



TI GEORGIA' MONITORED ELECTION DAY PROCEDURES IN KVEMO KARTLI

- **Kvemo Kartli remains one of the most problematic regions in terms of the quality of election conduct**
- **Significant violations noted in 56 out of 110 monitored polling stations**

Tbilisi, Georgia – On 21 May 2008 Transparency International Georgia (TI Georgia) conducted monitoring of polling and counting procedures in the region of Kvemo Kartli. The organization deployed its monitors to 110 polling stations in the following five election districts: Marneuli, Gardabani, Bolnisi, Dmanisi, and Tsalka, thus covering 40% of the polling stations in the region. In addition to 107 stationary monitors, TI Georgia's monitoring mission included five groups of mobile monitors.

The monitoring targeted precincts with the highest numbers of registered voters in the respective districts and ones where the majority of registered voters were ethnic minorities. TI Georgia chose to cover these districts taking into account the scale of problems observed there during the snap presidential elections of January 2008. In order to protect its monitors from possible pressure from local officials, TI Georgia recruited its election day monitors from outside the region of Kvemo Kartli.

The monitoring started at 7 AM and continued until the end of counting procedures in the monitored polling stations. As this monitoring revealed, Kvemo Kartli remained one of the most problematic regions in the country in terms of the quality of election conduct. In 56 out of 110 polling stations monitored by TI Georgia, the monitors noted significant breaches of election legislation. The problems ranged from poor qualification of Precinct Election Commission (PEC) members to carousel voting, ballot stuffing, etc.

Most frequently observed violations included: Precinct Election Commission members conducting agitation in the polling station in favor of the ruling party, voters marking ballot papers outside polling booths, voters being allowed to vote without presenting ID cards or upon presenting other persons' ID cards, proxy voting, inconsistent application of inking, Precinct Election Commission members following voters into polling booths, voters entering polling booths in groups of two and more, the presence of unauthorized persons during polling and counting procedures, and correcting of summary protocols.

Obtaining summary protocols upon the completion of the counting procedures was also problematic in a number of polling stations. PEC representatives provided protocols only after TI Georgia had contacted representatives of the District Election Commission (DEC) and Central Election Commission (CEC) and asked them to demand the PECs give the protocols to the monitors. With the DEC and the CEC's help TI Georgia obtained protocols from over 80% of the polling stations covered.

In addition to these problems, the electoral process was marred by the refusal of Precinct Election Commissions to register TI Georgia's and other election day monitors' appeals. In 23 polling stations TI Georgia's monitors were threatened when they pointed out violations or attempted to file appeals. In 14 polling stations PEC chairs and secretaries refused to register TI Georgia's appeals. TI Georgia informed the DEC and CEC representatives about the Precincts' refusal to register the appeals. Following their involvement the problem was resolved in a number of cases. In the end, TI Georgia's monitors filed 137 appeals at Precinct and DEC levels on election day.¹



TI Georgia has forwarded these appeals to the CEC as well in order to inform it about the revealed violations.

One more problem observed in the region on election day involved the local monitoring organization Ratsio Legi. In some of the polling stations monitored by TI Georgia, there were three or more Ratsio Legi monitors at one time. These monitors were seen instructing Precinct PEC members on how to deal with the monitors from other organizations, telling voters for whom to vote, and intimidating party and independent monitors from other organizations. Despite TI Georgia's monitors' requests to the Precinct Election Commission chairs to react to the illegal intrusions of the Ratsio Legi's monitors, the PEC chairs chose to ignore the issue.

Currently TI Georgia is in the process of comparing the collected summary protocols with the protocols publicized by the CEC. It is also following up the appeals submitted to the election administration and the courts.