



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

# REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

## EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 1 SEPTEMBER 2024

ODIHR Election Observation Mission  
Final Report



Warsaw  
27 February 2025

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**REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN**  
**EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS**  
**1 September 2024**

**ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report<sup>1</sup>**

**I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Following an invitation to observe the 1 September 2024 early parliamentary elections and in accordance with its mandate, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) established an Election Observation Mission (EOM) on 31 July. The ODIHR EOM assessed the compliance of the election processes with OSCE commitments and other standards for democratic elections, as well as domestic legislation.

In its Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions issued on 2 September, the ODIHR EOM concluded that the elections “took place in a restrictive political and legal environment that does not enable genuine pluralism and resulted in a contest devoid of competition. While efficiently preparing the elections, the election administration lacked impartiality and took a formalistic approach that limited the inclusivity of the election. Against the background of continued repression of dissenting voices, the campaign was barely visible, and efforts were not made to engage citizens or enable them to participate without fear of retribution. While many candidates participated in the process, almost all were supportive of the government’s policies in their campaign messages. Positively, these elections saw more engagement of women as contestants and in the election commissions. The legal framework for the elections does not meet international standards or OSCE commitments for democratic elections and restrictions introduced in political party and media legislation further limit fundamental freedoms. Campaign coverage rules also contributed to the absence of information on the contestants in the media. Despite a voting process that was orderly and assessed to be overall efficiently run, serious irregularities and omissions of important safeguards were observed, particularly in the vote count, raising questions about the integrity of the process”.

On 28 June 2024, pursuant to a request of the parliament and an opinion of the Constitutional Court on the matter, President Ilham Aliyev called early parliamentary elections to be held on 1 September. The need to hold early elections was justified by the potential inability of the parliament to perform its duties due to hosting COP29 in November, when elections were originally scheduled. Several ODIHR EOM interlocutors expressed concerns that holding elections during the vacation and agricultural season would further diminish political engagement. The elections were held against the backdrop of continued detentions and arrests of political actors, human rights defenders, civil society activists and journalists. Overall, such a restrictive political environment did not ensure that elections took place under conditions which ensure in practice the free expression of the opinions of the electors, as required by paragraph 5.1 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document.

The electoral legal framework is not conducive to democratic elections as it maintains undue restrictions on fundamental freedoms of expression, association and assembly, falling short of international standards and OSCE commitments. The Election Code remained substantially unchanged since the last parliamentary elections, leaving long-standing priority ODIHR and Venice Commission recommendations, as well as judgements of the European Court of Human Rights unaddressed. These relate to limitations on fundamental freedoms, the composition of election commissions, unequal campaign conditions in public media, and adding voters to the voter lists on election day.

Members of parliament are elected by a simple majority in 125 single-mandate constituencies for a five-year term. The latest review of constituency boundaries resulted in a more equal distribution of voters

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<sup>1</sup> The English version of this report is the only official document. An unofficial translation is available in Azerbaijani.

among constituencies, partially addressing a prior ODIHR recommendation, but the process lacked transparency and was not conducted in line with international good practices.

The electoral preparations at all levels were administered efficiently and within the legal deadlines. The Central Election Commission (CEC) held regular public sessions, however, the sessions observed by the ODIHR EOM were formalistic with limited debate. The CEC organized comprehensive training for lower-level election commissions, conducted an extensive voter information campaign and took measures to facilitate voting by persons with disabilities. Lower-level commissions did not always ensure transparency of their work as their sessions were generally held on an *ad hoc* basis and on short notice, and publicly available information about their activities was limited. While election commission members are nominated by different parliamentary groups, the lack of genuine political differentiation between these groups resulted in the control of the election administration by the majority party, failing to ensure its impartiality and the integrity of the electoral process.

For these elections, 6.4 million voters were registered, which is approximately 1.2 million less than the number of citizens of voting age, raising concerns about the accuracy of data and inclusiveness of the voter register. Voter lists were available for public scrutiny, enhancing transparency. Contrary to international good practice, adding voters to the voter list on election day was not complemented by adequate administrative safeguards or judicial oversight, allowing for potentially arbitrary decisions and multiple voting. Restrictions on the right to vote for those with an intellectual or psychosocial disability remain, contrary to international standards and previous ODIHR recommendations. Some 400,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) were registered to vote across the country.

In total, out of the 1,508 initial applicants, only 998, were registered to stand for the elections, including 305 nominated by political parties and 693 self-nominated. Prospective candidates were denied registration mainly due to insufficient number of valid signatures and inaccurate income and asset declarations, and most were not given an opportunity to correct mistakes in their applications. Several nominees withdrew, in some cases they alleged intimidation and others cited burdensome administrative procedures. The constituency election commissions mandated with candidate registration applied the rules and procedures inconsistently, limiting the inclusivity of the process. Recently introduced stringent requirements for political party registration and increased grounds for dissolution have negatively impacted pluralism and further restricted freedom of association.

While women remain underrepresented in elected and appointed positions, gender stereotypes persist and there are no affirmative measures to enhance their political involvement. In total, there were 21 women MPs in the outgoing parliament (18.42 per cent) including the speaker and no female minister or leader among the 26 political parties. While women were fairly well represented among attendees and speakers at campaign events, gender equality issues were overlooked in the campaign discourse. Women were underrepresented in the CEC, but better represented in lower-level commissions, including as chairs, partially addressing a prior ODIHR recommendation. Positively, women constituted 30 per cent of the registered candidates, a significant increase from 21 per cent in the previous elections.

The campaign was barely visible and generated limited public engagement. While a high number of candidates stood for these elections, the contest lacked a competitive nature and voters were not offered genuine political alternatives. Party platforms and messages, conveyed primarily through small-scale events, were generally supportive of the President's and government's policies. Restrictive campaign regulations and their implementation, including on freedom of assembly and expression, did not allow candidates to convey their messages or enable voters to freely obtain information, as required by OSCE commitments. By law, contestants must submit their print campaign materials to the lower-level election commissions prior to their distribution, which potentially results in self-censorship. The political debate was further subdued due to the declared attention of the authorities to monitor the internet space and social networks, albeit campaigning on social networks is not regulated by law. ODIHR EOM was informed of attendees, including public sector employees, forced to attend campaign events, raising

concerns about voter intimidation and voters' ability to cast their vote free of fear of retribution, at odds with OSCE commitments.

Campaign finance regulations prescribe limits for donations and expenditure, but reporting and disclosure requirements as well as oversight remain insufficient, negatively impacting the transparency and efficiency of campaign finance. Despite a previous ODIHR recommendation, there was no public funding of the campaign. The 2023 provision of the Law on Political Parties, which introduced annual public funding for all parties receiving votes in the previous elections will become applicable after these elections. Lower-level election commissions, mandated with oversight, posted only few financial reports and many of those reports lacked any information on donations and expenditures, limiting the information available to voters. Several contestants raised concerns about bureaucratic hurdles to open legally prescribed campaign accounts, and noted voters' reluctance to donate due to fear of retribution.

The media legislation includes restrictive registration requirements for media outlets and journalists, curtailing pluralism. Contrary to international standards, defamation and libel remain criminalized, resulting in self-censorship, and a number of news websites were blocked without a prior court decision, including during the campaign period. Since November 2023, arrests and detentions of journalists intensified, including on charges depriving them of their registration as journalists; over 20 remain detained. Only the ruling party was entitled to free airtime on the public broadcaster due to stringent legal requirements; but it refrained from using this opportunity. By law, private media can only cover the campaign in paid formats and none of the 72 private national and local broadcasters offered paid airtime. Subsequently, monitored broadcast media did not provide any coverage of the campaign and contestants, and all election-related news items referred to the activities of the CEC, further limiting the opportunity for candidates to convey their messages to voters and the ability of voters to make an informed choice. Newspapers and online media, which offered space for paid advertisement, became the sole platform for the candidates to convey their messages in media.

While the mechanism for election dispute resolution is overall in line with good practices, the demonstrated lack of independence and impartiality of election commissions in the consideration of the complaints undermined the right to an effective remedy, contrary to OSCE commitments and international standards. Several ODIHR EOM interlocutors attributed the reduced number of complaints to a further decline in trust in the judiciary's independence and its effectiveness in handling disputes against authorities. The CEC reviewed most complaints on merits, but the arguments of the invited parties were never considered, and the CEC adopted decisions prepared in advance, thus depriving the complainants of procedural guarantees prescribed by law, OSCE commitments and international good practice. The CEC and court decisions were not fully reasoned, and the CEC decisions failed to indicate the availability of further legal remedies. All appeals filed to courts of appeal and the Supreme Court were rejected or dismissed.

The law provides for citizen and international election observation, however, it grants election commissions wide discretionary powers to expel observers from the polling stations. Further, as a result of restrictive legal provisions that impact the registration and functioning of civil society organizations, well-known citizen election observer groups remained unregistered and deprived of funding, with some prominent members continuing to be under arrest or detention and thus unable to observe the elections. Election commissions accredited 112,749 citizen observers, including party and candidate observers. The vast majority of these observers were nominated by the ruling party, their nominated candidates and affiliated parties, raising concern over the access of independent and impartial observers to the process. The CEC registered 598 international observers.

The International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) observed in 922 polling stations throughout election day. The overall assessments of the opening and voting processes were positive with observers finding these to be orderly and efficiently organized. However, observers also noted serious irregularities and inconsistencies in the application of important procedures, which raise concerns about

the integrity of the voting process, including voters being allowed to vote without ID, seemingly identical signatures on the voter lists, unauthorized persons keeping track of voters and a number of observed indications of ballot box stuffing. Further, the addition of significant numbers of voters to the voter lists and inconsistencies in the application of procedures in the marking and checking of marks of voters; and in having voters sign the voter lists were observed; all important safeguards against multiple voting.

The closing and counting process was assessed negatively in 40 of the 92 polling stations observed, a significant number, mainly due to omissions of important reconciliation procedures that safeguard the count. Observers noted instances of ballots not being properly reconciled with signatures on voter lists, evidence of deliberate falsification of entries in voter lists or result protocols and additional indications of ballot box stuffing. Further, the transparency of the count was not assured in nearly a third of the observations, and concerns about transparency continued during the tabulation process which was negatively assessed in 15 of the 79 Constituency Election Commissions (ConECs) visited. Overall, the counting and tabulation processes, as well as instances of serious irregularities throughout the day raised questions about whether ballots were counted and reported honestly, in line with paragraph 7.4 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document.

The CEC started publishing partial preliminary results per constituency a few hours after the closure of the polls on election day and complete preliminary results were made available on 2 September. While the CEC published the tabulated results disaggregated by polling station, it did not publish Precinct Election Commissions (PEC) result protocols, as it is not required by law. After election day, the CEC received 55 complaints alleging election day irregularities, and annulled results in 23 polling stations in 9 constituencies. Further, the CEC, on its own initiative, annulled results in an additional 20 PECs in 12 constituencies citing the impossibility to determine the voters' will and dissolved 35 PECs for shortcomings in their activities. The Constitutional Court validated the results on 21 September, five days after the CEC submitted the result protocols and before the end of the period for review of appeals by the courts, as there is not an explicit legal requirement to announce the results after the end of the review process.

This report offers a number of recommendations to support efforts to bring elections in Azerbaijan closer in line with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections to which they have committed. Priority recommendations relate to the pluralistic competitive political environment, review of the legal framework, in particular regarding the exercise of freedoms of association, peaceful assembly and expression, the independence and impartiality of election commissions, registration of observers, transparency and integrity of the counting and tabulation process and measures to increase women's participation in public and political life. ODIHR stands ready to assist the authorities to further improve the electoral process and to address the recommendations contained in this and previous reports.

## **II. INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Following an invitation to observe the 1 September 2024 early parliamentary elections and in accordance with its mandate, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) established an Election Observation Mission (EOM) on 31 July. The mission, led by Ditzmir Bushati, consisted of a 11-member core team based in Baku and 28 long-term observers deployed on 8 August to 14 locations around the country. Core team members and long-term observers came from 20 OSCE participating States. The ODIHR EOM remained in the country until 11 September to follow post-election developments.

For election day, the ODIHR EOM was joined by a delegation from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) to form an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM). Michael Creed was

appointed by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office as Special Co-ordinator and Leader of the OSCE short-term observer mission, and Lucie Potůčková headed the OSCE PA delegation. ODIHR and the OSCE PA have endorsed the 2005 Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation. The IEOM deployed 279 observers from 34 participating States on election day, including 28 long-term and 172 short-term observers deployed by ODIHR, as well as a 54-member delegation from the OSCE PA; 46 per cent of observers were women. The IEOM observed opening procedures in 102 polling stations, voting in 922 polling stations and counting in 92. Tabulation was observed in 79 Constituency Election Commissions (ConECs).

The ODIHR EOM assessed the compliance of the election processes with OSCE commitments and other standards and obligations for democratic elections, as well as domestic legislation. This final report follows a Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions, which was released on 2 September.<sup>2</sup>

The ODIHR EOM wishes to thank the authorities of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the invitation to observe the elections, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Central Election Commissions for their assistance. The ODIHR EOM also expresses its appreciation to other state institutions, political parties, candidates, media, civil society organizations (CSOs), international community representatives, and other interlocutors for sharing their views and for their co-operation.

### III. BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

On 28 June 2024, President Ilham Aliyev dissolved the parliament and called for early parliamentary elections to be held on 1 September.<sup>3</sup> This followed an appeal from the parliament (*Milli Majlis*) to the President to call early elections as its full functionality could not be ensured due to hosting an international event in Baku in November, when the elections were originally scheduled.<sup>4</sup> While not required by the Constitution, the president requested an opinion of the Constitutional Court on the matter. The Constitutional Court supported the reasoning of the parliament and acknowledged that because Azerbaijan is hosting COP29 the parliament would not be able to perform its duties due to unavoidable reasons. Both parliament and the Constitutional Court did not provide sufficient explanation of how holding an international event would prevent parliament from fulfilling its obligations.<sup>5</sup> Several IEOM interlocutors expressed concerns that holding elections during the holiday and agricultural season would result in further diminished public engagement. These were the fourth consecutive early national elections.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See previous [ODIHR election reports on Azerbaijan](#).

<sup>3</sup> See the [decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan](#). The Constitution prescribes that the president may call early parliamentary elections, inter alia, “if the parliament fails to fulfill its obligations due to unavoidable reasons”.

<sup>4</sup> The [UN Climate Change Conference](#) COP29 was held in Baku from 11 to 22 November 2024. See the [reasoning](#) for early elections by [the Parliament](#), which states that a new parliamentary composition is required to effectively use the diplomatic opportunities COP29 provides.

<sup>5</sup> According to Article 98-1.1 of the Constitution, the president can dissolve parliament if it adopts a vote of no-confidence to the Cabinet of Ministers twice during a year, if it fails to appoint members of the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court and the Board of the Central Bank, upon a double submission of the president, and if it fails to fulfill its obligations due to unavoidable reasons. According to the [Constitutional Court's decision](#), holding of the COP29 in November constitutes a reason for dissolution of parliament for failing to fulfill its obligations due to unavoidable reasons. Paragraph 69 of the 2016 Venice Commission Opinion on the Draft Modifications to the Constitution Opinion stated that the new Article 98-1 makes Parliament largely ineffective as a countervailing power to the President. [...] It is dangerously vague and may be interpreted as allowing dissolution of Parliament whenever the President deems that Parliament does not “perform its duties”. New Article 98-1 is therefore incompatible with democratic standards.

<sup>6</sup> Article 9 of the 1996 [UNHRC General Comment No. 25 to the ICCPR](#) states that “genuine periodic elections are essential to ensure the accountability of representatives for the exercise of the legislative or executive powers vested in them”.

These were the first parliamentary elections held throughout the internationally recognized territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and unfolded amidst ongoing talks to sign a peace agreement to end the long-lasting conflict with Armenia and the hosting of COP29 with the stated aim to raise the country's international image.<sup>7</sup>

The political landscape is shaped by the continued dominance of the president who won a fifth consecutive term in February 2024 with an overwhelming majority of 92 per cent of the votes, and the political party he chairs, the New Azerbaijan Party (YAP). YAP has been uninterruptedly in office since 1993 and holds a majority of 68 of the 114 currently occupied seats; no by-elections were held for the 11 vacant seats, despite a legal requirement.<sup>8</sup> There are 9 more parties represented in parliament, jointly holding 10 seats, along with 37 self-nominated MPs; however, in almost all cases, there are no dissenting votes, and they do not represent different political views.<sup>9</sup>

Detentions and arrests of political actors, human rights defenders, civil society activists, academics and journalists persisted after the February presidential election.<sup>10</sup> While the authorities, in some cases, cited dubious funding sources and accounting of detained individuals, including from religious fundamentalist and separatist sources,<sup>11</sup> these detentions and arrests are perceived by a number of international and local human rights bodies as a crackdown on dissent and critical voices.<sup>12</sup> In addition, ODIHR EOM interlocutors cited concerns about widespread endemic corruption and political influence on institutional appointments. Overall, such political environment does not allow in practice the free expression of the opinions of the electors, as required by paragraph 5.1 and other commitments of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document.<sup>13</sup>

*To achieve a competitive political environment, the authorities should demonstrate full respect for fundamental freedoms and ensure that contestants are able to promote political platforms and debate public affairs in an environment free from pressure or intimidation. Instances and allegations of pressure or intimidation should be promptly investigated by the relevant authorities and the perpetrators held accountable.*

The Constitution and the 2006 Law on Equal Rights for Women and Men provide for equality of men and women, and Azerbaijan became part of CEDAW in 1995.<sup>14</sup> Notwithstanding the legal framework, there are no affirmative measures for enhancing women's political participation and representation. Women remain underrepresented in elected and appointed positions; with 21 women in the outgoing parliament (18.42 per cent) including the speaker. There are no women as ministers or leaders among the 26 political parties. The appointed First Vice-President is a woman. Among the seven state committees, only the Committee on Family, Women's and Children's problems is chaired by a woman. This underrepresentation in various elected and appointed positions, along with gender stereotypes that

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<sup>7</sup> The president and public officials made several public statements about the significance of hosting COP29 for the international recognition of the country. See for instance, the president's [statement](#) on X on 21 July. This view was also shared by many IEOM interlocutors.

<sup>8</sup> Eleven seats remained vacant, following the invalidation of elections in four constituencies, the appointment of three MPs to administrative positions, the arrest of one and the passing away of three MPs.

<sup>9</sup> Of the 91 laws adopted by parliament in 2024, 29 were adopted unanimously while the remainder with 1 to 10 dissenting votes or abstentions. Out of the 26 party leaders, 14 were high-ranking state officials in the past.

<sup>10</sup> Between the February 2024 presidential election and the compilation of this report, an additional 22 journalists, political activists, and civil society researchers and activists were detained or arrested.

<sup>11</sup> Common charges include large-scale drug dealing, smuggling, or failure to comply with a lawful order of the police.

<sup>12</sup> See among others, the [OSCE Representative on Freedom of Media statement \(7 March 2024\)](#), [United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner Press Release, 15 August 2024](#), [Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe \(PACE\) Press Release of 8 March 2024](#), the [European Parliament Resolution, 25 April 2024](#) and [Amnesty International, 30 April 2024](#).

<sup>13</sup> Paragraph 5.1 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) states that “free elections that will be held at reasonable intervals by secret ballot or by equivalent free voting procedure, under conditions which ensure in practice the free expression of the opinion of the electors in the choice of their representatives”.

<sup>14</sup> The draft of the National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2020–2024 was prepared in 2019 and submitted to the government, but was not approved.



hinder women’s political involvement, indicates that the efforts taken by authorities and political parties to address this issue have so far been insufficient.<sup>15</sup>

*Consideration should be given to introducing temporary special measures to enhance the participation of women in public and political life, including gender quotas.*

#### IV. ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The unicameral parliament consists of 125 MPs elected by a simple majority in 125 single-mandate constituencies for a five- year term. In case of early elections, its term may be shorter than five years.<sup>16</sup>

The law mandates the Central Election Commission (CEC) with reviewing the constituencies every five years.<sup>17</sup> The most recent review, conducted in September 2023, resulted in a more equal distribution of voters among constituencies, reducing the number of constituencies with deviations exceeding 10 per cent of the average from 51 to 10, partially in line with a prior ODIHR recommendation and international good practice.<sup>18</sup> However, contrary to good practice, the drawing of new constituency boundaries was not reviewed by an independent commission. Further, the legislation does not require the CEC to conduct public consultations with relevant stakeholders in this process and no pro-active measures were taken by the CEC, thereby undermining the integrity of the process.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, the CEC did not publish any information on the boundaries of the constituencies, which created confusion among some stakeholders and diminished the transparency of the process.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Several women politicians reported to the ODIHR EOM that they experienced gender-based discrimination in the political sphere. See Paragraph 27 of the sixth [report](#) of the UN Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

<sup>16</sup> If early elections are held, the next regular elections must take place again on the first Sunday of November on the fifth year since the beginning of the parliament’s term.

<sup>17</sup> The law requires the CEC to do so based on information on the number of voters permanently residing and registered in the relevant territorial unit. The law prescribes a maximum deviation of 5 to 10 per cent from the norm.

<sup>18</sup> In 2020, 51 constituencies exceeded 10 per cent from the average including 29 that exceeded 15 per cent. After the 2023 review, 10 constituencies exceed 10 per cent from the average number of voters, including 5 that exceed 15 per cent namely, constituencies Nakhchivan, Zangilan-Gubadli, Absheron Third, Shabran-Khachmaz, Shamkir Village exceed the average by 10 per cent, and Agdam-Khojaly, Aghdam, Lachin, Khankendi, Yasamal Third exceed by 15 per cent. See Paragraph 7.3 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#), which stipulates that the participating States will “guarantee universal and equal suffrage to adult citizens”. Paragraph I.2.2.iv of the 2002 [Venice Commission Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters](#) (Code of Good Practice) recommends that the “permissible departure from the norm should not be more than 10%, and should certainly not exceed 15 per cent except in special circumstances”. Paragraph 21 of the [UNHRC General Comment No. 25 to the ICCPR](#) states “the principle of one person, one vote, must apply, and within the framework of each State’s electoral system, the vote of one elector should be equal to the vote of another. The drawing of electoral boundaries and the method of allocating votes should not distort the distribution of votes”.

<sup>19</sup> Election constituencies are designed based on “average voter representation norm” determined by dividing the total number of registered voters in the country by 125; the norm is 50,470. Paragraph 18 of the 2002 Code of Good Practice states that “the political ramifications of (re)drawing electoral boundaries are very considerable, and it is therefore essential that the process should be nonpartisan ... The best solution would be to submit the problem in the first instance to a commission comprising a majority of independent members and, preferably, a geographer, a sociologist, a balanced representation of the parties and, where appropriate, representatives of national minorities”. Paragraph 19 of the [Venice Commission 2017 Report on Constituency Delimitation and Seat Allocation](#) recommends: “Like all crucial elements of electoral law, the delimitation of constituencies should be adopted after extensive public consultations with all relevant stakeholders. This should make it legitimate for both stakeholders and voters”.

<sup>20</sup> Confusion among candidates and voters due to the change of boundaries was reported in constituencies 2, 6, 15, 16, 24, 25, 41, 89, 101. Some nominees were denied registration for collecting voters’ support signatures outside their constituency as they were not aware of the new boundaries. For instance, one nominee in Constituency 24, who had been a candidate in several past elections in the same constituency, collected signatures of voters registered in villages assigned to the wrong ConEC.

*To ensure equality of the vote and in line with international standards and good practices, constituency delimitation should be conducted and reviewed periodically by an independent body, in an open and consultative manner and well in advance of the next elections. The CEC should ensure that the public is well-informed about the delineation of the constituencies through a comprehensive information campaign.*

Azerbaijan is party to the key international and regional instruments related to democratic elections.<sup>21</sup> Parliamentary elections are primarily regulated by the Constitution (last amended in 2016) and the Election Code, and supplemented by CEC regulations.<sup>22</sup> The Election Code remained substantially unchanged since the last parliamentary elections. The latest amendments made in April and June 2024 pertained only to minor technical details.<sup>23</sup>

The electoral legal framework is not conducive to democratic elections as the Constitution and other laws do not safeguard against curtailment of fundamental freedoms of association, assembly and expression, falling short of international standards and OSCE commitments.<sup>24</sup> Long-standing ODIHR and Venice Commission recommendations, as well as judgements of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) remain unaddressed, including those related to undue restrictions of fundamental freedoms, the composition of election commissions, unequal campaign conditions in public media, and the possibility to add voters to the voter lists on election day. Moreover, the Election Code is detailed but lacks clarity on some issues, including media coverage of elections, oversight of campaign finances, and rules for vote recounts.

*The electoral legal framework as well as legislation governing fundamental rights and freedoms should be reviewed to ensure compliance with international human rights obligations and standards for democratic elections. The legal reform should be preceded by an open and inclusive consultation process well in advance of the next elections. State bodies and the election administration should implement the laws in a manner that ensures the effective exercise of fundamental freedoms.*

The 2023 Law on Political Parties introduced additional restrictions on the registration, periodic verification, and operation of political parties, including an increase in the required number of party members for registration from 1,000 to 5,000 and the imposition of a mandatory annual

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<sup>21</sup> Including the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1979 Convention for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 2003 Convention against Corruption, 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the 2002 Convention on the Standards of Democratic Elections, Electoral Rights and Freedoms in the Member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Azerbaijan is also a member of the Council of Europe's Venice Commission and member of Group of States against corruption (GRECO). Since 2020, Azerbaijan has, in unilateral declarations before the ECtHR, acknowledged violations of a right to a free election related to the 2020 parliamentary elections and agreed to pay compensation to at least 25 individuals, following their applications to the ECtHR.

<sup>22</sup> Other applicable legislation includes the laws on Political Parties, Media, Freedom of Assembly, Non-Governmental Organizations and relevant provisions of the Criminal Code, the Code of Administrative Offences and the Administrative Procedure Code.

<sup>23</sup> The amendments harmonized the terminology between the Election Code and the new Law on Media and added a requirement to include the ID issuance and expiration dates wherever the law required provision of personal data.

<sup>24</sup> Paragraph 12 of the [UNHRC General Comment No. 25 to the ICCPR](#) states that "freedom of expression, assembly and association are essential conditions for the effective exercise of the right to vote and must be fully protected". The [2016 Venice Commission Opinion on the Draft Modifications to the Constitution](#) criticized, *inter alia*, the broad grounds for the limitation of freedom of assembly that disrupts "public order" and "public morals" (Article 49), broad prohibitions on freedom of association (Article 58) which "gives the legislator a *carte blanche* to define any activity as criminal and, hence, to prohibit any association which pursues it or even carries an intention to do so". See relevant sections of this report for further details. See also the [2023 Joint Opinion of ODIHR and the Venice Commission on the 2023 Law on Political Parties](#).

re-registration.<sup>25</sup> According to the Ministry of Justice, after the law entered into force, 33 political parties ceased to exist, with 26 parties remaining registered. In addition, the law granted broad powers to the authorities to monitor internal party activities, impose sanctions and deregister parties, contrary to international standards.<sup>26</sup> Some parties informed the ODIHR EOM that the oversight by the Ministry of Justice over their internal procedures and periodic verification of their membership created an environment of intimidation, potentially further limiting political pluralism.<sup>27</sup> In addition, some parties informed the EOM that they have been repeatedly denied registration without proper justification.

*To foster pluralism and ensure the exercise of freedom of association, the legislative and administrative requirements for the registration of political parties should be comprehensively revised. The authorities should discontinue practices of oversight that can be regarded as undue limitations on the freedom of association and intimidating to parties and their members.*

## V. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The parliamentary elections were managed by a three-tiered election administration comprising the CEC, 125 Constituency Election Commissions (ConECs), and 6,343 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs), all appointed for a five-year term.<sup>28</sup> The CEC is appointed by the parliament, ConECs are appointed by the CEC, and PECs are appointed by the respective ConECs. Women were underrepresented in the CEC with only 4 out of 18 members. In line with a prior ODIHR recommendation, the number of women as chairpersons and members of lower-level election commissions increased, with women constituting 41.55 per cent of ConECs and PECs permanent members with full voting rights, 32 per cent of chairs and 43 per cent of secretaries.

The CEC, ConECs and PECs consist of 18, 9 and 6 members, respectively.<sup>29</sup> Members of election commissions are nominated in equal shares by three parliamentary groups: the political party which has the majority, the 9 parties representing the minority, and the 37 non-partisan MPs jointly; each group nominates six CEC members, three ConEC and two PEC members. By law, the majority party YAP nominates the chairpersons of all election commissions at all levels. The lack of genuine political differentiation between the three parliamentary groups, previously evidenced by the ECtHR, does not ensure the independence and the impartiality of the election administration and the integrity of the

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<sup>25</sup> In Paragraph 47, the [2023 Joint Opinion of ODIHR and the Venice Commission on the 2023 Law on Political Parties](#) reiterated that “the new threshold seems to be formidably high and puts a burden on citizens trying to exercise their rights under Article 11 of the ECHR which is potentially restrictive and as such would be disproportionate and not necessary in a democratic society” and “the new law has introduced a number of new highly problematic provisions which risk having further chilling effects on pluralism in the country”.

<sup>26</sup> Paragraph 7.6 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) commits participating States to “respect the right of citizens to seek political or public office, individually or as representatives of political parties or organizations, without discrimination”. See also article 4 of the [UNHRC General Comment No. 25 to the ICCPR](#).

<sup>27</sup> The Ministry of Justice called registered party members to verify their membership, which was reportedly perceived by some party members as intimidation. Paragraph 23 of the [2020 ODIHR and Venice Commission Guideline on Political Party Regulation](#) states that “according to this principle of associational freedom, political parties are regarded as private associations that should be free to establish their own internal organization and their rules for selecting party leaders and candidates and should not be hindered by external regulations which limit free competition and political pluralism”. Further, “the requirement for the party to provide the state with lists of its members, would appear to be an overly intrusive measure that is not compatible with the principles of necessity and proportionality”.

<sup>28</sup> A total of 55 PECs were established in the regained territories.

<sup>29</sup> The current composition of the election commissions was established in 2021. The law does not limit the number of mandates of commissioners. According to the CEC, some 3 per cent of the ConEC members and some 11 per cent of the PEC members have been replaced prior to these elections for various reasons including running or being affiliated with candidates.

process.<sup>30</sup> Registered candidates have the right to nominate members with consultative rights at all levels of commissions. However, these members are *de facto* observers as they do not participate in decision-making nor are they assigned any other duties. The CEC and the ConECs registered 6,806 such representatives, including 6,251 nominated by political parties and 555 nominated by candidates.

*To strengthen impartiality and effective independence of election administration and to ensure broad public confidence in their work, the appointment process for election commission members at all levels should be revised to prevent dominance by any single political party. Commissions should work as collegial bodies taking decisions in a manner that supports the perception of impartiality and political neutrality.*

Technical preparations were conducted efficiently and within the established deadlines, despite a compressed time frame. The CEC held regular sessions attended by representatives of the media and contestants, as well as international observers, contributing to transparency. However, the CEC sessions and their agendas were not announced in advance, and decisions on administrative matters and session minutes were not published, detracting from transparency. Decisions were usually adopted unanimously with limited debate.

In line with its mandate, the CEC conducted cascade trainings for ConECs and PECs. The training sessions observed by the ODIHR EOM, both on central and local level, covered essential procedures adequately and were well-attended. The CEC also conducted seminars for various election stakeholders and a widespread voter information campaign, calling voters to check their entries in the voter lists and to vote, as well as targeting certain categories of voters, such as women and youth. The CEC provided all polling stations with Braille templates for ballots and requested ramps for polling stations in precincts where voters with low mobility reside.

While all levels of election administration were well-resourced, experienced and completed their tasks within prescribed deadlines, publicly available information about the activities of the ConECs was limited, at odds with international standards.<sup>31</sup> Sessions of ConECs were generally held on an *ad hoc* basis with short notice and only some of their decisions displayed on notice boards. In addition, some ConECs denied ODIHR EOM long-term observers (LTOs) access to their documentation, particularly those related to candidate registration.<sup>32</sup> These limitations undermined the principle of transparency, at odds with international good practice.<sup>33</sup>

*To enhance transparency and accountability, the election administration should proactively publicize information on its website, including all CEC and lower-level commission decisions, and ensure effective access to such information. The election commissions should conduct all substantive work in an open manner and sessions should be announced in advance, with relevant documentation published in a timely manner.*

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<sup>30</sup> See paragraph 78 of the [ECtHR decision on Gahramanli and Others v. Azerbaijan \(2015\)](#) and paragraph 60 of [ECtHR on Tahirov v. Azerbaijan \(2015\)](#). Article 20 of the [UNHRC General Comment No. 25 to the ICCPR](#) states that “An independent electoral authority should be established to supervise the electoral process and to ensure that it is conducted fairly, impartially and in accordance with established laws which are compatible with the Covenant”.

<sup>31</sup> Paragraph 19 of the 2011 [UNHRC General Comment No. 34 to the ICCPR](#) states that: “To give effect to the right of access to information, States parties should proactively put in the public domain Government information of public interest. States parties should make every effort to ensure easy, prompt, effective and practical access to such information”.

<sup>32</sup> Including ConECs 7, 8, 9, 20, 92, 94, 116, and 125. For instance, the list of nominees, including rejected applicants and their contact information, letters requesting information from the tax and property authorities, signature sheets, reports on signature verification, or decisions denying registration to nominees.

<sup>33</sup> Paragraph 68 of the Explanatory Report to the [Code of Good Practice](#) states that “only transparency, impartiality and independence from politically motivated manipulation will ensure proper administration of the election process, from the pre-election period to the end of the processing of results”.

While ODIHR EOM interlocutors did not raise concerns about the capacity of the CEC to undertake election preparations efficiently, many reported on inconsistent and selective candidate registration by ConECs (see *Candidate Registration* section). In addition, IEOM interlocutors questioned the independence of PECs, noting that these are overwhelmingly composed of public employees and chaired by their supervisors, for example, schoolteachers being PEC members and their director serving as a PEC Chair.<sup>34</sup>

## VI. VOTER REGISTRATION

Citizens over 18 years of age have the right to vote, with the exception of those declared incapacitated by a court decision, including as a consequence of intellectual or psychological disability. Deprivation of the right to vote on the basis of mental disability is inconsistent with international obligations and standards.<sup>35</sup>

*The legal framework should be harmonized with international standards by removing any restrictions on electoral rights based on intellectual or psychosocial disability.*

Voter registration is passive and is managed by the election administration. Voters are registered in the precinct where they have resided for at least 6 of the 12 months prior to the announcement of an election. Voter lists are compiled from the CEC-maintained nationwide voter register. PECs provide an annual update of the lists based on data received from local authorities. Additionally, the central database of the voter register is inter-connected with the database of the Ministry of Justice, which provides automatic updates on changes to the civil status and residence. The law requires an additional update of the voter lists prior to each election in the same manner as for the annual update. At odds with international good practice and previous ODIHR recommendations, voters could be added to the supplementary voter list on election day upon proof of residence, without adequate administrative safeguards or judicial oversight (see also *Election Day* section).<sup>36</sup>

*To safeguard the integrity of voter registration and election day procedures, additions to the voter list on election day should be subject to a judicial procedure, and this procedure should be coupled with the introduction of effective safeguards against multiple voting.*

According to the CEC, the voter register contained 6,421,960 voters on election day.<sup>37</sup> This is some 1.2 million less than the number of citizens of voting age, as published by the State Statistical Committee. While this discrepancy could be partially justified by different methodologies of data collection and the updating of the data, the information provided is insufficient to adequately explain the difference and raises concerns about the accuracy and inclusiveness of the voter register.

*To enhance the accuracy of the voter register, the election administration should maintain and update the voter register in a transparent manner. Consideration could be given to conducting an audit of the*

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<sup>34</sup> Paragraph 3.1.b of the [Code of Good Practice](#) states that: “where there is no long-standing tradition of administrative authorities' independence from those holding political power, independent, impartial electoral commissions must be set up at all levels, from the national level to polling station level”.

<sup>35</sup> See Articles 12 and 29 of the [2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#). Paragraph 24 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) provides that restrictions on rights and freedoms must be “strictly proportionate to the aim of the law”. Paragraph 14 of the [UN CCPR General Comment No. 25](#) states that grounds for deprivation of voting rights should be “objective and reasonable”.

<sup>36</sup> Paragraph 1.2 (iv) of the [Code of Good Practice](#) recommends: “There should be an administrative procedure subject to judicial control or a judicial procedure, allowing for the registration of a voter who was not registered; the registration should not take place at the polling station on election day”.

<sup>37</sup> This is approximately 168,000 less than the number of eligible voters in the 7 February early presidential election, when voters could also vote abroad, in rest homes, medical facilities, oil platforms and ships at sea.

*voter register and other relevant databases, including those of residents and citizens, and publishing regular detailed disaggregated updates on the verification of these registers.*

Voters and other electoral stakeholders had ample opportunities to scrutinize the voter lists. Voter lists were available at polling stations and accessible online, including at the ConECs and at the one-stop-service centers (ASAN), and through the CEC hotline, enhancing transparency.<sup>38</sup> The CEC published online the complete set of final voter lists, disaggregated by precinct. Some 400,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) were registered in 574 polling stations scattered across the country that were managed by 10 ConECs.<sup>39</sup>

## VII. PARTY AND CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

Eligible voters can stand as candidates with the exception of those with dual citizenship or obligations before other states, against ECtHR case law and international standards.<sup>40</sup> Individuals with an unexpunged prior conviction for a serious crime are also disqualified.<sup>41</sup> While this restriction is not against international standards, frequent criminal convictions of opposition political actors effectively deprives them of an opportunity to stand for election. While detainees are eligible to stand, the ODIHR EOM was informed that penitentiary institutions do not allow them to notarize the power of attorney necessary for their application.

*Restrictions on candidacy rights of individuals with dual citizenship should be reviewed, in line with international standards.*

Candidates can be nominated by a registered political party or coalition, an initiative group of voters or run as self-nominated.<sup>42</sup> To be nominated, applicants were required to submit at least 450 supporting signatures of voters, which is in line with international good practice. Additionally, applicants were required to submit to the respective ConEC their consent, autobiography and nominating party documents, income and property declarations, as well as the candidate's first campaign finance report and certificate for opening a campaign fund. A number of ODIHR EOM interlocutors perceived the list of required documents for the nomination process and the obligatory notarization as burdensome and increasing the risk of disqualification for technical shortcomings.

ConECs had five days to certify the nominations, and an additional seven days to verify the accuracy of the submitted income and asset declarations and the validity of supporting signatures and to decide on the registration of a candidate. By law, ConECs may deny registration to applicants in case of intentional mistakes in their applications, without offering them an opportunity to correct the

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<sup>38</sup> Decisions on requests for corrections and inclusion in voter lists from voters should be taken within one day or immediately if received on election day.

<sup>39</sup> Out of 10 ConECs, 7 were fully assigned to IDP voters, and 3 partially, with some IDP polling stations. Another four ConECs also had IDPs voters in the voter lists.

<sup>40</sup> Paragraph 15 of the ICCPR General Comment No. 25 confirms that the “persons who are otherwise eligible to stand for election should not be excluded by unreasonable or discriminatory requirements such as education, residence or descent, or by reason of political affiliation”. Paragraph 1.1.b of the [Code of Good Practice](#) states that “persons holding dual nationality must have the same electoral rights as other nationals”. See the [ECtHR judgments on Kara-Murza v. Russia \(2022\)](#) and [on Tanase v. Moldova \(2010\)](#).

<sup>41</sup> The law defines serious crimes as “acts for which the upper limit of the penalty of deprivation of liberty does not exceed twelve years for intentional or negligent commission”. Convictions for serious crimes are expunged six years after completing the sentence.

<sup>42</sup> A candidate may stand in only one constituency and does not have to be registered to vote in that constituency.

mistakes.<sup>43</sup> However, neither the law nor regulations define intentional and unintentional mistakes, granting ConECs discretionary powers to deny registration.

In total, 1,508 individuals applied for nomination, including 458 party-nominated, 1,048 self-nominated and one nominated by an initiative group. Of these, ConECs confirmed 1,462 as nominees, and 1,420 received signature sheets for the collection of voters' signatures.<sup>44</sup> Several ODIHR EOM interlocutors noted that ConECs provided each nominee with only 10 signature sheets of 50 lines each, and opined that this limitation is not prescribed by law and impaired their ability to collect sufficient number of valid signatures, including a reserve. In the next step, 1,197 nominees submitted signatures and 223 were unable to collect the required signatures or decided to discontinue their candidacies.

According to the CEC, out of these, 41 nominees were denied registration by ConECs due to insufficient number of valid support signatures; including cases where multiple seemingly identical signatures were submitted. The CEC informed the ODIHR EOM that ConECs applied the same regulation for signature verification as in previous elections. The current application of the existing regulations, *inter alia*, does not require neither presence of the prospective candidates during the process nor verification of signatures by experts; also, it does not guarantee procedural safeguards against arbitrary decisions.<sup>45</sup> Several ODIHR EOM interlocutors alleged that YAP did not conduct any evident signature collection campaign and claimed that, instead, local public entities, including utility service providers, provided lists with the personal data of voters. According to the CEC, 24 applicants were denied registration for submitting inaccurate income and property declarations.<sup>46</sup> The CEC said that applicants are not invited to correct such inaccuracies as they are considered intentional, however, several interlocutors, including rejected candidates, noted that often inaccuracies were not intentional.

*In line with international good practice, the meaningful possibility for corrections of omissions in nomination documents by contestants should be ensured by law and in practice. Consideration could be given to exploring measures to further facilitate candidate registration process and increase the integrity of the process, including electronic submission of candidacy nomination documents and voter support signatures and giving voters the opportunity to verify if their signatures are on lists of support signatures.*

The ConECs registered 1,052 candidates, and according to the CEC, 990 candidates remained on the ballot, of which 29.5 per cent were women.<sup>47</sup> Of these, 305 were nominated by political parties and 684 were self-nominated. Some 450 prospective candidates discontinued or withdrew their candidacies; some alleged fear of repercussions and informed the ODIHR EOM LTOs about intimidation exerted by the local executive, ConECs or employers.<sup>48</sup> Rejected candidates also informed that they or their family or business were threatened not to file complaints against the denial of their registration. Overall, the

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<sup>43</sup> For example, a Musavat candidate was rejected because the cadaster record showed her ownership of a house, that she claimed had been demolished 20 years ago. Similarly, she disputed the record of her ownership of a vehicle she claimed to have legally sold several years prior. Paragraph 24 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) states: "any restriction on rights and freedoms must, in a democratic society [...] be strictly proportionate to the aim of that law". Paragraph 273 of the [ODIHR and Venice Commission 2020 Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) states: "sanctions must bear a relationship to the violation and respect the principle of proportionality", and paragraph 87 states: "in case of technical omissions or minor infringements of registration requirements, the political party should be given reasonable time in which to rectify the failure". See also paragraph 271.

<sup>44</sup> The remaining nominees did not request signature sheets, thus discontinuing their candidacies.

<sup>45</sup> See the ECtHR [judgment](#) on Tahirov v. Azerbaijan (2015).

<sup>46</sup> For instance, prospective candidates were denied registration for failing to include in their income and asset declaration vehicles they sold by power of attorney or small amounts of money as income in Constituencies 17, 32, 35, 52, 58, 84; and for failing to include amounts ranging from AZN 345-2,464 in constituencies 17, 32, 35, 52, 58, 84, 89. One Azerbaijani Manat (AZN) equals EUR 0.53.

<sup>47</sup> Of them, 362 were nominated by 25 political parties, 834 on their own initiative and one by initiative group. After initial registration, 51 candidates withdrew, and one was deregistered by the CEC following a complaint (See *Election Dispute Resolution* section).

<sup>48</sup> This was reported among others in constituencies No. 24, 34, 47, 70, 92 and 110.

candidate registration process was negatively impacted by the inconsistent application of the rules and the selective approach of some ConECs.<sup>49</sup>

*To ensure inclusiveness, the registration of prospective candidates should be carried out objectively, transparently and be subject to effective judicial control. Authorities should take necessary measures to ensure that candidate nomination and registration is conducted in an atmosphere free from intimidation and fear of retribution and in an environment where fundamental freedoms are fully respected.*

## VIII. CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT

The campaign officially commenced on 9 August and concluded on 31 August lasting 23 days.<sup>50</sup> The law broadly defines campaigning, prohibiting any political outreach activities before the official start of the campaign. Several contestants informed the ODIHR EOM that they refrained from any political activity prior to the official start of the campaign, due to fear of deregistration as prescribed by law. Restrictive campaign regulations and their implementation, including on freedom of assembly and expression, did not effectively allow contestants to convey their messages to voters or enabled voters to obtain information, as required by OSCE commitments.<sup>51</sup>

*The authorities should ensure that political stakeholders are able to exercise their constitutionally guaranteed civil and political rights without unnecessary and disproportionate limitations and under equal conditions.*

In addition to the ruling YAP, 24 parties contested these elections; all but one are publicly perceived as ‘loyal opposition’. YAP was the only party with candidates in all constituencies, while the other 24 parties had a total of 181 candidates combined. The Popular Front Party urged voters to boycott, citing the non-genuine nature of the elections and restrictions on citizens’ rights and freedoms.<sup>52</sup> While an average of eight candidates ran in each constituency, the elections were not competitive, as also acknowledged by many interlocutors, including authorities and contestants.<sup>53</sup> Most candidates did not campaign, raising concerns about their genuine intention to contest the elections. Some parties informed the ODIHR EOM that their leaders did not stand as candidates, as they saw no meaningful prospect, and that they participated in these elections with the sole aim to be eligible for annual public funding.

The campaign was barely visible. Campaigning was mostly conducted through door-to-door canvassing, posters of candidates displayed on the designated boards and digital content. Meetings were

<sup>49</sup> The ODIHR EOM LTOs requested from 55 ConECs to review the request letters addressed to the tax and property authorities for all applicants; 8 ConECs refused to provide information; five ConECs which provided information, sent such requests only about candidates whom they viewed as “suspicious”. The remaining ConECs provided the ODIHR EOM with access to review the request letters. Paragraph 7.5 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) calls states “to respect the right of citizens to seek political or public office individually or as representatives of political parties without discrimination”.

<sup>50</sup> Some contestants expressed concerns about the duration of the campaign period, which they perceived as too short and limiting their opportunities to connect with voters.

<sup>51</sup> Paragraph 5.1 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) states that “free elections that will be held at reasonable intervals by secret ballot or by equivalent free voting procedure, under conditions which ensure in practice the free expression of the opinion of the electors in the choice of their representatives”. Paragraph 7.7 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document requires the election campaign to be conducted in a “fair and free atmosphere in which neither administrative action, violence nor intimidation bars the parties and the candidates from freely presenting their views and qualifications or prevents the voters from learning and discussing them or from casting their vote free of fear of retribution”.

<sup>52</sup> The leader of Popular Front Party [shared](#) on his Facebook account on 21 July that “the National Council urges the citizens of the country not to go to the polling stations on the day of the voting and to boycott the fake election spectacle of a government that has deprived the rights and freedoms of the people and opportunities to live happily”.

<sup>53</sup> On [11 August](#), a list of the “future winners of the elections” was [leaked](#) on the internet. All but 3 out of the 125 leaked candidates’ names were elected.



primarily small-scale, often in closed or intimate settings. Among the campaign events observed by the ODIHR EOM, YAP was the most prominent.<sup>54</sup> In addition to YAP candidates, almost all other contestants supported the President's and government's policies. Infrastructure projects in the regained territories and hosting COP29 as a sign of enhancing the international status of the country prominently featured in their campaigns. Some contestants also campaigned on the need for improved social services and local infrastructure. Very few contestants criticized internal policies of the government, and on rare occasions, foreign policy.<sup>55</sup>

At odds with international standards and good practice and challenging freedom of expression, contestants are required by law to submit their printed campaign materials to the ConECs prior to distribution, which potentially results in self-censorship.<sup>56</sup> The authorities publicly called on the contestants to refrain from disrupting the normal conduct of the elections which some contestants perceived as a call to refrain from criticism of the authorities.<sup>57</sup> The ODIHR EOM did not observe any campaign materials in formats suitable for persons with various accessibility needs.

*To provide for freedom of expression in the campaign, the law should allow for printing and distribution of campaign materials without pre-approval of the election commissions.*

In line with the law, the CEC provided contestants with a list of 5,506 campaign venues.<sup>58</sup> Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors noted that these venues were under police surveillance, which discouraged voters from participating. In addition, some were located in unsuitable and not easily accessible places. Contestants informed the ODIHR EOM that they were reluctant to hold meetings outside the designated venues, due to the burdensome five-day advance notification requirement.

Several candidates informed the ODIHR EOM that they traded favours with individual voters in return for votes, including regarding employment, social benefits, medical treatment and legal assistance, raising concerns about misuse of administrative resources to induce voters and potential vote buying. ODIHR EOM LTOs attended campaign events where participants, mostly public sector employees, informed them that they were ordered or paid by their employer to attend, raising concerns about voter

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<sup>54</sup> ODIHR EOM LTOs observed 59 campaign events of 8 political parties and 24 independent candidates. Of the 35 campaign events of political parties observed by ODIHR EOM LTOs, 21 were conducted by YAP.

<sup>55</sup> On [18 August](#), the leader of Azerbaijan People's Party, during a campaign event in Sabirabad-Shirvan [stated](#) "There is no work, the retirement age is too high, the pension is too little, prices are terribly high, and there is no childcare allowance". On [19 August](#), Musavat's leader [affirmed](#) "The rapprochement of Azerbaijan with Putin who started the aggression against Ukraine [...] contradicts the deep-rooted interests of Azerbaijan".

<sup>56</sup> Paragraph 25 of the [UN HRC General Comment 25 to the ICCPR](#) states that "[the] full enjoyment of rights protected by Article 25, [...] requires the full enjoyment and respect for the rights guaranteed in Articles 19, 21 and 22 of the Covenant, including freedom to engage in political activity individually or through political parties and other organizations, freedom to debate public affairs, to hold peaceful demonstrations and meetings, to criticize and oppose, to publish political material, to campaign for election and to advertise political ideas". Paragraph 61 of the [Code of Good Practice](#) states: "The insistence that materials intended for use in election campaigns must be submitted to electoral commissions, indicating the organisation which ordered and produced them, the number of copies and the date of publication, constitutes an unacceptable form of censorship, particularly if electoral commissions are required to take action against illegal or inaccurate publications. This is even more true if the rules prohibiting improper use of the media during electoral campaigns are rather vague".

<sup>57</sup> On 10 July, the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, during a meeting of the CEC with the ConECs, stated that "Persons who intend to prevent the normal conduct of the elections will be identified in time and action will be taken against them. [...] During the election campaign, as well as on the voting day, special attention will be paid to the observance of ethical behavior rules by citizens." Several media outlets reported this statement and affirmed that it was immediately deleted: [Inews](#), [Azadliq](#), [AZTV Xabar](#), [Turan](#).

<sup>58</sup> In total, 80 per cent of the campaign venues observed were accessible to persons with physical disabilities.

intimidation and voters' ability to cast vote free of fear of retribution, at odds with OSCE commitments.<sup>59</sup>

*The legal framework should include effective safeguards against the misuse of office by state and local officials, prohibit pressure on public employees, and provide for effective enforcement and proportionate sanctions for violations. Authorities should take necessary measures to ensure that campaigning is conducted in an atmosphere free from intimidation and fear of retribution and in an environment where fundamental freedoms are fully respected.*

Women constituted 34 per cent of the speakers at campaign events observed by the ODIHR EOM and 46 per cent of attendees. Gender equality issues were overlooked in the campaign discourse, with the rare references to women being limited to their roles within the family, reflecting persistent gender stereotypes.<sup>60</sup> Youth issues were given minimal attention during the campaign, with most of the focus on the emigration and unemployment of young people. At the campaign events monitored, 19 per cent of the attendees were young individuals.

*Political parties should make efforts to facilitate women's equal political advancement, increase visibility of women during electoral campaigns, mainstream a gender perspective into party programmes, and provide further support to women's participation in political life and party leadership.*

Campaigning on social networks is not regulated. Nevertheless, the authorities announced their intention to monitor the internet space during the elections, including social networks.<sup>61</sup> The ODIHR EOM followed the online activities of all registered parties and their leaders, and state institutions.<sup>62</sup> The low-key campaign was also reflected online. The tone of the online campaign was neutral with the main posts promoting candidates' posters, slogans, and meetings. Additionally, all parties and leaders and the majority of candidates were using social media to discuss social and economic issues. In a few instances, some contestants criticized internal government policies, but only on rare occasions, criticism of foreign policies was expressed. On the other hand, the social network posts of the boycotting Popular Front Party (AXCP) were strongly critical of the government and presented the current government as authoritarian and repressive. The ODIHR EOM did not observe use of intolerant and discriminatory rhetoric online.

## IX. CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Campaign finance is regulated by the Election Code. Previous ODIHR recommendations, including on enhancing transparency, ensuring effective oversight and prescribing effective proportionate and dissuasive sanctions remain unaddressed.

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<sup>59</sup> ODIHR EOM LTOs reported hearing of cases of voters being pressured to attend campaign events in Agsur, Baku, Gusar, Khachmaz, Ujar, and Zagatala. Paragraph 7.7 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) calls on states to "ensure that law and public policy work to permit political campaigning to be conducted in a fair and free atmosphere in which neither administrative action, violence nor intimidation bars the parties and the candidates from freely presenting their views and qualifications, or prevents the voters from learning and discussing them or from casting their vote free of fear of retribution".

<sup>60</sup> According to the [General Recommendation No. 23 to the CEDAW](#), State parties should ensure that "women have the right to participate fully in and be represented in public policy formulation in all sectors and at all levels". Article 191c of the [1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#) provides that political parties "shall consider incorporating gender issues in their political agenda, taking measures to ensure that women can participate in the leadership of political parties on an equal basis with men".

<sup>61</sup> On 10 July, the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, during a meeting of the CEC for the chairs of ConECs, stated that "Continuous monitoring of the internet space and social networks will be conducted".

<sup>62</sup> The ODIHR EOM observed Facebook accounts of all registered political parties and their leaders and some state institutions, for a total of 52 accounts starting from 1 August until the end of the campaign.

Contrary to previous ODIHR and Venice Commission recommendations, there is no public funding of electoral campaigns, which contributes to an unlevel playing field.<sup>63</sup> Based on the new Law on Political Parties, public funding will be provided annually to all parties which have received votes in the elections, applicable for the first time after these elections.<sup>64</sup>

Candidates may fund their campaigns with donations from nominating parties, individuals and legal entities as well as their own resources. Foreign, state, charitable, and anonymous donations, as well as in-kind donations are prohibited.<sup>65</sup> Parties may contribute from their own funds up to AZN 150,000 to each candidate or up to AZN 500,000 to the whole campaign. Individuals and legal entities may donate up to AZN 3,000 and AZN 50,000, respectively. Candidates are allowed to spend up to AZN 500,000.

Candidates were required by law to conduct all campaign related transactions through designated bank accounts. While in line with the legislation, YAP was allowed to manage the campaign finances for all of their 125 candidates, other parties were required to establish separate accounts for each candidate.<sup>66</sup> A CEC instruction mandated that campaign bank accounts could only be opened at the state-owned International Bank of Azerbaijan. Some candidates complained about bureaucratic hurdles to open an account before nomination.<sup>67</sup> The bank is required to provide updates on individual candidates' accounts to the ConECs and, in the case of unified accounts, to the CEC every week and, during the last 10 days, every 3 days.

The law requires prospective candidates to submit declarations of their income and property to the respective ConECs, but it does not require ConECs to make this information public, limiting transparency.<sup>68</sup> Candidates must submit three campaign finance reports to the ConECs.<sup>69</sup> While ConECs are required to publish these reports within five days, some failed to do so, and a few posted them only on notice boards, which did not provide sufficient accessibility of the information, and did not allow the public or the ODIHR EOM to scrutinize campaign finance reports. Moreover, ConECs were required by law to publish income and expenditures reports of the candidates, on a bi-weekly basis in local media, but the EOM LTOs could not observe this implemented due to the absence of such media. In line with the law, the CEC published the YAP reports for the unified account in a timely manner.

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<sup>63</sup> See Article 1 and 8 of the [Council of Europe recommendation 4 \(2003\)](#). According to Article 2.3. of the [Code of Good Practice](#), equality of opportunity must be guaranteed [...] with regard to public funding of [...] campaigns”.

<sup>64</sup> According to the Law on 2023 State Budget, public funding of political parties amounted to AZN 5 million. The Law on Political Parties prescribes the following formula: 90 per cent is distributed among parliamentary parties, 5 per cent is allocated to new parliamentary parties based on by-election results, and 5 per cent to parties that won valid votes in an election but are not represented in the parliament. Paragraph 232 of the [2020 ODIHR and Venice Commission Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) states that “Public funding and its requisite regulations [...] have been designed and adopted in many states as a potential means to support political parties in the important role they play, prevent corruption, and remove undue reliance on private donors. Such systems of funding should also aim to ensure that all parties, including opposition parties, small parties and new parties, are able to compete in elections in accordance with the principle of equal opportunities, thereby strengthening political pluralism and helping to ensure the proper functioning of democratic institutions”.

<sup>65</sup> Article 7 of the [Council of Europe recommendation 4 \(2003\)](#) provides that “States should specifically limit, prohibit or otherwise regulate donations from foreign donors”. Paragraph 229 of the 2023 ODIHR Venice Commission [Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) specifies that “this restriction aims to avoid undue influence by foreign interests, including foreign governments, in domestic political affairs, and strengthens the independence of political parties”.

<sup>66</sup> By law, parties with more than 60 candidates may establish a unified account for all their candidates.

<sup>67</sup> Nominees were required to submit to the bank the same set of notarized documents as to the CEC. For instance, Azerbaijan Democratic Party informed that 3 of its 18 nominees were not able to open bank accounts because of the 24-hour deadline.

<sup>68</sup> Paragraph 228 of the [2023 ODIHR and Venice Commission Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) defines that “It may also be appropriate to require that candidates file a public disclosure of assets and liabilities”.

<sup>69</sup> An initial report at the time of registration, an interim report between 10 and 20 days prior to election day, and a final report no later than 10 days after the publication of the final election results. In case of a unified campaign fund, parties submit their reports to the CEC.

*To enhance transparency and ensure access to information for voters, all campaign finance reports and income and asset declarations should be published on the website of the relevant election administration bodies in a timely manner. Equal campaign finance conditions, including with respect to opening of bank accounts and submission of reports, should apply to all contestants.*

Overall, contestants reported a limited amount of campaign income and expenditure.<sup>70</sup> Most candidates' campaign finance reports did not include any information on donations and expenditures. Several candidates informed the ODIHR EOM that they relied solely on their own resources and did not collect donations, because the requirement to provide detailed personal information discourages potential donors due to fear of reprisals.<sup>71</sup> Further, there are no explicit requirements to report expenditures related to online campaigning and no paid online advertising was identified.

The CEC and ConECs are responsible for overseeing and auditing campaign finances. The law does not prescribe how the audit should be conducted nor does it require publication of audit results, undermining transparency and not ensuring effective oversight. Equally, the law does not foresee a graduated system of proportionate, effective and dissuasive sanctions. Namely, violations, including failure to submit or to publish a report are punishable by non-dissuasive fines, while candidates may face deregistration if they exceed the spending limit by more than 5 per cent, which may be a disproportionate sanction.<sup>72</sup> The CEC informed the ODIHR EOM that to date they have not referred any campaign finance related matters to the court.

*To ensure the effectiveness of campaign finance oversight, the law should define oversight mechanisms, including the auditing of finance reports and publication of the audit results in a timely manner, and guarantee that the oversight body is fully mandated and resourced to monitor campaign spending and thoroughly review campaign finance reports. The law should introduce a graduated system of proportionate, effective and dissuasive sanctions for non-compliance.*

Overall, the gaps in the legislation combined with the lack of capacity of oversight bodies to ensure the audit of the submitted reports and enforcement of the legal requirements diminished the transparency of the campaign finances, contrary to international standards and good practice.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> YAP reported a donation of AZN 140,000 from the party and expenditures for campaign and information and consultancy services of AZN 139,727. The final report submitted by YAP, published on the CEC website on 23 September, did not contain any additional expenditure. The total income and expenditure of the other 24 parties are unknown, as campaign finance reports were only submitted by their individual candidates and, in absence of a legal requirement, they were not published on the CEC website.

<sup>71</sup> A number of candidates reported minimum, or zero income and expenditures, while others informed the ODIHR EOM LTOs that they were funding their campaign expenses with unreported cash. This practice was confirmed by some ConECs. Paragraph 212 of the [2023 ODIHR and Venice Commission Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) states that “Anonymous donations should be strictly regulated, including through a limit on the aggregate allowable amount of all anonymous donations. Legislation should limit the aggregate maximum amount to a reasonable level designed to ensure that anonymous donors cannot wield undue influence”.

<sup>72</sup> Fines for candidates range from AZN 1,000 to 2,000, for individual donors from AZN 100 to 500; for public officials from AZN 1,500 to 2,000, and for legal entities AZN 5,000 to 7,000. The [2017 GRECO Second Addendum to the Second Compliance Report on Azerbaijan](#) recommended the introduction of more effective, proportionate, and dissuasive sanctions for such violations, particularly by expanding the range of penalties.

<sup>73</sup> Paragraph 7.3 of the [2003 United Nations Convention Against Corruption](#) prescribes that states “shall also consider taking appropriate legislative and administrative measures, [...], to enhance transparency in the funding of candidatures for elected public office and, where applicable, the funding of political parties.” Paragraph 247 of the [2020 ODIHR and Venice Commission Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) states that “voters must have relevant information as to the financial support given to political parties, as this influences decision making and is a means of holding parties accountable”. See also paragraph 47 of the [2017 GRECO Second Addendum to the Second Compliance Report on Azerbaijan](#), which states that “[t]he clearly partisan composition of the CEC and election commissions is a particularly important issue which remains to be addressed in order to ensure effective and impartial supervision of political financing”.

## X. MEDIA

### A. MEDIA ENVIRONMENT AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, the right to access to information and prohibits censorship. At the same time, it foresees broad grounds for limitations on these freedoms, based on a broad definition of hate speech and personal data protection norms used to prevent disclosure of information on public figures.<sup>74</sup> Contrary to international standards and previous ODIHR recommendations, defamation and libel, including on social networks, remain criminalized, punishable with up to three years imprisonment, or if targeted at the president, up to five years.<sup>75</sup>

*To guarantee freedom of expression, defamation and libel should be decriminalized and should be subject only to civil proceedings designed to restore the reputation harmed. Laws that provide special protection of the honour of public officials should be fully repealed, in line with international standards. The sanctions for harm to reputation should be proportional to the offence and the cases should be addressed in a timely manner.*

While the 2022 Law on Media prescribes that the state shall ensure diversity of opinion and freedom of activity in the field of media, the same law, as well as other media-related legislation and its implementation, further curtail these rights in practice and detract from media pluralism. For instance, the Law on Information entitles the Ministry of Digital Development and Transport to provisionally block websites of media outlets based on their content prior to seeking a court decision, which has resulted in a number of news websites being blocked in the country, including during the election campaign.<sup>76</sup>

*In line with international standards, websites should only be blocked based on objective and reasonable criteria clearly defined in law and in a transparent procedure, to safeguard against arbitrary application. Possible limitations should be content-specific and should not serve as a tool to control content, while general bans of entire websites should be avoided. Restricting access to websites should be ordered by a court, court hearings and decisions on blockage should be public, while website owners and the public should be duly informed to ensure they have an effective opportunity to appeal. A register of blocked websites should be publicly available.*

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<sup>74</sup> The [2016 Venice Commission Opinion on Draft Modifications to the Constitution](#) criticizes the overly broad definition of hate speech as “propaganda provoking racial, national, religious discord and animosity and hostility based on any other criteria” as giving too much room for censorship. Moreover, the opinion notes that norms on personal data protection should not be used to prevent access to information of public interest, they “should not prevent collection and disclosure of data on “private life” of public figures, within the limits set by the ECtHR case-law under Article 10 of the European Convention”.

<sup>75</sup> Paragraph 47 of the [General Comment No. 34 to the ICCPR](#) calls States to “consider the decriminalization of defamation”, while Paragraph 38 provides that “all public figures, including those exercising the highest political authority such as heads of state and government, are legitimately subject to criticism and political opposition. [...] Laws should not provide for more severe penalties solely on the basis of the identity of the person that may have been impugned”.

<sup>76</sup> Some prominent opposition online media, including [azadliq.org](#) and [24saat.org](#), were not accessible during the campaign period. Despite a legal requirement, the list of blocked websites is not publicly available. See also the [ECtHR judgment on RFE/RL INC and others v. Azerbaijan \(2024\)](#) where the court found in favour of four websites blocked in 2017. Paragraph 43 of the [General Comment No. 34 to the ICCPR](#) suggests, that “Any restrictions on the operation of websites, blogs or any other internet-based, electronic or other such information dissemination system” are only permissible to the extent they do not violate Article 19 of the ICCPR, concluding, that generic bans on the operation of websites are not in line with Article 19 of the ICCPR. Paragraph 70 of the [2011 report of the UN Special Representative on Freedom of Expression](#) calls upon states “to provide lists of blocked websites and full details regarding the necessity and justification for blocking each website”.

The 2022 Law on Media was met with strong criticism from local and international organizations including the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) and the Council of Europe.<sup>77</sup> The law introduced a wide range of excessive requirements for the registration of media outlets and journalists;<sup>78</sup> making registration *de facto* mandatory.<sup>79</sup> Such registration requirements run contrary to international standards and have resulted in a significant decrease in the number of media outlets.<sup>80</sup> There are no requirements for disclosure of ownership of the media, undermining transparency.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, registered media outlets and journalists can apply for state subsidies and are granted privileged access to information, including covering the election process.

*The Law on Media should be amended to align it with international standards on freedom of expression. In particular, excessive restrictions on the establishment, registration and funding of media outlets, including by foreign nationals and entities, as well as the state-managed system of registration and licensing of journalists should be repealed. Information on ownership and sources of funding of media outlets should be public.*

Since November 2023, in part following the publication of an investigative report on corruption of high-ranking state officials, persecution of journalists intensified, with some 20 journalists still in detention, including some on charges of grave crimes, depriving them of their registration as journalists until their criminal records are expunged.<sup>82</sup> Such arrests, combined with the overly-restrictive legal framework contribute to a significantly constrained media-environment, leading to widespread self-censorship and severely limiting the scope for independent journalism and critical discourse.

## B. MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE CAMPAIGN

Campaign regulations for the media are comprehensive but they do not provide for equitable access of contestants to the media and do not ensure that voters are provided sufficient information to make an

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<sup>77</sup> See the [2022 Legal Analysis on the Law on Media](#) commissioned by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and the 2022 [Venice Commission Joint Opinion with the Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law of Council of Europe on the Law on Media](#).

<sup>78</sup> To register, online media are required, *inter alia*, to produce at least 20 original news items per day for at least 20 days a month; journalists must have, *inter alia*, a university degree, three years of work or scientific experience connected to media, no criminal convictions for certain crimes, must be employed by a registered media outlet, or be registered as a sole-proprietor, and adhere to the code of professional ethics. Registered media may also register their journalists and obtain accreditation to public institutions and access venues to seek, impart and disseminate information. Non-registered journalists are required to request accreditation for each event separately.

<sup>79</sup> For instance, in November 2023 in absence of registration, the media outlet "Dunya" Information Agency (dia.az) was transformed into a blog. Yet, it was made inaccessible, pursuant to a request of the Media Development Agency to the Baku Court of Appeal.

<sup>80</sup> Paragraph 44 of [General Comment No. 34 to Article 19 ICCPR](#) provides that "general State systems of registration or licensing of journalists are incompatible with paragraph 3 of Article 19 ICCPR". More than [5,000 media outlets](#) were registered in the past while 300 remained registered after the law entered into force. Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors noted that some not registered media outlets had been created by local journalists, who could not afford creating an editorial, due to a limited market and restrictions on funding media. Others noted that journalists often, including in registered media, abuse their capacity for making illicit financial profit.

<sup>81</sup> Paragraph g. of the [Joint Declaration on Media Freedom and Democracy](#) states that "[t]ransparency of media ownership is of paramount importance. Society has the right to know who owns media and influences the priorities, narratives, and content. Transparency of media ownership provides the basis for plurality and diversity of media content".

<sup>82</sup> Ulvi Hasanli, Sevinc Vaqifqizi Abbasova, Mahammad Kekalov, Nargiz Absalamova, Hafiz Babali, Elnara Gasymova; Farida Mehralizada (Abzas Media); Aziz Orujov, Shamo Emin (YouTube channel Kanal 13); Ibrahim Humbatov (Azerinfo.az); Arshad Ibrahimov (dunyaninsesi.az); Teymur Karimov (Kanal 11); Arzu Sayadoglu (Public Service Movement); Musfiq Cabbar, Ali Zeynal, Ramil Babayev, Ilkin Amrahov, Akif Gurbanov, Elmir Abbasov, Farid Ismayilov, Alasgar Mammadli (Toplum TV); Imran Aliyev (Meclis.info); Afgan Sadygov (Azet TV); Vugar Gurdganli (Az24saat.org).

informed choice.<sup>83</sup> Namely, the public broadcaster *ITV* is required by law to provide at least three hours of primetime per week free of charge only to parties and coalitions of parties with more than 60 registered candidates. In these elections, only the ruling YAP met this requirement but decided not to use the free airtime.<sup>84</sup> While self-nominated candidates and those nominated by parties with less than 60 candidates are eligible for free airtime on the local branches of the public broadcaster, these in practice do not exist. As required by law, *ITV* provided airtime for paid advertisement. Positively, the prices decreased compared to the previous parliamentary elections.<sup>85</sup> However, no contestants used paid airtime.

*To enable voters to obtain sufficient information about the contestants, in line with international standards, airtime on the public broadcaster should be granted on a fair and non-discriminatory basis, and the time allocated to parties and candidates shall be sufficient for them to communicate their messages.*

The law provides for a broad definition of campaigning in the media including interviews, press conferences, open discussions, debates, round-table discussions, political advertising, as well as TV and radio programs. This broad definition of campaigning combined with the very narrowly defined editorial coverage limited the media's ability to provide diverse and comprehensive coverage of contestants thus narrowing the public's access to a wide range of views.<sup>86</sup> Private media are allowed to provide coverage of the campaign only on a paid basis. However, none of the 72 private national and local broadcasters offered paid airtime.

*To contribute to the ability of voters to make an informed choice, the state has an obligation to ensure that the media inform the public about the political parties, candidates, campaign issues and voting processes. In particular, the definition of campaign in media should be reviewed to allow media to provide for free editorial coverage of the campaign, including in forms of news coverage, interviews, or panel discussions.*

In line with the law, the CEC established a Media Group comprised of 4 CEC members and 15 media representatives. The group is mandated to oversee the campaign coverage and to resolve media-related issues during the campaign. It may refer violations to law enforcement bodies, courts and the CEC. During the campaign, the Media Group held one session on an *ad hoc* basis, which was attended by the ODIHR EOM; the group did not receive any complaints and it did not identify any violations. In the absence of a legal requirement, it did not publish any information on its work.

The prime time allocated for free and paid airtime on the public *ITV* was used for the coverage of the CEC activities and general information about the election process. Similarly, all election-related news

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<sup>83</sup> The 2009 [Joint Statement](#) on the Media and Elections states “All publicly-owned media, including public service broadcasters, should be under the following obligations during an election period: To ensure that the electorate are informed about election matters, including the role of elections in a democracy, how to exercise one’s right to vote, the key electoral issues, and the policy positions of the various parties and candidates contesting the election. This should normally include reporting that involves questions being put to party leaders and candidates, as well as debates between candidates. [...] To grant all parties and candidates equitable access to the media to communicate their messages directly with the public, either for free or at subsidized rates. Equitable access means fair and non-discriminatory access allocated according to objective criteria for measuring overall levels of support, and includes factors such as timing of access and any fees”.

<sup>84</sup> YAP [stated](#) that it chose “not to exercise this privilege during the pre-election campaign period in order to adhere to democratic principles and ensure fair competition with independent and party candidates”. Similarly, in the past two elections, only YAP qualified for free airtime and refused to use it for the same reasons.

<sup>85</sup> Airtime between 9:54 and 16:54 cost AZN 20 per second, and between 21:55 and 22:55, AZN 30.

<sup>86</sup> Article 13.2 of the [CIS 2002 Convention](#) on the Standards of Democratic Elections, Electoral Rights and Freedoms in the Member States of the CIS states: “The mass information and telecommunications media are called upon to keep the population informed about elections, nomination of candidates (list of candidates), their election programs (platforms), the progress of an election campaign, voting returns and election results operating within the framework of the constitution, laws, international obligations of the state”.

items on the monitored broadcasters referred to the activities of the CEC.<sup>87</sup> Between 13 and 37 per cent of the coverage of the CEC in primetime news in monitored TV channels was with a positive tone, except for *Xezer TV*, which covered the CEC neutrally.

The government's foreign policy dominated the evening news, with 21 to 59 per cent of all news coverage on the six monitored TV channels. In other news coverage on monitored broadcasters, the president received between 29 and 67 per cent of the primetime coverage, and of that coverage, between 28 and 70 per cent was in a positive or a very positive tone.<sup>88</sup> In addition to the coverage officially allocated for the campaign, on a regular basis, promotional videos of the President's achievements were broadcast on all monitored channels, *inter alia* the president's pre-election campaign video from the February presidential election, including right before newscasts.

The government received between 12 and 44 per cent of the coverage, including footage of Ministry of Defense military trainings, which was mostly provided by the Ministry itself and was in a positive tone. Online media mostly covered meetings of the candidates with voters. Only the news agency APA clearly marked its materials as sponsored.

Overall, the negligible and insufficient coverage of the contestants in the media during the entire campaign did not allow voters to learn about the contestants and their programs, and limited their opportunity to make an informed choice.

## XI. ELECTION DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Complaints and appeals may be filed by all stakeholders to election commissions and the courts and short deadlines apply for filing and reviewing complaints, in line with international good practices.<sup>89</sup> In compliance with the law, the CEC and ConECs established expert groups, consisting of commission members and their staff with legal backgrounds, to review complaints.<sup>90</sup>

Prior to election day, the CEC received 28 complaints against ConECs decisions on candidate registration. Of these, 21 were filed by nominees denied registration and 19 were rejected as unsubstantiated while 2 were granted resulting in the registration of the complainants; an additional complaint was filed against the registration of a candidate resulting in his deregistration.<sup>91</sup> In addition, the CEC received four complaints on campaign violations and referred three of them to the ConECs citing lack of jurisdiction, while one was rejected citing lack of investigative powers.<sup>92</sup>

Positively, the complainants were invited to present oral arguments at the CEC sessions. However, at the sessions observed by the ODIHR EOM, the CEC did not consider the complainants' arguments and always approved the draft decision prepared in advance, unanimously in all but one case. Most complainants did not have the opportunity to present additional evidence, or to review the examination

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<sup>87</sup> During the official campaign period the ODIHR EOM conducted a systematic media monitoring of the prime time of the following TV stations: *ITV* (public), *AzTV* (state), *ARB*, *ATV*, *Real TV* and *Xezer TV*. The ODIHR EOM also monitored campaign coverage on the online media, which had stated their intention to the CEC to provide paid space for the candidates.

<sup>88</sup> On 26 August, *ATV*, *Real TV*, *Xezer TV*, and *AzTV* dedicated 21 to 45 primetime minutes, to the celebration of the birthday of the First Vice-President, who is also the president's wife, covered in a positive tone.

<sup>89</sup> Complaints and appeals may be filed within three days from a decision or violation. The election commissions and courts must decide on the complaints and appeals within three days, or within two days, if submitted within 30 days before election day. Complaints filed on election day or the day after must be addressed immediately.

<sup>90</sup> The expert groups were comprised of nine members at CEC, and three members at ConECs, respectively.

<sup>91</sup> Six more complaints pertained to minor technical issues; of them two were granted and four dismissed on formal grounds (the complaint was not signed or was missing supporting documentation).

<sup>92</sup> Alleged campaign violations included distribution of leaflets without the legally required information.



protocols on which the CEC had based its decisions.<sup>93</sup> On cases of denial of candidate registration for incomplete asset declarations, including undeclared real estate property or vehicles, the CEC made its decisions based solely on state records, without investigating the complainants' claims that the state records do not reflect the actual facts accurately. Overall, the CEC decisions lacked detailed justifications, with most decisions merely referencing expert group findings and failing to indicate the availability of further legal remedies.<sup>94</sup> Such approach of the CEC deprived the complainants of procedural guarantees prescribed by law and international good practice.<sup>95</sup>

Further, 11 appeals were submitted to the courts of appeal against the CEC decisions rejecting candidate registration.<sup>96</sup> Six rejected candidates filed appeals to the Supreme Court, five were rejected and one dismissed without consideration as the appellant was not represented by a lawyer. In the two court hearings observed, the courts did not examine substantial evidence submitted. The courts of appeal and the Supreme Court rejected all the remaining appeals as unsubstantiated finding that the CEC decisions were well-reasoned, a practice previously found as a violation by the ECtHR.<sup>97</sup> While adjudication deadlines were generally respected by election commissions and courts, 14 appeals on candidate registration were still ongoing after the start of the campaign, undermining the principle of an effective and timely remedy; all were resolved before election day.

*To ensure due process in the resolution of election disputes, additional measures should be taken. Complainants should be able to participate when evidence is being reviewed, access expert findings, and propose their own evidence. Courts must address all arguments, including those provided by the CEC and experts, procedural omissions and motions for new evidence. The CEC and court decisions should be fully reasoned and indicate available remedies.*

Several ODIHR EOM interlocutors noted that the existing legal fees for access to the Supreme Court posed a barrier to accessing further appeals.<sup>98</sup> The CEC published its decisions in a timely manner on its website but complaints were not made public, as this is not required by law. While the CEC maintains a register of complaints, it does not make it publicly available, undermining transparency. Information on court hearings was not publicly accessible, and while anonymized court decisions are to be published in the "E-court" online unified judicial database, they are accessible only to the parties of the case.<sup>99</sup>

*To enhance transparency of election dispute resolution, the election administration could consider publishing its complaints' register on its website. Court decisions should be published in a timely manner and be easily accessible.*

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<sup>93</sup> When the CEC decisions alleged fraudulent signatures, the rejected candidates were not informed which exact signatures were deemed incorrect and how that was established.

<sup>94</sup> Paragraph 5.11 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) prescribes that "administrative decisions against a person must be fully justifiable and must as a rule indicate the remedies available".

<sup>95</sup> According to Article 112-1.9 of the Election Code the applicant has the right to present new evidence. Article 112-1.7 gives the complainant the right to attend the meeting related to investigation of his or her complaint. Article 24 of the Law on Administrative Procedure obliges an administrative body "to investigate thoroughly, completely and objectively all the factual circumstances that are important for the correct resolution of the case during administrative proceedings". Paragraph 100 of the [Code of Good Practice](#) states that "the appeal procedure should be of a judicial nature, in the sense that the right of the appellants to proceedings in which both parties are heard should be safeguarded".

<sup>96</sup> One appeal was dismissed as inadmissible as the complainant had not previously appealed to the CEC.

<sup>97</sup> In the [ECtHR judgment on Gahramanli and others v. Azerbaijan \(2015\)](#), the ECtHR found a violation where the Baku Court of Appeal merely reiterated and upheld the CEC's findings, and copied its reasoning, without conducting an independent examination of the arguments raised or addressing the applicants' complaints about the shortcomings in the CEC procedure.

<sup>98</sup> Appeals to the Supreme Court can only be filed through a legal representative registered with the Bar Association. A lawyer at the expense of the state may be appointed in cases where a person proves they lack sufficient resources to hire a lawyer.

<sup>99</sup> The database web interface has a long and dysfunctional search feature, making the decisions accessible only to those in possession of a direct link or a QR code, such as the parties of a case.

While the mechanism for election dispute resolution is overall in line with good practices, the lack of independence and impartiality of election commissions in consideration of the complaints undermined the right to an effective remedy, contrary to OSCE commitments and international standards.<sup>100</sup> In addition, several ODIHR EOM interlocutors attributed the reduced number of court appeals, compared to the previous parliamentary elections, to a further decline in trust in the judiciary's independence and its effectiveness in handling disputes against authorities.<sup>101</sup>

## XII. ELECTION OBSERVATION

Observers may be nominated by parties, candidates, non-governmental, international and foreign entities. They must be accredited by the CEC, to observe nationwide, or by the ConECs, to observe within the territory of the respective constituency. Restrictive legal provisions limit foreign funding for civil society organizations in general and prescribe administrative obstacles, such as long delays or the lack of a possibility to rectify minor omissions in documents in the process of their registration as organizations, undermining the work of civil society, including in election observation.<sup>102</sup> Several well-known citizen election observation groups remained unregistered and deprived of funding, with some prominent members under arrest or detention, and were thus unable to conduct any election observation.<sup>103</sup>

By law there is no limit on the number of observers an organization may nominate to observe the activities of each election commission. However, only observers granted a special permission by the CEC have the right to observe meetings of election commissions prior to and after election day while all other observers may observe only election day procedures in polling stations. Moreover, the law grants wide discretionary powers to the election commissions to decide who can be present in case of overcrowding, and to deprive observers from observation, based on broad grounds and on the election commissions' interpretation of what are inappropriate actions or behaviors of the observer.

In total, 112,749 citizen and 598 international observers were accredited. A total of 126 YAP-nominated observers obtained a special permission to observe nationwide. The vast majority of observers were nominated by YAP, YAP-nominated candidates and affiliated parties, raising concern over the access of independent and impartial observers to the process.<sup>104</sup>

*To enhance the transparency of the electoral process, measures should be taken to facilitate registration of citizen observer groups and to provide them with unhindered access to all aspects and stages of the*

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<sup>100</sup> Paragraph 5.10 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) states that “everyone will have an effective means of redress against administrative decisions, so as to guarantee respect for fundamental rights and ensure legal integrity”.

<sup>101</sup> Paragraph 66 of the of the 2016 Venice Commission [Opinion](#) on the Draft Modifications to the Constitution stated that the Article 98-1 “represents a serious threat to the independence of the judiciary; the involvement of “an independent judicial council” in the process of nomination of judges by the President is not guaranteed at the constitutional level” and that “the appointment of all judges of the two top courts will be in the hands of the executive [...] In essence, it would increase even more the dependence of the judiciary on the President”. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court is a former Minister of Agriculture while the deputy Chief Justice is the government's agent at the ECtHR.

<sup>102</sup> In the [ECtHR judgment on Election Monitoring Centre and Others v. Azerbaijan \(2021\)](#), the Court stated that “neither the Ministry of Justice nor the domestic courts explained why they regarded that the alleged breaches were impossible to remedy and justified outright dissolution of the [Election Monitoring Centre] EMC”. The Court held that there had been a violation of Article 11 of the ECHR in respect of the delay in the registration of the EMC and its dissolution. To date, this judgment has still not been implemented.

<sup>103</sup> Including the Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Centre, Institute for Democratic Initiatives and Election Observation Alliance. On 29 April 2024, a prominent EMDSC member, [Anar Mammadli was placed under pretrial detention](#) on charges of conspiracy to unlawfully bring money into the country, and remained detained after election day. If convicted, he faces up to eight years in prison.

<sup>104</sup> YAP was officially represented by 12,560 of the 63,266 ConEC-accredited party-nominated observers and 818 of the 1,405 CEC-accredited party-nominated observers.

*electoral process, including the work of election commissions, candidate registration, the campaign and election dispute resolution.*

### **XIII. ELECTION DAY**

In the polling stations observed by the IEOM the election day was orderly. Throughout election day, the CEC shared updates on voter turnout per constituency and nationwide. In line with a prior ODIHR recommendation, women were well-represented in the polling stations observed by the IEOM, with 48 per cent of the PEC members, including 40 per cent of the chairpersons. The preliminary voter turnout was announced at 37,27 per cent.

The IEOM observed the opening in 102 polling stations which was assessed overall positive in all but five cases, however, observers noted important safeguards were omitted in nearly half of the observed polling stations. The polling stations observed opened on time, with the exception of 9 that opened with minor delays. Key procedural safeguards during opening that were not always followed included: in 28 observed polling stations the ballot papers received were not counted, while in 43 cases their number was not announced or recorded in the PEC protocols; the PECs did not check whether the ballots were pre-stamped with the PEC stamp in 28 observations; and in 26 polling stations, the serial numbers of the ballot box seals were not announced and were not recorded in the PEC protocols. These omissions potentially compromised the integrity of the ballots and ballot boxes. Further, in 13 polling stations observed, PEC members demonstrated a lack of awareness of the opening procedures. IEOM observers reported that in some instances, they were obstructed in observing the opening procedures or that other authorized persons faced similar limitations.

In the 914 observed polling stations, the voting process was orderly and generally assessed positively in 95 per cent of observations, however, observers also noted cases of serious irregularities and inconsistencies in the application of important procedures. Voters were not always checked for traces of ink before voting (10 per cent of observations), or consistently marked with ink after voting (7 per cent), voters were also not always asked to sign the voter lists (3 per cent), all important safeguards against multiple voting.<sup>105</sup> Further, IEOM observers observed a number of voters added to the supplementary voter list on election day, including some who did not prove having residence within the respective precincts, contrary to legislation.<sup>106</sup>

The polling station layouts were found to ensure secrecy of the vote in 98 per cent of observations. Nevertheless, the secrecy was compromised in a number of observations, either because voters did not mark the ballot in secret or did not fold it to preserve secrecy in 4 and 9 per cent of observations, respectively. Ballot boxes were not sealed properly in 3 per cent of polling stations observed. Other procedural problems were observed also in 3 per cent of polling stations.

Serious irregularities were also observed that raise concerns about the integrity of the process including voters being allowed to vote without ID (17 cases), seemingly identical signatures on the voter lists (56 cases), unauthorized persons keeping track of voters (32 cases), and indications of ballot box stuffing (26 cases).<sup>107</sup> IEOM observers also reported direct observations of a voter voting in multiple PECs and a group of voters bussed to multiple polling stations.

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<sup>105</sup> For instance, PEC members were inking the right thumb, instead of the left, as required by law; or they were checking for ink using an ordinary torch rather than an UV lamp.

<sup>106</sup> For these elections, 11,224 voters were added to the supplementary voter list on election day, without adequate administrative safeguards or judicial oversight, which is not in line with international good practice.

<sup>107</sup> In addition, STOs reported that in PEC 2 of ConEC 32, PEC 15 of ConEC 124 and PEC 13 of ConEC36 the number of voters who had voted, according to the PEC Chairs, did not match the number of ballots in the ballot box, nor the number of signatures on the voter lists.

*To safeguard the integrity of the vote, the authorities should consider more effective oversight of the adherence of election commissions to procedures, including by applying sanctions to those tolerating breaches of the secrecy of vote, engaging in or not preventing ballot box stuffing and for failure to enforce procedural safeguards, such as inking and securing the ballot boxes.*

Citizen observers were present in 63 per cent of the observations, and candidate or party observers in 86 per cent of observations. However, IEOM observers noted that candidate representatives and citizen observers were often not aware which entity had nominated them, raising concerns about the independence of these observers and their capacity to enhance the transparency of the process. Further, the IEOM observers reported indications of citizen observers *de facto* representing contestants in 47 cases, while YAP-nominated contestant observers were far more present than other contestant observers. Unauthorized persons were present in 3 per cent of the visited polling stations.

IEOM observers were able to observe the voting procedures without restrictions in 95 per cent of observations but reported that PEC members did not co-operate fully with them in 5 per cent of polling stations observed and, in some cases, reported that they were not allowed to review the voter lists.

Despite measures to facilitate access to the voting process for persons with disabilities, independent access to the polling stations was not ensured in 70 per cent while the layout of the polling stations was not conducive for persons with disabilities in 35 per cent of those observed, respectively. Persons with disabilities could also cast a ballot by means of mobile voting.

*The authorities, in consultation with relevant organizations, should undertake additional efforts to facilitate the participation of persons with disabilities in the electoral process, including publishing information in accessible formats, securing independent access to polling stations and ensuring that secrecy of vote is respected.*

The counting was assessed negatively in 42 of the 97 polling stations observed by the IEOM. The negative assessments were largely a result of PECs having omitted important reconciliation procedures that safeguard the integrity of the count, including counting the number of signatures in the main and supplementary voter lists (41 cases), determining the number of voters who voted by mobile voting (24 cases) or by deregistration voting cards (26 cases), canceling the unused ballots (21 cases) and announcing the figures entered in the draft protocol (45 cases). In 58 cases, the ballots were not stamped with the PEC stamp, the validity of ballots was not determined reasonably (23 cases) or consistently (20 cases) and those contested were not determined by vote in 44 cases. The number of ballots in the mobile ballot box was not determined and entered into the protocol in 30 cases. Of serious concern, in addition to during voting, indications of ballot box stuffing were also observed during counting in 17 cases; including 4 where the number of ballots in the stationary box was higher than the number of voters who voted in the polling station and one mobile ballot box with clumps of ballots. Further, IEOM observers noted indications of the deliberate falsification of entries in voter lists or result protocols in 15 cases and in 8 cases the result protocols were pre-signed by PEC members. Overall, the counting process raised serious concerns about whether ballots were counted and reported honestly, in line with paragraph 7.4 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document.<sup>108</sup>

Observers reported that not all people present had a clear view of the count in 29 of the 92 counts, they were not able to observe without restrictions in 27 cases and that PECs did not provide full co-operation in 22 cases. In 4 cases, unauthorized persons were observed directing or interfering in the work of the PEC. In 60 per cent of the observed counts, PECs did not post a copy of the protocol at the polling station, despite the legal obligation to do so, while in 19 per cent of the cases PECs did not provide

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<sup>108</sup> Paragraph 7.4 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document provides that “the participating States will ensure that the votes are counted and reported honestly”.

copies of the protocols to all persons entitled by law. In 8 cases, tension or unrest in or around the polling station was reported.

The IEOM observed tabulation in 79 ConECs and it was assessed positively in 64 observations. Negative assessments were mostly attributed to poor organization of the tabulation process (9 cases), lack of transparency (12 cases) and ConEC chairpersons failing to announce entries in the computer (36 cases). Party and candidate observers were present in only 21 and citizen observers in only 10 of the observed ConECs. Reported procedural irregularities included correction of the protocols without formal decisions (10 cases) and filling out protocols in ConECs premises (12 cases). In 15 cases the PECs did not deliver all required documentation to the ConECs and in 11 cases figures on the PEC protocols did not reconcile. Three cases of what appeared to be deliberate falsification of result protocols were observed.

*To ensure that ballots are counted and reported honestly, election commissions should receive adequate training, and important procedural safeguards should be strictly complied with during counting and tabulation in full view of observers.*

#### **XIV. POST-ELECTION DAY DEVELOPMENTS**

The CEC announced the turnout at 37.2 per cent. The IEOM consistently observed discrepancies between the number of voters casting their ballots and the official turnout figures.<sup>109</sup> The CEC started publishing partial preliminary results per constituency a few hours after the closure of the polls on election day, and complete preliminary results were made available on 2 September. While the CEC published the tabulated results disaggregated by polling station, it did not publish PEC result protocols, as it is not required by law.

*To enhance transparency over the election results, the CEC should consider publishing scanned PEC result protocols.*

After election day, the CEC received 55 complaints alleging irregularities in voting, counting, and PEC and ConEC results protocols.<sup>110</sup> These complaints were filed by candidates and observers requesting annulment of results in a number of polling stations of 25 constituencies.<sup>111</sup> The CEC reviewed 22 complaints on merit, granting 9 partially, which led to annulments of results in 23 polling stations in 9 constituencies due to irregularities. Moreover, the CEC dismissed 10 complaints due to late submission and referred 23 complaints to the competent ConECs; 18 of these were subsequently filed to the CEC as second-instance appeals. The high number of late and misfiled complaints indicates a lack of understanding of procedures among stakeholders, while some ODIHR EOM interlocutors alleged that complainants filed these complaints to the CEC due to lack of trust in the ConECs. The CEC informed the ODIHR EOM that they did not collect any information on complaints handled by ConECs, including those referred back.

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<sup>109</sup> Throughout election day, the IEOM collected data on the number of voters registered on the voter list, the number of voters who had voted at the time of their arrival, as well as the number of voters who had voted at the time of their departure from all observed polling stations. Statistical analysis of these data suggests that the number of voters casting their ballots was lower than officially reported by the PECs. In addition, IEOM observers observed that a significant number of voters not residing at the territory of the precincts were added to the supplementary voter lists, that voters without proper ID were allowed to vote and that there were indications of multiple voting and ballot stuffing.

<sup>110</sup> Alleged irregularities included multiple voting, ballot box stuffing, non-registered voters being allowed to vote, and votes being counted without observers present, incorrect protocol compilation and failures by ConECs to investigate alleged violations.

<sup>111</sup> Of the 55 complaints, 29 were filed by self-nominated candidates, 11 by Musavat, four by Real, two by the White party candidates, and three by citizen observers, in constituencies No 8, 10, 11, 21, 22, 24, 30, 31, 33, 42, 52, 60, 63, 65, 69, 70, 71, 72,73, 78, 86, 94, 97, 119, and 120.

The CEC decisions were based on a wide range of evidence, including statements provided by observers, candidates, PEC and ConEC members, and video or photo evidence, including from posts on social media. In one case, the CEC also reviewed the official webcam footage as part of evidence.<sup>112</sup> However, the short and general nature of the justifications of the CEC decisions, posted on the CEC website, lacked clarity on how the evidence supported the conclusions, undermining the transparency of the post-election disputes resolution.

In addition, the CEC, on their own initiative, annulled results in an additional 20 PECs in 12 constituencies citing the impossibility to determine the voters' will and dissolved 35 PECs for shortcomings in their activities. While the CEC annulled elections in 46 PECs, in total, it did not order recounts or repeat elections in the annulled PECs, in absence of explicit legal requirements, which is at odds with international good practices.<sup>113</sup>

Shortly after election day, the CEC publicly announced that it would investigate, on their own initiative, all alleged irregularities posted on social networks, including over 500 videos.<sup>114</sup> However, in the following months, the CEC did not inform whether it in fact investigated these allegations and which the findings were. While some alleged irregularities potentially had elements of electoral criminal offences, the CEC did not forward such information to the prosecutor for investigation.<sup>115</sup> The CEC also did not investigate whether some of the alleged irregularities amounted to election-related administrative offences, nor did it forward any such case to district courts.<sup>116</sup>

The Constitutional Court validated the election results on 21 September, five days after the CEC submitted the results protocols and before the end of the period for review of appeals by the courts, in absence of an explicit legal requirement to announce the results after the end of the review process.<sup>117</sup> In its decision, the Court stated that the Prosecutor received 13 complaints and initiated criminal proceedings in 6 of them and also referred 10 cases to the CEC but these did not have any impact on the election results. The Constitutional Court further stated that 39 appeals were filed with the courts of appeal and 12 with the Supreme Court of Baku, however it did not clarify whether all appeals had been finalised.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> During their examination of a complaint alleging voting irregularities, CEC reviewed the webcam footage of five polling stations in Neftchala constituency and annulled the results in one of them.

<sup>113</sup> Article 172 of the Election Code mandates repeat elections to be conducted only if the results for an entire constituency are canceled. According to section 3.3 of the [Venice Commission Code of Good Practice](#) "In zones where the results have been annulled, the elections must be repeated".

<sup>114</sup> See the [statement](#) of the CEC chairperson.

<sup>115</sup> For instance, falsification of electoral documents by a member of an election commission, deliberately incorrect counting of votes, incorrect determination of voting results are all criminal offenses according to Article 161 of the Criminal Code.

<sup>116</sup> For example, several complaints alleged a refusal of PECs or ConECs to hand over the result protocols to candidate agents. Deliberate withholding of information on voting results constitutes an administrative offense according to Article 179 of the Code of Administrative Offences.

<sup>117</sup> By law, the Court has 10 days to decide after the CEC submits the results protocols, with a possibility of extension. Complainants had three days to file appeals against CEC decisions to the courts which had an additional three days to review them. They had an additional three days for appeals to the Supreme Court. In its decision on validation of the results, the Constitutional Court referred to information from courts on a number of appeals, however it did not clarify whether all legal means had been exhausted. Paragraph 5.10 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document states that "everyone will have an effective means of redress against administrative decisions". See also Paragraph 18.2 of the 1991 OSCE Moscow Document. Article 2 of the ICCPR provides that "any person whose rights or freedoms as herein recognized are violated shall have an effective remedy". Section II.3.3.3.f of the 2002 Venice Commission's Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters recommends direct legal standing in challenging election results by stating that "all candidates and all voters [...] must be entitled to appeal. A reasonable quorum may be imposed for appeals by voters on the results of elections".

<sup>118</sup> Including 25 filed to the Baku court of appeal, 8 to Sumgayit, 5 to the Supreme Court of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic and 12 to the Supreme Court of Azerbaijan, which upheld all but one decisions of the courts of appeal.

*In case of alleged irregularities pertaining to voting and counting, the law should prescribe clear grounds for recounts and repeat voting in polling stations in case of invalidation of results. Perpetrators of irregularities, including election commission members, should be held accountable. The timeline for the validation of election results should provide for the full exhaustion of any related appeals of election disputes.*

On 4 September, two self-nominated candidates denounced the election results, in front of the CEC, alleging falsification of results, multiple voting and ballot stuffing. On 6 September, a self-nominated candidate staged a sit-in protest outside the ConEC where she was running for office. She was briefly detained by the police for a few hours.

As a result of the elections 11 parties gained representation in parliament. YAP obtained 68 seats, while the other 10 parties obtained 13 seats jointly.<sup>119</sup> The remaining 44 seats were obtained by self-nominated candidates. Of the 125 elected members, 88 had served in the outgoing parliament, including 50 nominated by YAP and 30 self-nominated. In total, 26 women were elected which is an increase from 21 in the previous parliament. Among the newly elected MPs, several have previous experience in state institutions, and some MPs are family members of prominent political figures.

## **XV. RECOMMENDATIONS**

These recommendations as contained throughout the text are offered with a view to further enhance the conduct of elections in the Republic of Azerbaijan and to support efforts to bring them fully in line with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections. These recommendations should be read in conjunction with past ODIHR recommendations that have not yet been addressed.<sup>120</sup> ODIHR stands ready to assist the authorities of Azerbaijan to further improve the electoral process and to address the recommendations contained in this and previous reports.

### **A. PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. To achieve a competitive political environment, the authorities should demonstrate full respect for fundamental freedoms and ensure that contestants are able to promote political platforms and debate public affairs in an environment free from pressure or intimidation. Instances and allegations of pressure or intimidation should be promptly investigated by the relevant authorities and the perpetrators held accountable.
2. The electoral legal framework as well as legislation governing fundamental rights and freedoms should be reviewed to ensure compliance with international human rights obligations and standards for democratic elections. The legal reform should be preceded by an open and inclusive consultation process well in advance of the next elections. State bodies and the election administration should implement the laws in a manner that ensures the effective exercise of fundamental freedoms.

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<sup>119</sup> Civic Solidary Party obtained 3 seats, Justice, Law, Democracy Party 2 seats, while Azerbaijan Democratic Enlightenment Party, Azerbaijan National Independence Party, Azerbaijan National Front, Democratic Reforms Party, Great Azerbaijan Party, Great Order Party, Motherland, and REAL got 1 seat each.

<sup>120</sup> In paragraph 25 of the [1999 OSCE Istanbul Document](#), OSCE participating States committed themselves “to follow up promptly the ODIHR’s election assessment and recommendations”. The follow-up of prior recommendations is assessed by the ODIHR EOM as follows: recommendation 13 from the [ODIHR final report on the 2018 early presidential election](#) (2018 Final Report) and recommendation 11 from the [ODIHR final report on the 2020 early parliamentary elections \(2020 Final Report\)](#) are mostly implemented. Recommendations 9, 12, 14 and 23 from the 2018 Final Report and 8, 9, 10 and 19 from 2020 Final Report are partially implemented. See also the [ODIHR electoral recommendations database](#).

3. To foster pluralism and ensure the exercise of freedom of association, the legislative and administrative requirements for the registration of political parties should be comprehensively revised. The authorities should discontinue practices of oversight that can be regarded as undue limitations on the freedom of association and intimidating to parties and their members.
4. The Law on Media should be amended to align it with international standards on freedom of expression. In particular, excessive restrictions on the establishment, registration and funding of media outlets, including by foreign nationals and entities, as well as the state-managed system of registration and licensing of journalists should be repealed. Information on ownership and sources of funding of media outlets should be public.
5. To strengthen impartiality and effective independence of election administration and to ensure broad public confidence in their work, the appointment process for election commission members at all levels should be revised to prevent dominance by any single political party. Commissions should work as collegial bodies taking decisions in a manner that supports the perception of impartiality and political neutrality.
6. Consideration should be given to introducing temporary special measures to enhance the participation of women in public and political life, including gender quotas.
7. The authorities should ensure that political stakeholders are able to exercise their constitutionally guaranteed civil and political rights without unnecessary and disproportionate limitations and under equal conditions.

## **B. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Electoral System**

8. To ensure equality of the vote and in line with international standards and good practices, constituency delimitation should be conducted and reviewed periodically by an independent body, in an open and consultative manner and well in advance of the next elections. The CEC should ensure that the public is well-informed about the delineation of the constituencies through a comprehensive information campaign.

### **Election Administration**

9. To enhance transparency and accountability, the election administration should proactively publicize information on its website, including all CEC and lower-level commission decisions, and ensure effective access to such information. The election commissions should conduct all substantive work in an open manner and sessions should be announced in advance, with relevant documentation published in a timely manner.
10. To safeguard the integrity of the vote, the authorities should consider more effective oversight of the adherence of election commissions to procedures, including by applying sanctions to those tolerating breaches of the secrecy of vote, engaging in or not preventing ballot box stuffing and for failure to enforce procedural safeguards, such as inking and securing the ballot boxes.
11. The authorities, in consultation with relevant organizations, should undertake additional efforts to facilitate the participation of persons with disabilities in the electoral process, including publishing information in accessible formats, securing independent access to polling stations and ensuring that secrecy of vote is respected.



12. To ensure that ballots are counted and reported honestly, election commissions should receive adequate training, and important procedural safeguards should be strictly complied with during counting and tabulation in full view of observers.
13. To enhance transparency over the election results, the CEC should consider publishing scanned PEC result protocols.
14. In case of alleged irregularities pertaining to voting and counting, the law should prescribe clear grounds for recounts and repeat voting in polling stations in case of invalidation of results. Perpetrators of irregularities, including election commission members, should be held accountable. The timeline for the validation of election results should provide for the full exhaustion of any related appeals of election disputes.

### **Voter Registration**

15. The legal framework should be harmonized with international standards by removing any restrictions on electoral rights based on intellectual or psychosocial disability.
16. To safeguard the integrity of voter registration and election day procedures, additions to the voter list on election day should be subject to a judicial procedure, and this procedure should be coupled with the introduction of effective safeguards against multiple voting.
17. To enhance the accuracy of the voter register, the election administration should maintain and update the voter register in a transparent manner. Consideration could be given to conducting an audit of the voter register and other relevant databases, including those of residents and citizens, and publishing regular detailed disaggregated updates on verification of these registers.

### **Party and Candidate Registration**

18. Restrictions on candidacy rights of individuals with dual citizenship should be reviewed, in line with international standards.
19. In line with international good practice, the meaningful possibility for corrections of omissions in nomination documents by contestants should be ensured by law and in practice. Consideration could be given to exploring measures to further facilitate candidate registration process and increase the integrity of the process, including electronic submission of candidacy nomination documents and voter support signatures and giving voters the opportunity to verify if their signatures are on lists of support signatures.
20. To ensure inclusiveness, registration of prospective candidates should be carried out objectively, transparently and be subject to effective judicial control. Authorities should take necessary measures to ensure that candidate nomination and registration is conducted in an atmosphere free from intimidation and fear of retribution and in an environment where fundamental freedoms are fully respected.

### **Electoral Campaign**

21. To provide for freedom of expression in the campaign, the law should allow for printing and distribution of campaign materials without pre-approval of the election commissions.
22. The legal framework should include effective safeguards against the misuse of office by state and local officials, prohibit pressure on public employees, and provide for effective enforcement and proportionate sanctions for violations. Authorities should take necessary measures to ensure that

campaigning is conducted in an atmosphere free from intimidation and fear of retribution and in an environment where fundamental freedoms are fully respected.

23. Political parties should make efforts to facilitate women's equal political advancement, increase visibility of women during electoral campaigns, and mainstream a gender perspective into party programmes, and provide further support to women's participation in political life and party leadership.

### **Campaign Finance**

24. To enhance transparency and ensure access to information for voters, all campaign finance reports and income and asset declarations should be published on the website of the relevant election administration bodies in a timely manner. Equal campaign finance conditions, including with respect to opening of bank accounts and submission of reports, should apply to all contestants.
25. To ensure the effectiveness of campaign finance oversight, the law should define oversight mechanisms, including auditing of finance reports and publication of the audit results in a timely manner, and guarantee that the oversight body is fully mandated and resourced to monitor campaign spending and thoroughly review campaign finance reports. The law should introduce a graduated system of proportionate, effective and dissuasive sanctions for non-compliance.

### **Media**

26. To guarantee freedom of expression, defamation and libel should be decriminalized and should be subject to civil proceedings designed to restore the reputation harmed. Laws that provide special protection of the honour of public officials should be fully repealed, in line with international standards. The sanctions for harm to reputation should be proportional to the offence and the cases should be addressed in a timely manner.
27. In line with international standards, websites should only be blocked based on objective and reasonable criteria clearly defined in law and in a transparent procedure, to safeguard against arbitrary application. Possible limitations should be content-specific and should not serve as a tool to control content, while general bans of entire websites should be avoided. Restricting access to websites should be ordered by a court, court hearings and decisions on blockage should be public, while website owners and the public should be duly informed to ensure they have an effective opportunity to appeal. A register of blocked websites should be publicly available.
28. To enable voters to obtain sufficient information about the contestants, in line with international standards, airtime on the public broadcaster should be granted on a fair and non-discriminatory basis, and the time allocated to parties and candidates shall be sufficient for them to communicate their messages.
29. To contribute to the ability of voters to make an informed choice, the state has an obligation to ensure that the media inform the public about the political parties, candidates, campaign issues and voting processes. In particular, the definition of campaign in media should be reviewed to allow media to provide for free editorial coverage of the campaign, including in forms of news coverage, interviews, or panel discussions.

### **Election Dispute Resolution**

30. To ensure due process in the resolution of election disputes, additional measures should be taken. Complainants should be able to participate when evidence is being reviewed, access expert findings, and propose their own evidence. Courts must address all arguments, including those

provided by the CEC and experts, procedural omissions and motions for new evidence. The CEC and court decisions should be fully reasoned and indicate available remedies.

31. To enhance transparency of the election dispute resolution, the election administration could consider publishing its complaints' register on its website. Court decisions should be published in a timely manner and be easily accessible.

### **Election Observation**

32. To enhance the transparency of the electoral process, measures should be taken to facilitate registration of citizen observer groups and to provide them with unhindered access to all aspects and stages of the electoral process, including the work of election commissions, candidate registration, the campaign and election dispute resolution.

## ANNEX I: FINAL ELECTION RESULTS<sup>121</sup>

<b>Aggregated data from ConEC results protocols</b>	<b>Number/per cent</b>
Total number of ConECs	125
Total number of constituencies where election results were annulled	4
Total number of regular PECs	6,343
Total number of the PECs established in military units and prisons	135
Total number of polling stations where results were invalidated	328
Total number of voters	6,431,973
Number of voters included in supplementary voter lists	11,224
Number of voters who were issued de-registration voter cards	1,211
Number of voters who voted with de-registration voter cards	904
Number of ballots provided to the PECs by ConECs	6,394,317
Number of voters who were issued ballots	2,395,510
Number of cancelled/unused ballots	3,996,553
Number of spoiled ballots	2,254
Number of ballot papers found in ballot boxes	2,393,329
Number of valid votes	2,380,795
Number of invalid votes	12,534
Voter turnout	37.24 %

<b>Party that nominated candidates</b>	<b>Number of Registered Candidates</b>	<b>Number of Mandates Received</b>
New Azerbaijan Party	125	68
Civic Solidarity Party	17	3
Justice, Law, Democracy Party	11	2
Great Creation Party	1	1
Motherland Party	5	1
Party for Democratic Reforms	5	1
Unity Party	5	0
Azerbaijan Democratic Education Party	1	1
Republican Alternative Party	12	1
National Front Party	7	1
Musavat (Equality) Party	24	0
Umid (Hope) Party	17	0
Azerbaijan National Independence Party	8	1
Azerbaijan People's Party	7	0
White Party	18	0
Azerbaijan Democratic Party	4	0
Classic Popular Front Party	10	0
Great Azerbaijan Party	6	1
Future Azerbaijan Party	2	0
Justice Party	4	0
Modern Musavat Party	3	0
New Time Party	1	0

<sup>121</sup> Aggregated by the ODIHR EOM, based on the data from the [CEC website](#).

Right, Justice Party	5	0
National Revival Movement Party	1	0
Free Homeland Party	6	0
Initiative Group	1	1
Self-nominated Candidates	684	43
<b>Total</b>	<b>990</b>	<b>125</b>

## ANNEX II: LIST OF OBSERVERS IN THE INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION

### OSCE PA

Lucia	Potuchkova	Head of Delegation	Czech Republic
Michael	Creed	Special Coordinator	Ireland
Axel	Kassagger	Member of Delegation	Austria
Christoph	Matznetter	Member of Delegation	Austria
Sibylle	Hamann	Member of Delegation	Austria
Mihael	Zmajlovic	Member of Delegation	Croatia
Nikola	Mazar	Member of Delegation	Croatia
Furio	Radin	Member of Delegation	Croatia
Kyriakos	Hadjiyianni	Member of Delegation	Cyprus
Zbynek	Linhart	Member of Delegation	Czech Republic
Jaroslav	Zeman	Member of Delegation	Czech Republic
Canan	Bayram	Member of Delegation	Germany
Malte	Kaufmann	Member of Delegation	Germany
Eugenio	Zoffili	Member of Delegation	Italy
Emanuele	Loperfido	Member of Delegation	Italy
Anna	Bilotti	Member of Delegation	Italy
Fabrizio	Comba	Member of Delegation	Italy
Galiaskar	Sarybayev	Member of Delegation	Kazakhstan
Skaidrite	Abrama	Member of Delegation	Latvia
Madeleine	Van Toorenburg	Member of Delegation	Netherlands
Monika	Zajkova	Member of Delegation	North Macedonia
Nikola	Micevski	Member of Delegation	North Macedonia
Halil	Snopche	Member of Delegation	North Macedonia
Sverre	Myrli	Member of Delegation	Norway
Bard	Hoksrud	Member of Delegation	Norway
Barbara	Bartus	Member of Delegation	Poland
Radoslaw	Fogiel	Member of Delegation	Poland
Konrad	Fryszak	Member of Delegation	Poland
Krzysztof	Truskolaski	Member of Delegation	Poland
Jacek	Wlosowicz	Member of Delegation	Poland
Paula	Cardoso	Member of Delegation	Portugal
Luis	Graca	Member of Delegation	Portugal
Milan	Radin	Member of Delegation	Serbia
Tine	Novak	Member of Delegation	Slovenia
Artemi	Rallo	Member of Delegation	Spain
Selami	Altinok	Member of Delegation	Türkiye
Halis	Dalkilic	Member of Delegation	Türkiye
Murat	Baybatur	Member of Delegation	Türkiye
Kamal	Celik	Member of Delegation	Türkiye
Tekin	Bingol	Member of Delegation	Türkiye
Ali	Oztunc	Member of Delegation	Türkiye

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Pavlo	Frolov	Member of Delegation	Ukraine
Yaroslav	Yurchushyn	Member of Delegation	Ukraine
Iryna	Gerashchenko	Member of Delegation	Ukraine
Sergii	Alieksieiev	Member of Delegation	Ukraine
Rupa	Huq	Member of Delegation	United Kingdom
Olgica	Tolic	Staff of Delegation	Croatia
Katerina	Kosarikova	Staff of Delegation	Czech Republic
Kristyna	Harakova	Staff of Delegation	Czech Republic
Igors	Aizstrauts	Staff of Delegation	Latvia
Lidija	Karakamcheva	Staff of Delegation	North Macedonia
Marcin	Mykietynski	Staff of Delegation	Poland
Nuno	Paixao	Staff of Delegation	Portugal
Ecem	Danik Gokce	Staff of Delegation	Türkiye
Tugce	Okumus	Staff of Delegation	Türkiye
Murat	Uysal	Staff of Delegation	Türkiye
Mikulas	Semerak	International Secretariat	Czech Republic
Stephanie	Koltchanov	International Secretariat	France
Tim	Knoblau	International Secretariat	Germany
Anzhelika	Ivanishcheva	International Secretariat	Russian Federation
Dimitrije	Todoric	International Secretariat	Serbia

### ODIHR EOM Short-Term Observers

Philipp	Hermann	Austria
Werner	Rohracher	Austria
Tinneke	Everaert	Belgium
Anna	Hvězdová	Czech Republic
Hani	Stolina	Czech Republic
Pavel	Kalina	Czech Republic
Terezie	Hiclová	Czech Republic
Jan	Liska	Czech Republic
Helene	Ellemann-Jensen	Denmark
Søren	Stauning	Denmark
Gete	Markussen	Denmark
Mette	Hjelmsø	Denmark
Nadeem	Ghaus	Denmark
Inge Merete	Hansen	Denmark
Martin	Jensen	Denmark
Tom	Høyem	Denmark
Mikko	Niiles	Finland
Sakari	Koivula	Finland
Ksenia	Glebova	Finland
Eva Mathilde	Seye	France
Matthias	Rumpf	Germany

Christa	Mueller	Germany
Marion	Mienert	Germany
Evelyn	Stöckle	Germany
Reinhard	Hesse	Germany
Alina	Falzon	Germany
Ulrich	Seel	Germany
Frank	Fischer	Germany
Marcel Martin	Vietor	Germany
Christoph	Veith	Germany
Dominika	Eichstaedt	Germany
Ulrike	Dässler	Germany
Michael	Wiersing	Germany
Katia	Feo Kutsch	Germany
Ute	Ehren	Germany
Marina	Adamovic	Germany
Zaza	Bzishvili	Germany
Stefan	Lesjak	Germany
Daniel	Kempken	Germany
Thomas	Erling	Germany
Michael	Haußmann	Germany
Andrea Frieda	Schmelz	Germany
Ulrike	Neundorf	Germany
Lynn	Schweisfurth	Germany
David	Bühlmeier	Germany
Regina	Cordes Larson	Germany
Jakob	Hoffmann	Germany
Karin	Ruf	Germany
Bertram	Welsing	Germany
Eszter	Németh	Hungary
Annamária	Rátky	Hungary
Andrea	Breslin	Ireland
Claire	O'Neill	Ireland
Patrick	Donnelly	Ireland
Maurizio	Cacucci	Italy
Deborah	Bruschi	Italy
Claudia Silvana	Tizzoni	Italy
Catharina Cornely (Nynke)	La Porte	Netherlands
Pauline	Oosterhoff	Netherlands
Arthur	Wiggers	Netherlands
Leendert	van der Zwan	Netherlands
Marcia Andrea	Haugedal	Norway
Sven Gunnar	Simonsen	Norway
Gunnar	Baustad	Norway



Kristin	Hauge	Norway
Elena	Podolko	Russian Federation
Vsevolod	Perevozchikov	Russian Federation
Ekaterina	Gorbatova	Russian Federation
Elena	Balandina	Russian Federation
Ivan	Zavorin	Russian Federation
Semen	Liapichev	Russian Federation
Elena	Iursheva	Russian Federation
Stanislav	Pritchkin	Russian Federation
Sergey	Baburkin	Russian Federation
Ivan	Krylov	Russian Federation
Dmitrii	Bikkin	Russian Federation
Alexander	Konkov	Russian Federation
Marsel	Gibadullin	Russian Federation
Tatiana	Kupalova	Russian Federation
Anna	Zhurovich	Russian Federation
Polina	Plakhikh	Russian Federation
Vadim	Mikheev	Russian Federation
Alexander	Sukhanov	Russian Federation
Andrei	Valchenko	Russian Federation
Iaroslav	Starkov	Russian Federation
Sergei	Paltov	Russian Federation
Aleksei	Krasnoshtanov	Russian Federation
Alesya	Khalyapina	Russian Federation
Ruslan	Kobelkov	Russian Federation
Anna	Khodaeva	Russian Federation
Alexander	Vladychenko	Russian Federation
Egor	Baburin	Russian Federation
Aleksei	Budarev	Russian Federation
Irina	Kosacheva	Russian Federation
Evgeny	Kozhokin	Russian Federation
Oleg	Komarov	Russian Federation
Vladimir	Ivanov	Russian Federation
Andrei	Mitrofanov	Russian Federation
Anton	Perov	Russian Federation
Aleksandr	Averianov	Russian Federation
Alina	Koroleva	Russian Federation
Sofia	Leshchinskaia	Russian Federation
Elizaveta	Titkova	Russian Federation
Maxim	Abramov	Russian Federation
Stanislav	Telegin	Russian Federation
Anna	Sinelnikova	Russian Federation
Oleg	Senchenko	Russian Federation

Ksenija	Škrilec	Slovenia
Åke Lennart	Haggren	Sweden
Bengt Tomas Alexander	Sjoberg	Sweden
Paulos	Berglöf	Sweden
Johan	Tejpar	Sweden
Hans Birger	Nareskog	Sweden
Berndt Gunnar	Ekholm	Sweden
Rolf Olof Andreas	Berglöf	Sweden
Bo Pontus	Tallberg	Sweden
Erik Mattias	Wandler	Sweden
Eva	Rimsten	Sweden
Gabriela	Fuchs	Switzerland
Barbara	Egger Maldonado	Switzerland
Michele	Calastri	Switzerland
Emma	Six (LRSTO)	Switzerland
Daniel	Bochsler	Switzerland
Martin	Damary	Switzerland
Thomas	Holzer	Switzerland
Alper	Alp	Türkiye
Coskun	Topal	Türkiye
Guler	Kalay	Türkiye
Veysel	Kurt	Türkiye
Ulviyye	Aydin	Türkiye
Umut	Uzer	Türkiye
Hüseyin	Alptekin	Türkiye
Harun	Arikan	Türkiye
Peter	Hurrell	United Kingdom
Gligor	Tashkovich	United States
Lee	Bauer	United States
Bujar	Ajdari	United States
James	Martin	United States
Harold	Otto	United States
Geraldine	O'Mahony	United States
Scott	Risner	United States
Russell	Raymond	United States
Anzhela	Greene	United States
Mary-Margaret	Hesse	United States
Spenser	Mestel	United States
James	Ketterer	United States
Sarah	D'Amico	United States
Kyle	Donelson	United States
Victoria	Scott	United States
Christopher	Shields	United States

Barbara	Jackson Mcintosh	United States
Suanne	Buggy	United States
Wilson	von Kessler	United States
Arthur	Kron	United States
Soraia	Ghani	United States
Garrett	Monti	United States
Jordan	Kanter	United States
Dale	Archer	United States
Octavius	Pinkard	United States
Sophia	McGrath	United States
James	McHugh	United States
Robert	Paulson	United States
Mary-Lynn	Sferrazza	United States
Mary	Bluestocking	United States
Constance	Robinson	United States
Daniel	Villegas	United States
Katherine	Gallagher	United States
Catherine	Lawrence	United States
Leon	Hartwell	United States
Mark	Foehr	United States
Rebecca	Graham	United States
Arthur	Piszczaowski	United States
David	Hawkins	United States
Connor	Gillette	United States
Callie	Starn	United States
Eric	Rice	United States
Steven	Young	United States
Iroda	Ubaydullaeva	Uzbekistan

### Locally recruited Short-Term Observers

Tinneke	Everaert	Belgium
Eva Mathilde	Seye	France
Marcel Martin	Vietor	Germany
Emma	Six	Switzerland
Scott	Risner	United States
Kyle	Donelson	United States

### ODIHR EOM Long-Term Observers

Miroslav	Brozman	Czech Republic
Hanne	Bang	Denmark
Timo	Laine	Finland
Reima	Larki	Finland

Nicola	Busse	Germany
Jochen Michael	Rinck	Germany
Alexandra	Thein	Germany
Jens	Kreibaum	Germany
Anja	Bronny	Germany
Gerard	Buckley	Ireland
Sara	Farmisano	Italy
Raffaele	Ditadi	Italy
Thomas	Hug	Norway
Narve	Rio	Norway
Alexander	Guchkov	Russian Federation
Evgeny	Loginov	Russian Federation
Alexander	Bedritskiy	Russian Federation
Gleb	Shubin	Russian Federation
Astrid	Nunez	Sweden
Lena Ohre	Arnault	Sweden
Lars Tore	Tollemark	Sweden
Stefan	Ziegler	Switzerland
Diana	Ferrari	Switzerland
Mark	Waller	United Kingdom
Laura	Villalba	United States
Jorge	Amador	United States
Ann	Merrill	United States
Christopher	Brandt	United States

### ODIHR EOM Core Team Members

Ditmir	Bushati	Albania	Head of Mission
Elissavet	Karagiannidou	Greece	
Peter	Marron	Ireland	
Noemi	Arcidiacono	Italy	
Marina	Kim	Kazakhstan	
Ahmad	Rasuli	Kyrgyzstan	
Martina	Barker-Ciganikova	Slovakia	
Nina	Wessel	Norway	
Michal	Ostankowicz	Poland	
Kira	Kalinina	Russian Federation	
Sasa	Pokrajac	Serbia	
Branislav	Solovic	Slovakia	
Firuza	Garibshoyeva	Tajikistan	
Ruslan	Ovezdurdyev	Turkmenistan	
Oleksii	Lychkovakh	Ukraine	
John Edward	Hampson	United Kingdom	

## ABOUT ODIHR

The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is OSCE's principal institution to assist participating States "to ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, to abide by the rule of law, to promote principles of democracy and (...) to build, strengthen and protect democratic institutions, as well as promote tolerance throughout society" (1992 Helsinki Summit Document). This is referred to as the OSCE human dimension.

ODIHR, based in Warsaw (Poland) was created as the Office for Free Elections at the 1990 Paris Summit and started operating in May 1991. One year later, the name of the Office was changed to reflect an expanded mandate to include human rights and democratization. Today it employs over 150 staff.

ODIHR is the lead agency in Europe in the field of **election observation**. Every year, it co-ordinates and organizes the deployment of thousands of observers to assess whether elections in the OSCE region are conducted in line with OSCE commitments, other international obligations and standards for democratic elections and with national legislation. Its unique methodology provides an in-depth insight into the electoral process in its entirety. Through assistance projects, ODIHR helps participating States to improve their electoral framework.

The Office's **democratization** activities include: rule of law, legislative support, democratic governance, migration and freedom of movement, and gender equality. ODIHR implements a number of targeted assistance programmes annually, seeking to develop democratic structures.

ODIHR also assists participating States' in fulfilling their obligations to promote and protect **human rights and fundamental freedoms** consistent with OSCE human dimension commitments. This is achieved by working with a variety of partners to foster collaboration, build capacity and provide expertise in thematic areas, including human rights in the fight against terrorism, enhancing the human rights protection of trafficked people, human rights education and training, human rights monitoring and reporting, and women's human rights and security.

Within the field of **tolerance and non-discrimination**, ODIHR provides support to the participating States in strengthening their response to hate crimes and incidents of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance. ODIHR's activities related to tolerance and non-discrimination are focused on the following areas: legislation; law enforcement training; monitoring, reporting on, and following up on responses to hate-motivated crimes and incidents; as well as educational activities to promote tolerance, respect, and mutual understanding.

ODIHR provides advice to participating States on their policies on **Roma and Sinti**. It promotes capacity-building and networking among Roma and Sinti communities, and encourages the participation of Roma and Sinti representatives in policy-making bodies.

All ODIHR activities are carried out in close co-ordination and co-operation with OSCE participating States, OSCE institutions and field operations, as well as with other international organizations.

More information is available on the ODIHR website ([www.osce.org/odihr](http://www.osce.org/odihr)).