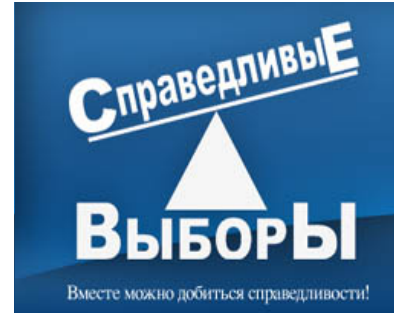


For Fair Elections 2012

www.vybary.org

Press Release



Media Contacts: Viktor Korneenko and Sergei Kalyakin

+375 29 654 6005

zsvby2012@gmail.com

Final Report of the Fair Elections 2012 Campaign Released

Outcomes of poll watcher monitoring for 2012 elections to the
Belarusian House of Representatives

September 23, 2012 – Minsk, Belarus: For Fair Elections 2012 (FFE-2012), a coalition of 13 political parties and civic organizations of the Republic of Belarus, is the country's largest and broadest observer group that monitored the September 23 elections to the House of Representatives of the fifth convocation. The For Fair Elections 2012 campaign had two major goals: to document and report election violations, and to attempt to thwart violations through interference and issuing formal complaints and recommendations, according to the procedures prescribed by the Belarusian law.

Campaign representatives monitored all stages of election process in all regions of the country. Their effort began on June 23 immediately following the announcement of elections and ending with the closing of the polls and vote tabulation on September 23. Monitoring of the early voting period and the main election day, between September 18 and 23, was conducted by approximately 1,600 observers in 36 electoral districts.

Having monitored all stages of election process, For Fair Elections 2012 campaign members concluded that these elections were not free, equal or fair. This conclusion is based on the following findings:

- **The process of formation of district and precinct election commissions was not transparent and was mostly closed to the public. There were no written criteria guiding the process of commission members or candidate selection. The comparative analysis of selected vs. non-selected commission nominees highlights authorities' discrimination of opposition political parties.**
- **During the pre-election campaign period, the opposition candidates faced numerous cases of censorship. Their recorded speeches were not broadcasted; their printed materials including official candidate programs were changed or not printed; and they were refused equal access to the mass media. FFE-2012 documented numerous cases of inequality in candidates' rights and usage of administrative resource and rank by pro-government candidates.**

- **During the five-day early voting period, observers of FFE-2012 campaign continuously documented incidents of voter turnout inflation by the pro-government election commissioners. Observers also recoded numerous cases of organized voting and pressure to vote early applied to students, military personnel and employees of state enterprises.**
- **On the main Election Day, FFE-2012 observers have witnessed a large discrepancy between the actual number of voters who participated in these elections and the number announced by the commissions in the majority of the precincts covered. In 422 of precincts (or 80 percent of precincts monitored by FFE-2012) observers could not see the contents of ballots during the vote count, which is in direct violation of the Belarusian electoral legislation. Mass cases of removing observers from the polling stations were registered on September 23, 2012.**

The country maintains extremely restricted conditions that prevent the conduct of free and democratic election. Belarusian citizens do not enjoy the freedom to receive and disseminate information, freedom of expression and belief, freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and equality of all before the law.

No improvements took place during the arrangement and implementation of the key election procedures affecting the election results. First and foremost vote count procedures vital to establishing election outcome remained non-transparent and restricted from oversight by observers and even the majority of election commissions members.

Observers of FFE-2012 campaign noted drastic breaches of the existing election legislation at every stage of the election. Furthermore, the acting government has demonstrated its unwillingness to adopt and follow positive amendments to the election legislation, which were proposed by FFE-2012 on March 1, 2012.

For Fair Election 2012 Campaign is the biggest coalition for monitoring of elections and defense of the voters' rights in Belarus. The campaign includes 13 independent political parties and organizations. From the very beginning of the early voting (September, 18), the campaign deployed approximately 1,600 observers at the electoral precincts within the 36 constituencies all over the country. The campaign sees its main role not only in monitoring and recording violations, but also in actively interfering with them through formal complaints and recommendations, according to the procedures prescribed by the Belarusian law.