Syria Elections Held Despite US Opposition

On May 26 presidential elections were held in Syria. Bashar al-Assad, who has been president since 2000, was elected to another seven-year term with 95.1% of the vote. An important achievement of Bashar al-Assad is that his level of support from the population, based on the results of the election, has increased compared to 2014: at that time, about 88% of Syrians attending election polls voted for him. Today, according to many in Syria and abroad, Bashar al-Assad’s victory in the Syrian presidential election is the result of the fortitude shown by the politician and his officials.

These results, as a matter of fact, far exceed the percentage of voters who supported Joseph Biden in the last US presidential election. Not to mention the fact that many Americans are still demanding a review of the presidential election results, particularly in several key states — Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin — where Joe Biden won, as evidenced by the recent lawsuit filed by Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton.

Recall that there were two other candidates for the post of president of Syria: Mahmoud Marei of the Democratic Arab Socialist Union and Abdullah Abdullah of the Socialist Unionist Party. Even before the election, Bashar al-Assad’s rivals acknowledged that it would not be easy to beat the current head of state, since Assad’s clear support is evidenced by his decision to end the war in the country and to eliminate the radical Islamist groups that were terrorizing Syria.

Bashar al-Assad, who won the presidential elections, signaled the beginning of a new era of reconstruction in the country’s history. “Thank you to all Syrians for their high sense of nationalism and their notable participation,” Assad said in a message published by his campaign headquarters on Telegram. The president also paid tribute to the
Syrians who perished, without whom “Syria would not exist,” and wished recovery to the wounded.

According to official data, voting took place in all provinces without violations. According to the Syrian Electoral Commission, approximately 13.5 million Syrian citizens voted for Assad and about 74.6% of voters took part in the elections. Many Syrian citizens could not participate in the presidential election because they live in territories controlled by the militants. For example, the northern and western regions of SAR, including parts of Idlib province.

Today the SAR authorities control most key regions of the country and have set up 12,000 polling stations there. Even Bashar al-Assad’s choice of polling station was symbolic: the city of Duma, where the first anti-government protests erupted ten years ago. Two years ago, with Russian mediation, the city returned to Damascus, and the militants of Jaysh al-Islam (banned in Russia) laid down their weapons and withdrew north to Idlib. At present, the province is relatively peaceful.

The election process was not without provocations organized by clear opponents of the current government in Damascus and with “external support”. For instance, even in the south of the country, held directly by government forces, provocateurs attempted to hang anti-government posters, and in the cities of Tafas and Jasim “activists” tried to organize protests. Leaders of the Kurdish formations of the Syrian Democratic Forces, under US control and concentrated mainly in the northeast, forbade residents in territories under their control to participate in elections. Only the towns of Al-Hasakah and Al-Qamishli were able to vote, and therefore the election commission recognized the elections in these regions as only partially valid. The towns of Ras al-Ayn and Tell Abyad in the northern Idlib province, which is part of the Turkish and anti-Assad groups' area of responsibility, refused to equip polling stations.

In Lebanon, the polling stations did open, but not all local Syrians were able to exercise the right to vote. Special units of the Lebanese army put a stop to the May 27 clashes that broke out between local Sunnis and Alawites in the city of Tripoli in northern Lebanon. The interests of the Alawites, who make up 12% of the city’s residents, are expressed by the pro-Syrian Arab Democratic Party (ADP). Among Sunnis, there are strong Islamist positions, who, at the height of the crisis in Syria, supported opposition formations.

The Syrian refugees were not allowed to vote either in Turkey (over 6.5 million SAR citizens there) nor in Europe. Meanwhile, the US, Germany, France, Britain and Italy refused in advance to recognize the legitimacy of the elections, issuing a joint provocative statement the day before calling “not to allow Assad to retain power”.

Now, many countries of the world are divided on whether or not to recognize the results of the elections in the Syrian Arab Republic. The Russian Federation acknowledged the results of the elections in Syria, congratulating Bashar al-Assad on his convincing victory. Accordingly, there is no doubt that the West will use the results of the elections to further undermine the international position of the Syrian Arab Republic and further destabilize the internal situation in the country.

Following clear instructions from Washington, including during recent contacts between US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Josep Borrell, head of EU diplomacy, the European Union refused to recognize the results of the elections in Syria. European officials said that the presidential elections in Syria “were neither free nor democratic”. This interpretation, in particular, was used by Josep Borrell, according to whom “what has happened in Syria will not contribute to the normalization of the situation and improve relations with the EU countries.” It appears that the European Union is actually ignoring the opinion of the majority of Syrian citizens!

Another rather regrettable fact that attracts the attention is that in their desire to serve Washington as much as possible, Josep Borrell and other European officials do not say a word about the illegal presence of American troops in Syria, whose main purpose is to plunder the Syrian energy resources, in caravans of hundreds of trucks as blatant occupation troops, regularly exporting to Iraq from “enemy territory” the national wealth of the Syrian Republic. As well as Syrian wheat and other food products badly needed today in Syria! — Maybe this is what the “peace-loving policy of the European Union” is all about now, carried out under the supervision of Washington? While also rejecting the results of the current presidential election in Syria, so as to allow the US to continue to plunder Syria with its support?

As for “Europe’s slave dependence on the US,” many politicians and the Western media recognize this fact today, in particular the American publication Foreign Policy, which recently even called on Europe to “move away from it”.

“Assad must go,” the thesis of the US and its allies in the West, has once again failed. Just as it didn’t work out with Washington’s armed intervention in Syria, the purpose of which was to change power in the Arab Republic by force. However, the West’s refusal to recognize the election results does not mean they will just leave Assad to himself.
After all, unlike the faraway United States, the security of the European Union depends directly on the situation in Syria: if there is a crisis in the country, Germany, Britain and Greece will again be flooded with refugees. So far, only Assad has managed to move towards improvements, and Brussels has to reckon with this. Under these conditions, even Assad’s biggest foes are begrudgingly concluding that it’s better to accept reality and work within it, Newsweek notes.

*Vladimir Danilov, political observer, exclusively for the online magazine “New Eastern Outlook”.*