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**Subject:** ODIHR EOM Interim Report - Armenia

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**Attachments:**

ARM Parliamentary 2026\_EOM\_interim report\_22.05.2026.pdf  
2026 05 Letter to OSCE PA\_ ARM\_interim report.pdf

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U ontvangt niet vaak e-mail van [redacted]@odihr.pl. [Ontdek waarom dit belangrijk is](#)

Dear Sir, Dear madam,

Attached is, for your information, the ODIHR Election Observation Mission Interim Report in connection with the parliamentary elections in Armenia.

Kind regards,

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**INTERIM REPORT**  
**23 April – 20 May 2026**

**22 May 2026**

**I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- The 7 June 2026 parliamentary elections are taking place in a polarized environment, shaped by developments following the September 2023 ceasefire agreement with Azerbaijan and the Washington Summit of 8 August 2025, where also an Agreement on Establishment of Peace and Inter-state Relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan was initialled. The electoral context has been framed by questions concerning the agreement's ratification and implementation, the constitutional reform process, the country's foreign policy orientation, tensions between the government and the leadership of the Armenian Apostolic Church, and criminal charges recently brought against prominent opposition members.
- A minimum of 101 members of parliament will be elected by proportional representation from closed lists in a nationwide constituency. The electoral legal framework has undergone substantial revisions since the last elections. Some amendments were in line with previous ODIHR recommendations, including those related to addressing the misuse of administrative resources, sanctions for pressure on voters and vote-buying, election-related criminal offences, and accessibility for voters with disabilities. However, a number of recommendations remain unaddressed, including on restrictions of voting rights related to mental disability, voter data protection, transparency of media ownership, candidacy rights of dual citizens, and accreditation of new observer organizations.
- To date, the election administration has complied with legal deadlines for technical preparations. The Central Election Commission (CEC) has held regular sessions, which were live-streamed, and has adopted most decisions by consensus. Most interlocutors the ODIHR EOM has met were positive about the overall technical capacity of the election administration. Organizations representing persons with disabilities noted that limited accessibility of polling stations remains a concern.
- As of 18 May, there are 2,483,520 registered voters. By law, voter lists were published online on 28 April, and voters may request inclusion, corrections, or change of voting address up until 26 May. Out-of-country voting is limited to diplomatic and military personnel; other voters living abroad may vote only if present in Armenia on election day. Most ODIHR EOM interlocutors expressed overall confidence in the accuracy of the voter lists, but some noted that delays in processing pending citizenship applications for displaced Armenian refugees could affect the voting rights of applicants.
- For these elections 17 political parties and 2 alliances submitted requests to register as contestants, and all were approved by the CEC by 3 May. A total of 2,032 candidates are contesting the elections; five political parties also submitted minority lists for dedicated minority seats. Following registration, 73 candidates withdrew. Individual candidates may not stand independently, which is at odds with OSCE commitments.
- Women's participation in public and political life, especially in leadership positions, remains low, despite gender quotas and financial incentives introduced for political parties in recent years. None of the contesting parties are led by a woman. In line with legal gender requirements, women comprise 4 of the 7 CEC members and some 47 per cent of Territorial Election Commission (TEC) members. By law, candidate lists must include at least 30 per cent of each gender; all submitted lists complied with this requirement. Some 37.8 per cent of the registered candidates are women. Only one list is headed by a woman.

- Many contestants began campaigning before the official campaign period. The campaign is active and focused on the peace process with Azerbaijan, foreign policy, the economy, employment, rule of law, and anti-corruption. Campaign discourse is divisive, harsh and marked by war-related rhetoric, particularly around the government's "Real Armenia" programme and the status and potential reform of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Since the announcement of the elections, several criminal cases related to alleged vote-buying and misuse of charities have been initiated, including against members of opposition parties. Some opposition and civil society ODIHR EOM interlocutors raised concerns about the use of administrative resources and budgetary allowances introduced shortly before the elections.
- Online campaigning is extensive but remains largely unregulated. No institution is specifically mandated to monitor the campaign online, although a number of departments under the Prime Minister's Office have assumed certain responsibilities in detecting and responding to manipulative information and hybrid threats. Recent platform reports indicate several coordinated influence operations from abroad targeting Armenia. Platforms have taken a number of steps to restrict content that breaches their community standards, including with respect to elections. Against a reported increase in hybrid threats and foreign influence operations, the government has taken steps to strengthen resilience through legislative amendments, institutional capacity building and external co-operation.
- Amendments adopted in 2021 and 2024 increased donation and campaign expenditure limits, redistributed oversight competences, and expanded the definition of campaign expenditure. Contestants may receive and spend up to AMD 800 million (EUR 1.86 million), while third-party campaigning is not regulated. By the 8 May deadline, all contestants opened campaign accounts, and banks began submitting account statements as required every three days. Many ODIHR EOM interlocutors raised concerns about the transparency of campaign finances, including expenditures before the opening of campaign accounts, prohibited corporate in-kind donations and third-party campaigning, and questioned the consistency of investigations into alleged offenses.
- The media environment is pluralistic but constrained by a limited and shrinking advertising market, which increases its vulnerability to political influence. Several ODIHR EOM interlocutors raised concerns about a weakening press freedom environment, and lawsuits against online media outlets and bloggers, mainly initiated by senior public officials. For the elections, the law requires balanced campaign coverage, but some ODIHR EOM interlocutors perceive the public broadcaster as supportive of the government. The Commission for Television and Radio is mandated to monitor broadcasters, and it has issued warnings to two channels before the official campaign period.
- The legal framework for election disputes has remained unchanged since the last elections and provides for administrative review by election commissions and judicial appeal before the Administrative Court. The CEC's final decision on election results may be challenged before the Constitutional Court. To date, few election-related complaints and appeals have been submitted: the CEC rejected two appeals of the registration of a party and the impartiality of a citizen observer group; eight appeals have been filed with the Administrative Court, mainly concerning candidate and observer registration, of which three were rejected, two granted, and three returned for corrections.
- The CEC registered 13 citizen observer groups with 1,285 observers accredited so far, as well as 8 international observer organizations. January 2026 amendments introduced additional accreditation requirements, including the submission of activity reports and information on funding sources. ODIHR EOM civil society interlocutors welcomed the amendments as safeguards against the misuse of observer status.

## II. INTRODUCTION

Following an invitation from the authorities of Armenia to observe the parliamentary elections, upon recommendations from a Needs Assessment Mission and in accordance with its mandate, ODIHR deployed an Election Observation Mission (EOM) on 22 April.<sup>1</sup> The EOM, led by Janez Lenarčič, consists of a 13-member core team based in Yerevan and 30 long-term observers (LTOs) deployed throughout the country from 1 May. Mission members are drawn from 28 OSCE participating States; 40 per cent are women.

## III. BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

Armenia is a parliamentary republic, with legislative power vested in a unicameral parliament. Executive power is exercised by the government, which is headed by the prime minister. The Civil Contract Party, led by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, has held a parliamentary majority since 2018, and holds 69 of the 107 seats. The opposition in the outgoing parliament has comprised the Armenia Alliance, with 28 seats, and the With Honour Alliance, with 6 seats.

On 6 February, President Vahagn Khachaturyan called parliamentary elections for 7 June 2026. The elections are taking place in a polarized and emotionally charged environment, largely shaped by developments following the September 2023 ceasefire agreement with neighbouring Azerbaijan. In August 2025, the two countries initialled an Agreement on Establishment of Peace and Inter-state Relations, which establishes a framework for the normalization of relations.<sup>2</sup> Questions related to the ratification and implementation of the agreement continue to shape the political debate and remain a challenge for the ongoing constitutional reform process.<sup>3</sup>

The broader political context is marked by tensions between the government and the leadership of the Armenian Apostolic Church, which is publicly supported by several key opposition parties.<sup>4</sup> Prior to the announcement of the elections, several former officials, Church leaders, and opposition figures were subject to criminal charges, including the leader of the Strong Armenia, who is under house arrest.

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<sup>1</sup> See previous ODIHR election observation reports on <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/armenia>.

<sup>2</sup> In the [agreement](#), the parties committed to normalizing relations through the mutual recognition of sovereignty and territorial integrity, the renunciation of territorial claims and the use or threat of force. They also committed to introducing peace-building measures, including diplomatic relations, respect for non-interference in internal affairs, and the development of co-operation in various fields. The agreement was initialled on 8 August 2025 by the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan, and witnessed by the heads of state of Armenia, Azerbaijan and the US, who also signed a [Joint Declaration](#).

<sup>3</sup> Constitutional reform discussions began in 2020, independently of the peace process; in 2022, a new Reform Council [was established](#) with the mandate of drafting a new constitution. Following the initialling of the August 2025 agreement, [Azerbaijan](#) conditioned its implementation to the removal of references in the Constitution of Armenia it considered to constitute territorial claims. In response, the Armenian [Prime Minister](#) and [Foreign Minister](#) noted that the constitutional reform is an internal matter but also expressed views in favour of adopting a Constitution that does not contain references to the disputed text. In March 2026, the [Minister of Justice](#) stated that the new draft Constitution had been finalized and would be discussed within the ruling party before publication. The Prime Minister declared that a constitutional referendum is [planned](#) for 2027.

<sup>4</sup> Following the signing of a ceasefire statement with Azerbaijan brokered by the Russian Federation in November 2020, Catholicos Karekin II [called](#) for the Prime Minister's resignation, citing the government's alleged failure to protect national interests. Similar calls were reiterated after the September 2023 ceasefire agreement, culminating in the [May 2024](#) mass anti-government protests led by some senior clerics, which saw numerous people detained. In [June 2025](#), senior clergymen and opposition representatives were arrested and prosecuted on various grounds; the detentions continued until [January 2026](#). In [February 2026](#), criminal charges were raised and a travel ban was imposed on the Catholicos, which were annulled by the court [in April](#). In January 2026, the Prime Minister, together with several clergymen, [called](#) for the resignation of the Catholicos, and launched a campaign for church reform, which became part of the Civil Contract Party's election programme. The Church and several parties [criticized](#) the move as undermining its constitutionally protected status. Before these elections, Strong Armenia and several opposition contestants, including Armenia Alliance, Prosperous Armenia and Wings of Unity, continue to publicly express support for the Church.

Opposition parties describe these cases as politically motivated, while the authorities and the ruling party maintain that investigations are aimed at preventing corruption, in line with the law.<sup>5</sup>

Regional developments since 2023 also accelerated Armenia’s geopolitical re-orientation, further polarizing the electoral landscape.<sup>6</sup> While several political parties favour maintaining or strengthening strategic partnership with the Russian Federation, the government and some parties advocate for what they describe as a balanced foreign policy, closer ties with the European Union (EU), and normalization of relations with neighbouring countries. These competing orientations are often accompanied by mutual allegations of foreign interference.<sup>7</sup>

Women’s participation in public and political life remains low, due to longstanding gender norms, and male-dominated political practices. Four out of 12 government ministers and 39 per cent of the outgoing members of parliament (MPs) are women. There are no women provincial governors. Despite gender quotas and the recent introduction of financial incentives for parties maintaining gender-balanced governing bodies, none of the parties running for the elections are led by a woman.<sup>8</sup>

#### IV. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Parliamentary elections are regulated by the 1995 Constitution, the 2016 Electoral Code, the 2016 Law on Political Parties, and other legislation.<sup>9</sup> The legal framework is supplemented by CEC decisions. Since the last elections, the electoral legal framework has undergone substantial revisions. Amendments adopted in May 2021, most of which will apply for the first time in these elections, revised thresholds for seat allocation and a stable majority, extended the timeframe for a possible second round, and introduced changes to the regulation of campaign finances, traditional and online media coverage, voter and candidate registration, and determining ballot validity. Further amendments adopted in July 2022 concerned video recording of voting and tabulation, requirements for TEC members, and the naming of political party alliances.<sup>10</sup> In December 2024, substantial amendments to the Electoral Code and other laws were adopted, related to deregistration of candidates, permissible campaign materials, accessibility measures, recount procedures and campaign finance oversight.<sup>11</sup> The 2024 amendments supplemented, reformulated or repealed many provisions introduced in 2021 and 2022.

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<sup>5</sup> Following statements in support of the Church, Strong Armenia leader Samvel Karapetyan was arrested in [June 2025](#) on [charges](#) of publicly calling for the seizure of power; additional charges for tax evasion and money laundering were [brought](#) in October. In December 2025, he [was placed](#) under house arrest, which [was extended](#) in April 2026 for three months. Other prominent criminal investigations initiated before the announcement of elections include two former presidents and current party leaders, Robert Kocharyan and Serzh Sargsyan, as well as the former mayor of Yerevan, and the current mayor of Gyumri.

<sup>6</sup> Armenia halted its participation in the Moscow-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in February 2024, although it has not formally withdrawn. The EU [deployed](#) a civilian mission to contribute to stability in the border areas in January 2023; the parliament adopted the [EU Integration Act](#) in March 2025 and an [agenda](#) for the EU–Armenia Strategic Partnership in December 2025. In April 2026, an EU [Partnership Mission](#) in Armenia was established to enhance resilience and crisis management. In May 2026, following a [European Political Community](#) meeting, the first [Armenia–EU Summit](#) took place in Yerevan.

<sup>7</sup> During Prime Minister Pashinyan’s visit to Moscow in April, the President of the Russian Federation [referred](#) to “special relations” between the two countries, and raised concerns that some Armenian politicians with a pro-Russian position were in detention. Following the Armenia–EU Summit in May, several heads of state [expressed](#) support for Prime Minister Pashinyan, including the President of France, who attended a large-scale public event in Gyumri with the Prime Minister on 5 May.

<sup>8</sup> Only one of the candidates lists, “Against All” Democratic Party, is led by a woman.

<sup>9</sup> Including the Administrative Code, the Administrative Offences Code, the Criminal Code, and the Law on Peaceful Assemblies.

<sup>10</sup> In 2022, new administrative offences were also introduced, *inter alia*, for party-affiliated charity work during election periods, unlawful campaign materials, and failure to submit asset and income declarations.

<sup>11</sup> See also the 2023 Venice Commission and ODIHR [Joint Opinion](#) on draft amendments to the Electoral Code and related legislation; several recommendations were taken into consideration in the law adopted in December 2024.

In 2026, two limited amendment packages were adopted, with parliamentary readings completed within 24 hours in each case. Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors noted that, unlike previous amendments, consultations before the January changes were not comprehensive and did not fully consider opposition views, while no public consultations preceded the April changes. The January amendments introduced new accreditation requirements for citizen observers and empowered the CEC to revoke observer accreditations for certain violations.<sup>12</sup> Further amendments adopted in April elaborated ballot validity rules and reintroduced provisions, initially introduced in 2022 and repealed due to drafting errors in 2024, prohibiting the use of personal names in the names of alliances. While such prohibitions already existed for political party names under the Law on Political Parties, some ODIHR EOM opposition interlocutors criticised the amendment as late and negatively affecting Strong Armenia’s campaign.<sup>13</sup>

The legislative changes since the last elections were in line with several previous ODIHR recommendations, including with regard to addressing the misuse of administrative resources, sanctions for pressure on voters and vote-buying, election-related criminal offences, and accessibility for voters with disabilities. Nevertheless, a number of previous recommendations remain unaddressed, including those related to restrictions on voting rights on the basis of mental disability, protection of voters’ personal data, transparency of media ownership, candidacy rights of dual citizens, campaign finance reporting before the official campaign period, and restrictions on the accreditation of newly established observer organizations.

Voters will elect at least 101 members of parliament (MPs) through a closed-list proportional system in a single nationwide constituency.<sup>14</sup> Parties must receive at least four per cent of votes cast to qualify for seat allocation, and alliances at least eight per cent.<sup>15</sup> The Constitution requires a stable parliamentary majority to form a government, defined as 52 per cent of seats. If a contestant wins an absolute majority of seats but falls short of this threshold, it receives additional mandates to reach it. If no contestant wins an absolute majority, the party with relative majority may form a coalition with other parties within nine days. If this fails, within five days any party may form a coalition securing the stable majority. If no such coalition is formed, a second round is held 35 days after election day between the two leading lists, with additional mandates awarded to the winner.

## **V. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION**

Parliamentary elections are administered by a three-tiered system comprised of the CEC, 38 Territorial Election Commissions (TECs), and 2,005 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs). The CEC consists of seven members elected by parliament with three-fifths majority of all MPs for six-year terms, renewable once. TECs are permanent bodies and are comprised of seven members, appointed by the CEC for a six-year term. In line with the requirement that each gender be represented by at least three members of the CEC and TECs, four CEC members and 47 per cent of TEC members are women.<sup>16</sup>

The CEC is responsible for the overall conduct of the elections. To date, it has met all legal deadlines, and preparations are proceeding according to schedule. The CEC has held regular public sessions, which are streamed live. Since the call of the elections, the CEC has adopted over 160 decisions, generally by

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<sup>12</sup> The Standing Committee on State and Legal Affairs of the Parliament informed the ODIHR EOM that it had consulted a number of civil society and international stakeholders before the amendments. The opposition boycotted the parliamentary session on 23 January 2026, when amendments to the Electoral Code were adopted by a majority of votes from the Civil Contract faction.

<sup>13</sup> In these elections, Strong Armenia had initially submitted its registration request as “Strong Armenia with Samvel Karapetyan”; following the adoption of the amendment, the alliance was required to modify its application.

<sup>14</sup> In addition, the law provides for up to four reserved seats in parliament, one for each of the four largest national minorities (Yezidis, Russians, Assyrians and Kurds), in proportion to votes cast for parties passing the threshold.

<sup>15</sup> By law, if fewer than three parties or alliances pass the threshold, the three contestants with the highest number of votes gain parliamentary representation.

<sup>16</sup> While women at TEC represent some 87 per cent as secretaries, their role in leadership is limited, holding 16 per cent of chair positions and 18 per cent of deputies.

consensus. Decisions have addressed technical preparations, candidate and observer registration, and interpretation of the legislation. The CEC has also established new Training and TEC Relations departments to strengthen the capacity of lower-level commissions and streamline internal communication.

TECs supervise the formation and work of PECs, handle recounts, and tabulate results within their respective areas. In line with recent legal amendments, all TEC members have undergone attestation and training. During the election period, TEC sessions are broadcast online and their decisions posted on the CEC website. PECs, responsible for the conduct of election day operations, are formed anew for each election and are comprised of eight members: two appointed by each of the three parliamentary factions and two by the respective TECs.<sup>17</sup> All PECs were appointed within the legal deadline of 13 May.

For the first time, the CEC launched a training of trainers initiative for TEC members to strengthen PEC capacity. The CEC has also developed a variety of voter education materials on voter registration, the electoral system, and voting procedures, which include sign language or closed captioning. Organizations representing persons with disabilities positively assessed the CEC's efforts to improve accessibility, including the introduction of Braille voting templates. However, they noted that the limited accessibility of polling stations, which according to CEC data stands at 31 per cent, continues to hinder independent participation. Most ODIHR EOM interlocutors, including from political parties, were positive about the overall technical capacity of the election administration, and expressed hope that the improved training of PEC members would largely address concerns related to their technical capacity noted in previous elections.

## **VI. VOTER RIGHTS AND REGISTRATION**

Citizens at least 18 years old on election day are eligible to vote, unless serving a sentence for a serious crime, or declared incompetent by a court decision; these suffrage restrictions based on mental disabilities are contrary to international standards.<sup>18</sup> The voter register is maintained by the Migration and Citizenship Service (MCS), based on data from the State Population register, and includes citizens with permanent residence who have held a valid identification document in the six months preceding election day.

In line with the law, on 28 April, precinct-level voter lists were published online in a downloadable and searchable format. Voters may request corrections or temporary inclusion at another location either in-person or online until 26 May.<sup>19</sup> Voters otherwise eligible to vote, but not included in the voter lists, may be added to supplementary voter lists, including on election day. Most ODIHR EOM interlocutors expressed overall confidence in the accuracy of the voter lists. The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) informed the ODIHR EOM that some 20,000 displaced Armenian refugees who recently obtained citizenship may be able to vote. However, some interlocutors noted that delays in processing pending citizenship applications could affect the voting rights of applicants.<sup>20</sup> According to the MIA, some 7,000 applications remain pending.

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<sup>17</sup> PEC chairperson and secretary positions are distributed among parliamentary factions and appointed by the CEC according to a formula based on the number of seats held by each party, the number of available positions and the number of precincts.

<sup>18</sup> See Articles 12 and 29 of the UN [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (CRPD). Paragraph 48 of the 2014 General Comment No. 1 to the CRPD states that “a person’s decision-making ability cannot be a justification for any exclusion of persons with disabilities from exercising their political rights, including the right to vote, the right to stand for election and the right to serve as a member of a jury”.

<sup>19</sup> Special voter lists will be compiled for voters in penitentiary facilities, detention centres, military and medical facilities. Out-of-country voting online is provided only for diplomatic and military personnel and their families abroad.

<sup>20</sup> According to the UNHCR [Operations Data Portal](#), more than 115,000 Armenians were displaced since September 2023.

As of 18 May, there were 2,483,520 registered voters. The MCS will submit the final lists to PECs three days before elections. On election day, voters will be identified through voter authentication devices (VADs), which contain offline electronic copies of voter lists. After election day, signed voter lists, except those from military facilities, detention centres and penitentiaries, will be published online with the stated aim of enhancing transparency and preventing electoral fraud, despite previous ODIHR recommendations against this practice to protect voter data and secrecy of the choice to vote or not to vote.

## VII. CANDIDATE RIGHTS AND REGISTRATION

To stand as a candidate, one must be an eligible voter of at least 25 years of age, be a citizen and resident of Armenia for the preceding four years, and have command of the Armenian language.<sup>21</sup> Citizens holding another nationality are ineligible to stand, despite a previous ODIHR recommendation.

Political parties or alliances may nominate candidates; individual candidacies are not permitted, which is at odds with OSCE commitments.<sup>22</sup> Contesting entities are required to submit nationwide closed lists, which may consist of a main list of between 80 and 300 candidates, including up to 30 per cent non-party members, and a second, optional list of 4 candidates representing the main national minorities for reserved minority seats. Candidate lists must provide for at least 30 per cent representation of each gender and the first 30 candidates on each list must be approved by a party congress.<sup>23</sup> The law also prescribes procedural requirements and sets the deposit for the registration of candidate lists.<sup>24</sup>

Most ODIHR EOM interlocutors were satisfied with the handling of the candidate registration process. By the 23 April deadline, 17 political parties and two alliances submitted registration requests to the CEC, and all were registered by 3 May.<sup>25</sup> A total of 2,032 candidates are contesting, including 768 women (37.8 per cent), with all lists fulfilling the gender and placement requirements. Only one list is headed by a woman. Five political parties submitted minority lists, comprising 21 candidates. Following registration, 73 candidates from 12 entities withdrew, including 26 women. The gender quota applies only at the stage of candidate list registration; the law does not require it to be maintained if candidates later withdraw.

## VIII. CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT

The official campaign began on 8 May and ends one day before election day. The law does not prohibit early campaigning, and many contestants campaigned prior to the start of the campaign period. A number of ODIHR EOM interlocutors raised concerns about the lack of distinction between official state and campaign activities in some of these events.<sup>26</sup> Most campaign regulations apply only during the official

<sup>21</sup> Candidates must have resided in Armenia for at least 731 of the 1,461 days preceding the submission of their candidacy request. Armenian language proficiency is certified by a graduation document from an Armenian educational institution or, in its absence, through a test administered by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports.

<sup>22</sup> See paragraph 7.5 of the 1990 OSCE [Copenhagen Document](#), which states that participating States will “respect the right of citizens to seek political or public office, individually or as representatives of political parties or organizations”.

<sup>23</sup> In addition, both genders are to be represented in each grouping of three consecutive candidates on a list.

<sup>24</sup> Contestants are required to submit the charter of the party, a decision of the congress approving the candidate list, the written consent of candidates, and a deposit of AMD 7.5 million (EUR 17,500) for parties or AMD 15 million (EUR 35,000) for alliances. Deposits are returned if a party or alliance wins seats in parliament or gets at least 2 or 4 per cent of the votes, respectively.

<sup>25</sup> Eight parties were required to provide additional documentation for 35 candidates and, in line with the law, were granted 48 hours to rectify omissions; 23 of these candidates were ultimately denied registration for non-fulfilment of the registration requirements. The “Progressive Centrist Party Alliance” and the “Law, Democracy, and Discipline” party appealed the denial of registration of one candidate each to the Administrative Court; both were rejected.

<sup>26</sup> On 19 April in Gyumri and 25 April in Yerevan, large-scale “Voice of Peace” concerts were held, echoing Civil Contract Party’s campaign slogan, “Stand Up for Peace”. The Prime Minister appeared at the Gyumri concert, which was widely viewed as the party’s inaugural campaign event. Both concerts were sponsored by [5.1.2.e](#) and the Independent Observer Alliance [filed](#) a complaint with the Corruption Prevention Commission (CPC) alleging illegal campaign financing. [According to](#) the *Akanates* citizen observer group, the Civil Contract Party’s campaign logo and slogan featured during the 2026 New Year celebration in Yerevan, also financed by [5.1.2.e](#)

campaign period, but charitable activities by contestants and associated entities are prohibited from the calling of the elections.

The main campaign topics include peace and regional stability, mostly linked to the normalization process with Azerbaijan, the status of displaced Armenian refugees, the situation of Armenian detainees in Azerbaijan, as well as the standards of living, economy, rule of law, and anti-corruption. The campaign is active, with contestants using digital and printed billboards, printed campaign materials, in-person events, media and online outreach.<sup>27</sup> Public discourse is often divisive and marked by war-related rhetoric, particularly around the government's "Real Armenia" programme, which features prominently in the campaign, and on the status and potential reform of the Armenian Apostolic Church.<sup>28</sup> Representatives of Strong Armenia stated the criminal proceedings for recent criminal charges related to vote-buying and the misuse of charities brought against their members are hindering their ability to campaign.<sup>29</sup>

The law prohibits the use of administrative resources for campaigning, with the 2021 and 2024 amendments further defining such misuse and expanding the list of entities barred from campaign activities. ODIHR EOM interlocutors alleged violations of these rules in several provinces.<sup>30</sup> A number of interlocutors also criticized the introduction or announcement of social and economic measures shortly before the elections, which they perceived as benefitting the incumbent government.<sup>31</sup>

Social networks are a primary source of political information but media literacy remains low.<sup>32</sup> Facebook is the most widely used platform, while most parties are also active on Instagram and Telegram. Most contestants have a strong focus on digital campaigning, including through paid political advertisement on Meta and Google platforms. Campaigning on social networks is mostly unregulated, except for labelling requirements for campaign content and online political advertisement during the official campaign period.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> So far, ODIHR EOM LTOs have observed 46 campaign events, mostly rallies, with Civil Contract and Strong Armenia accounting for the largest share, followed by Armenia Alliance and Prosperous Armenia. Most speakers were men. Over 80 per cent of observed events were accessible to persons with physical disabilities.

<sup>28</sup> The [Real Armenia](#) programme, approved in January 2025, focuses on peace and regional normalization, including through the "[Crossroads of Peace](#)" initiative. The Prime Minister has repeatedly framed the election in stark security terms: before and during the official campaign, he [claimed](#) that an opposition victory would lead to war and described the leaders of Strong Armenia, Prosperous Armenia and the Armenia Alliance as a "three-headed party of war". For their part, most larger opposition parties advocate revisiting the current direction of relations with Azerbaijan and the full integration or "right to return" of displaced Armenian refugees.

<sup>29</sup> Authorities have launched over 54 criminal proceedings related to vote buying and bribery, most of which are related to Strong Armenia supporters. While the ODIHR EOM was not able to receive from the relevant authorities the exact number of individuals involved, representatives of the party claim that over 250 people have been arrested or detained on these charges. In April 2026, a prominent Strong Armenia member was [arrested](#) and charged for [alleged](#) vote buying violations. In addition, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) initiated several criminal cases involving charities allegedly associated with Strong Armenia, including the arrests of four individuals on 30 March, two party members and relatives of the party leader on [14 April](#), and 14 further individuals on [16 April](#), on charges related to vote-buying or providing funds under the guise of charity.

<sup>30</sup> Earlier, on 13 May, the CEC called on all contestants to respect the prohibition on the misuse of administrative resources.

<sup>31</sup> These included universal health insurance, [announced](#) in December 2025 with effect from January 2026; increases in pensions and disability benefits, [announced](#) in March 2026 with effect from April; performance-based bonuses and payments to senior officials and ministries, including AMD 3.5 billion (EUR 8.1 million; 1 EUR = 430 AMD) reportedly allocated in [December 2025](#) and a further AMD 4.6 billion (EUR 10.7 million) reported in [March 2026](#); more than AMD 2 billion (EUR 4.5 million) in additional regional funding [announced](#) in March; and zero-interest agricultural loans [announced](#) in April.

<sup>32</sup> According to the International Telecommunication Union [DataHub](#), in 2024, 81 per cent of the population used the internet. Based on a survey by Prisma's [Freedom of Expression and Media Consumption Research](#), in 2024, only 31 per cent of the respondents were able to recognize manipulative media strategies.

<sup>33</sup> The CEC informed the ODIHR EOM that it monitors compliance with this regulation only with respect to paid online advertisements.

According to the authorities, over the past years, Armenia has faced increased hybrid threats and foreign influence operations.<sup>34</sup> In response, the government enhanced preparedness to address these threats through a 2025 legislative package on cybersecurity, personal data protection and public information management, and strengthened the Information Systems Agency of Armenia (ISAA), responsible for election-related cybersecurity. Ahead of the elections, the EU supported the authorities through the deployment of a Hybrid Rapid Response Team to assess risks and provide advice on countering hybrid threats.<sup>35</sup> Most ODIHR EOM interlocutors assessed the legislative amendments positively; however, some raised concerns that the external support could be perceived as undue involvement in the electoral process.

No institution is specifically mandated to monitor online campaigns, but a number of state bodies have assumed certain responsibilities to counter key threats in the election period. The Information and Public Relations Centre (IPRC) under the Prime Minister's Office informed the ODIHR EOM of its efforts to monitor and, together with the Strategic Communications department of Prime Minister's Office, coordinate the government's response to manipulative information. The ISAA also informed the ODIHR EOM that it monitors coordinated inauthentic behaviour, along with detecting and responding to cyber threats.<sup>36</sup> Platforms are not legally required to share information with authorities; however, the CEC acts as a focal point for communication with Meta and TikTok. Recent reports indicate several coordinated influence operations targeting Armenia; platforms have taken a number of steps to restrict content, including with respect to elections, that breaches their community standards.<sup>37</sup> Some CSOs also monitor the online environment for hybrid threats and discriminatory rhetoric.<sup>38</sup>

Although several actors had actively campaigned before the official campaign period, all contestants intensified their outreach on social network platforms from its first weeks. At the beginning of the campaign, there were instances of offensive, discriminatory and divisive language on social networks, including from government officials.<sup>39</sup> The ODIHR EOM has started monitoring the online activities of political parties contesting the elections, including their leaders and some key candidates, noting in particular the tone and content of their messages.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> See the 2026 Armenian Foreign Intelligence Service [External Security Risks Report](#) and the [Armenia Cybersecurity Threat Landscape](#) report by CyberHUB-AM.

<sup>35</sup> Reportedly, in February, the Foreign Minister requested the EU's support to combat foreign information manipulation, interference, and cyber threats within the context of the elections. The Hybrid Response Team, composed of EU experts, visited Armenia in March-April and provided support, among others, to the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Interior, and ISAA.

<sup>36</sup> On 18 May, ISAA published a statement warning about increased Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS) attacks on Armenian websites. Specific efforts to tackle disinformation ahead of the elections by the IPRC include the publication of a manual on foreign information manipulation, and an AI-powered content verification platform.

<sup>37</sup> By March 2026, [TikTok](#) had removed around 80 inauthentic accounts with 27,892 followers operating from the Russian Federation, which targeted audiences in Armenia, Moldova, and Georgia, and sought to amplify narratives favourable to certain politicians and critical of others, primarily in the context of Armenia's parliamentary elections. Google, with support from Meta, [blocked](#) 63 YouTube channels linked to a Russia-related coordinated influence operation sharing content in Arabic, Armenian, English, Kazakh, and Ukrainian; 25 YouTube channels connected to another operation, with content in Armenian, English, German and Russian that was supportive of Russia and critical of Ukraine and the United States; and 25 channels as part of its investigation into coordinated influence operations linked to Azerbaijan, which had content critical of Armenia. According to Meta's [report](#) for the first quarter of 2026, it disrupted a network attributed with high confidence to "Ruposters", for coordinated inauthentic behavior, and acted in connection to 52 Facebook accounts, 134 pages, and 35 Instagram accounts. The network targeted audiences in some 20 countries, including Armenia, had more than 274,000 followers cumulatively, and spent around USD 49,000 on ads.

<sup>38</sup> These include the Fact Investigation Platform, Freedom of Information Centre, the Media Diversity Institute, Hetq, and Helsinki Citizen's Assembly Vanadzor.

<sup>39</sup> On 10 May, the Minister of Social Affairs [stated](#) at a Civil Contract campaign event in reference to the opposition: "The three-headed monster that wants to bring war to our country must be strangled in its nest." The same day, at a campaign event in Yeghenadzor, the Prime Minister [said](#) in reference to the opposition: "if they're going to work anywhere, then let them work in prison". On 14 May, the Prime Minister and an opposition leader mutually [referred](#) to each other as "Neanderthal" on Facebook.

<sup>40</sup> The ODIHR EOM is monitoring 63 accounts across Facebook, Instagram, and Telegram.

## IX. CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Campaign finance is regulated by the Electoral Code and the Law on Political Parties. Amendments adopted in 2021 and 2024, *inter alia*, increased the limits for donations and campaign expenditure, redistributed the competences among oversight bodies and, in line with a longstanding ODIHR recommendation, expanded the definition of campaign expenditure to cover organizational expenses, such as costs for office space, transportation, communications, and campaign staff.<sup>41</sup>

Four parliamentary political parties and alliances receive annual public funding, proportionally to the votes obtained in the last elections.<sup>42</sup> No public funding is specifically provided for campaigns. Parties may also be financed from membership fees, donations from citizens, loans, and income from party activities, with total annual income capped at AMD 1 billion (EUR 2.33 million). Voters may donate up to AMD 10 million (EUR 23,500) annually to a political party and may not donate directly to a campaign, while donations from legal entities, foreign and anonymous sources are prohibited. Campaign accounts may receive funds only from party accounts, up to AMD 800 million (EUR 1.86 million), which is also the campaign spending limit.<sup>43</sup> Campaign payments must be made in non-cash methods through dedicated accounts, but cash donations may be deposited into party accounts. Third-party campaigning is not regulated.

The CEC's Oversight and Audit Service (OAS) is mandated with the oversight of campaign finances, while the Corruption Prevention Commission (CPC) oversees regular party finance. Following candidate registration, every parliamentary party appointed auditors to the OAS, as required by law. By the 8 May deadline, all contestants opened campaign accounts, and banks began submitting account statements to the OAS every three days. The OAS and CPC are required to publish the total income and expenditure of each contestant every three days, without disclosing the names of donors or disaggregated information on expenditures.<sup>44</sup> Contestants must also submit campaign finance reports on 17 and 27 May, and 11 June, but are not required to disclose the sources of funding in these reports. The reports are published on the CEC website within three days of submission. Online spending must be reported. One day before the final election results, the CEC must publish the audit conclusions of the OAS. Sanctions for irregularities include fines of three times the amount of unreported or underreported income or expenditure, or the amount exceeding the permissible limit, and deregistration of contestants, who fail to open a campaign account or exceed the expenditure ceiling by more than 20 per cent.

Many ODIHR EOM interlocutors raised concerns about the lack of transparency of campaign expenditure incurred before the opening of campaign accounts, corporate in-kind donations, and third-party campaigning, including through charities (see also *Campaign Environment*). While the Anti-Corruption

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<sup>41</sup> While the 2021 amendments transferred oversight competences from the OAS to the CPC, according to the CPC, the transfer was not implemented due to its limited capacity. The 2024 amendments reinstated the OAS competences.

<sup>42</sup> Following the 2021 elections, AMD 520 million (EUR 1.21 million) was allocated annually to four parties: Civil Contract Party received AMD 268 million (EUR 623,256), Armenia Alliance AMD 163 million (EUR 379,070), Prosperous Armenia Party AMD 50 million (EUR 116,279), and Republic Party AMD 38 million (EUR 88,372). After 2021, the threshold for public funding has been reduced from three to two per cent. Parties are entitled to receive additional funding if they have a gender-balanced administration and branches in more than half of the provinces.

<sup>43</sup> Goods and services received free of charge or below market value, as well as payments made before the opening of campaign accounts, must be included in campaign expenditure reports.

<sup>44</sup> As of 13 May, the contestants reporting the highest income and expenditure were Civil Contract, with AMD 200 million (EUR 465,100) and AMD 138 million (EUR 320,900), respectively; Armenia Alliance, AMD 104 million (EUR 241,900) and AMD 53 million (EUR 123,300); Prosperous Armenia, AMD 70 million (EUR 162,800) and AMD 30 million (EUR 69,800); Strong Armenia, AMD 30 million (EUR 69,800) and AMD 6.5 million (EUR 15,100); and For the Republic Alliance, AMD 28 million (EUR 65,100) and AMD 24 million (EUR 55,800). According to CPC data, between 6 and 13 May, Strong Armenia received AMD 100 million (EUR 232,600) from 63 donors, Prosperous Armenia AMD 75 million (EUR 174,400) from 48 donors, and Civil Contract AMD 19 million (EUR 44,200) from 62 donors.

Commission (ACC) and the Investigative Committee undertook a number of investigations on alleged offences, many ODIHR EOM interlocutors noted a perceived selective and potentially politically motivated approach.

## X. MEDIA

The media environment is pluralistic, but constrained by a limited and shrinking advertising market, which increases its vulnerability to political influence. Television remains an important source of political information, although it is gradually losing its audience to social networks. The Public Broadcaster of Armenia (PBA), which many ODIHR EOM interlocutors perceive as supporting the government, operates two national television channels, *H1* and *H1 News*, as well as *Armradio*.<sup>45</sup> Several interlocutors also raised concerns regarding the narrowing of broadcast pluralism, citing the loss of nationwide terrestrial broadcasting licences by opposition-affiliated television stations *H2* and *Yerkir Media*, and the closure of *Shoghakat TV*, affiliated with the Armenian Apostolic Church, following the 2025 amendments to the Audiovisual Media Law.

The Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and freedom of the media. Defamation and libel were decriminalized in 2010. However, criminal hooliganism provisions have been recently applied against online media and several bloggers for content deemed offensive to senior public officials, resulting in pre-trial detentions and, in one case, in the search and seizure of video editing equipment.<sup>46</sup> This, combined with an increasing number of civil defamation lawsuits initiated mainly by senior public officials, has, according to a number of ODIHR EOM interlocutors, weakened Armenia's press freedom environment.<sup>47</sup>

The law requires broadcasters to ensure balanced coverage. In line with a CEC decision, from 8 May, the PBA has provided each contestant with three minutes of free daily television airtime during prime time and five minutes of free daily radio airtime, used by all contestants on television and by 14 contestants on radio. Private terrestrial broadcasters are required to provide each contestant with 25 minutes of free airtime during the campaign period, while paid political advertising must be offered on equal terms. Public television is required to organize at least three debates open to all contestants, including one among the list leaders. It held its first debate, with six contestants, on 17 May. Private broadcasters have also organized numerous debates.

The broadcast media regulator Commission for Television and Radio (CTR) oversees compliance with the rules through monitoring of licensed broadcasters during the campaign. It may issue warnings, impose fines, or suspend licences for identified violations.<sup>48</sup> In April, before the official campaign period, the CTR issued warnings to *Kentron TV* and *DAR-21* for exceeding the limit on the legally permitted share of

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<sup>45</sup> See also the Commission for Television and Radio's (CTR) [2025 annual report](#), which notes that, according to their 2025 monitoring results, "on *H1* and *H1 News*, coverage of the government's agenda sometimes dominates, and the presentation of alternative opinion is absent".

<sup>46</sup> On 13 November 2025, the National Security Service detained AntiFake.am podcast co-hosts Vazgen Saghatelyan and Narek Samsyan and seized the outlet's recording equipment on hooliganism [charges](#) stemming from podcast episodes and Facebook posts, in which the co-hosts responded to vulgar posts by the speaker of parliament, targeting him with similar language in reply. Both co-hosts were placed in pre-trial detention, later converted to house arrest and administrative supervision, respectively. The same co-hosts had faced identical [charges](#) in March 2024 for insulting the Prime Minister, and spent two months in pre-trial detention before being placed under administrative supervision, and eventually acquitted by a court in May 2025.

<sup>47</sup> The 2025 [Annual Report](#) by the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression identified 61 defamation lawsuits filed in 2025 against journalists and media outlets, up from 43 in [2024](#). The majority of such lawsuits were filed by senior public officials, including the Prime Minister and the speaker of the parliament. The [World Press Freedom Index compiled](#) by Reporters Without Borders noted a drop in Armenian press freedom, with Armenia falling from 34<sup>th</sup> place in 2025 to 50<sup>th</sup> in 2026.

<sup>48</sup> Its sanctioning powers regarding the public broadcaster are limited to notifying the supervisory board of violations.

news coverage devoted to Prosperous Armenia and Strong Armenia, respectively.<sup>49</sup> In May, following complaints by two parties, the CTR initiated administrative proceedings against *A-TV* and *Armenia TV* for allegedly obstructing parties' access to allocated free airtime. Based on its internal media monitoring, the CTR also initiated proceedings against *Shant TV* and *Business Channel FM 106.5* for interrupting campaign programmes with advertisements, and against *FastSports TV* for violations related to free airtime.

With the start of the official campaign, the ODIHR EOM commenced quantitative and qualitative monitoring of seven television channels and a qualitative assessment of four online news outlets.<sup>50</sup>

## XI. ELECTION DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The legal framework for election disputes has remained unchanged since the last elections, and provides for administrative review by election commissions and judicial appeal before the Administrative Court. The right to file complaints is, in most cases, limited to persons whose electoral rights are directly affected, despite a previous ODIHR recommendation. Parallel consideration of complaints by election commissions and courts is not permitted, with precedence given to judicial proceedings. Complaints and appeals must be adjudicated in public sessions within expedited deadlines of three to five days; decisions are final and must be published on the Administrative Court's website on the same day they are taken. The CEC's final decision on election results may be challenged before the Constitutional Court.

The election administration launched a public database of election-related complaints on 18 May. Since the beginning of the campaign, no complaints have been submitted to TECs; the CEC adjudicated two complaints, requesting the deregistration of a party for non-fulfilment of a registration requirement and challenging the impartiality requirement of one accredited observer organization; both were rejected. Eight appeals have been filed with the Administrative Court: three were rejected, all concerning refusals by the MCS to issue residency or citizenship certificates. Two were granted: one requiring the CEC to accredit an observer organization and another ordering the MCS to issue a citizenship certificate. Three appeals were returned to the applicants for additional documentation or correction of procedural deficiencies. A number of ODIHR EOM interlocutors raised concerns over the impartiality of the courts and law enforcement.<sup>51</sup>

## XII. ELECTION OBSERVATION

The Electoral Code provides for observation by citizen and international observers, as well as proxies of contestants. Citizen observer organizations may request accreditation from the CEC, provided that their statutory objectives have included democracy and human rights protection for at least one year prior to the announcement of elections, despite a prior ODIHR recommendation. The January 2026 amendments introduced additional neutrality requirements for observer accreditation, including the submission of reports on activities and information on funding sources.<sup>52</sup> Most ODIHR EOM civil society interlocutors

<sup>49</sup> The Audiovisual Media Law provides that coverage of the same topic in news programmes must not exceed 25 per cent of the programme's total airtime.

<sup>50</sup> The ODIHR EOM is monitoring the prime-time broadcasts (from 18:00 to 00:00) of the nationwide TV channels *HI* (public TV), *ATV*, *Armenia TV*, *Kentron TV*, *Shant TV*, as well as Yerevan-based *5TV*, *FreeNews*, *H2*, and *Yerkir Media*. The ODIHR EOM is also monitoring the politically relevant articles of the online media sources [armtimes.com](http://armtimes.com), [civilnet.am](http://civilnet.am), [news.am](http://news.am), and [panorama.am](http://panorama.am).

<sup>51</sup> See also the European Commission's 2025 [Partnership Implementation Report](#) on Armenia, which, among other things, identified the following remaining challenges of the judiciary: "the backlog of cases; effective implementation of integrity checks; prosecutorial self-governance and autonomy; [...] and financial and human resources management".

<sup>52</sup> These include the obligation to publish the latest annual report, disclose the source of funding for observation activities, and ensure that the management of the organizations does not include candidates or engage in campaigning on behalf of any contestant. The CEC may revoke accreditation if an organization no longer meets the prescribed criteria, violates the provisions of the Electoral Code, or if the circumstances of its registration change.

expressed support for the legislative changes, citing concerns over the impartiality of some observer groups in the past, while a number of organizations and the opposition criticized the amendments as hastily adopted and insufficiently reflective of their views.

The observer scene is active. By the 3 May deadline, the CEC registered 13 citizen observer groups with 1,285 observers accredited so far, and 8 international observer organizations.<sup>53</sup> *Akanates* (Eyewitness) and the Independent Observer Alliance conduct long-term observation and plan comprehensive election-day observation.<sup>54</sup>

### **XIII. ODIHR EOM ACTIVITIES**

The ODIHR EOM formally opened in Yerevan on 23 April. It established regular contacts with the CEC, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other high-level state officials, as well as candidates and other representatives of political parties, the media, civil society, and members of the diplomatic and international community. ODIHR EOM LTOs have been meeting stakeholders at the provincial and local levels since their deployment on 1 May.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), and the European Parliament (EP) have announced their intention to deploy an observer delegation and form an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) for election day, together with the ODIHR EOM.

*The English version of this report is the only official document.  
An unofficial translation is available in Armenian.*

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<sup>53</sup> The CEC initially rejected the registration of the *Menq* observer organization because its statute did not expressly refer to democracy protection; following an appeal, the Administrative Court overturned the decision and ordered its registration, finding that the statute should be assessed on the basis of its overall content rather than a literal reference.

<sup>54</sup> *Akanates* is co-ordinating 60 long-term observers and 700 short-term observers, as well as 50 mobile groups on election day. The Independent Observer Alliance has 50 long-term observers and plans to deploy some 600 short-term observers.



# Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

The Director

Warsaw, 22 May 2026

Mr. Pere Joan Pons, MP  
President  
OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Dear President,

Please find attached, for your information, a copy of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) Election Observation Mission interim report in connection with the 2026 parliamentary elections in the Republic of Armenia.

Yours sincerely,

5.1.2.e



5.1.2.e

cc: 5.1.2.e MP  
Special Co-ordinator and Leader of the OSCE short-term observer mission for the  
2026 parliamentary elections in the Republic of Armenia  
5.1.2.e Secretary-General of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly