

**INTERIM REPORT**  
**18–31 May 2021**

**8 June 2021**

**I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- Early parliamentary elections will take place in Armenia on 20 June 2021. The decision to hold early elections arose in the aftermath of anti-government protests following the signing of a ceasefire statement in November 2020 which ended a 44-day war in and around Nagorno-Karabakh.
- Voters will elect a minimum of 101 members of parliament for a five-year term, under a newly adopted closed-list proportional system in one nationwide constituency. The system incorporates a representation threshold and compensatory mandates aimed at guaranteeing a stable majority while ensuring an opposition representation of at least one-third of all seats. The change, adopted in April 2021, from the previous two-tier proportional system, in which candidates were elected from a single national list and 13 open territorial lists, had been advocated for by many political parties and civil society organizations.
- The elections will be held under an Electoral Code that was adopted in 2016 and amended in April 2021, shortly before the elections, to eliminate the territorial lists and adjust other provisions as necessary. A broader package of amendments adopted in May will take effect in 2022 and does not apply to these elections.
- The elections are administered by the Central Election Commission (CEC), 38 Territorial Election Commissions (TECs), and 2,008 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs). The CEC has so far complied with all legal deadlines. It has held regular open sessions, and CEC decisions are published online in a timely manner. The CEC's plan of activities takes into account the compressed timeframe for early elections, notably with regards to the training of PEC members and a voter-awareness campaign on the new voting procedures.
- Voter lists are based on the State Population Register, which is maintained by the Passport and Visa Department (PVD) of the police and includes around 2.6 million voters, eligible citizens who maintain permanent residence in Armenia. On election day, electronic Voter Authentication Devices (VADs) will be used to identify voters. The VADs were introduced in 2017 to help prevent potential electoral fraud including through multiple voting and voter impersonation. According to the CEC, the VADs have significantly improved the efficiency of the voter identification process compared to previous paper-based methods.
- For parliamentary elections, political parties and alliances of political parties submit their list of candidates to the CEC. The Electoral Code provides for a 30-per cent gender quota. On 31 May, the CEC registered 22 political parties and 4 alliances who had submitted candidate lists. The CEC rejected 26 individual candidates from 12 different candidate lists. Four parties and alliances registered candidates for the four seats reserved for national minorities.
- The official campaign period for these early elections is 12 days and will run from 7 to 18 June. Campaign materials such as television spots, billboards and posters are already visible, and despite the COVID-19 pandemic, ODIHR EOM long-term observers and interlocutors have reported that

in-person campaign activities are taking place across the country. The national security situation has been dominating the political discourse in the pre-campaign period.

- The law provides for public and private funding of election campaigns and sets limits for contributions and expenditures. Contesting parties and alliances are required to open a dedicated bank account for their campaign finance transactions and to submit two reports on their campaign incomes and expenditures, the first ten days before and a second after election day. The reports are required to be published on the CEC website. The CEC's Oversight and Audit Service (OAS) is in charge of campaign finance oversight.
- The media environment is diverse and includes a large number of outlets, but the political affiliation of various broadcasters poses the risk of biased election coverage. While television remains the most important source of political information, the role of social networks is growing rapidly. The law provides contesting parties and alliances with free airtime on public broadcasters and allows them to buy advertising on public and private media. The Commission for Television and Radio will oversee media compliance with the law during the campaign, including conducting its own media monitoring.
- Most election-related complaints can be lodged either to higher-level election commissions or courts. In most cases, the right to file a complaint is only granted to those whose personal electoral rights are at stake. While no ODIHR EOM interlocutors have thus far raised concerns regarding deadlines for handling pre-election complaints and appeals, some noted that the seven-day deadline for establishing the election results limits the time for post-election day dispute resolution. The CEC informed the ODIHR EOM that, so far, it has not received any complaints. The Administrative Court has thus far received appeals from two potential candidates.
- The legal framework provides for international and citizen election observation and entitles party proxies to be present at polling stations. Some citizen observer groups have expressed concerns that the early accreditation deadline of 15 days before election day makes it difficult to recruit observers.
- The ODIHR EOM opened on 18 May, with an 11-member core team in Yerevan, and 26 long-term observers deployed around the country.

## **II. INTRODUCTION**

Following an invitation from the Armenian authorities, and based on the recommendation of a Needs Assessment Mission conducted from 28 to 30 April 2021, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) established an Election Observation Mission (EOM) on 18 May.<sup>1</sup> The mission, led by Eoghan Murphy, consists of an 11-member core team based in Yerevan and 26 long-term observers (LTOs) deployed on 27 May to ten locations around the country. Mission members are drawn from 21 OSCE participating States. ODIHR has requested participating States to second 250 short-term observers to observe election-day proceedings. ODIHR has observed eleven previous elections in Armenia.

## **III. BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT**

On 18 March 2021, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announced that early parliamentary elections would be held on 20 June. In compliance with legal deadlines, he resigned on 25 April, and the elections were called via presidential decree on 10 May. The decision to hold early elections arose in the aftermath of anti-government protests following the signing of a ceasefire statement with Azerbaijan, brokered by

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<sup>1</sup> See previous [ODIHR election reports on Armenia](#).

the Russian Federation in November 2020. The ceasefire statement followed a 44-day war in and around Nagorno-Karabakh. In addition to the recent war and the continuing tensions, the subsequent economic downturn, which has been aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has impacted the pre-electoral environment.

The most recent parliamentary elections were early elections held in December 2018. The elections took place following a resignation by Prime Minister Pashinyan who had come to the position in May of that year. Mr. Pashinyan was appointed prime minister through a majority vote of the National Assembly following the resignation of Serzh Sargsyan. Mr. Sargsyan's Republican Party had won the April 2017 parliamentary elections, however his appointment as Prime Minister in April 2018 after having served as President for the preceding decade was followed by protests and resulted in his resignation. The December 2018 early elections were won by the My Step alliance led by Mr. Pashinyan's Civil Contract party with 70.4 per cent of votes cast, resulting in 88 of the 132 seats in parliament. Prosperous Armenia and Bright Armenia were the only other parties to gain seats in parliament (26 and 18 mandates, respectively).

Women are underrepresented in public office, holding 24 per cent of the seats in the outgoing parliament, one of 12 ministerial posts, and none of the governorships of the 10 *marzes* (regions).

#### IV. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Parliamentary elections are regulated by the 1995 Constitution (last amended by referendum in 2015), the 2016 Electoral Code, and other legislation.<sup>2</sup> Armenia is a party to the main international treaties related to democratic elections.<sup>3</sup>

The Electoral Code was adopted in 2016 and has been amended several times since then.<sup>4</sup> Public outreach on proposed electoral reforms began in 2020 and has been largely perceived as inclusive. On 1 April 2021, shortly before the early elections were called, the outgoing parliament adopted a set of amendments abolishing the territorial lists of candidates.<sup>5</sup> The change to a single national closed-list system required changes to candidate nomination and registration, the distribution of mandates, as well as election-day procedures among other procedural changes. Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors expressed the view that the late adoption of these amendments gave less time for organizing the upcoming elections; the changes gave the CEC one month to bring all its relevant regulations into compliance with the amended Electoral Code.<sup>6</sup> The move to a single nationwide constituency had been advocated for by many political parties and many civil society organizations. The amendments were adopted by a majority of 82 out of 132 members of parliament (MPs); the Prosperous Armenia and Bright Armenia parties did not participate in the vote. A second, more comprehensive, package of

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<sup>2</sup> Including the Law on Political Parties, the Law on Peaceful Assemblies, the Law on Administrative Procedures, the Law on Administrative Offences, and the Criminal Code.

<sup>3</sup> Including the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 2003 UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), and 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Armenia is also a member of the Council of Europe's European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) and Group of States against Corruption (GRECO).

<sup>4</sup> The 2018 amendments to the Electoral Code and other legislation in relation to parliamentary elections introduced, among others, measures against abuse of state resources, lifted restrictions on accreditation of media representatives for the elections and set greater sanctions and penalties for electoral offenses.

<sup>5</sup> The President of the Republic refused to sign these amendments, citing how close these amendments were adopted in relation to the proposed election date. Following the expiration of the constitutionally mandated 21-day deadline for the president's signature, the amendments were signed into law by the Speaker of Parliament and entered into legal force on 27 April 2021.

<sup>6</sup> The CEC informed the ODIHR EOM that in order to update its instructions in a timely manner, it had to start the process based on the draft law, without knowing which provisions would ultimately be adopted by parliament.

amendments was adopted in May 2021. These amendments will not be applicable for these elections, as they enter into force on 1 January 2022.<sup>7</sup> Until the final official adoption of both sets of amendments by parliament, electoral stakeholders were uncertain which amendments would apply to these elections.

In the upcoming elections, voters will elect a minimum of 101 MPs, through a closed-list proportional system with a single nationwide constituency that replaced the previous two-tier proportional system, in which candidates were elected from a combination of a single national list and 13 open territorial lists. The elimination of the territorial list system has largely been supported by many political and civil society actors.<sup>8</sup> MPs are elected for a five-year term.

In order to qualify for the distribution of mandates, political parties must pass a threshold of five per cent of votes cast, while alliances of two or more political parties are required to obtain at least seven per cent. The law provides for up to four reserved seats in parliament, one for each of the four largest national minorities (Yezidis, Russians, Assyrians and Kurds).<sup>9</sup> Each party or alliance may nominate up to four candidates for each of the four seats reserved for national minorities.

The Constitution requires a “stable parliamentary majority” (defined as 54 per cent of seats in parliament) in order to form a government. In the event that the winning party or alliance list obtains at least 50 per cent of seats plus one but falls short of 54 per cent, the party or alliance will be assigned additional seats so that it obtains the required stable majority.<sup>10</sup> If no single party or alliance wins a 50 per cent plus one majority and no political parties or alliances are able to form a coalition within 6 days of the finalization of the results, a second round is held 28 days after first election day between the top two candidate lists. In the second round, the two remaining contestants are permitted to form new alliances with other parties that ran in the first round.

## V. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

Elections are administered by a three-tiered system comprising the Central Election Commission (CEC), 38 Territorial Election Commissions (TECs), and 2,008 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs). The CEC and TECs are required by law to include at least two members of each gender.<sup>11</sup> The CEC is a permanent and professional body composed of seven members who are elected for a six-year term by a parliamentary vote of at least three-fifths of all MPs, for a maximum of two consecutive terms.<sup>12</sup> The CEC, in its current composition, was appointed in October 2016.<sup>13</sup>

Under the Electoral Code, the CEC is responsible for the overall conduct of elections and has extensive regulatory powers and responsibilities such as issuing decisions, binding instructions and clarifications

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<sup>7</sup> These amendments include changes to provisions on candidate registration, including the amount and the return of the financial deposit, new provisions in campaign rules and campaign-finance regulations, as well as provisions regulating the activity of the election administration.

<sup>8</sup> See the ODIHR and Venice Commission [Urgent Joint Opinion on Draft Amendments to the Electoral Code and Related Legislation](#).

<sup>9</sup> Based on the most recent census, conducted in 2011. Armenia is highly ethnically homogeneous, with over 98 per cent of the population self-identifying as Armenian. Yezidis account for 1.1 of the population, Russians for 0.3 per cent, and Assyrians and Kurds for less than 0.1 per cent each.

<sup>10</sup> The Electoral Code also foresees that if the winning party or coalition wins more than two thirds of the total number of seats in parliament, smaller parties and alliances that passed the threshold will be assigned additional seats so that they hold one third of the total number of seats.

<sup>11</sup> Three of the seven CEC members are women, including the deputy chairperson.

<sup>12</sup> Prior to 2016, CEC members were nominated by the president.

<sup>13</sup> Five members, including the chairperson, deputy chairperson and secretary, were first nominated in 2011. Two other members were first nominated in 2014 and 2015.

concerning issues related to the electoral process, including COVID-related procedures.<sup>14</sup> The CEC has so far complied with all legal deadlines. It has held regular open sessions, which are live-streamed online and attended by observers, media representatives, and party proxies. CEC decisions have been published on the CEC website in a timely manner. The CEC's plan of activities takes into account the compressed timeframe for early elections, notably with regards to training of PEC members and the voter-awareness campaign on the new voting procedures. The CEC has produced a variety of voter education materials about election-day procedures, including in the languages of the four main national minorities and for persons with visual impairments.

The CEC has informed the ODIHR EOM that, as in previous elections, it plans to equip the 1,500 largest polling stations with cameras which will live-stream opening, voting and counting operations. The CEC confirmed that these videos may be requested for the submission of electoral complaints and can be used as evidence.

TECs are permanent professional bodies composed of seven members appointed by the CEC for a six-year term; they were last formed in 2016. While the Electoral Code does not explicitly address the renewal of the composition of TECs, the term of TEC members is in practice renewable. TECs supervise PEC activities, handle complaints against PECs, organize recounts, and tabulate and transfer the election results for their respective territory to the CEC.

PECs are temporary bodies formed anew for each election, with a minimum of seven members selected by parliamentary groups as well as by the TECs. For these elections, each PEC is composed of eight members, two of whom are nominated by the respective TEC and two by each of the three alliances represented in the outgoing parliament.<sup>15</sup> The positions of PEC chairperson and secretary were distributed among the alliances in the outgoing parliament in proportion to their current representation on 27 May, four days ahead of the legal deadline. Training of PEC members, organized by the CEC with the support of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), was scheduled to commence immediately after the formation of PECs.

According to the most recent state report to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the full realization of political rights of persons with disabilities is not yet a reality, despite noteworthy progress.<sup>16</sup> The CEC plans to make available materials to support the participation of the visually impaired on election day, and has developed public service announcements with subtitles, as well as printed voter education and awareness materials with Braille, for dissemination across the country ahead of the election and in polling stations on election day.

## VI. VOTER REGISTRATION

All citizens who are at least 18 years old on election day are eligible to vote, unless convicted of a serious crime or declared incompetent by a court decision. Deprivation of the right to vote on the basis of a mental disability is inconsistent with international obligations and standards.<sup>17</sup> Voter registration is passive, in that voters are not required to take any specific action of their own in order to be included

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<sup>14</sup> Other key responsibilities include registering candidate lists, training lower-level election commissioners, accrediting international and domestic observers as well as media representatives, and monitoring campaign finance.

<sup>15</sup> If there are over five parties and/or alliances in parliament, each faction can only appoint one member per PEC.

<sup>16</sup> See: [Report on Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(the second and third joint periodic report\), Republic of Armenia, 2020](#).

<sup>17</sup> According to Articles 12 and 29 of the [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (CRPD), “State Parties shall recognize that persons with disabilities enjoy legal capacity on an equal basis with others in all aspects of life” and ensure their “right and opportunity [...] to vote and be elected”. Paragraph 48 of [General Comment No. 1 to Article 12 of the CRPD](#) states that “a person’s decision-making ability cannot be a justification for any exclusion of persons with disabilities from exercising [...] the right to vote [and] the right to stand for election”.

on voter lists. Voter lists are based on the State Population Register, which is maintained by the Passport and Visa Department (PVD) of the police and includes all eligible citizens who maintain a permanent residence in Armenia. As of 13 May, there were 2,583,823 registered voters.

Preliminary voter lists were to be displayed at polling stations for public scrutiny by 31 May. As required by law, on the same day, the PVD published the entire voter register on its website. Voters can request corrections, inclusions and deletions related to themselves or other voters until 10 June. The final voter lists must be displayed at polling stations by 18 June. Voters who have been omitted from the voter lists, as well as those who are in medical facilities or detention centers, can be included on supplementary voter lists up until the end of voting on election day.

On election day, voters will be identified using electronic Voter Authentication Devices (VADs), which contain an electronic copy of the voter list of the respective polling station. VADs can identify voters by scanning their ID and fingerprint. The CEC told the ODIHR EOM that VADs, introduced in 2017 to help prevent potential electoral fraud through impersonation, multiple voting, and other misuse of voter list entries, have significantly improved the efficiency of the voter identification process.

Since 2017, the CEC also publishes scanned copies of the signed voter lists from all polling stations after election day, allowing the public to check who officially voted. The stated aim of this measure is to allow for identification of cases where somebody voted on behalf of citizens who are *de facto* resident away from their place of registration, particularly those residing abroad. The April 2021 amendments to the Electoral Code specify that the signed voter lists should remain available at least until the tabulation of results at the CEC or, if appeals are filed, until their adjudication.

## VII. CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

For parliamentary elections, political parties and alliances of political parties can each submit one nationwide closed list of candidates, containing between 80 and 300 candidates. Women and men must account for at least 30 per cent of the candidates, with a requirement that both genders are represented in each group of three consecutive members of the party's list.<sup>18</sup> The 30 per cent gender requirement is an increase from the 25 per cent requirement in the previous elections.

To run as a candidate, one must be an eligible voter of at least 25 years of age, have been a citizen of and resident in Armenia for the preceding four years, and have command of the Armenian language. Citizens holding another nationality are not eligible to stand as candidates. Judges, prosecutors, military personnel, police officers, other categories of civil servants, and members of election commissions cannot stand as candidates. A list of candidates may include up to 30 per cent of non-party members. At odds with paragraph 7.5 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document, the law does not provide the possibility for candidates to stand individually.<sup>19</sup>

A total of 23 parties and 4 alliances submitted their candidate lists and supporting documents to the CEC by the 26 May deadline. The CEC published the list of contestants immediately following the deadline for submission of lists. Parties and alliances had two days to correct deficiencies in a candidate list identified by the CEC. One party that had sought registration both individually and as part of an alliance withdrew its individual application. On 31 May, the CEC registered the lists of the remaining 22 parties and 4 alliances. It rejected 26 individual candidates from 12 different candidate lists, due to deficiencies in their documents. Four parties and alliances registered a total of 13 candidates for the four

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<sup>18</sup> The gender requirement does not apply to the section of the list with candidates representing national minorities.

<sup>19</sup> Paragraph 7.5 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document commits OSCE 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”.



seats reserved for national minorities. Following the CEC decisions on the registration of candidate lists, contestants have three days to appeal the CEC decision. Registered parties and alliances must submit a financial deposit of AMD 10 million (approximately EUR 15,700). The deposit is returned if a list wins seats in parliament or receives more than four per cent of valid votes.

Among the parties and alliances that registered to run in the elections are the three largest parties represented in the outgoing parliament,<sup>20</sup> as well as parties and alliances involving all three presidents to have held office between 1991 and 2018.<sup>21</sup>

## VIII. CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT

The official campaign period for these early elections is shortened to 12 days (as compared to 35 to 45 days for regular elections), which is in line with the Electoral Code. For these elections, it will commence on 7 June. Campaigning is prohibited on the day before election day and on election day itself. The law does not prohibit campaign activities before the start of the official campaign period. Campaign materials such as television spots, billboards and posters are already visible. ODIHR EOM long-term observers and interlocutors have reported that in person campaign activities are taking place around the country, largely without required measures against the COVID-19 pandemic.

The national security situation has been dominating the political discourse in the pre-campaign period, with the fight against corruption and the socio-economic situation as important secondary issues. Interlocutors have reported particularly high levels of intolerant, inflammatory or discriminatory rhetoric in the time leading up to the campaign period.

## IX. CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Campaign financing is primarily regulated by the Electoral Code and the Law on Political Parties, which provide for both public and private sources of funding. Political parties or alliances that received at least three per cent of the vote in the previous elections are entitled to annual public funding.<sup>22</sup> Parties and alliances contesting the elections are required to open a dedicated bank account for campaign finance transactions, which may include contributions from voters, as well as from candidates' funds and political parties themselves.<sup>23</sup> Contributions from commercial and non-commercial entities, as well as from foreign and anonymous sources, are not permitted.<sup>24</sup> The law limits campaign expenses of up to 500 million Armenian dram (AMD; around EUR 788,000) per contesting party or alliance. The CEC's Oversight and Audit Service (OAS) is in charge of overseeing the compliance of competing parties and alliances with campaign finance legislation. In early elections, contesting parties and alliances must submit two financial reports on campaign incomes and expenditures: one ten days prior to election day, and the second no later than three days before the summarization of election results. Campaign finance reports are to be published on the CEC website within three days of their submission.

The Law on Political Parties was amended in December 2020, *inter alia* with respect to party and campaign financing. However, the amended provisions related to campaign finance, including the

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<sup>20</sup> Civil Contract, Bright Armenia, and Prosperous Armenia.

<sup>21</sup> Levon Ter-Petrosyan (Armenian National Congress), Robert Kocharyan (Armenia alliance) and Serzh Sargsyan (With Honour alliance). Mr. Sargsyan himself is not a candidate in these elections.

<sup>22</sup> Based on the results of the 2018 parliamentary elections, the following parties and alliances receive funding from the state budget: My Step, Prosperous Armenia, Bright Armenia, Republican Party of Armenia, and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation.

<sup>23</sup> Up to AMD 500,000 (around EUR 790), AMD 5 million (around EUR 7,900), and AMD 100 million (around EUR 157,000), respectively. EUR 1 is approximately AMD 635.

<sup>24</sup> Any contribution from prohibited sources as well as contributions that exceed the limits shall be transferred to the state budget.

transfer of financial oversight functions from the CEC to the Anti-Corruption Commission and the expansion of the legal definition of campaign expenditures, will only enter into legal force on 1 January 2022, together with the corresponding provisions of the Electoral Code.<sup>25</sup>

## X. MEDIA

The media landscape includes 26 television channels (including six with nationwide outreach), 24 radio stations, over 35 periodical print publications, and more than 200 online news portals.<sup>26</sup> Television remains the most important source of political information, especially outside the capital. The role of online sources, in particular social networks, is growing rapidly. Facebook and YouTube have become significant platforms for the exchange of political information.

In recent years, international organizations dealing with freedom of expression have noted improvements in the overall freedom of the media in Armenia. Freedom of expression is guaranteed by the Constitution. Defamation was decriminalized in 2010. However, a Civil Code amendment from April 2021 has significantly increased the maximum pecuniary damages that can be claimed in insult and libel cases. This change has been criticized by numerous media-related organizations and was sent to the Constitutional Court for review by the president.

Public television, which is financed from the state budget, continues to be perceived as having a pro-government editorial policy. At the same time, many ODIHR EOM interlocutors raised concerns that the political affiliation of private broadcasters poses the risk of biased election coverage. Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors also noted a growing distrust towards the media as a consequence of the coverage of the recent war in and around Nagorno-Karabakh. In addition, some stakeholders have noted that the absence of regulation of online media outlets and social media platforms with regards to the conduct of electoral campaigns risks contributing to misinformation and intolerant and inflammatory rhetoric.

Following candidate registration, the CEC is obliged to allocate 30 minutes of free airtime on public *HI* television, and 60 minutes on public radio, during prime time, to each contesting party or alliance. In addition, each contestant has the right to purchase up to 60 minutes of paid advertising on public television, and up to 90 minutes on public radio.<sup>27</sup> The Electoral Code stipulates that news programmes of all broadcasters shall provide “impartial and non-judgmental information” on contestants’ campaigns. The media regulator, the Commission for Television and Radio (CTR), is tasked with overseeing media compliance with legal provisions during the campaign, including through its own media monitoring.<sup>28</sup> In case of violations, the CTR can issue warnings or apply fines.

On 24 May, the ODIHR EOM commenced its media monitoring, with quantitative and qualitative analysis of seven TV channels, one radio station, and three online media outlets.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Several ODIHR EOM interlocutors explained that the postponement of entry into force (*vacatio legis*) was based on the timing of the next regular parliamentary elections.

<sup>26</sup> The Commission for Television and Radio (CTR) provided the number of broadcasters, whereas the numbers of print and online media are reported by the [IREX Media Sustainability Index 2019 – Armenia](#).

<sup>27</sup> Parties and alliances contesting an election can also place paid political advertising in private broadcast and print media, both before and during the official campaign period.

<sup>28</sup> On 27 May, within the legal deadline, the CTR adopted its media monitoring methodology that is publicly available [on its website](#) as well as on the [CEC website](#).

<sup>29</sup> The ODIHR EOM is monitoring the prime-time broadcasts (from 18:00 to 24:00 hrs.) of the nationwide TV channels *HI* (public TV), *ATV*, *Armenia TV*, *Kentron TV*, *Shant TV*, and *Yerkir Media*, as well as Yerevan-based *Armnews TV*. The ODIHR EOM is also monitoring the news programs of Public Radio and politically relevant articles of the online media sources [www.azatutyun.am](#) (the Armenian-language service of RFE/RL), [www.news.am](#), and [www.lin.am](#).



## XI. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Under the Electoral Code, decisions, actions, and inactions of election commissions can be appealed to the higher-level commission, while complaints against the CEC are adjudicated by the Administrative Court. Complaints regarding inaccuracies in the voter lists can be filed to the PVD, the decision of which can be further appealed to a district court. Election-related complaints can also be filed with the courts, but parallel handling of complaints by election commissions and courts is forbidden by the Electoral Code, which gives precedence to the judicial process. With some exceptions, the right to file complaints is only granted to those whose personal electoral rights are at stake.<sup>30</sup>

Candidates and proxies present during the vote count, as well as PEC members, may challenge precinct voting results to the superior TEC and appeal the TEC decision to the CEC or the Administrative Court. No ODIHR EOM interlocutors have thus far raised concerns regarding deadlines for handling pre-election complaints and appeals. At the same time, some interlocutors mentioned that the seven-day deadline for establishing the election results impacts on deadlines for post-election day dispute resolution as all results-related complaints and appeals must be handled within this timeframe.<sup>31</sup> Only political parties and alliances contesting the elections can appeal the final election results to the Constitutional Court, which has 15 days from the submission of an application to decide.

The CEC informed the ODIHR EOM it has not yet received any complaints, but that it had received a number of requests for information, which most of which have been responded to.<sup>32</sup> To facilitate access for complainants during the COVID-19 pandemic, the CEC allows for complaints to also be submitted via an electronic system.<sup>33</sup> The Administrative Court received appeals from two prospective candidates who were refused the residency or citizenship certificates required for candidate registration; in one case, the court ruled in favour of the complainant,<sup>34</sup> while it rejected the other complaint.

## XII. CITIZEN AND INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS

The legal framework provides for international and citizen election observation and entitles party proxies to be present at polling stations. To be accredited, citizen observer groups must adopt an internal code of conduct for their observers and conduct their own trainings. In addition, they are required to have included in their charter, explicit aims related to democracy and the protection of human rights, at least one year prior to the announcement of the elections they wish to observe.<sup>35</sup>

As of 31 May, the CEC had accredited 1 citizen observer organization, 1 international organization, and 18 diplomatic missions to observe these elections. Some citizen observer groups have expressed concerns that the early deadline for submitting applications for accreditation, 15 days before election day, makes it difficult to recruit observers. Limitations on the number of citizen observers and media representatives at polling stations may be imposed to avoid overcrowding, by majority decision of the

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<sup>30</sup> Complaints may be filed by voters, media representatives, and observers with respect to violations of their individual rights, and by proxies and commission members with respect to violations of their rights and those of other parties, candidates, and stakeholders.

<sup>31</sup> For post-election day disputes, the seven-day period between election day and the establishment of the election results means that all complaints must be submitted, examined, and decided, and appeals must be dealt with by higher-level instances within this period.

<sup>32</sup> The CEC informed the ODIHR EOM that some letters, primarily requests for information about the location of polling stations, will be answered later in the electoral process, once the requested information is available.

<sup>33</sup> The CEC piloted the electronic system for submitting complaints during the 2020 local elections.

<sup>34</sup> Implementing the court decision in that case, the PVD issued the residency certificate but shortly after declared it invalid. The candidate appealed the PVD decision invalidating the certificate but withdrew the appeal shortly before the deadline for candidate registration. The candidate eventually was issued a residency certificate by the PVD and was registered to run in the elections.

<sup>35</sup> On 29 May, the Resource Centre Charitable NGO was refused accreditation for not meeting this requirement.

PEC. Such decisions may not limit the total number of observers present in a polling station to less than 15.

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

The ODIHR EOM formally opened in Yerevan on 18 May and held an initial press conference on 19 May. The Head of Mission has met with the CEC Chairperson, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, and representatives of political parties. The ODIHR EOM has established regular contacts with the CEC, governmental institutions involved in the electoral process, the judiciary, political parties, civil society, the media, and the diplomatic and international community.

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