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United Russia Wins Record State Duma Majority in Elections Dubbed as Most Uncompetitive in Modern History

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Senior members of United Russia, including Deputy Chairman of the Russian Security Council Dmitry Medvedev and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. **Sputnik / Yekaterina Shtukina / Pool via REUTERS**

Russia's ruling party, United Russia, won a record number of seats in the lower-house State Duma, election officials announced Friday in confirming the final results of the country's first wartime parliamentary elections, an outcome that was all but predetermined in Russia's tightly controlled political system, where true opposition had been barred from the ballot and public criticism of the war remains illegal.

Central Election Commission (CEC) Chairwoman Ella Pamfilova said United Russia received 349 seats in the 450-seat State Duma, beating its previous record of 343 seats set in 2016.

Nominally opposition parties captured the remaining seats, led by the Communist Party with 37, the Liberal Democratic Party with 23, New People with 19 and A Just Russia with 17.

Pamfilova also said that, for the first time ever, Ukraine war veterans who ran for political office won 46 seats. President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly hailed veterans-turned-politicians as Russia's "new elite."

The Kremlin welcomed their electoral victory. "This is excellent. The experience of our heroes is in high demand. The results of the vote have clearly confirmed this," spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reports on Friday.

"Each one of them will make the greatest possible contribution in whatever initiatives that they take on," Peskov said.

Independent Russian media reported that several of the newly elected veteran lawmakers have been accused of committing war crimes in Ukraine.

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Election officials placed turnout, which included voting staged in occupied Ukrainian territories claimed by Moscow, at 59.8% — the highest since the 2011 State Duma elections.

"This was made possible despite all the everyday difficulties caused by sanctions, terrorist threats and drone strikes," Pamfilova said at a press conference on Friday afternoon.

"Our wonderful people put all of this aside, rose above it and demonstrated the highest level of civic responsibility," she said.

The CEC also reported that over 280,000 Russians voted abroad at 333 polling stations across 152 countries. Pamfilova said United Russia received 58% of the votes cast abroad, adding that attempts by exiled opposition figures to disrupt the elections had "failed."

The results of Russia's first wartime parliamentary elections, which independent experts have said were the most uncompetitive in the country's modern history, will not come as a surprise to anyone.

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United Russia has long served as a central pillar of Vladimir Putin's quarter-century rule, making the party's dominance in the State Duma vital to maintaining total control over the legislative process.

Voters this time were left with virtually no real opposition option. Yabloko, Russia's oldest liberal party and the only registered political force campaigning for peace, was struck from the party-list ballot by the Russian Supreme Court in August. Even in single-member constituencies where members of the party could still run, candidates faced interference, police detentions and disqualification.

The new conviction of the State Duma plans to hold its first session next Wednesday, Sept. 30.

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