

Russia Refuses European Court's Request for Answers on Disputed 2011 Elections

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Russian authorities have refused to respond to questions from the European Court of Human Rights over a complaint about the 2011 State Duma elections in St. Petersburg, Vedomosti reported Tuesday.

Eleven people had turned to the European Court of Human Rights with allegations of vote rigging, indicated by a large gap between the number of votes counted by observers and those officially recorded. The complainants said the alleged violations ended up benefiting the ruling United Russia party.

At the time, the inconsistency was explained by the authorities as the result of territorial committees having recounted the votes — an excuse that the European court dissected in its examination of the case.

The court submitted 12 questions to the Russian government this past April. Several of the questions concerned the alleged vote recount, with the European court asking first if there really was such a recount, and if so, how much time it took, what commissions and observers were notified of the recount, whether all the protocols were followed, and other questions.

According to Vedomosti, the court also asked whether such inconsistencies in voting were always beneficial to the United Russia party.

In response to these questions, Russian authorities said such detailed questions concerning the vote counting procedure did not fall within the European court's competency, Vedomosti reported, citing a copy of the memorandum submitted by the government to the court.

Russian authorities said only that the "redistribution of votes as a result of the recount" did not increase or decrease any of the candidates' results.

They also said the recount was conducted only to "eliminate inaccuracies and mistakes," though they did not elaborate on what those inaccuracies or mistakes might have been, Vedomosti reported.

The memorandum cited numerous Russian court rulings that found there was no basis for the complainants' allegations of vote-rigging, the report said.

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