

Lukashenka’s show of “democratic” presidential election failed spectacularly

The 2010 presidential election in Belarus were supposed to be a copybook example of democratically run elections. A. Lukashenka was outspoken on his plans to prove to the West that he is capable of winning a landslide victory even in democratic elections and thus expose the weakness of the opposition.

In order to create at least an illusion of democratic election procedures, the Belarusian regime adopted amendments to the electoral code, accepted the registration of as many as 10 candidates in the presidential election, as well as implemented a series of other measures. Until the very election day (December 19, 2010), the Belarusian government put maximum effort to imitate the progress towards democratic election. However, the E-day undoubtedly revealed that no real elections could or ever did take place in Belarus so far.



The events on the night of December 19, formation of the election commissions, results of the preliminary voting and early reports of international observers led to a clear conclusion even before the OSCE report was published. The presidential election of 2010 cannot be recognised, and the levels of violence and coercion during their course exceed the events of 2006.

Dispersing the peaceful demonstration and taking the presidential candidates under custody

Provocations against the demonstration that were organised on the night of December 19 still remain understated by the international media although many experts had warned about their likelihood months before the election. It was forewarned that in case of a scenario similar to the “Square” of 2006, provocations might be organised by law enforcement institutions in order to label the demonstration as “rioting” and thus justify the use of force against it. And that was precisely the case.

The October Square (Oktiabrskoe) in Minsk was the location where a mass demonstration took place in 2006. This year, the entrances to the square and its surroundings were blocked by militia forces and OMON before the crowd even started to gather, thus the demonstration moved towards the Independence Square. At about 10.30 PM, the first media reports occurred on unidentified persons (allegedly the demonstrators) raiding the government



administration building. The reports “sanctioned” the arrest of seven out of ten presidential candidates: Vladimir Nekliaev, Ales Michalevich, Grigori Kostusev, Vital Rymashevski, Andrei Sannikov, Mikola Statkevich and Dmitri Us. The candidates were not only arrested but also suffered beating during the arrest. Moreover, V. Nekliaev, representatives of his electoral headquarters, as well as other candidates were in fact beaten and arrested hours before the provocation. Out of the estimated 20 000 Belarusian citizens who participated in the demonstration against fraudulent election results, 230 to 500 were arrested on the election night. The numbers of protestors injured remain unknown.

Diverging estimations of the election results

According to official data issued by the Central Election Commission, after 100 % of the votes had been counted Lukashenka scored as much as 79,67% of the votes. Whereas 6,47% of the voters voted against all candidates. With a turnout of 90,66% of the voters this should mean a landslide victory for Lukashenka in the first election round. However, the exit polls by international polling company SOCIUM suggest a rather different outcome: A. Lukashenka winning 40,2% of the votes; V. Nekliaev running second with 19,8% of the votes and A. Sannikov running third with 11,5%. Election observers by the Belarusian National Front report that the turnout of voters was higher than 50 % in less than half of Minsk constituencies they observed, whereas the turnout in rest of the constituencies was up to 35-45 % of voters.



Violations during the preliminary voting

According to international observers the preliminary voting was similar to the one of 2006. In 10,5 % of the constituencies, voters were obviously forced to vote during the preliminary voting (students, military, public sector employees and convicts mostly). State-run companies and offices organised obligatory voting lists and voting schedules, and required employees to provide proof after they had voted. The international observers were refused the information on how the ballot boxes were secured after working hours of the constituencies in most cases. Prolonged opening hours were reported in 6,4 % of the constituencies, interference of unauthorised persons in the election commissions were reported in 5,8 % of cases. The numbers of voting persons were not being announced daily as the regulation requires. Taking into consideration that 23.1 % of all votes were casted through the preliminary voting procedure, these violations put into question the authenticity of more than 20 percent of all the votes. This should be a good enough reason to question the overall outcome of the election.