



The Movement for the Defense of Voters' Rights "Golos"
golosinfo.org

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Analytical report

Nomination of candidates for the March 18, 2018 presidential elections in the Russian Federation (part 2)

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The movement "Golos" continues to carry out long-term monitoring of the presidential elections in the Russian Federation, scheduled for March 18, 2018. Election campaign monitoring aims to ensure the campaign's compliance with the principles and standards of free and equal elections.

The "Golos" expert group receives information from the media, from participants and organizers of the elections, and from public observers and voters who report information about violations during the campaign to individual representatives of the movement and through the crowdsourcing service "Map of Violations." Long-term "Golos" observers are on the ground in 40 entities of the Russian Federation with a total of about 70 million registered voters.

Conclusions

Ensuring equality of candidates' rights during signature collection

- The process of voter signature collection in support of the nominated candidates violated the principles of equality of candidates' rights and their freedom of action.
- Initiative groups of some candidates faced various kinds of obstacles. Supporters of the politician Alexei Navalny faced the greatest difficulties in the preparation and execution of the candidate's nomination; the meetings of his initiative groups were met with pressure from law enforcement and unreasonable restrictions from the authorities.
- According to available information, staff and volunteers of candidates Natalya Lisitsyna ("ROT Front"), Vladimir Mikhailov (self-nomination), Ksenia Sobchak ("Civic Initiative") and Grigory Yavlinsky ("Yabloko") faced various restrictions on collecting signatures, provocations, and interference in their activities by the police. Not all candidates had the same access to public areas (for example railway stations and shopping centers), where signatures were collected in support of the incumbent president.
- Federal, regional, and local TV channels demonstrated an unequal approach to the coverage of signature collection in support of various candidates; there were cases of illegal campaigning under the guise of informing the public about signature collection in support of Vladimir Putin's self-nomination. Cases of illegal campaigning also occurred on the websites of authorities and local governments, regional public chambers, and even budget institutions.
- Vladimir Putin's election campaign was accompanied by a massive opening of "student centers" by his supporters and by political campaigning at universities. This, in our opinion, is controversial in terms of legislation on elections and education. Nevertheless, Putin's supporters created the circumstances in which educational institutions must now create equal conditions for campaigning by the support groups of other candidates, provided these candidates apply for space to campaign.
- The "Map of Violations" as well as various media outlets reported that a massive and often compulsory collection of signatures in support of Vladimir Putin's and, on occasion, Boris Titov's ("Party of the Growth") nominations happened at workplaces during business hours, including at budget, educational, and medical institutions, as well as industrial enterprises. There were recorded cases of "administrative" coercion

of state employees and students to participate in signature collection for Vladimir Putin. Officials at various levels directly participated in organizing signature collection or facilitated the spread of information about candidate Putin. The true extent of the **“administrative” mobilization of voters** to collect signatures in favor of the incumbent president is difficult to assess because of its latent nature and the fears of voters to publicize instances of their coercion.

- The information we have at our disposal gives **“Golos” enough grounds to state that at the stage of signature collection, the principle of free and voluntary participation in elections has been violated.**
- Despite the nomination of an ample number of candidates in the initial stage of the election campaign – 17 in total – only a few of them publicly and openly carry out real election campaigns aimed at mobilizing their supporters, attracting voters, and collecting signatures in their support. Most of those who did not conduct a public campaign to collect signatures were effectively eliminated at this stage.
- Compared to the presidential campaign of 2012, when only 6 candidates collected signatures and only 3 signature collections were submitted to the CEC of Russia, some progress was made in this campaign: 15 candidates were granted permission to collect signatures, 6 of which submitted signatures to the CEC of Russia. **Thus, it seems that the existing requirement to collect 100,000 signatures in 30-35 days for non-administrative candidates nominated by parties is quite tough, and 300,000 signatures for self-nominated candidates is clearly excessive.**

Technologies for signature collection

- The campaign activities of the nominated candidates seem insufficient for the purposes of conducting a competitive campaign. Of the 15 candidates allowed by the CEC of Russia to collect signatures, only a few actively, publicly, and openly conducted a real election campaign aimed at mobilizing their supporters and attracting voters, as well as collecting signatures in their support. Some candidates – for example, Anton Bakov ("Monarchist Party"), Irina Volynets ("People's Party of Russia"), Mikhail Kozlov ("Party of Social Protection"), and Roman Khudyakov ("CHESTNO") – apparently did not even try to actually collect signatures; they did not announce enough resources and did not show any noticeable campaign activity in the regions.

- Signature collection in support of the nomination of Ksenia Sobchak was directed both by activists from established regional headquarters as well as professional collectors. Signature collection in support of the nomination of Grigory Yavlinsky mainly relied on the regional branches of the political party “Yabloko.” In most regions, public collection of voter signatures in support of other candidates, and other activities related to their campaigns, went largely unnoticed.
- The procedure for signature collection remains unjustifiably costly. Despite the significant decrease in the number of signatures necessary for registering a candidate, the costs (monetary, time-related, and organizational) for this process remain substantial. This forces even those candidates who plan real participation in the campaign to concentrate almost exclusively on signature collection and neglect election campaigning. As a result, the actual campaign period, which is still too short to properly inform voters about the activities and programs of candidates applying for the highest office in the country, practically got even shorter.
- Vladimir Putin became the only candidate who managed to combine signature collection with the start of his campaign. Public signature collection points in support of Putin were basically election campaign points, which only demonstrated the collection procedure and were rather meant to display publicly the state leader’s popular support. Apparently, the real collection of the bulk of the signatures was conducted in a different way.

Transformation of Alexei Navalny’s election campaign into an election boycott campaign

- The 2018 election campaign clearly demonstrated that the circle of real participants in the elections is not limited to officially registered candidates. Alexei Navalny continues to lead his political campaign ("voters' strike"), which is directly related to the ongoing elections, despite the fact that he is not allowed participate in them. Thus, the exclusion from the election race of a politician who enjoys real voter support has deprived Navalny of the opportunity to try for the post of president, but has enabled him to influence the course of the election campaign. Evidence of this was the reaction of regional election commissions and law enforcement agencies to Navalny’s election boycott campaign, which led to the politically motivated persecution of his political supporters, who are calling for non-participation in the elections.

1. General information on candidates' activities at the signature collection stage

List of registered candidates and candidates allowed to collect signatures

As noted in Part 1 of the report,¹ after passing the necessary procedures at the CEC of Russia, **17 candidates** continued their participation in the election campaign:

- 2 candidates were registered by the CEC of Russia under the "parliamentary privilege" provision, that is without being required to collect signatures (Zhirinovskiy from "LDPR" and Grudinin from the "Communist Party of the Russian Federation");
- 2 self-nominated candidates (Putin and Mikhailov) and 13 candidates nominated from non-parliamentary parties (Agurbash from "Alliance of Greens," Baburin from "Russian National Union," Bakov from "Monarchist Party," Volynets from "People's Party of Russia," Gordon from "The Party of Good Deeds," Kozlov from "Party of Social Protection," Lisitsyn from "ROT Front," Polishchuk from "Party of Social Reforms," Sobchak from "Civic Initiative," Suraykin from "Communist Party "Communists of Russia,"" Boris Titov from "Party of Growth", Khudyakov from "CHESTNO," and Yavlinsky from "Yabloko") were all allowed to collect signatures.

List of candidates who pulled out at the signature collection stage

According to the law, the nominated candidates had to submit the collected signatures to the CEC of Russia before 6 p.m. on January 31. As a result, 9 of the 15 candidates who were allowed to collect signatures left the election race: Elvira Agurbash, Anton Bakov, Irina Volynets, Ekaterina Gordon, Mikhail Kozlov, Natalya Lisitsyna, Vladimir Mikhailov, Stanislav Polishchuk, and Roman Khudyakov.

List of candidates who submitted the collected signatures to the CEC of Russia

Compared to the presidential campaign of 2012, when only 6 candidates collected signatures and only 3 signature collections were submitted to the CEC of Russia, some progress was made in this campaign: 15 candidates were granted permission to collect signatures, 6 of which submitted signatures to the CEC of Russia. Thus, it seems that the

¹ <https://www.golosinfo.org/en/articles/142472>

existing requirement to collect 100,000 signatures in 30-35 days for non-administrative candidates nominated by parties is quite tough, and 300,000 signatures for self-nominated candidates is clearly excessive.

Informal participant of the election campaign

Meanwhile, the **election campaign of 2018 clearly demonstrated that the circle of real participants in the elections is not limited to officially registered candidates.** Alexei Navalny continues to conduct his political campaign, directly related to the ongoing elections, even though he is not registered as a candidate. His personal political campaign, now in its second year, has transformed into a boycott of the ongoing elections, the so-called "voters' strike,"

The presidential election campaign of 2018 is also different from the previous one in that **some candidates (mainly Alexei Navalny and Grigory Yavlinsky) publicly announced their participation in the election campaign and actually started campaigning long before the official announcement of the election.** This is normal international practice, which, "Golos" believes, serious political contenders should adopt.

2. Individual campaigns for nomination and signature collection

- Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin -

During the signature collection campaign, "Golos" received many reports about the mass collection of signatures in support of the self-nomination of the incumbent Russian president, coordinated by administrations of various levels and conducted in state and municipal institutions, budgetary organizations (such as educational and medical institutions and kindergartens), law enforcement agencies, and industrial enterprises. According to media reports, social networks, and reports made on the "Map of Violations," persons with elective posts, public authorities, state and municipal employees, chairmen of territorial public self-government, state house-management employees, teachers, and other employees of the budget sphere took part in signature collection for Vladimir Putin.

At many public signature collection points for Putin, i.e. those equipped with the appropriate

racks, very inexperienced students and participants of the movement "Volunteers of Victory"² acted as collectors. Signature collection was carried out on an hourly basis.³ It seems that it would be more expedient to pay the collector not for the number of hours worked, but for the number of collected signatures. The public collection points, which were opened in some 70 shopping centers across the country,⁴ were not so much signature collection points as election campaign points designed to demonstrate popular support for the state leader and merely stage a semblance of a signature collection. The real mass signature collection in support of Vladimir Putin happened differently.



Ufa



Krasnodar



Chelyabinsk



Tambov

Judging by the locations of the signature collection points for the nomination of Vladimir Putin (under the slogan "Strong President. Strong Russia"), their general entourage, the circumstances under which they were set up, and their activities, the entire operation looks a

² For example, information from Yaroslavl. <https://yarcube.ru/news/politics/86938.php>
³ For example, Krasnoyarsk <http://ngs24.ru/news/more/53369581/>, Irkutsk <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3516508>, and from "Golos" coordinators.
⁴ According to information gathered by "Yabloko" party. https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Lod_FidcraBTkeCTbqXQ7NaUsapZrDC-NQRD-TiZzQk/edit#gid=0

lot like a PR campaign undertaken for purely political purposes. **The movement "Golos" welcomes the practice of signature collection in public places. However, we believe that other candidates should have equal access to the same places to carry out their collection. Owners of shopping centers should not refuse to accommodate the establishment of collection points of certain candidates if they have already provided such accommodation to other candidates. If necessary, appropriate changes to restore the principle of equal rights of candidates must be included in the electoral legislation.**

Meanwhile, the movement "Golos" and the "Map of Violations" have received information from various regions on illegal methods used to collect signatures in support of Vladimir Putin's nomination. These are mostly messages from voters expressing indignation either about the administrative coercion of state employees and students to collect or hand over signatures for Vladimir Putin, or about the participation of officials in signature collection. **It is important to stress that the legal and political literacy of voters about this issue has increased.** They recognize as illegal, and are increasingly willing to report, instances in which officials, employees of educational institutions, and the management of institutions inform voters about the location of signature collection points for only one candidate, and are especially sensitive to instances in which voter groups are mobilized for purposes of collecting signatures. In particular, "Golos" has screenshots of correspondence in social networks about participation in such mobilization events.

There were so many reports of violations of the procedure for signature collection and of the use of administrative resources, as well as cases of illegal coercion and mobilization of voters, that they could not be ignored by the staff of Vladimir Putin,⁵ who was forced to confirm some of them by canceling some of his collected signatures and asking the Prosecutor General's Office to look into substantiated cases of "administrative excesses" in the signature collection process in the regions.⁶ The movement "Golos" welcomes the intention on behalf of Putin's headquarters to remove from further participation in the campaign *"all those who "cast a shadow" on the procedure."*

⁵ For example, collecting signatures at the Kurgan's regime enterprises.

<http://www.mk.ru/politics/2018/01/16/shtab-putina-otreksya-ot-nezakonno-sobrannykh-na-rezhimnykh-predpriyatiyakh-podpisey.html>

⁶ <https://iz.ru/698850/konstantin-dorofeev/za-peregiby-k-prokuroru>

Another manifestation of this inequality was the way the signature collection process was covered in the media. Almost all federal and regional, and especially state and municipal, media reported favorably on the start and progress of signature collection for Vladimir Putin. In some cases, coordination of these actions suggests the existence of administrative guidelines. For example, information about the fact that the Ivanovo region had begun collecting signatures for Putin was simultaneously published on the websites of almost all municipal newspapers, the founder of which is the Department of Domestic Policy of the Ivanovo region.⁷ At the same time, the same media rarely reported information about where and how the collection of signatures for other candidates was taking place.

In the middle of January, Russian TV stations started broadcasting reports about the collection of signatures in support of Vladimir Putin (the "Map of Violations" alone received 55 messages related to this topic). Many of these television reports were not so much informational as political. The "Golos" movement issued a special **"Emergency Statement on Illegal Campaigning on TV Channels During the Election of the Russian President in 2018."**⁸ The issues raised in the "Golos" report – the violation of the principle of equality of candidates' rights and the media's role in campaigning for one of them – were supported by the complaints and statements of a number of candidates (among them, Grudinina, Sobchak, and Yavlinsky), and became an agenda point at meetings of the CEC of Russia. The Central Election Commission was forced to remind the media of the rules of coverage of the election campaign.

In many media reports, campaigning is conducted under the guise of informing the public about the activities of candidates, with obvious distortion in favor of Putin and to the detriment of the interests of other participants in the election race. Moreover, such reports are issued outside the legally permitted period of campaigning in the media and are not paid for from the election fund of the candidate.

One particularly vivid example of such a campaign-related report came from the town of Biysk in the Altai Territory, where the local television channel not only informed viewers where

⁷ <https://www.privpravda.ru/ivanovskie-volonteryi-sobirayut-podpisi-v-podderzhku-putina/>
<http://gazeta-tejkovo.ru/2018/01/09/ивановские-волонтеры-собирают-подпи/>

⁸ <https://www.golosinfo.org/ru/articles/142438>

signatures are being collected for Vladimir Putin, but confirmed that buses are being used to transport employees of city business and university students to a signature collection point in the factory's "Palace of Culture."

Use of administrative resources to inform the public about signature collection in support of Vladimir Putin.

Various administrative resources were involved in informing citizens about the places and times of signature collection in support of the nomination of Vladimir Putin.

On January 9, in the Saratov region, the administration of the Balakovo municipal district posted on its website an announcement about the place and time for collecting signatures for Vladimir Putin. Only the next day, after the appeal of journalists from the news agency "Svobodnye Novosti" to the regional election commission, the announcement was removed from the administration's website, and the incident was called "an inaccuracy."⁹



On January 14, in the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania, a regional public chamber joined the "information" process on signature collection in support of Vladimir Putin's nomination and the recruitment of volunteers by the "United Russia" party, by positing this obviously political campaign material on their website.¹⁰

⁹ <https://fn-volga.ru/news/view/id/77497> <https://fn-volga.ru/news/view/id/77500>

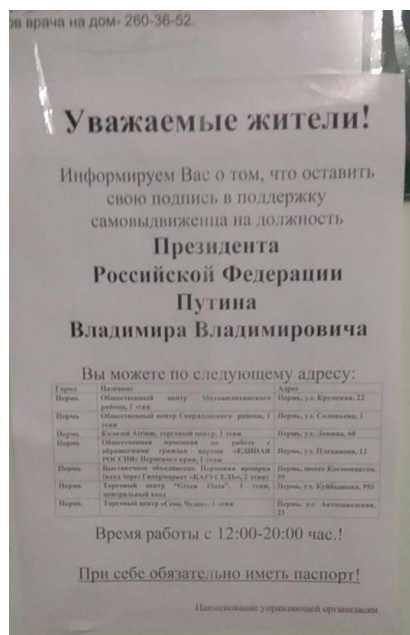
¹⁰ <https://www.kartanarusheniy.org/2018-03-18/m/39490>



After a message about this appeared on the "Map of Violations," the public chamber's press secretary admitted his mistake and withdrew the material from the site.

The way the "administrative information system" works can clearly be seen in the example of the Perm Region, where some of the city's housing management companies took part in informing the public about signature collection by posting announcements about the location of collection points for Vladimir Putin on their information boards in the entrances of houses.¹¹ Judging by the second photo (see below), a housing manager received a template, where it was necessary only to insert the name of his company in the last line, but for some reason did not do this (the announcement features "Name of a managing company" as the last line).

¹¹ <https://www.kartanarusheniy.org/2018-03-18/m/39463>; <https://www.kartanarusheniy.org/2018-03-18/m/39464>



According to reports on the "Map of Violations," coercion of voters to sign for the incumbent president took place in the Republics of Bashkortostan,¹² Karelia,¹³ Sakha (Yakutia),¹⁴ Altai,¹⁵ St. Petersburg,¹⁶ Kurgan,¹⁷ Tambov,¹⁸ and other regions.

Signature collection at workplaces

Federal Law No. 67-FZ, "On basic guarantees of electoral rights and the right to participate in a referendum of citizens of the Russian Federation" (Art. 37, Para. 6), passed on June 12, 2002, states that collecting signatures at workplaces is prohibited, and that all signatures collected therein are recognized as invalid. Participation in signature collection of the management bodies of organizations and institutions is not allowed.

On January 9, "Golos" received information about organized signature collection for Vladimir Putin at the company Kurganpribor in Kurgan, and later at other enterprises in the region.

Signature collection in support of the nomination of Vladimir Putin also took place in the teachers' room in the Kostroma Lyceum #17.¹⁹

¹² <https://www.kartanarusheniy.org/2018-03-18/m/39467>

¹³ <https://www.kartanarusheniy.org/2018-03-18/m/39465>

¹⁴ <https://www.kartanarusheniy.org/2018-03-18/m/39418>

¹⁵ <https://www.kartanarusheniy.org/2018-03-18/m/39426>

¹⁶ <https://www.kartanarusheniy.org/2018-03-18/m/39424>

¹⁷ <https://www.kartanarusheniy.org/2018-03-18/m/39461>

¹⁸ <https://www.kartanarusheniy.org/2018-03-18/m/39390>

¹⁹ <https://www.kartanarusheniy.org/2018-03-18/list?page=2>

The movement "Golos" draws attention to the fact that it's not just that the collection of signatures took place during working hours, but also that it cannot be held in the workplace at all, which is the entire territory of the factory. **The management of enterprises cannot take part in organizing signature collection since this is beyond the scope of their labor relations with factory employees.** Many reports "Golos" received say that coercion comes from the leadership of budget institutions or commercial enterprises, which is a serious violation of labor law. The administration has no right to force employees to any actions not included in the employment contract (Article 60 of the Labor Code). For this violation, the enterprise and its management can be brought to administrative responsibility in the form of a fine under art. 5.27 of the Administrative Code of the Russian Federation.

Use of minors in campaigning in favor of Vladimir Putin.

On January 6 and 9, the "Map of Violations" received information that the administration of the Izberdeevskaya secondary school in the Tambov region used underage students to campaign in favor of Vladimir Putin.²⁰ Videos in which minors campaign holding pickets with the slogan #RussiaNuzhenPutin (RussiaNeedsPutin) appeared on the page of the educational institution in social networks. After a public outcry, the posts were deleted. The chairman of the election commission of the Tambov region, Andrey Ofitserov, tried to protect the school's leadership, claiming that the materials on the site were posted by the schoolchildren themselves within the framework of a country-wide action. "The students did this on their own accord, without coercion ..."²¹ As it turned out, this action by the students was part of a large-scale campaign to support Vladimir Putin called #RussiaNuzhenPutin (RussiaNeedsPutin), which was organized in the Tambov region with the active participation of the governor and his administration.

- Alexei Anatolyevich Navalny-

At the time of the announcement of the Russian presidential elections, Alexei Navalny continued to campaign in support of his nomination – he visited several of the country's regions and increased his street and media activity. Navalny's headquarters, established in 84

²⁰ <https://www.kartanarusheniy.org/2018-03-18/m/39604>

²¹ <http://www.interfax.ru/russia/596850>

cities in Russia,²² conducted the verification of his supporters, organized picketing and distribution of leaflets, and, with varying degrees of success, continued to fend off judicial and administrative persecution for previously held public events.



Information materials of Alexei Navalny Picket for allowing Alexei Navalny to take part in the elections, Chelyabinsk

For example, shortly before the announcement of the elections, on December 8, 2017, Navalny made a repeat visit to the Altai Region;²³ on December 9, he visited the city of Novokuznetsk in the Kemerovo Region; and on December 10, he was already in Kaliningrad, where he met with his supporters. On December 13, Navalny published his election program on his website.²⁴ Despite the fact that the election campaign was well underway, detentions and harassment of Navalny's supporters continued, as did attacks on his regional headquarters. For example, on the eve of the announcement of the elections, on December 7, an attack occurred on the Navalny headquarters in Chelyabinsk (Chelyabinsk Region), committed by a member of the local cell of the "National Liberation Movement."²⁵ A police search was conducted at the Kaliningrad Navalny campaign headquarters, and campaign materials were seized.²⁶ Persecution of Navalny's political supporters continued after the CEC denied him further participation in the elections (on December 25). For example, in the Stavropol Territory, on December 26, a regional Navalny campaign coordinator was arrested, presumably by the FSB.²⁷

²² <https://2018.navalny.com/>

²³ According to the Committee on Working with Citizens' Appeals and Public Associations of the Administration of Barnaul, 650 people attended the event with the Moscow blogger. <http://www.amic.ru/news/402591/>

²⁴ <https://2018.navalny.com/platform/>

²⁵ https://vk.com/teamnavalny_che?z=video424160815_456239020%2Fa5a59c3adb45243a0e%2Fpl_post_-138777098_8393 – https://vk.com/teamnavalny_che?w=wall-138777098_8237

²⁶ <https://2018.navalny.com/post/488/>

²⁷ https://capost.media/special/obzory/politobzor_s_24_po_31_dekabrya_vybory_meshayut_karty/

Preparing for the meetings of the initiative groups to nominate Alexei Navalny, his staff and volunteers continued to experience forceful and unreasonable obstruction by authorities.

The most serious violation of the electoral rights of citizens, including the right to participate in the nomination of a candidate, occurred in Astrakhan, where a minibus with eleven activists of Alexei Navalny's staff was detained at the exit from the city on the way to a meeting of the initiative group of voters in Volgograd (which numbered 783 participants). Employees of the road police confiscated their documents and did not return them for several hours. As a result, the trip was ruined, and voters were unable to exercise their legal right.²⁸

Taking into account the real electoral support that Alexei Navalny enjoys, and the severity and other circumstances of his conviction, “Golos” believes that the norms of the federal law imposing additional restrictions on the passive electoral rights of citizens illustrate the apparent disproportionality of the restrictions established by the legislator, which lead to violations of constitutionally protected values.

Exclusion for formal reasons from the election race of a politician who enjoys real support of the voters, did deprive him of the opportunity to run for the post of the president, but it gave him the opportunity to influence the course of the election campaign.

On January 28, Alexei Navalny and his supporters announced a "voters' strike." At least 30 regions reported that the police were suppressing leaflets calling for participation in the “strike” under the pretext of removing illegal election campaign materials, and that their distributors were being detained. An attempt was made to liquidate “Media Support Fund “Fifth Season”” which was used by the opposition politician Alexei Navalny to lead his political campaign to nominate him for the presidency. It was obviously a persecution of the politician for his legitimate political activities, in particular for the organization and execution of the "voters' strike" campaign.²⁹ The movement “Golos” does not support the idea of a “voters’

<https://www.kavkazr.com/a/ranili-zhitelya-pankisi-pohitili-navalnista-raskritikovali-kavkaz-realii/28942259.html>; <https://www.kavkazr.com/a/28941682.html>

²⁸ <https://ovdinfo.org/express-news/2017/12/24/na-vyezde-iz-astrahani-zaderzhali-mikroavtobus-so-storonnikami-navalnogo>

²⁹ <http://www.bbc.com/russian/news-42751896>

strike,” but “Golos” believes that supporters of this position should be given the right to freely express their opinion.

Given that participation in elections is voluntary (one of the basic principles of Russian elections), calls for participation or non-participation (boycott) in voting are acceptable. In addition, according to the provisions of the electoral law, such calls are not election campaigning and should not fall under electoral legislation restrictions. Otherwise, it is necessary to recognize as election campaigning all the statements of officials and members of election commissions in which they urge citizens to participate in the upcoming elections.

Recommendations

To legislators

- Appeals for voter turnout, as well as calls for boycott of voting, should not be considered election campaigning (unless they are combined with calls to vote for or against one of the candidates, or if they contribute to forming a positive or negative attitude among voters toward a particular candidate)
- Drastically reform the mechanism of voter support for nominating candidates through the procedure of collecting signatures, and hold a broad discussion about possible options for this reform.
- Develop mechanisms for ensuring equal rights of nominated candidates to access public places and other places where large numbers of people can congregate (for example, railway stations, shopping centers, sports centers, and other similar facilities and locations) for the purposes of implementing signature collection procedures.

To the election commissions

- Strictly control participation of members of election commissions in campaign activities of candidates and parties, including in procedures for voter signature collection.
- Henceforth, promptly and properly inform law enforcement officials about candidates and parties entitled to collect voter signatures, and of the inadmissibility of carrying out any actions against signature collectors that impede their work.

- Seek immediate restoration of the principle of equality of candidates' rights by preventing the blocking of some candidates from collecting signatures in places where other candidates have collected or are collecting signatures. If necessary, give the election commissions additional powers to achieve this goal.
- Systematically work with the media to clarify the specifics of their activities when covering the process of voter signature collection in order to prevent an unequal approach to the coverage of this process that might favor certain candidates over others, as well as to prevent the production of campaign materials under the guise of information.

To law enforcement authorities

- All police officers and other law enforcement agents must be informed in good time about the candidates allowed to collect signatures, and must be made aware that any obstruction of their activities will have negative consequences for law enforcement individuals conducting such obstruction.
- Strengthen the protection of the public headquarters of candidates and parties, in cases where they officially request such protection, in order to prevent provocations and unlawful actions against candidates' employees, supporters, property, and premises.
- Respond promptly to the allegations and appeals of candidates, their supporters, and voters, where such allegations and appeals indicate a possible violation of the rights of signature collectors, and take prompt measures immediately to restore the principle of equality of candidates.
- The Prosecutor's Office and other law enforcement bodies and special services should react independently and immediately to reports in the media and social networks about cases of coercing voters to conduct any actions related to elections (including coercion to collect signatures). Also, immediately respond to information about the participation of state and municipal employees in the election campaign of a candidate. If these allegations are confirmed, immediately take measures to respond and restore the violated rights of citizens.

To higher education institutions

- Especially in regard to institutions in which students opened support headquarters for one of the candidates and information about such support was disseminated through the information resources of the institution: strictly adhere to the principle of equality of

candidates' rights and do not interfere in the provision of premises for campaigning by candidate support groups if such an opportunity was already given to other candidates.

* * *

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- Regional long-term observers.