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Voting Violations Don't Cast Doubts on Putin's Victory, Election Head Claims

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Ella Pamfilova **Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency**

Russia's senior election official has said that violations recorded on Election Day did not change the outcome of the vote that gave President Vladimir Putin six more years in office.

Putin sailed to victory with almost 77 percent of the vote with a 67.5 percent turnout on Sunday, March 18. Russia's Central Elections Commission (CEC) has canceled the results of 14 polling stations amid reports of voter fraud and of state employees casting ballots under duress.

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"Despite insinuations, there were no violations that could cast doubt on the results of the free expression of will in these elections," the RBC business portal quoted CEC head Ella Pamfilova

as saying Thursday.

Pamfilova said the 14 stations where the votes were declared invalid are in the regions of Dagestan, Krasnodar, Kemerovo, Tyumen, Khanty-Mansiisk, Moscow and Moscow region, as well as in Australia.

Pamfilova characterized as "speculation" opposition leader Alexei Navalny's claim that 4,500 of his observers were refused accreditation.

"It's untrue, there was a refusal in the accreditation of mythical journalists from a mythical media organization," she was cited as saying by RBC.

Election officials in Kaliningrad, Chechnya and Karachayevo-Cherkessia have filed lawsuits seeking to declare the votes invalid at polling stations where violations were recorded, the Vedomosti business daily reported on Thursday.

The CEC has received a total of 240,000 complaints regarding the elections, RBC reported.

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