



Written by [Bruce Walker](#) on December 6, 2011

## Russian Elections: Putin's Party Squeaks By; Thousands Rally Against Him

The BBC noted that "United Russia won the election, but with a sharp drop in its support ahead of Mr. Putin's bid to return to the presidency next March." Putin served as President from 2000 to 2008, but the Russian constitution prohibited him from running for a third consecutive term.

According to the Russian international news agency Ria Novosti,

The governing United Russia party won 238 of 450 seats in ... [the] elections ... a significant drop compared to the 315 seats it won in the 2007 elections.



International observers spoke of "flagrant violations" during the elections. Ria Novosti reported,

OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] observers noted that the preparations for the elections were technically "well administered across a vast territory," but marked by "a convergence of the state and the governing party," limited political competition and a lack of fairness.

OSCE representative Petros Efthymiou commented, "The contest was also slanted in favor of the ruling party [United Russia].... Most media were partial, and state authorities interfered unduly at different levels."

Even Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and White House spokesman Jay Carney voiced "serious concerns" about the Russian elections.

On Monday night following the voting, thousands of protesters gathered in central Moscow to demand honest elections, shouting, "Down with Putin!" "Russia Without Putin!" and "Revolution!" Russian police reported that they had detained more than 300 protesters.

According to the *New York Times*,

On the morning after thousands of people protested parliamentary elections that international observers said were marred by irregularities, two prominent opposition figures who appeared at the demonstration remained under arrest and faced criminal charges on Tuesday.

One of the men, Ilya Yashin, a leader of the Solidarity movement, was found guilty by a judge of organizing an unauthorized rally and disobeying police orders, and was given a sentence of 15 days in prison, Russian news agencies reported. The other man, anti-corruption blogger Alexei Navalny, was expected to face similar charges.

Meanwhile, the Russian government said on Tuesday that it would maintain heightened security until the ballot-counting was completed.



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Alexei Navalny, one of the two men sentenced to prison, said of the United Russia party, "They are a party of crooks and thieves."

*Photo of Vladimir Putin: AP Images*



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