

Putin Acknowledges Signs of Vote Fraud

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A victorious Vladimir Putin shaking hands on Tuesday with an election worker at Moscow's polling headquarters. **Yana Lapikova**

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin on Tuesday acknowledged that voting violations occurred during Sunday's presidential election.

But he said opponents who demonstrated afterward were not protesting fraud. He characterized the protests as an emotional outburst by people unhappy with his election victory.

The official tally gave Putin more than 60 percent of vote, but exit polling put the number much lower. In addition, monitors from several groups said voting irregularities were rampant and widespread.

"There were violations, naturally," Putin said, RIA-Novosti reported. "We need to bring them all to light and clean them up so that everything is clear to everyone."

Putin made his comments while at the Election 2012 operations center, where he was shown what safeguards were used at polling stations on the day of the election.

He also viewed an interactive map showing statistics and documentation of the complaints registered with electoral officials during the balloting.

Dmitry Shumkov, chairman of a nongovernmental organization called the Federal Law System, highlighted the fact that Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov was the candidate who drew the most complaints.

The figures show that more than 6 percent of the complaints pertained to Zyuganov, while Putin's total was 4.1 percent.

Putin dismissed the suggestion that the post-election protests were related to procedural violations in the conduct of the election.

"That is an element of the political struggle," he said. "It has nothing to do with the election."

Shumkov contradicted foreign election observers who immediately after the results were announced listed multiple improprieties they had seen.

The observers at the operations center, Shumkov said, questioned the necessity of their presence. He recounted their words as, "Why did we come along with this mission if we could follow everything from home?" Interfax reported.

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