

Election Chief Defends Transparency of Russian Elections

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Voters casting their ballot in the March 2013 presidential elections. **A. Mahonin**

A top Russian elections official has defended the fairness of Russia's elections in a [letter](#) to the Washington Post, while also expressing hope that one day the U.S. "will achieve the same level of openness and transparency of elections that has been achieved in the Russian Federation."

Vladimir Churov, head of the Central Elections Commission, took exception to a May 24 article titled "Keeping the peace with Russia," which included the sentence: "Domestically, Russia is a corrupt and semi-authoritarian country where citizens lack many of the protections in the Bill of Rights and elections are not fair."

The article appeared in the Washington Post's opinions section, because its author, Paul J. Saunders, is not a journalist, but the executive director of a public policy think tank.

In his letter, sent to the Post's chief editor on Friday, Churov said that the Central Elections Commission has "reviewed every single complaint concerning violation of election laws," finding that complaints following the State Duma election of Dec. 4, 2011, and the presidential election of March 4, 2012, "do not mention a single fact that could question the voting results and election outcomes in the country or its specific territories."

Churov then condemned U.S. elections as "fraught with serious violations of relevant international standards," citing a report by a mission from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which critiqued the United State's mechanisms for dealing with election-related complaints.

But Churov seemed to have overlooked the fact that the OSCE's outlook on the activities of the CEC has not always been positive either. In a [review](#) of the 2011 Duma elections the OSCE found that "the entire process of resolving complaints at the Central Elections Commission was non-transparent and did not afford complainants the right to an effective or timely remedy."

Echoing many other observer reports, the report also noted "frequent procedural violations" and "several serious indications of ballot box stuffing" during the 2011 elections.

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