

Crisis and Violence at the Ballot Box: Ukraine Presidential Election

By [RT](#)

Global Research, May 25, 2014

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Region: [Russia and FSU](#)

The early presidential election in Ukraine has started amid looming civil war and economic collapse, precipitated by a recent power takeover and dispute with top trading partner Russia. Two eastern regions have refused to take part in the election.

Polling stations have opened at 8am (06:00 GMT) and will be operating until 8pm.

To learn more about uneasy presidential election in Ukraine check out RT's [10 you need to know about Ukrainian presidential poll](#). There are 21 presidential candidates participating in the election, which in some cities coincide with mayoral ballots.

Sunday, May 25

12:55 GMT:

As of 3pm Kiev time (12:00 GMT), the overall turnout at presidential election has reached 38.53 percent, reported Ukraine's Central Electoral Commission.

12:32 GMT:

All 5 million ballots printed for use in the Donetsk and Lugansk Regions for presidential elections have been stolen, revealed Zhanna Usenko-Chernaya, deputy head of Ukraine's Central Electoral Commission. A day ago the abovementioned regions declared the creation of the unified state of Novorossiia (New Russia) and ruled out participation in the presidential election.

12:06 GMT:

Ukrainian presidential candidate and ex-PM Yulia Tymoshenko of the Batkivschina (Fatherland) Party has called for a referendum on Ukraine's accession to NATO. According to Tymoshenko, such a referendum should be held simultaneously with the run-off of the presidential elections on June 15.

Tymoshenko - who was released from jail in February after the Ukrainian MPs amended the law and decriminalized the charge of abuse of power for which she was serving a seven-year jail term - has promised to immediately apply for a North Atlantic Treaty Organization membership if she wins the race.

12:01 GMT:

Ballot papers for the entire Donetsk Region have been collected in region's third-largest city

of Makeevka and burnt to ashes, one of the leaders of Donetsk People's Republic told RIA Novosti. The activist was a prisoner of the new authorities in Kiev, but was exchanged for a Ukrainian security service officer 10 days ago. The act took place on the territory of the regional Directorate for Combating Organized Crime.

11:37 GMT:

By midday local time in Ukraine, the highest voter turnout was registered in the Kiev (22.49 percent) and Kirovograd (22.12 percent) Regions. The lowest result is expected to be in Donetsk Region, where only 5.48 percent cast their ballots over the first four hours of voting.

According to Ukrainian central election committee, the turnout has been *"significantly higher than expected."*

11:29 GMT:

Armed with knives, militants from the ultranationalist Right Sector are guarding the headquarters of Ukraine's Central Election Commission in Kiev. Journalists are required to present their accreditation cards and passports, with Russians especially being asked about their professional activities.

Bottles of water are being allowed inside the building only after their holders agree to take several sips from them. All CEC speakers are delivering information solely in Ukrainian. There's no Wi-Fi in the CEC headquarters.

11:23 GMT:

In Nikolaev an anonymous person phoned the local election committee warning that six polling stations had been rigged with explosives. This put the casting of ballots on hold for a while. Police are attempting to track down the caller.

11:15 GMT:

The presidential election protest in Donetsk, attended by over 2,500 citizens and fighters of the 'Vostok' (East) self-defense unit that arrived at the scene on eight military Kamaz trucks, ended with a column of about 400 activists marching to the residence of Ukraine's richest man, billionaire Renat Akhmetov, to picket the installation.

Akhmetov, who owns a large number of coal mines and industrial facilities in the Donetsk Region, has spoken against the independence of the region and called upon citizens to boycott the independence referendum.

10:57 GMT:

According to updated information, there were 33,673 polling stations throughout Ukraine, but after the Crimean Autonomy's secession from Ukraine and reunification with Russia, only 32,236 remain. Today in the Donetsk and Lugansk Regions only 735 out of a total 3,900 polling stations opened. Ukraine's Central Election Commission prepared 34,693,000 ballot papers, about 10 percent of which will not be used at all.

Meanwhile, social network users are sharing a photo of Ukraine's presidential ballot with the name of Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, written across it.

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