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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**INDEPENDENT MONITORING GROUP FINDS MAJOR ELECTORAL
VIOLATIONS,
SUGGESTS RUSSIAN ELECTION NEITHER FREE NOR FAIR**

MOSCOW –The Executive Director of the independent domestic election monitoring group, The VOICE Association, today said that the organization’s monitoring effort preliminarily “suggests that the election was neither free nor fair.” VOICE monitored the election in 30 regions of Russia, covering 2/3 of the population, and also conducted a parallel vote tabulation in 20 regions.

Lilia Shibanova said, “The entire campaign and election day itself seemed designed to create support for one party and ensure that certain other parties do not return to the Duma.” This belief is made on numerous electoral violations uncovered both during the campaign and during election day.

Primary among these violations is the possibility that official protocol sheets containing the results of the election from each polling station were changed as they were being input into the system tracking the final results. Shibanova noted that throughout the 30 monitored regions, the majority of protocols contained incorrect addition and vote numbers that did not add up to the final totals listed on the same sheet. “The myriad of mistakes in addition creates a major concern. Since election officials have not reported any problems with protocol sheets, the discrepancies in numbers of votes cast must have been eliminated, and the sheets summarily changed.”

She also suggested that VOICE has discovered a major inconsistency in the number of people who were reported to have voted and the number of votes recorded from “mobile ballot boxes.” The boxes are transported to housing complexes so that voters can cast their ballots at home. In this election, Shibanova also noted that the number of “mobile voters” was unusually high at 6% of the total votes cast.

“These facts,” she said, “are in addition to numerous other violations noted on election day, and a campaign that saw not only media bias but also a systematic use of administration pressure in support of one party and against others.”

Shibanova will announce the details of VOICE’s findings, including a parallel vote tabulation that conflicts with official results, at a press conference on Tuesday at 1:30.

VOICE is an independent, non-partisan NGO that receives its funding largely from numerous international foundations. It is not affiliated in any way with, and receives no support of any kind from, any political party.

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