

'Terror' Forces OSCE Election Monitors from Ukraine's Donetsk

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OSCE Permanent Council site at Hofburg, Vienna.

Denouncing an "atmosphere of terror" directed against local electoral officials in eastern Ukraine, Europe's OSCE democracy watchdog is pulling most of its election monitors from the Donetsk region, an Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe source said Saturday.

On the eve of a presidential poll that Kiev hopes can help resolve a confrontation with Russia that has split the country, the source said there would be no foreign monitors in the city of Donetsk and only a few in the whole region, in western areas.

"There will be no election monitors in the city of Donetsk," he said.

He added that, of dozens who would have been in the most populous of Ukraine's regions, there would now only be a few due to fears for the security of international personnel.

"There's an atmosphere of terror," he said of conditions facing Ukrainian electoral officials due to opposition to the poll from pro-Russian rebels who control large areas.

"We have found many officials sending us terrified SMSs."

The redeployment does not affect a longer term security observer mission from the OSCE that has personnel in the region.

The Vienna-based body has more than 1,000 vote monitors in Ukraine for the election and is expected to deliver a verdict on the conduct of the poll on Monday after results are announced.

Ukrainian officials have said many polling stations in the eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk are unlikely to open.

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