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# Russian Elections 'Far From Free and Fair,' Say Monitors

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Russia's parliamentary elections were “far from truly free and fair,” the independent election monitoring group Golos reported Monday

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The 2016 elections saw substantial improvements from those in 2011, but the country still faced a “long and difficult road to reform,” the group said in their official report.

Golos praised the positive influence of the new head of the Central Elections Committee, Ella Pamfilova, but lamented that there were still "institutional changes needed to prevent fraud.”

"Although there were fewer violations than in 2011, the number of recorded irregularities should be recognized as substantial," the group said.

Golos received 1,798 reports of possible violations during Sunday's elections. Complaints were predominantly regarding stuffed ballots, "cruise voting," and pressure placed on the electorate by authorities.

Election monitors from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) said that the elections had been "administered transparently" but that challenges remained in Russia's "restriction to fundamental freedoms and political rights, firmly-controlled media and a tightening grip on civil society."

"The low-key campaign shows an overall lack of engagement," said Marietta Tidei, head of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly delegation. "I hope that we will soon see more political alternatives engaging the public in proper debate."

Sunday's elections saw an expected landslide victory for the ruling United Russia Party, which built on their majority in the country's State Duma. Turnout across the country stood at 47 percent.

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