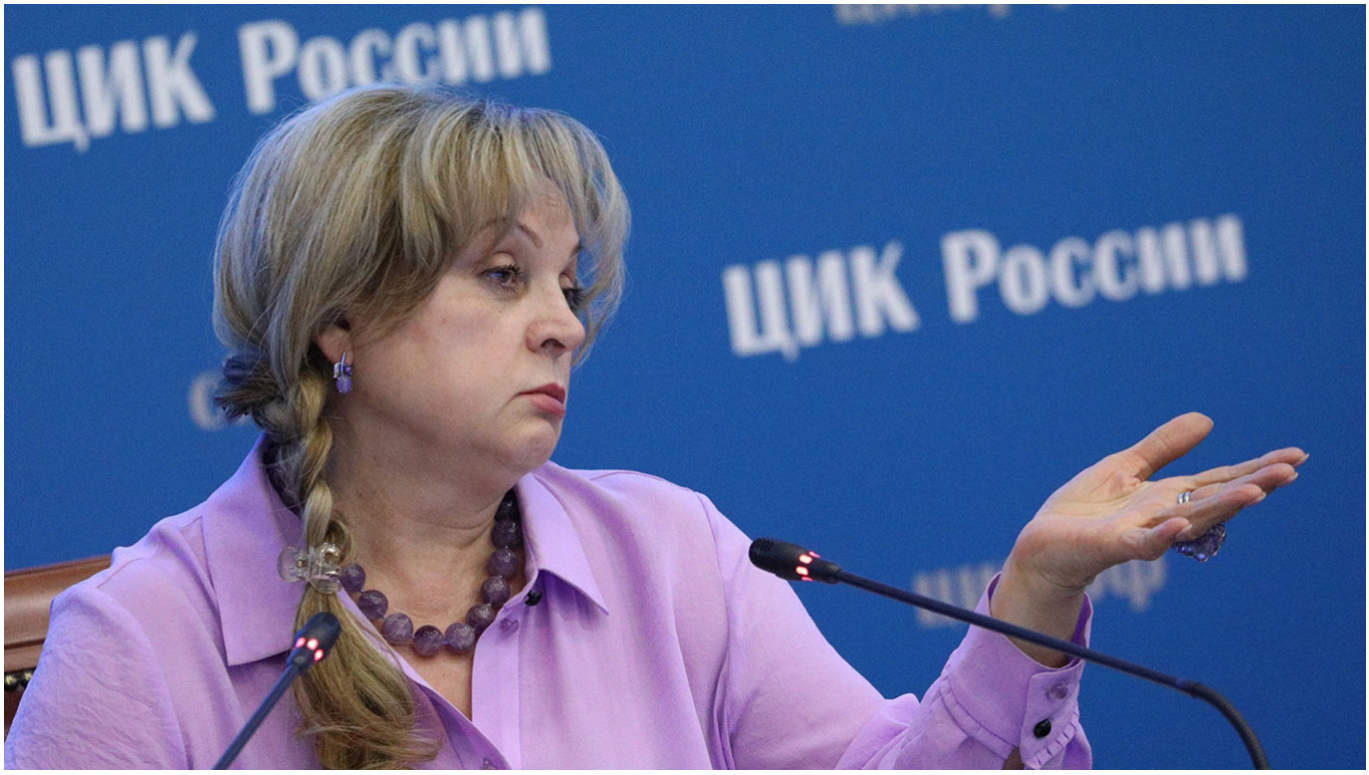
The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

OSCE Says Will Not Monitor Russian Duma Elections

By AFP

August 04, 2021



Ella Pamfilova, a former human rights campaigner, now chairman of Russia's Central Election Commission. **Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency**

International monitors said Wednesday they would not send observers to Russia for next month's general election because of a limit on numbers imposed by Russian authorities.

"We very much regret that our observation of the forthcoming elections in Russia will not be possible," said Matteo Mecacci, director of the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

"But the ability to independently determine the number of observers necessary for us to observe effectively and credibly is essential to all international observation," he added in a statement.

"The insistence of the Russian authorities on limiting the number of observers we could send

without any clear pandemic-related restrictions has unfortunately made today's step unavoidable."

The statement issued by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) said Russia had invited both the ODIHR and the OSCE's parliamentary assembly to observe the vote scheduled for September 17-19.

Related article: Voting Monitor Slams Russia's Election Livestream Restrictions

But it added that Russia later limited the number of observers to 60 for the two OSCE institutions because of the sanitary-epidemiological situation in the country.

The OSCE noted however that "at present, no pandemic-related entry restrictions or rules about operating and moving within the country would seem to prevent the deployment of a full election observation mission in line with ODIHR's initial assessment."

The OSCE said its institutions had been prepared to abide by any coronavirus-related rules, adding that they had managed to observe elections in numerous countries over the course of the pandemic.

"The responses provided by the Russian authorities did not offer sufficient clarification as to why the limitations were needed to prevent the spread of the virus when other preventative measures could be taken," the OSCE said.

ODIHR determined earlier this year that a total 500 long-term and short-term observers was needed for the Russian election.

"I am very disappointed that limitations imposed by the national authorities prevent the OSCE from providing the Russian voters with a transparent and authoritative assessment of their elections, as we have been doing consistently since 1993," said Margareta Cederfelt, president of the OSCE parliamentary assembly.

"The OSCE was limited to sending only a small fraction of the observers we had intended, and this simply does not enable us to carry out our work in an effective and thorough manner."

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/08/04/osce-says-will-not-monitor-russian-parliamentary-elections-a74700