



NDI STATEMENT ON THE CRISIS SURROUNDING GEORGIA'S PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Washington, DC, November 19, 2003

The Republic of Georgia has been thrown into a political crisis as a result of the failure of the November 2, 2003 parliamentary election process to produce preliminary official election results that accurately reflect the will of the Georgian electorate.

The findings of nonpartisan Georgian and international observers documented significant disenfranchisement on election day, due to large-scale problems with the voter registry. They also noted intimidation, ballot box stuffing, changing of tally sheets and other major irregularities. Major violations were particularly evident in Ajara, Kvemo Kartli and certain other areas. In addition, preliminary official election results do not accurately reflect the will of those who were able to cast votes. This is starkly revealed because the official results differ significantly from the results arrived at through a parallel vote tabulation conducted by the respected Georgian civic organization, ISFED.

ISFED's projected results were based on professional analysis of reports of actual vote counts from its nationwide statistical sample of polling stations. This parallel vote tabulation was conducted based on internationally recognized procedures, and was supported by NDI through the technical assistance of international experts. The Institute has assisted the successful conduct of parallel vote tabulations in more than 25 countries around the world, and NDI is fully confident that ISFED's projected results are a sound estimation of the will of those who cast ballots on November 2.

Various attempts at dialogue have thus far taken place between the government and opposition political parties about what should be done to rectify the situation. The goal of such dialogue should be the recognition of election results that reflect the will of the Georgian people. In all events, peaceful means should be used to reach a solution.

NDI calls on President Shevardnadze, the Georgian government and security forces to demonstrate utmost respect for the civil and political rights of all citizens in this tense post-election period. At the same time, the Institute calls on all political leaders to exhort their supporters to respect the rights of others and to act nonviolently.

"The consequences of a failed election process in Georgia could undermine peace and stability as well as deny the right of Georgians to freely choose those who would have the authority to govern in their name and in their interests," said NDI Chairman and former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright. "I have always believed that Georgia has enormous potential, reflecting the courage and dedication of its people. I view the present developments with disappointment and concern." She added, "Georgia's political leaders have an urgent responsibility to reach a just outcome that respects fundamental rights, including the right to genuine elections. The international community also has an urgent responsibility to apply strong and concerted efforts, through bilateral relations and the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations, to help avert violence or a protracted crisis."

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