

95 People Punished Over 3,000 Parliamentary Vote Violations

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A total of 95 people across the country have been punished over some 3,000 legal violations during the State Duma elections last month, Prosecutor General Yuri Chaika said Wednesday.

Chaika's comments, made as he presented an interim report to President Dmitry Medvedev, drew immediate criticism, with the independent elections watchdog Golos and the Communist Party saying they had documented a higher number of violations.

United Russia, which won a slimmed-down majority in the Dec. 4 elections, acknowledged problems with the vote but insisted that the outcome remained valid and a new vote as demanded by large opposition protests was unnecessary.

Chaika told Medvedev that prosecutors caught people trying to employ ex-convicts and Duma candidates' staff to work as members of elections commissions; placing convicts and mentally incompetent people on voter rolls; failing to put eligible voters on the rolls;

and attempting to register voting results before Dec. 4, among other violations, the Kremlin [said](#) on its web site.

Chaika did not elaborate on the punishment meted out to the violators. The violations are administrative, not criminal, and include penalties like fines, dismissal from work, arrest for up to 15 days, or warnings that a similar violation in the future will be punished with tougher penalties, including arrest for up to 15 days or a longer prison sentence.

Two criminal cases have also been opened, with Moscow region prosecutors examining the illegal production of absentee ballots and Leningrad region prosecutors looking into an attempt to bribe voters.

Prosecutors have asked investigators to open another four criminal cases, the Kremlin said.

Golos, which documented about 7,800 violations on an interactive online [map](#), described Chaika's statistics as "crudely written and obscure."

"If the Investigative Committee was working scrupulously, it could open a big number of criminal and administrative investigations," Golos member Andrei Buzin said by phone.

The absolute minimum number of violations is 3,000, said Andrei Klychkov, deputy head of the Communist Party's legal department. He said there were more violations on Dec. 4 than in the 2007 Duma vote and their nature was "worse."

"Physical violence was used against our election monitors, right up to broken skulls and arms," Klychkov told The Moscow Times.

The Communist Party will [appeal](#) to the Supreme Court and Medvedev with its own list of complaints and violations, which number more than 3,000, said Vadim Solovyov, head of the party's legal department, RIA-Novosti reported.

Duma deputies with the Communist and Liberal Democratic parties will question Chaika and Investigative Committee head Alexander Bastrykin about the violations when they speak to the Duma on Jan. 27, RIA-Novosti said.

A Central Elections Commission member, Tatyana Voronova, agreed that the 3,000 declared violations seemed small, given that the figure covers the campaign period and election day for both elections for the Duma and 27 regional legislatures, RIA-Novosti [reported](#). She also noted that Russia has about 100,000 polling stations.

Yury Shuvalov, a senior member of United Russia, told RIA-Novosti that the number of violations discovered by prosecutors was "rather big but not so big as to cast doubt on the Duma vote."

Moscow prosecutors, at the request of Central Elections Commission chief Vladimir Churov, will also follow up on an article written by political analyst Dmitry Oreshkin and [published](#) in the opposition-minded Novaya Gazeta newspaper on Dec. 14 that accused United Russia of rigging the elections, RIA-Novosti [reported](#) late Tuesday.

Oreshkin wrote, citing data from the Civil Monitor organization, that 15 percent to 20 percent

of falsified votes in Moscow were cast in favor of United Russia.

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