



SILBA
Gothersgade 151, kld. tv
1123 Copenhagen K
press@silba.dk
09 October 2016

SILBA FINAL REPORT

GEORGIA

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 8 OCTOBER 2016

EXCECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 8 October 2016, Initiative for Dialogue and Democracy (SILBA) conducted a short-term Election Observation Mission (EOM) in 8 districts of Tbilisi to observe the parliamentary elections in the Republic of Georgia.

SILBA sent a delegation of 25 short-term observers (STOs), in collaboration with Norwegian European Dialogue and Democracy Association (EDDA), and assisted by local interpreters, to observe the elections. 11 teams visited a total of 91 polling stations during the election day, observing 11 opening and 9 closing polling stations in 8 different precinct districts in Tbilisi.

SILBA deployed its STOs a week prior to the election and met with relevant organisations, institutions and one domestic election observation organisation. The STOs have received sufficient training in terms of an OSCE E-Learning course prior to the EOM, as well as a specific seminar on live coding for the observations throughout the day using appropriate survey tools.

FINDINGS FROM ELECTION DAY:

Opening:

Opening procedures were generally followed and organised well in relation to the Election Code and generally opened on time in a professional manner. In general, Precinct Election Commission (PEC) members as well as domestic observers, partisan observer and additional international observers were present at the opening of the polling station.

General:

Overall election day was calm and peaceful across the districts. Voting was generally well organised and polling officials administrated the vote professionally. Observers evaluated the voting process in 92 per cent of polling stations positively and negatively in 8 per cent.

In general, observations indicate that campaign materials or activity was not in proximity or in any way generally inappropriately present at the polling station as well as any manipulation of the voters. The secrecy of voting was respected and there were no voters being turned away at any of the observed districts.

In 50 per cent of polling stations, observers noted a sufficient number of appointed PSOs. The vast majority of the PSOs was female. Observers noted ten or more female PSOs in 52 per cent of polling stations. In 72 per cent of polling stations the chairperson was noted to be female.

Despite the general positive observations some less substantial irregularities were detected. However, irregularities were not seen as systematic. First of all, a majority of the polling stations did not offer access for people with disabilities. In 13 per cent of the polling stations unrest or tension were observed either due to confusion of the general procedure or because of unsuitable locations of the polling stations. Family voting was reported in 20 per cent of the polling stations and general confusion was related with regards to the legal framework of the Election Code.

Additionally, police and or security personnel were observed at a substantial amount of polling stations and in 20 per cent of the cases, the observers noted that the authority behaved inappropriately.

Closing:

Closing procedures were generally followed and organised well in relation to the Election Code and generally closed on time in a professional manner. Observers evaluated the closing procedures in 55 per cent of polling stations positively and in 54 per cent negatively.

Despite observers generally noted an adequate execution of the counting procedures, the counting process was generally evaluated less positively than voting. In 7 of the 9 counts observed, observers noted the count to be performed not only by polling-station officials. In 4 counts, observers noted that party officials took part in the counting. In 3 counts, observers noted the PSOs' understanding of counting procedures as inadequate. In one count observers noted an insufficient number of PSOs participating in the counting process. In relation to this, observers noted that a number of PSOs removed their green uniforms at 02.30 AM. In 4 counts, observers noted that the PSOs were disturbed during their work counting the ballots, which delayed the process.

Conclusion:

Based on the observation of 91 polling stations in Tbilisi, the parliamentary elections held in Georgia is considered as free but with noticeable irregularities. Though procedures were generally followed according to the legal framework of the Election Code, observers noted a few irregularities including counting performed by other than PSOs, most notable performed by party officials.

Neither systematic fraud nor voter intimidation have been observed throughout election day, and irregularities observed is generally considered to be due to lack of training, rather than an attempt of systematic fraud.

Recommendations:

These recommendations are offered with the aim to bring elections in Georgia fully in line with the international standard for democratic elections. These recommendations are concluded on SILBA's observations in 91 polling stations in Tbilisi, and may not apply to all regions of Georgia. Concluding on observations throughout election day SILBA recommends the following:

- Ensuring training of all PSOs to avoid confusion, especially in relation to the counting procedure.
- As well as training, ensuring distribution of informative material on Georgian election law could help avoid confusion.
- It is recommended that all PSOs wear their badges and/or uniforms even after closing of the polling stations, to make it clear who have the authority to participate in the vote counting.
- A more balanced gender representation in the appointed PSOs is recommended.