



Georgia - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Thursday 23 May 2019

Information on elections of 2012 including independent observations and any cases of bribery/vote-rigging/attacks

In March 2013 the *European Commission* states in a report that:

“The October parliamentary elections marked the first democratic transfer of power in the country's history. The elections were widely recognised by election observation organisations as the most free and fair ever in Georgia” (European Commission (20 March 2013) *Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in Georgia: Progress in 2012 and recommendations for action*, p.2).

In April 2013 the *United States Department of State* issued a report reviewing events of 2012 including stating that:

“Observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Council of Europe found parliamentary elections held on October 1 to be an important step in consolidating democratic elections consistent with most democratic election commitments, but noted concerns. They reported the election was competitive, with active citizen participation throughout the campaign, including in peaceful rallies; however, they found the preelection environment polarized, tense, and characterized by the use of harsh rhetoric and a few instances of violence. The campaign was marred by harassment and intimidation of party activists and supporters, often ending with detentions or fines of mostly opposition-affiliated campaigners” (United States Department of State (19 April 2013) *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2012 – Georgia*, p.1).

In 2013 *Freedom House* issued a report reviewing events of the preceding year which included noting that:

“International observers generally hailed the October 2012 parliamentary elections as free and fair, noting increased competitiveness and a range of largely peaceful political activities, including mass demonstrations by the opposition. The government's acceptance of the results and the subsequent transfer of power were also welcomed as signs of progress. However, a number of electoral problems persisted, including the abuse of administrative resources, intimidation of opposition supporters, tabulation irregularities, and an apparent progovernment bias in the activities of the State Audit Office” (Freedom House (2013) *Freedom in the World 2013, Georgia*, pp.3-4).

A report published in 2013 by the *Human Rights Centre* states that:

“Meeting of political parties with the local population during the pre-election often resulted in verbal and physical abuse. Often representatives of public sector or local government initiated fights...” (Human Rights Centre (2013) *Annual Human Rights Report for 2012* p.11).

Human Rights Watch in January 2013 states that:

“In Georgia, while the elections largely met international standards, harassment and intimidation of opposition party activists marred the pre-election environment. Authorities used administrative (misdemeanor) charges to detain activists for minor public order breaches without full due process. Other human rights abuses included torture and ill-treatment in custody, and lack of judicial independence” (Human Rights Watch (31 January 2013) *Georgia: New Government Should Make Rights a Priority* p.1).

In December 2012 a report issued by the *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe* states that:

“The elections were competitive with active citizen participation throughout the campaign, including in peaceful mass rallies. The environment, however, was polarized and tense, characterized by the frequent use of harsh rhetoric and a few instances of violence” (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (21 December 2012) *Georgia, Parliamentary Elections, 1 October 2012: Final Report*, p.1).

A report published in December 2012 by the *International Crisis Group* states that:

“Problems were also evident in the run-up to the October elections. In September, the courts consistently convicted nearly all opposition activists detained for such misdemeanours as “hooliganism” or resisting arrest, sentencing many from ten to 40 days in pre-trial detention in administrative proceedings that lacked due process...GD officials claimed 60 individuals had been arrested. An “Interagency Commission”, set up to consider elections violations, confirmed the detention of 44...Taken together, the cases led legal experts to conclude that “prior to the elections, the judiciary did not protect the rule of law, was loyal to the law enforcement agencies and failed to promote a sense of justice...” (International Crisis Group (18 December 2012) *Georgia: Making Cohabitation Work*, p.12).

In November 2012 a *Council of Europe* report states:

“The vote took place in a well organised and calm manner. A large number of observers and party proxies were present in all polling stations. This increased the transparency of the process, but led to overcrowding in a number of PECs. Reportedly, this overcrowding, as well as the large number of supporters of all parties present around many polling stations, occasionally led to some tensions” (Council of Europe (29 November 2012) *Observation of the parliamentary elections in Georgia (1 October 2012)*).

PEC is an acronym for Precinct Election Commissions.

This document also notes:

“Overall, the vote count took place in line with legal procedures in most places, but was less positively assessed by international observers than the conduct of the vote, especially in the regions. In the regions, a number of isolated incidents took place during the vote count and pressure was exerted on party proxies and observers” (ibid).

A report issued in October 2012 by the *United States Congressional Research Service* notes:

“On October 3-4, the CEC reported that groups of GD supporters were threatening the work of electoral officials at nearly a dozen district headquarters, demanding that the election officials reverse “fraudulent” vote counts resulting in wins for UNM candidates in constituency races” (United States Congressional Research Service (15 October 2012) *Georgia’s October 2012 Legislative Election: Outcome and Implications*, p.4).

GEC is an acronym for Central Electoral Commission; GD is an acronym for Georgia Dream.

Commenting on reports from election observers, this document also states that:

“The observers raised concerns that a majority of fines levied and activists detained during the campaign involved supporters of GD” (ibid, p.4).

In October 2012 *Civil Georgia* states:

“Chairman of Central Election Commission, Zurab Kharatishvili, said elections in at least two out of total 53 precincts in Shida Kartli region’s town of Khashuri will be annulled amid reports of armed and masked men breaking into several polling stations and falsifying vote tallies” (Civil Georgia (2 October 2012) *Polls in Two Precincts in Khashuri Expected to be Annulled*)

A report issued in October 2012 by the *International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy* notes:

“Violations were observed during the closing and counting process in 4% of precincts” (International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (2 October 2012) *2012 Parliamentary Elections, Statement, Closing of precincts and election results*).

A publication issued in October 2012 by *Amnesty International* states that:

“There have certainly been numerous allegations and several well documented cases of harassment, intimidation, obstruction and unfair punishment of opposition members and supporters in the run up to the parliamentary elections” (Amnesty International (1 October 2012) *A lot to contest: Rights abuses in the run up to Georgia's 2012 Parliamentary Election*, p.2).

References

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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