



## REPORT of GOLOS, HONEST PEOPLE and ZUBR CIVIL INITIATIVES on the so-called 2022 "REFERENDUM" on CONSTITUTION IN BELARUS

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### Introduction

Belarusian civil initiatives Golos, Honest People and ZUBR present a report on the results of the civil and political Cross-Out-the-Referendum – Cross-Out-the-Lawlessness campaign during the constitution “referendum” in Belarus in 2022. The Cross-Out-the-Referendum – Cross-Out-the-Lawlessness campaign was launched by the named initiatives along with the united Belarusian democratic forces, namely, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya's Office, the National Anti-Crisis Management and the Coordination Council.

[Golos](#) platform was created by Belarusian IT-professionals to control the fairness of elections in Belarus and alternative vote count. [Honest People](#) initiative deals with interaction with citizens and members of commissions in Belarus, mass media monitoring and other activities aimed at developing civil society in Belarus. [ZUBR](#) platform monitors voting processes during elections and referenda in Belarus, namely, performs the collection, systematizing and analysis of the data on violations, vote count, voting results, people who make part of voting commissions in all levels and all polling stations.

The report contains and is based on data received from citizens and open resources (mass media publications, human rights organisations' data) about the preparation and the process of the "referendum". **The results we received demonstrate the initially illegitimate character of any electoral process in Belarus in principle and confirm that the illegitimate regime in Belarus used both already well-known fraudulent mechanisms and manipulations to create a pretence of visibility and transparency of the process.**

## Situation in Belarus at the Moment of Announcing Referendum in 2022

According to the results of a survey held by the Golos platform back in October 2020 as to the possibility and necessity of introducing changes to the Constitution<sup>1</sup>, with the survey embracing 463,594 Belarusians, 99,1% of respondents believed that before any changes into the Constitution are made, the state system must fulfill three basic requests coming from the society:

- stop politically motivated pursuit of people in Belarus on behalf of the state authorities, and initiate criminal cases to draw the guilty to justice;
- free all political prisoners, cancel unlawfull court decisions and pay compensations to all who has suffered;
- declare the August 9, 2020 election invalid and hold a new election under international standards with new composition of all election commissions, including the Central Election Commission.

The authorities in Belarus did not meet these requirements, and peaceful citizens who made these requirements got under repressions and pursuit.

In late January 2022, the regime ruled by the illegitimate president Lukashenka announced that the Constitution referendum would be held on February 27. Against the background of mass repressions, human rights violations, civil society purges and crackdown of free speech in Belarus, including the pursuit of active citizens who used to be independent civil observers during the 2020 election, it is obvious that the minimum term possible between the referendum date announcement and the voting date itself resulted from the regime's intention to prevent any growth of the political and civil activities in the period of the campaign.

Under the circumstances, the human rights organisations refused to send short-term citizen observers to the so-called "referendum". Pro-democratic political parties also announced they would not arrange citizen observation during the "referendum". Within the Human Right Defenders for Free Elections campaign, the Human Right Center "Viasna" and the Belarusian Helsinki Committee announced any full-scale observation to be impossible due to the precautions for the safety of citizen observers and launched an expert mission of observation of the "referendum".

## Cross Out the Referendum – Cross Out the Lawlessness Campaign

Since no independent citizen observation by any local and international organizations (e.g. OSCE/ODIHR) was arranged, the Golos, Honest People and ZUBR initiatives jointly with the united democratic forces announced the Cross Out the Referendum – Cross Out the Lawlessness campaign aiming to demonstrate what the real attitude of a substantial part of the citizens to the "referendum" was. The citizens of Belarus were offered to make their bulletins null and void (by crossing out both the options in the bulletin as a mark of non-recognition of the authorities that held the "referendum") and take part in the citizen control of the "referendum".

The regime in Belarus has been exerting unprecedented pressure on any initiatives and citizens who arrange observation and citizen control over preparation and holding of elections and referenda. This pressure continued and increased in the period of preparation and holding of the "referendum". From December 2021 to February 2022 force authorities held mass searches at the places of residence of and "preventive conversations" with citizens who had taken part in the independent observation and cooperated with the Golos, Honest People and ZUBR initiatives during the 2020 election. Early in February Vitebsk Region Prosecutor's Office blocked access to the Cross Out the Referendum – Cross Out the Lawlessness campaign website of the democratic forces and civil initiatives coalition [xx.2022.org](http://xx.2022.org), where information about the fraud at the 2020 presidential election and the lists of the "referendum" commission members had been placed. On February 8, the KGB of Belarus announced the Honest People community to be an extremist organisation.

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<sup>1</sup> [Golos \(golos2020.org\)](http://golos(golos2020.org))

## The Society's Participation in Preparing the Constitution Changes Project

As the preliminary analytical report of the above-mentioned Viasna expert mission issued on February 28, 2022 said<sup>2</sup>, the constitutional reform and the Constitution changes project were prepared behind closed doors, and the discussion in the state-sponsored media was formal and took no opinions and requirements from the society into account. The process of creating the Constitution project in 2020-2021 was a closed one, the authors of the project remained anonymous and no feedback from citizens was considered.

As a result of the unprecedented pressure on free speech, the civil discussion of the project was practically brought to nought: the Constitution project was published just before the New Year festive period as close as possible to the date of the referendum, with submissions and proposals from the citizens accepted with a by-the-book approach. Citizens were repressed for venting their opinions. Examplewise, a retired man Nikolay Vitikov was arrested on January 15, 2022 after he wrote a letter to a newspaper to express his attitude to what was going on<sup>3</sup>, and another person, Andrey Dyubina, was arrested on January 21<sup>4</sup>, after he suggested to ban "moustached and bold men" from taking part in any elections during a formal "constitution societal dialogue" on a Constitution gathering at his place of work.

## Collection of Data on "Referendum" Commissions in ZUBR Platform

One of the major tasks of ZUBR initiative is to collect and arrange information on elections and referenda in Belarus, including the data on commissions in all levels. ZUBR made attempts to collect information on commissions in the period of the so-called "referendum"-2022.

Under the Electoral Code, a decision on forming a commission is to be published within seven days after it was made. The decision contains surnames, names and patronymics of all the members of a commission, the way this member was nominated into the commission, the address and the telephone number of the commission. During the 2020 election, the lists of members, addresses and contact data of the territorial and district polling stations were published in the websites and in print media and were available to absolutely any voter. In 2022, no ordinance was published on how the referendum commissions and local executive and regulating bodies must inform citizens about the preparation and conducting the "referendum". We suggest that some Central Election Commission's ordinances were concealed from citizens in 2022.

Under the Central Election Commission Ordinance dd. Jan 21, 2022 "On Approving the Calendar Plan of Organisational Events to Prepare and Hold the State Referendum on Introducing Changes and Additions into the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus", before or on January 25 **territorial referendum commissions** had to be created.

The very first days showed that a number of executive and regulating bodies did not publish any information about territorial commissions in any publicly available sources. In a number of cases the websites of executive committees only featured the names and surnames of the chairperson, deputy chairperson and secretary, address, hours of work and contact phone number of territorial commissions. It was obvious that all executive committees in Brest region and some executive committees in Minsk region deliberately delayed the publication of these data. As a result, we were unable to get any data about the members of territorial commissions of a number of districts in Brest region (Leninsky and Maskousky districts of Brest as well as Brest, Hantsavichy, Zhabinka, Malaryta, Luninets districts), Gomel regions (Zhytkavichy district), Minsk region (Minsk and Starya Darohi district), Mahiliou region (Byalynichy district).

The situation with publication of data of **referendum district polling stations** was even worse. After these commissions were formed, their data were not published in the websites of local executive committees (as the case had been in 2020 and earlier), though the names of the commissions' members must be published

<sup>2</sup> [The Expert Mission's Preliminary Analytical Report to Assess the Referendum in Belarus | Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections \(spring96.org\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Up to Five Years in Prison. A Pensioner's Constitution Reform Suggestions Qualified as Incitement to Hostility \(spring96.org\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Another Arrest Related to Project Constitution Discussion in Vysokoye? | Belarus News | euronews.fm](#)

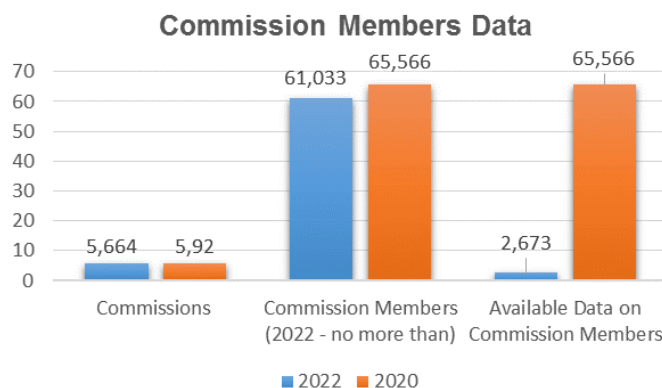
in a seven days' term under the law. Local printed mass media that would publish decisions on forming commissions showed incomplete data about these commissions (just the identification numbers, addresses and contact telephone numbers of the stations). The voters therefore had no opportunity to be informed about who the members of their territorial and district commissions were as the law requires. In addition, it violated the principle of publicity for referenda provisioned by the Electoral Code.

After the longest term allowed for the publication of executive committees' decisions on forming commissions was over, civil activists, including those under coordination of the Honest People and ZUBR initiatives, made attempts to inquire where the data about commissions had been published. A number of employees in district executive committees behaved in an aggressive manner towards those who made inquiries and would even utter liability threats for simply asking for information. An inquiry to the Central Election Commission resulted in a reply that the CEC had made a decision to "keep the names of the commissions' members confidential"<sup>5</sup>. This decision had no lawful basis as it violated Articles 13 and 34 of the Electoral Code. Besides, it witnesses abuse of authority by the CEC which can be regarded as a criminal offence. No relevant ordinance was ever published by the CEC.

Thus, the ZUBR initiative managed to collect data about the "referendum" polling stations by using information from a limited number of open sources as well as protocols and messages that were received from people via chat bots on terms of anonymity. **The final number of polling stations was 5,510 and that of all commissions 5,664.** But only a small share of the "referendum" commission' members was detected: **just slightly over 2,700 members of these commissions were identified.** By comparison, in 2020 ZUBR platform featured the data of each and all members of 5,920 election commissions. The number of them then totalled in about 65,000.

### Honest People's Communications with Members of "Referendum" Commissions

While the "referendum" was prepared and held, Honest People's activities included interaction with commission members in the polling stations. Within the period starting from December 2021, **163 people**, got in touch with the Honest People initiative to inform on their membership in district polling stations' commissions. Verification of these people via their personal data was not possible due to risks related to their safety. At it turned out later, at least 11 out of those 163 who had reached out for Honest People would pretend to be commission members and be representatives of pro-government mass media of Belarus who were trying to mislead the initiate and thus bring messages from other sources into discredit. The messages from these sources have been ignored in this report. The report's authors have no grounds to mistrust the information received from the other people who reported to them. At the same time, however, there is no possibility for the time-being to verify the data they have sent and their sources due to their safety precautions.



As anonymous sources in the commissions reported to Honest People, such commissions had been

<sup>5</sup> [CEC Made the Names of Commissions Members Secret. Lawyer Says It Is Direct Law Violation \(zerkalo.io\)](#)

actually formed as far back as December 2021, i.e. a month before the date of the "referendum" was announced. Honest People received messages about at least **25 facts of pressure on people** on behalf of companies and organisations to force them to become members of commissions. They threatened their employees with breaking work contracts, firing, deprivation of parental rights and criminal responsibility. The commissions would often be composed of loyal or vulnerable employees, for example, single mothers who cannot allow themselves to lose their job. The commission members' lists underwent three stages of approval of their "trustworthiness" in district and regional executive committees and the KGB.

Citizens who claimed to be members of commissions informed Honest People that the authorities had arranged a campaign aimed to prevent commission members from communicating with civil society organizations. Both in general meeting and in private talks, heads of companies would threaten their subordinates who were members of commissions with criminal liability for cooperation with civil initiatives and "leakage" of any information. These threats produced their effect and resulted in a situation when only **13 out of 163** commission members who had contacted Honest People **reported on the voting process and vote count**.

### Citizen Control and Observation in "Referendum" Polling Stations

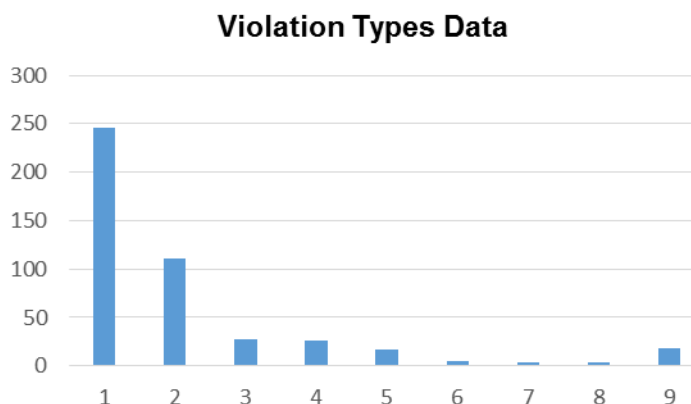
ZUBR provided citizens with training materials and a Telegram chat bot as a tool to document incidents that could point to violations of electoral legislation. The contact with active citizens was arranged on terms of anonymity to secure their safety. Thus the data on the voting process collected from open sources as well as from common voters and independent observers via ZUBR chat bot have been voluntary and anonymous messages of users about potential violations of electoral legislation, which makes it practically impossible to verify such messages.

In total, there were **about 2000 interactions in ZUBR chat bot, with 1,834 with citizen controllers and 96 with citizen observers**. The final number of **messages about violations sent to ZUBR chat bot totalled in 408** (with some of them containing information about a few simultaneous violations). **96 results' protocols arrived in the chat bot**, including those of preliminary voting results and of February 27 final voting results. This limited number of messages from citizens, commission members, civil controllers and observers received from civil initiatives does not imply neither society's depoliticization nor low interest to democracy. These figures most notably bear evidence of final degradation of the electoral system in Belarus in terms of openness and publicity. Active participation in the electoral campaign in Belarus in the period of the "referendum" meant a disproportionately high threat to freedom and safety due to repressions by the regime. At the same time, even this limited number of messages that arrived in ZUBR chat bot testify that the commissions would continue to use their conventional methods of artificially increasing the number of voters and falsifying the voting results. Besides, citizens informed ZUBR on some "innovations" on behalf of the commissions (see below for further details).

### Types of Violations in "Referendum" Polling Stations

The violations of the electoral legislation contained in the messages we received in ZUBR chat bot during the six voting days are distributed as follows:

1. non-observance of the conditions to insure the secrecy of ballot (246);
2. non-observance of sanitary norms in the polling station (111);
3. coercion to voting (27);
4. deprivation of the right to vote (exclusion of Belarusians abroad from the poll) (26);



5. no voting results protocol when and where due (17);
6. denial of accreditation to an observer (5);
7. mismatch of data on the number of voters according to observer and in voting results protocol (4);
8. manipulations with voters' lists (4);
9. other (18).

The biggest number of messages were related to **not insuring the secrecy of ballot** due to absence of curtains and even walls in the voting cabins along with placing the tables for voting in cabins in a way that a voter's actions could be seen by the members of a commission. There is no doubt it resulted from the regime's fear of any attempts of alternative vote count via making photos of bulletins even if it was formally explained as a COVID prevention measure. Meanwhile, there have been numerous messages from citizens to ZUBR about members of commissions not obeying even the basic sanitary norm of wearing a mask. That means that the Central Electoral Commission would position the direct violations of the Electoral Code, namely, not insuring the secrecy of ballot in cabins and limiting the number of citizen observers in the polling stations, as COVID prevention measures while commission members would not use really necessary and basic safety norms such as wearing a mask.

A number of messages in ZUBR chat bot **informed on commissions unlawfully depriving observers of accreditation**. Several of such incidents had a continuation when such an observer was taken to a police station for a "preventive conversation".

Commission members used a variety of methods to artificially increase the turnout apparently trying to reach the figures that the executive committees had "brought down" to them (the same way the case was in 2020<sup>6</sup>). Among other things, **their manipulations with voters' lists** were reported in ZUBR chat bot. For example, commission members asked voters who received their bulletins not to put the date of voting in a voters' list. One can suggest they would put the dates later themselves to fulfil some turnout "plan" in different days of preliminary voting. Besides, there were messages about practically empty voters' lists with no signatures in a region, where preliminary voting turnout by that moment was claimed to be around 40%.

Messages to ZUBR chat bot about **coercion to voting** arrived from polling stations in Minsk, Hrodna, Rechyt'sa, Homel, Polatsk, Stolin, Kalinkovichy, Kastsiukovichy, Orsha, Vitebsk, Mahiliou, Myadzel and Baranavichy districts. Students were forced to go to polling stations either under threats of depriving them of their place in a dormitory or after offering them vacation days. Other groups traditionally vulnerable in this regard that were forced to go and vote were state companies' employees, members of Belarusian Republican Youth Union and convicts from open type penitentiary institutions. Coercion to voting breaks the principle of free participation in a referendum stipulated in Article 5 of the election code as well as a number of international standards (Article 25 of ICCPR and Paragraph 7.7 of OSCE Copenhagen Document).

Messages in ZUBR chat bot reporting that commissions in a number of polling stations **would not put up any copies of voting results protocols** when and where they were due on both preliminary voting days and the major voting day confirm that the sad tendencies and bad practices of 2020 went on. Indeed, citizens who tried to get information on voting results in their polling stations reported that they either waited in vain for any final results' protocols put up there or they could not reach out to them although a protocol must be put up in a location for everyone to be able to see it. Such practices are a direct violation of the electoral legislation of Belarus as well as of international standards (paragraph 7.4 of OSCE Copenhagen Document).

These facts, along with the information about commission members' name tags turned with their empty side upfront or containing just a "Commission Member" lettering on them with no name and surname reported to ZUBR chat bot witness the intention **to hide not only the official voting "results", but also the data on commission members** that are required to be present in the results protocols. There were

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<sup>6</sup> [Head of a Commission: How Count is Requested to be Done](#)

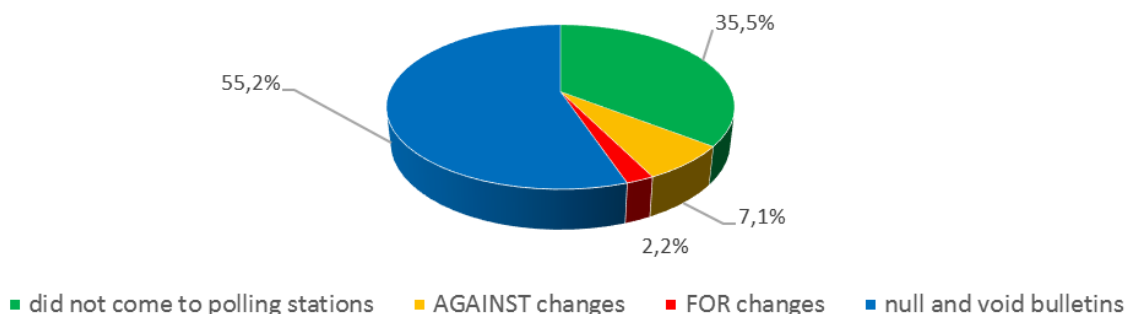


messages about cases when voters would ask commission members to introduce themselves but the latter would only provide their name (and no surname) or even appeal to a police officer who was on duty in the polling station, and the policeman would demand the voter who had made the question to leave the polling station.

### Alternative Voting in Golos Platform

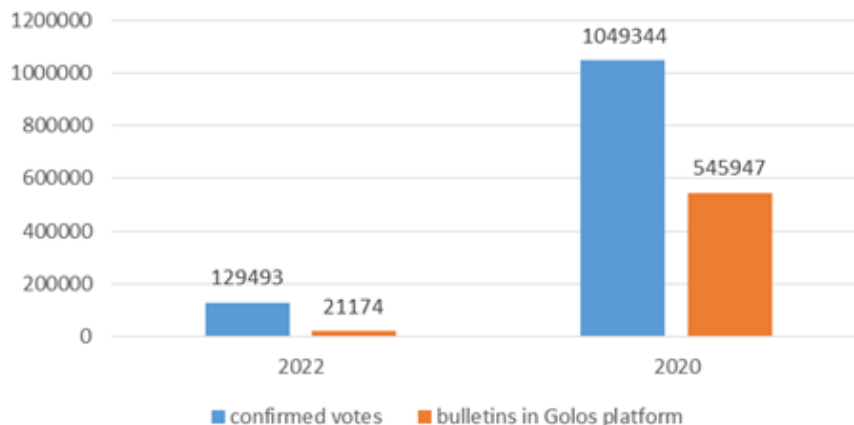
During the period of the "referendum" citizens who registered in Golos platform using a Belarusian telephone number or a Belarusian passport were offered to confirm their actions in their polling station with the aim to make alternative count.

**Alternative Online Voting**



200,788 users from Belarus took part in this online voting (which makes 2.95% of the "referendum" voters assuming that the Central Election Commission data about 6,810,166 voters lines up with reality). 110,869 of them (55.22% of the number of those who voted in Golos platform) reported that they had made their bulletins null and void, 4,309 users (2.15% of those who voted in Golos platform) had voted FOR changes in the Constitution, 14,315 (7.13% of those who voted in Golos platform) had voted AGAINST, and 71,295 people (35.50% of those who voted in Golos platform) had not attended their polling stations.

**Bulletins Photos Data**



Upon that, just 21,174 users (16%) out of those 129,493 who voted in Golos platform (i.e. those who was ready to attend and (or) attended their polling stations) managed to make and send photos of their bulletins. This 16% share differs drastically from the share of citizens who made photos of their bulletins in the 2020 elections: over 50% of Golos platform online voting participants sent their photos then.

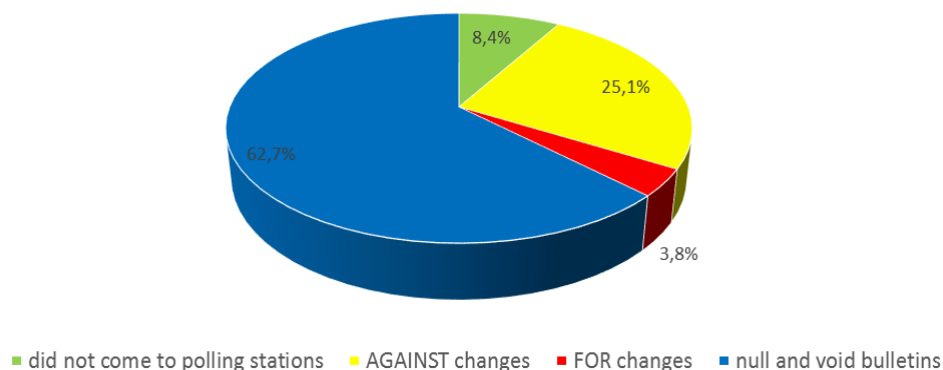
The difference is accounted for the repressions and the atmosphere of fear: during the Cross Out the Referendum – Cross Out the Lawlessness campaign many Belarusians noted that they were afraid to make their bulletins null and void or bulletin's photos due to fear of persecution on behalf of Lukashenka's regime.

### Belarusians Abroad

As a matter of fact, the regime deprived Belarusians who are located and reside outside Belarus of the right to vote by deciding not to create "referendum" polling stations in embassies and consulates. One of the reasons announced by the Central Electoral Commission was "limited number of citizens were registered in consulates"<sup>7</sup>, although according to Article 18 of the electoral code, this factor cannot impact arranging polling stations in the territory of foreign states. Another reason for the absence of polling stations abroad was outlined by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus as the need to secure the safety of diplomatic missions from provocations. However, whatever reasons the CEC and the MFA announced, it is hard to assess the validity of such steps in the absence of a formal assessment of the need to limit people's voting rights from the point of view of defence of citizens' rights. Neither the CEC nor the MFA presented this kind of assessment.

According to data from a number of sources, tens of thousands of activists have been forced to leave Belarus due to pressure and repressions since 2020 (for example, as of February 2022, 42.2 thousand Belarusians had been granted <sup>8</sup> effective residence permits in Poland only). Messages in ZUBR chat bot from citizens of Belarus outside the country confirm the violations of **depriving them of their voting rights** due to the impossibility to attend polling stations at the places of their residence.

### Belarusians Abroad Online Voting



Golos platform arranged online voting for Belarusian citizens abroad. Belarusians who stayed out of the country could verify their citizenship with a passport of a citizen of the Republic of Belarus, a Belarusian telephone number or a unique code received during exit polls during the 2020 election. They were offered to answer which option they would choose if polling stations abroad had been open. The poll embraced 25,458 citizens, with 960 (3.77% of Golos platform respondents) who would have voted FOR the changes in the Constitution, 6,388 (25.09% of Golos platform respondents) would have voted AGAINST the changes; 15,964 (62.71%) would have made their bulletins null and void, and 2,146 (8.43% of Golos platform respondents) would not have voted at all.

<sup>7</sup> [Telegram Contact @cikbelarus](https://t.me/cikbelarus)

<sup>8</sup> <https://t.me/supermovea/1438>



## Analysis of "Referendum" Results Protocols

Golos platform, ZUBR and Honest People have processed the data from all the final results' protocols that had been received from citizens. **The whole lot of February 27 final results' protocols with official outcomes of the "referendum" comprised 79 items from 5,510 polling stations.** By way of comparison, the number of final results' protocols sent to ZUBR after the 2020 election totalled in 1,310. The most probable reasons for this very limited number of the "referendum" protocols received from Belarus were: 1) very small number of independent observers; 2) fear of repressions for any steps or actions that the regime construes as "suspicious" or claims to be "unauthorized" (like making photos in a polling station); 3) the fact that protocols were not put up in polling stations in most cases as messages from citizen controllers in ZUBR chat bot prove.

When one compares the data of Golos with the data in the protocols, fraud in a number polling stations seems inevitably feasible. For example, the number of users who reported that they made their bulletins null and void in Hrodna polling station No. 3 exceeds the number of null and void bulletins in the final results' protocol (72 in Golos against 20 in the protocol). Furthermore, the number of photos of null and void bulletins sent from this polling station exceeds the number of null and void bulletins in the protocol (there were 23 photos of null and void protocols in Golos). The number of "referendum" participants who made their bulletin null and void exceeds the numbers of null and void protocols in the polling station No. 4 in Hantsavichy, polling station No. 14 in the agrotown Lyasny, polling stations No. 10, 23 and 27 in Maskousky district of Minsk, polling station No. 73 of Pershamaysky district of Minsk, polling station No. 23 of Tsentralny district of Minsk, polling station No. 17 in agrotown Khatsyukhava of Krupki district of Minsk region. The data from these polling stations imply fraudulent results of the vote count.

Also, there were arithmetical discrepancies in 5 of the 79 protocols. The total number of people who voted in the preliminary voting period, at home and on the major voting day does not correspond to the total number of referendum participants in the protocols in the polling stations No. 27 of Maskousky district and No. 10 of Zavodsky district of Minsk. According to the protocols in the polling station No. 19 in Leninsky district of Hrodna, polling station No. 12 in the village of Bakshty of Luye district and the Fourth Kopishchy polling station No. 26 of Minsk district, the total numbers of the FOR, AGAINST votes and null and void bulletins do not correspond to the total numbers of bulletins in the ballot boxes.

Besides, the observers who kept count of the number of voters reported that **the number of people who had received bulletins was substantially overstated in the preliminary voting results protocols.** According to messages from Minsk region on the very first day, a commission overstated the number of voters in its polling station by more than three times, and another commission increased this figure by as many as half. In addition, the observers noted that the figures in the final results' protocols exceeded not just the number of voters but even the number of all people who visited the building of the polling station during the day. Besides, there were cases when the number of voters under a protocol would mean that the voting must have been taking place non-stop during the entire day with bulletins given out to voters with no more than 3-minute long intervals.

According to messages from commission members who contacted Honest People, the final turnout during the preliminary voting period was faked upwards in at least 2 polling stations. In these polling stations, the number of "referendum" participants who received bulletins indicated in the protocols of every day of preliminary voting could differ from reality as much as 20% and up to thrice. Commission members of at least 3 polling stations put their signatures in the final results' protocols on the major voting day before the vote count ever started. Heads of these commissions put down voting results in these protocols later. Voting results were faked in the stage of vote count in 2 more polling stations. These fraudulent practices to fake up the turnout contradict the electoral legislation of Belarus and the principle of honesty during vote count stipulated by international standards.

## Major Referendum Day as the Day of Protesting Against the War in Ukraine

After Russia attacked Ukraine on February 24 and used the territory of Belarus for it, the focus of the society's attention almost completely switched over to the military action while the so-called "referendum" ultimately lost any signs of legitimacy.

On February 25, given the invasion of Russian troops to Ukraine and Belarusian territory being granted for this invasion by the regime, the coalition of the democratic forces called upon Belarusians to attend the polling stations at 2 pm on February 27 and stand in lines to receive bulletins and make them null and void as a sign of protest against the war.

On February 27, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky made a video address to Belarusians. He said that friendly relationships between Ukrainians and Belarusians are under a huge threat and called the people of Belarus to make the right choice.

According to commission members who contacted Honest People, **there was organised control** over citizens who followed the invitation to come by the indicated time in at least 4 polling stations. As reported, heads of these commissions ordered to fix the names and surnames of those "referendum" participants who arrived in their polling stations around 2 pm. Messages from citizen controllers in ZUBR chat bot about pencil marks that commission members did in voters' lists to put down the time when a citizen received the bulletin on the major day of voting, enforced police squads and public order squads and camera shootings they did and their attempts to scare away people who stood peacefully near polling stations are clear signs of **pressure and intimidation of citizens** during the "referendum" in breach of the law.

The major ZUBR chat bot had been prepared specially for messages about any events that would occur in the polling stations on February 27 beside voting. Messages from citizens with photos and video materials sent to ZUBR chat bots – the one for civil control and the one for general feedback -- confirm that tens of thousands of Belarusians not only made their bulletins null and void on the major voting day to express their protest against the so-called "referendum". Belarusians gathered together at 2 pm of February 27 to voice their protest against the war by writing "NO WAR" in the bulletins, chanting protest slogans, making crowds and standing in huge lines near the polling stations.

As Belarusian Ministry of Interior and human rights defenders reported, about 1,000 Belarusians were detained on February 27, February 28 and a few consecutive days. Most of them were sentenced to administrative arrests and (or) big fines.

**Taking into account that no expression of people's will is possible in principle in a situation with a war and repressions, the real expressed will of Belarusians was their protest against both the "referendum" arranged by the authorities that have no legitimacy since 2020 and the war where this authorities provide the territory of Belarus for locating and movement of Russian troops and their attack on Ukraine.**

**Golos, Honest People and ZUBR initiatives express their sincere gratitude and deep respect to all citizens of Belarus who answered the appeal to take part in the Cross-Out-the-Referendum – Cross-Out-the-Lawlessness campaign and sent information notwithstanding the big risks to their safety under repressions and crackdown of any civil activities.**