

Communist Party Rallies in Moscow After Remote Vote Upsets

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Communist Duma Deputy Valery Rashkin (C) speaks at the protest in Moscow. **Alexander Nemenov / AFP**

Members of Russia's Communist Party gathered in the pouring rain in central Moscow on Monday evening after parliamentary election results showed their candidates seeing their initial strong leads reverse.

Several Communist Party candidates who appeared set to win their races during the Sept. 17-19 parliamentary and local polls suddenly fell behind candidates from the ruling, pro-Kremlin United Russia party as soon as election officials started releasing e-voting results.

Party leaders said they will [not recognize](#) the remote voting results and some senior members called for supporters to gather in Moscow's central Pushkin Square.

A couple of hundred people gathered in the square in rainy weather to protest the election results with close police monitoring, according to an AFP report from the scene.

“Russia will be free,” the crowd chanted, a slogan popularized by jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny.

Related article: [Russian Opposition Calls Foul After Ruling Party Landslide in Parliamentary Elections](#)

No detentions were reported at the Communist Party rally, which Moscow authorities rejected alongside those scheduled for Tuesday and Saturday, citing coronavirus concerns.

With all the ballots counted in the parliamentary race, the Communist Party won just shy of 19% of the votes, behind the pro-Putin United Russia with almost 50% and a guaranteed supermajority in the 450-seat State Duma, the lower house of Russian parliament.

Three other so-called “systemic opposition” parties passed the 5% threshold to receive mandates in the Duma.

The Communist Party improved its vote share from the last parliamentary polls — it received 13.3% in 2016 — with scores of its members receiving an endorsement from jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny.

Navalny’s own electoral network was declared “extremist” ahead of the vote and allies shut out of the ballot with disqualifications on procedural grounds and criminal prosecutions. A number of key Navalny allies have fled Russia, abandoning their plans to run for seats in the Duma, to avoid jail.

Google, Google-owned YouTube and Apple deleted Navalny’s endorsements under pressure from the Kremlin as voting got underway, stirring outrage among activists and observers.

United Russia’s landslide victory was marred by claims of widespread voter fraud after an unprecedented crackdown on monitors and opposition candidates.

Critics had argued that online voting, new limits on election observers and the polls being spread over three days — a move officials said was to reduce Covid-19 risks — all presented opportunities for fraud.

AFP contributed reporting.

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