergei Grishin, a candidate to the Oryol city council of people’s deputies from the Communist Party, caught two young people removing his materials from the mailboxes and tearing them off bulletin boards. The plucked and seized leaflets were not discarded, but folded neatly into a bag — apparently for reporting purposes. The candidate appealed to the law enforcement agencies. According to the press service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Oryol region, the police department for the Northern District took statements from the alleged culprits and is currently investigating the case. It is important to note that Article 5.14 of the Administrative Code requires a fine ranging from 500 to 1,000 rubles for the deliberate destruction of campaign materials — which, no doubt, these young people will get back after a few hours of night “work.”<sup>30</sup>

In the Smolensk region, where in addition to the election of the regional head, there are elections to the Smolensk city council, housing department employees of Smolensk received an order to remove from mailboxes any pre-election printed materials. In a letter to the editor of “Smolenskaya Narodnaya Gazeta,” an employee of the “Zhilischnyk” wrote that, in spite of it being the weekend, the entire staff of the housing department were told to remove from their mailboxes all newspapers and leaflets that contained information about the election. The “extracted” materials were to be brought to their bosses. Those who shied away from this extracurricular work were threatened with dismissal.<sup>31</sup>

The regional office of the party “Fair Russia” **in the Vladimir region** reported that during campaign pickets, party activists were attacked by unknown individuals who stole their campaign materials. The Party’s office has already appealed to the police department of Vladimir City with a statement about the theft of a portion of the party’s newspaper circulation, as well as about a violation of constitutional rights to participate in election activities.<sup>32</sup>

People are often given inducements to cooperate for purposes of election campaigning. **In the Vladimir region**, flower shop employees on Myra (Peace) Street claimed that campaign representatives of the “United Russia” party — specifically the deputy chairman of the local committee of the territorial public administration — forced them to display the party’s campaign materials by using threats. The deputy chairman threatened them with troubles from the district administration. A video exists in which she admits on camera that campaign materials were given to her by the chairman of the committee.<sup>33</sup>

Dirty PR tactics are also in frequent use. **In the Chelyabinsk region**, authorities confiscated copies of an anonymous campaign newspaper. Young people were spreading “dirty” campaign

materials in Korkino. Illegal campaign activists were caught by the chairman of the Korkino department of “Fair Russia,” Natalia Loshchinina. Three men were distributing a newspaper in the city with a negative bias towards the social democrats. The fourpage bulletin “Fair Newspaper” is anonymous, containing no information about its registration, circulation, or the authors of the texts. The paper contains a negative and possibly defaming statement about a deputy of the State Duma and the face of the Chelyabinsk “Fair Russia,” Valeriya Gartung. We have been informed that the police confiscated more than 3,000 copies of the newspaper. There are protocols on administrative violations regarding those detained.<sup>34</sup>

**As a rule, violations of the rules of street and outdoor campaigning can be linked to different participants in the electoral race, and are generally unrelated to the candidates’ political views, beliefs, or relation to administrative resources. In addition, such violations are generally interrupted by the work of law enforcement agencies. Exceptions may be cases related to the misuse of administrative resources and/or obstruction of the lawful activities of election candidates or electoral association (kidnapping, destruction of campaign materials, tempering with election campaign events, etc.). In such cases, law enforcement agencies are often passive.**

## **5. Vote Buying**

Vote buying is relatively common in local elections.

**In the Voronezh region**, the editor of “Aware” (“V Kurse”) received several phone calls informing him that urban constituencies No. 8 (Left Bank) and No. 19 (Comintern) were forming electoral lists with the names of citizens who expressed willingness to vote for “United Russia” on September 13. On the eve of Election Day, “the people on the list” will be called and told where they can collect the money that was promised to them. According to one caller, voters were promised 500 rubles each to cast their ballots in favor of “United Russia.”<sup>35</sup>

Another clear example of vote buying was registered in the Tomsk region, Tomsk City. During the announced elections to the City Duma, “United Russia” released a series of “social cards” offering discounts in a network of different stores.<sup>36</sup>

However, one can find examples of vote buying in regional campaigns too. In some regions, such as in the Kemerovo region, vote buying takes official forms. Thus, Acting Governor Aman Tuleyev, nominated as a candidate, decided to distribute free bicycles.

**Magadan region** website “Kolyma.ru” published an article describing vote buying by the candidate to the Magadan Regional Duma, Vladimir Golovan. “Children — sweets; adults — tablets, smartphones, USB cards.” These were the prizes prepared for the next “backyard day,” which is permanently organized by the Magadan Regional Duma deputy philanthropist Golovan.<sup>38</sup>

**In the Chelyabinsk region**, Evgeny Svezhentsev, a “United Russia” candidate for deputy of the Legislative Assembly of the Chelyabinsk Region, organized a tour for the residents of his constituency, which also should be viewed as vote buying.<sup>39</sup>

## **5. Conclusions and Recommendations**

Refusals to register candidates are not always linked to the complexity of passing the “signature filter.” They also occur for other reasons. In such cases, difficulties with registration can affect representatives of electoral associations who are exempt from signature collection, and some of them are facing these difficulties in the current elections.

This opposition comes from the electoral commissions which organize elections, as well as from local administrations. At the same time, there are obvious cases where preferential treatment is given to one party over another in terms of the stringency of registration requirements.

Administrative resources have long been an integral part of the Russian electoral process, and the pre-election campaign stage is no exception. In this stage, government power is used directly to generate benefits to individual candidates and parties. Another use of government power is to ensure desirable turnout in the elections and put pressure on other election participants. A number of regional and local election campaigns for September 13 have already been tainted by the administrative recruitment of voters and by pressure on certain candidates to withdraw from the elections.

In this stage of the elections, street and outdoor campaigning violations are frequent, and are generally committed a range of different political parties and party candidates. Often, such violations are stopped by law enforcement authorities, as indicated by practice. However, in cases of obstruction of the lawful campaign activities of a candidate or party, or when the violation is committed using administrative power, law enforcement agencies are often passive, as indicated by past experience and the monitoring of election campaigns.

In the current elections, there are also explicit cases of vote buying. Considering that vote buying is sporadic, it is important to emphasize that it occurs not only in the municipal elections, for which this type of violation is not uncommon, but also in the regional elections.

The preliminary results of election campaign monitoring for the elections on September 13, 2015, allow the movement “Golos” to offer the following recommendations:

***To the State Duma (Parliament):***

- Increase penalties for the misuse of administrative resources and services in the elections, and ensure that such penalties cannot be appealed or evaded.
- Oblige the heads of regions and municipalities who are candidates in the elections to go on vacation for the period of the election campaign.
- Completely eliminate any possibility of use public events financed from the budget and/or with the participation of officials for pre-election campaigning.

***To electoral commissions:***

- Ensure the equality of all participating candidates and parties in nomination, collection and verification of signatures, registration, and all other electoral activities.
- Eliminate any element of arbitrariness and selectivity when making decisions
- Provide a fully independent, collegial, open, and transparent decision-making process, as required by current electoral law.

***To candidates and political parties:***

- Adhere in the election campaigns to the principles and methods of fair competition. • Do not resort to using administrative resources for campaigning purposes.

***To law enforcement and judicial authorities:***

- Curb offenses taking advantage of an official position in the elections.
- Tighten control over campaign activities not directly financed by election funds, such as by misusing administrative resources or gaining unequal access to the media.
- Curb various actions impeding the lawful campaign activities of candidates and electoral associations. • Be self-reliant. Do not to follow politically motivated instructions.

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