



# **Assessment of the GYLA's Observation Mission of the Polling Day of Batumi Sakrebulo By-Elections 2022**

Georgian Young Lawyers Association, within the framework of the Short-term Observation Mission 2022, informs the public about the results of the observation of Election Day. Based on the information collected by the GYLA observers, we address the main violations that occurred while closing the polling stations and starting the vote counting, as well as the tendencies observed inside the polling stations and on the outer perimeter.

According to GYLA's observers, regulations concerning the control over the will of voters, in particular, rules on the gathering, physical obstruction, and counting of voters, were violated numerous times throughout the day. Influential figures, such as

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MPs and members of Tbilisi and municipality Sakrebulos from the Georgian Dream, UNM, and other political parties were also present. Their presence near the polling stations increased the risk of influencing the will of voters. In addition, several cases of agitation were observed. Those violations were related to both of the running parties.

Due to the breach of the regulations administering the adjacent areas of precincts, GYLA has called law enforcement only twice. Non-compliance with the perimeter rules is an administrative offense. However, the police never took proper action. Therefore, even though violations of the perimeter regulations persisted during the polling day, GYLA did not refer to law enforcement anymore.

There was also overcrowding and lack of space in the stations, due to the presence of an unusually large number of observers in the relatively small polling stations. Consequently, GYLA's observers had some difficulties in properly monitoring the voting process. This problem also hampered the working process of the commission not only during the voting but also after the polling stations closed.

During the monitoring, several cases of non-compliance with electoral regulations were detected in the polling stations:

- At #78 precinct, the chair of the commission made sure the voter remembered to vote for a certain candidate by asking "you know who to vote for, right?";
- At #79 precinct, the UNM representative wore a black T-shirt with Nugzar Putkaradze's name printed on it with his picture. Nugzar Putkaradze, who has passed away, was the father of one of the candidates running in the elections;
- At #89 precinct, the observer representing the observer organization "Multiethnic Unity" stood behind the registrar and copied personal data from the list of voters.

Despite the numerous remarks made by GYLA's observer, the chair of the commission failed to resolve the issue.

In sum, GYLA submitted 3 complaints and about 10 written remarks.

After the mobile ballot box was returned, the number of unused bulletins decreased by 1. Responsible commission members wrote an official explanation and declared that the missing ballot paper had been lost under unclear circumstances.

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According to the information provided by GYLA's observers, COVID-19 regulations were disregarded at numerous precincts. #78 polling station, where commission members did not wear face masks at all, was particularly problematic. GYLA's observer submitted a written comment on the matter; however, rather than ensuring compliance with COVID-19 regulations, the Election Commission Chairman insulted GYLA's observer by calling him a "punk".

All the polling stations were closed on time.

GYLA continues to observe election-related developments. The organization will prepare a final report, which will assess the pre-election period and the election day.