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Observation of the parliamentary elections in Armenia (7 June 2026)

Election observation report[1]
Ad hoc Committee of the Bureau
Rapporteur: Mr Damien COTTIER, Switzerland, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

1. Introduction

1. At the invitation of the President of the Parliament of Armenia, the Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly decided, at its meetings on 30 January and 2 March 2026, to observe the parliamentary elections scheduled for 7 June 2026, to set up an ad hoc committee ("PACE delegation") composed of 20 members (SOC 7; EPP/CD 5; ECPA 4; ALDE 3; UEL 1), as well as the two co-rapporteurs of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee), and to conduct a pre-electoral mission. It appointed me as Chairperson and Lord David Blencathra (United Kingdom, ECPA) as Vice-Chairperson of the ad hoc committee. The composition of the delegation is set out in Appendix 1.

2. In line with the co-operation agreement signed between the Assembly and the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) on 4 October 2004, Veronika Bílková (Czech Republic) represented the Venice Commission as legal adviser during this election observation mission.

3. A pre-electoral delegation was in Yerevan on 11 and 12 May 2026 to assess the pre-electoral environment. It met with a wide range of interlocutors and key electoral stakeholders. The pre-electoral delegation emphasised the importance of conducting the 7 June 2026 parliamentary elections in an environment free from fear, undue foreign influence and misuse of administrative resources. The delegation expressed concern over the increasingly complex and systemic nature of foreign interference affecting Armenia's political and information landscape (see its programme in Appendix 2 and its statement in Appendix 3).

4. The PACE delegation operated from 5 to 8 June 2026 as part of an international election observation mission (IEOM) together with delegations from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE PA), the European Parliament (EP) and the Election Observation Mission (EOM) of the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). The programme of the delegation's meetings is set out in Appendix 4.

5. The IEOM concluded that the parliamentary elections offered voters a genuine choice among political alternatives in a well-run process, although direct pressure from abroad, in the form of escalating trade restrictions and security threats, was observed during the campaign, aimed at unduly influencing voters in favour of the opposition (see the joint press release set out in Appendix 5). The preliminary conclusions and findings were presented at the press conference on 8 June 2026.[2]

1. The report is drawn up under the responsibility of the rapporteur.
2. See full text here.

6. The PACE delegation extends its appreciation to the Armenian authorities for their invitation and assistance, as well as to all interlocutors and international and national partners for their effective co-operation. The delegation also acknowledges the support of the Council of Europe Office in Yerevan for facilitating the smooth organisation of the two visits conducted by the PACE EOM.

2. Background and political context

7. The June 2026 elections were the first regularly scheduled parliamentary elections since Armenia's transition to parliamentary government. They were held in the shadow of momentous geopolitical realignment, following Armenia's normalisation process with Azerbaijan, the deep displacement crisis emanating from Nagorno-Karabakh, and a marked estrangement from the Russian Federation.

8. The ruling Civil Contract Party, led by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan – whose government had been in office since the 2018 Velvet Revolution and reconfirmed in 2021 – sought to strengthen a pro-European course. The opposition, including the Strong Armenia and Armenia Alliance blocs and the Prosperous Armenia Party, campaigned on platforms of security, sovereignty and greater engagement with Russia and the Eurasian Economic Union.

9. Widespread societal polarisation and mass protests set a tense domestic scene. Confidence in institutions and in the possibility of political change through elections was weakened by years of confrontation and ongoing legal and organisational reforms. The context was further polarised by unusual tensions between the government and the leadership of the Armenian Apostolic Church, as well as by criminal proceedings, including pre-trial detentions, against several prominent opposition and religious figures.

3. Legal framework and recent electoral reforms

3.1. Legal framework

10. The elections were regulated by the 1995 Constitution as amended (2005, 2015), and the 2016 Electoral Code, supplemented by the Law on Political Parties, the Law on Peaceful Assemblies, and extensive Central Election Commission (CEC) guidance. Since 2021, a series of legal reforms have been introduced addressing campaign finance, gender quotas, observers and technical and procedural safeguards. Notable are the July 2022 and December 2024 amendments, which together improved gender quota implementation, clarified campaign finance reporting and strengthened the role of observers and electoral commissions.

11. However, important changes were made after the calling of the elections in January and April 2026, contradicting Venice Commission guidance on stability of electoral law. These included further changes to observer accreditation and a last-minute prohibition on personal names in bloc titles on the ballots. Only limited multi-partisan support or public consultation was ensured for these sensitive and consequential reforms.

12. Though technical in part, the PACE delegation noted significant ongoing gaps:

– provisions regarding dual citizenship, as well as disability rights, contrary to the case law of the European Court of Human Rights and the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recommendations;

– persistent ambiguity on online campaigning and third-party finance;

– inadequate legal standing for judicial complaints and party lists;

– a lack of effective safeguards and proportionate sanctioning against administrative abuse.

3.2. Electoral system

13. Armenia's parliamentary elections are conducted on the basis of closed-party-list proportional representation in a single nationwide constituency for at least 101 seats. Up to four minority seats are reserved for Armenia's largest recognised minorities. Parties are required to clear a 4% vote threshold, alliances 8% (10% for alliances of more than three parties). Gender quotas require at least 30% women on each candidate list, enforced at both nomination and seat allocation stages.

14. If no party or alliance secures a simple majority, a complex formula awards top-up mandates to the winning list, or, if necessary, triggers a second round between the two largest lists. The Constitution requires indeed a stable parliamentary majority to form a government, defined as 52% of seats. If a contestant wins an absolute majority of seats but falls short of this threshold, it receives additional mandates to reach it. Otherwise, a coalition must be formed within 14 days or a second round is held 35 days after election day between the two leading lists, with additional seats awarded to the winner. The system is designed for parliamentary stability and to ensure broad representation, but in practice has led to sharp debates over the proportionality and fairness of mandate distribution, particularly given electoral thresholds and the relatively few votes able to determine entry into parliament.

3.3. Election administration

15. The three-tiered election administration – the CEC, 38 Territorial Election Commissions (TECs), and over 2 000 Precinct Election Commissions (PEC) – was praised for technical competence and transparency. Live streaming, publication of all key decisions and comprehensive voter education signalled efforts to foster trust.

16. The CEC and most TECs met legal gender quota requirements, although women remained under-represented in senior posts. The CEC, appointed by parliament for staggered six-year terms, was criticised for insufficient public advance notice of session agendas and for operating, at times, by apparent pre-session consensus, limiting transparency and accountability.

17. Polling officials received improved training, and election-day logistics were well resourced. However, only around half of polling stations were fully accessible to voters with mobility impairments.

18. Concerns regarding the independence of the CEC and TECs persisted due to nomination processes dominated by the parliamentary majority and past affiliations to the Civil Contract Party.[3]

3.4. Complaints and legal remedies

19. Complaint mechanisms provided under Armenian law, primarily through the CEC and the Administrative Court, are reasonably robust in theory but limited in scope and access. Most complaints of deregistration, campaign violation or observer interference were reviewed openly, quickly, and with reasons published.

20. However, only persons with a direct, legally recognised interest in a particular constituency may file complaints, limiting the scope for civil society and affected voters to seek remedy for abuses occurring at a national level. Appeals of CEC refusals to accredit observers or candidates succeeded in a handful of cases, but most substantial complaints regarding campaign conduct, use of State resources, and the handling of invalidated precincts were rejected or referred to other organs.

4. Voter registration

21. The final voter register contained 2 503 976 names. Citizens aged 18, with residence and valid documents in the six months preceding election day were eligible. Voter lists were available for public scrutiny both at polling stations and online. Special measures included mobile voting for the hospitalised and limited out-of-country voting (for diplomatic and military personnel only).

22. The inclusion of over 20 000 recently naturalised displaced Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh was a breakthrough, though approximately 6 000 such applications remained pending, often for bureaucratic reasons.[4] Domestic observers noted that this exclusion disproportionately affected the most vulnerable.

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3. Some interlocutors of the PACE delegation raised concerns on the prior affiliation of the CEC chairperson with the Civil Contract Party.

4. According to the UNHCR, more than 115 000 Armenians were displaced since September 2023. The Armenian authorities informed that between the 1990s and 2023 special passports for persons residing in the area of conflict were issued, which did not confer citizenship rights, including the right to vote. In May 2026, three such passport holders appealed to the first district court of Yerevan for inclusion in the voter lists, and the Court granted their requests, following more than 120 similar rulings in 2021. The Ministry of Internal Affairs appealed these decisions to the Court of Appeal, which overturned them on procedural grounds.

23. In response to rumours that the transport of a large number of Armenian voters residing in the Russian Federation might be organised, the Vice-President of the parliament and the Minister of Economy made announcements that Armenian voters coming from abroad were welcome but threatened that those that were bribed to return would be arrested upon arrival. All Armenian citizens holding valid documents and registered at an address in the country may vote in person at their designated polling station on election day. Citizens whose documents expired more than six months before election day may obtain a temporary document from the Migration and Citizen Service (Ministry of Internal Affairs), allowing them to be added to supplementary voter lists.

24. Criticism persisted that signed voter lists are published after election day – a practice at odds with Venice Commission guidance on privacy.

25. Persons declared incompetent by a court and prisoners convicted of serious crimes remain disenfranchised, contrary to European and international standards. Attempts by such persons to appeal to courts were mostly unsuccessful.

5. Candidate registration and party landscape

26. A record 17 parties and 2 alliances initially submitted lists (one party withdrew). The CEC registered 16 parties and two alliances, with 1 938 candidates, following the disqualification of 23 candidates for residency or paperwork shortfalls. Requirements included:

– four years' Armenian citizenship and domicile;

– Armenian language proficiency;

– minimum 80 and maximum 300 candidates per list;

– 30% gender quota and, for minority candidates, presence on at least four lists.

27. The exclusion of dual citizens and lengthy residency requirement conflicted with the judgement of the European Court of Human Rights (*Tanase v. Moldova*).

6. Gender equality and minority participation

28. Party financing rules, nomination deposits, and technical amendments meant candidate lists were generally more diverse, but there were no female list leaders and minority candidates were under-represented in "winnable" list slots.

29. Women made up 37.3% of all registered candidates, the highest in Armenia's history, and were well represented in polling and TEC staff. However, none led their party list, and only a limited number were in list positions likely to win a mandate.

30. Armenia's four largest national minorities benefited from seats reserved by law and by minority sections on party lists. Nevertheless, observer missions and representatives from these groups reported insufficient access to campaign funds and mainstream party platforms.

7. Election campaign

7.1. Campaign environment and conduct

31. The campaign period (formally 8 May to 6 June 2026) was marked by stark polarisation, aggressive rhetoric and repeated allegations of misconduct. It centered on:

– the peace deal with Azerbaijan and the implementation of the 2025 "Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and Interstate Relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan";

– the security, the "corridor" question and national identity;

– the choice between European integration and Eurasian alignment;

– economic hardship and anti-corruption measures.

32. Many candidates alleged direct threats against them or their supporters, both from State agencies and foreign actors. Public sector employees reported being required or pressured to attend rallies of the Civil Contract Party, while observers also documented several instances of pressure by business leaders on staff to participate in opposition rallies.

33. Observers and police recorded more than 200 criminal investigations of vote buying and related electoral crimes, primarily targeting the opposition, leading to perceptions of selective law enforcement. The publication online of private telephone conversations of targeted candidates raised additional concerns regarding political surveillance.

34. Recent government social programs introduced shortly before the elections,[5] such as targeted debts forgiveness, and easing driving penalties were regarded as *de facto* campaign tools,[6] despite their technical compliance with election law.

7.2. Campaign finance and misuse of administrative resources

35. Armenian law regulates campaign expenditures and donations but leaves pre-campaign and third-party spending largely unchecked. Maximum authorised campaign spending for parties is 800 million AMD (1.86 million EUR), and individual donations are capped at 10 million AMD (23 300 EUR) per year.

36. While direct donations from foreign or corporate sources are banned, observer groups monitored substantial expenditures and donations prior to the formal campaign that were not declared in official returns.

37. Several high-cost campaign events (notably concerts), funded by prominent banks, were widely understood as indirect campaign sponsorship for the ruling party. The use of public resources for campaign events and differentiated treatment of opposition and government social programming by oversight bodies, fuelled perceptions of bias.

38. Reform to allow greater transparency in donations, including greater detail in annual party reports, has improved public oversight, but persistent digital spending and in-kind gifts, especially on social media, evade scrutiny.

7.3. Human rights, judiciary and the role of law enforcement

39. Recent years have seen an increased use of law enforcement against opposition candidates and activists, mass criminal proceedings for vote buying, almost all targeting opposition or opposition-leaning business interests, and an absence of convictions for such cases at the time of the report, raising questions about the selective impact and due process.

40. International and local NGO reports noted disproportionate pre-trial detention, intimidation of protest leaders and a “chilling effect” on freedoms of assembly and expression. While legal reforms have narrowed executive dominance over the courts, problems remain with judicial independence, transparency of appointments and public trust.

8. Media environment and freedom of expression

41. Armenian law guarantees freedom of the media and decriminalises defamation, but the media environment during the campaign was highly polarised and characterised by a shrinking, concentrated advertising market.

42. Public television and several key private broadcasters displayed clear bias in favor of the ruling party and negative coverage of leading opposition parties, while other outlets portrayed the government in a consistently critical light.

43. Most of the television coverage was used to amplify mutual insults, with limited attention to candidates’ platforms or public debate.

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5. At odds with international standards, see the 2016 Joint ODIHR Venice Commission “Guidelines for Preventing and Responding to the Misuse of Administrative Resources During Electoral Processes”.

6. These included the introduction of universal healthcare from January 2026; increases in pensions and disability benefits from April 2026; performance-based bonuses and payments to senior officials and ministry employees; additional regional funding announced in March; zero-interest agricultural loans announced in April; and forgiving unpaid debts for certain categories of citizens in May.

44. Journalists, especially in the regions, faced legal intimidation, civil suits, and, in some cases, targeted threats and harassment on social media.

45. Efforts by the Commission for Television and Radio to enforce media impartiality were hindered by the loss of terrestrial broadcasting licenses for two major opposition-friendly channels, and by limited sanctioning authority.

9. Disinformation, information operations, and the online sphere

46. Online platforms, especially Facebook, Instagram, Telegram and X, proved the central battleground for campaign messaging. The campaign saw a significant increase in the use of:

– artificial intelligence (AI)-generated and deepfake content intended to discredit political opponents;

– botnet and troll networks as vehicles for negative narratives;

– co-ordinated foreign-linked information operations;

– aggressive attacks on both ruling and opposition figures' personal reputations.

47. While Armenia's regulatory framework for online campaigning is minimal (mainly labeling requirements for paid content), the CEC, the Information Systems Regulatory Commission, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs took a more active role in countering and fact checking viral disinformation, in co-operation with local and international partners.

48. Domestic fact-checking organisations enabled rapid rebuttal of false stories, but much damaging content had already achieved viral reach.

10. Foreign interference and pressure from the Russian Federation

49. These elections were marked by foreign interference on a scale described by observers as both "unprecedented and worrying". The Russian Federation, in particular, leveraged economic sanctions (embargoes on agricultural products and threatened gas supply revisions) and sharp diplomatic rhetoric to sway the election toward opposition-aligned or anti-government parties.

50. Russian authorities introduced several restrictions on Armenian exports, including flowers, mineral water and alcohol, and subjected food products to inspections. At the May 2026 Astana summit, Eurasian Economic Union leaders demanded Armenia hold a referendum choosing between the bloc and the EU, warning of suspension over its Western-leaning policies. On 27 May, Russian authorities announced their intention to revise the terms of supply of natural gas, oil products, and diamonds, and on 28 May they announced "temporary restrictions" on additional agricultural products.

51. On 9 May, Russian President Vladimir Putin portrayed Armenia's aspirations to join the EU as carrying risks comparable to those faced by Ukraine. On 30 May, the Russian Federation recalled for consultations its Ambassador in Yerevan "in connection with steps taken by the Armenian leadership toward closer relations with the European Union".

52. Domestic and foreign observer groups reported orchestrated information campaigns by Russian-linked actors, as well as threats issued in the Russian Federation to Armenian citizens and business owners, promising punitive measures if the ruling party was not defeated.

53. Although far less pronounced and limited largely to declarative statements, the vocal and high-profile endorsements of the ruling party by Western and European officials – including the US President, the French President and senior EU representatives – were also perceived as external interference, albeit without the enormous coercive dimension associated with Russian actions.

11. Civil society, observers and complaints

54. Armenia's elections were closely observed by both domestic and international groups. Thirteen domestic civil society organisations and eight international missions – including the IEOM – registered teams, collectively ensuring that more than 95% of precincts were observed at least once on election day.

55. Leading domestic coalitions, such as Akanates and the Independent Observer Alliance, deployed over 1 500 monitors and verified the conduct of voting, counting, and transmission of results. These groups, along with legal consultants, ran rapid response lines for complaints, and supported hundreds of voter inquiries and grievances on election day.

56. While observer access was for the most part respected, there were instances of intimidation, restricted entry and hostile rhetoric, particularly in stronghold regions of major parties. Approximately 44% of the precincts observed experienced at least one campaign-related violation, with the most common issues being control over the voting process, secrecy violations, and unauthorised presence of proxies or candidate representatives.

57. The credibility and increasing sophistication of domestic observation coalitions are a strength of Armenian electoral life, but their findings are not always acted upon by institutions, and allegations of observer bias, including *ad hominem* attacks on organisation leaders, remained a feature of a tense campaign atmosphere.

12. Election day observations

58. On election day, the PACE delegation split into 13 teams and observed the voting in Yerevan and its surroundings, in Gyumri, Hrazdan, Gavar, Artashat, Sisian, Goris, Vanadzor, Shirak and Aparan.

59. Election day was orderly and calm, and the process was assessed positively in the vast majority of polling stations observed by the IEOM. Women were well represented among PEC members in these polling stations, comprising 70% of members and 51% of chairpersons. Accessibility was a significant concern, with only 45% of polling stations assessed as independently accessible for voters with disabilities, while the layout was unsuitable for such voters in 27% of observations. Cameras were installed in polling stations and provided a live stream that allowed voting and counting to be followed.

60. Reports published in the media and information received by the PACE delegation prior to the elections alleged that schemes were under way to transport tens of thousands of Russian-Armenians to sway the vote on election day. However, the delegation had no evidence to suggest that this had been confirmed during the elections.

61. The process was generally transparent and efficient, although affected in some polling stations by overcrowding, inadequate layouts, isolated procedural errors and interference by contestant proxies. Vote secrecy was generally respected, with some compromises mainly linked to insufficient voter understanding and overcrowding. Closing and counting were positively assessed, with occasional procedural inconsistencies.

62. Violations occurred in approximately 44% of precincts observed:

– procedural errors: for example, incomplete maintenance of registers, improper ballot handling, failure to explain rules;

– attempted control: crowding, direction of voters by proxies, removal of ballots;

– breaches of secrecy: group voting, public disclosure of votes;

– campaigning: wearing insignia, unauthorised distribution of party literature;

– conflict and tension: arguments among voters, discrepancies between party proxies and commission staff;

– equipment and material issues: malfunctions of voter authentication, insufficient provision of materials, transparency flaws in envelopes.

63. Rare incidents involved obstructed entries, especially of observers or media. These were generally resolved quickly with TEC support.

64. Counting was rated as “good” in the overwhelming majority of observed stations. Occasional irregularities included counting by unauthorised persons, premature signing or posting of results protocols, and a handful of disputes over ballot validity. Discrepancies in the handling of invalid ballots and arithmetic errors in protocol summaries were primarily due to inexperience rather than manipulation.

65. Transparency was improved by the CEC’s rapid online posting of preliminary results, but some observer groups were denied access to the tabulation process at 11 TECs (out of 38), which the CEC justified with reference to cyber security.

66. Turnout was 58.97%, a marked increase from the snap elections in 2018 (48,62%) and 2021 (49,40%). The reason might have been that many Armenians believed the 2026 election would have unusually important consequences for the country's security, foreign policy and domestic political direction.

13. Counting, tabulation, and invalidation of results and post-electoral developments

67. The crucial post-election controversy centered on the CEC's invalidation of results at polling stations 10/51, 35/65, and 12/13. The basis was:

– at two polling stations military voters were allowed to cast ballots after the legal close of voting;

– at one polling station party ballots for the National Democratic Pole were absent for most of the day.

68. According to some calculations, had these turnout figures been included, Prosperous Armenia might have crossed the 4% parliamentary threshold, securing seats, and denying the ruling party's 3/5 majority. The CEC determined in a one-sentence justification that "the invalidation of the results in these stations did not affect the overall result," and declined to schedule a revote. That is a very insufficient justification for the decision, especially given the significance of its impact.

69. Both the Akanates mission and the Independent Observer Alliance, as well as civil society and legal experts, challenged this decision as lacking legal basis, contrary to the principle of proportionality and contrary to the standards of effective legal remedy.

70. The President of the CEC, in a subsequent statement, cited the Venice Commission's urgent report on the cancellation of elections results by Constitutional courts, which notes potential risks of tactical voting in repeat polls. However, the report does not preclude a revote if disenfranchisement of voters will fundamentally change seat allocation and the representativity of parliament.[7]

71. The matter proceeded to the courts but was not remedied before parliament convened.

72. Moreover, court proceedings relating to the exclusion of polling station results and the loss of mandates for Prosperous Armenia did not produce a remedy, in part due to narrow standing and rigid timelines. The Administrative Court's transparency was praised, but its substantive ability to correct the electoral outcome was lacking. There is a risk that a significant proportion of the electorate is left without effective representation, given how close the result achieved by the Prosperous Armenia party is to the 4% electoral threshold.

73. The official final results of Armenia's 7 June 2026 parliamentary elections, as certified by the CEC on 14 June 2026, are as follows:

Party / Alliance	Vote share	Votes	Parliamentary status
Civil Contract (Nikol Pashinyan)	49,75%	726 819	Governing majority
Strong Armenia Alliance	23,27%	340 006	Opposition
Armenia Alliance (Robert Kocharyan)	9,92%	144 983	Opposition
Prosperous Armenia	3,99%	58 287	Did not enter parliament
Wings of Unity	2,30%	33 537	Did not enter parliament
Meritocratic Party	2,10%	30 642	Did not enter parliament
Democracy, Law and Discipline	1,76%	25 758	Did not enter parliament
New Force Reformist Party	1,75%	25 551	Did not enter parliament
Others (10 parties/alliances)	< 1,5% each	-	Did not enter parliament

74. Under Armenia's proportional electoral system, only three political forces entered the National Assembly:

– Civil Contract (governing majority)

– Strong Armenia Alliance

– Armenia Alliance

7. Statement of the Chairman of the CEC, Mr Vahagn Hovakimyan, on the decision not to call a repeat vote in the three electoral precincts where the voting results were declared invalid, 15 June 2026.

75. With 49.75% of the vote and following the application of the seat allocation rules laid down in Armenia's electoral law, Civil Contract obtained a parliamentary majority and formed the government.

76. The Strong Armenia Alliance challenged the outcome, alleging irregularities and requesting that the election be annulled. The CEC ultimately upheld the results.

77. Mandate allocation was directly shaped by Prosperous Armenia's failure to cross the electoral threshold votes, leading to loss of seats for the excluded party to Civil Contract which thus secured a three-fifths majority, granting it control over legislation and constitutional laws, but falling short of the two-thirds supermajority required to call a referendum on a new Constitution or enact major constitutional amendments. Furthermore, the parliamentary composition did not match the full spectrum of participating forces nor the preferences of all valid voters.

78. The newly elected parliament was constituted at its first sitting on 2 August 2026, in accordance with the Armenian Constitution and Electoral Code. On 3 August it chose Ruben Rubinyan of the ruling Civil Contract Party[8] as speaker.

14. Conclusions and recommendations

79. The 7 June 2026 parliamentary elections offered voters a genuine choice among political alternatives in a well-run process. Direct pressure from abroad in the form of escalating trade restrictions and security threats during the campaign, aimed at unduly influencing voters in favour of opposition forces, was observed. The campaign was highly confrontational with divisive rhetoric and marked by allegations of vote buying and other electoral violations that led to numerous criminal proceedings against opposition candidates and activists, resulting in many opposition supporters refraining from actively engaging in the campaign. This, along with pressure on public sector employees to attend ruling party events, and recently introduced social and economic measures, raised concerns about the equality of opportunity to campaign. The legal framework provides a sound basis for democratic elections and the election administration enjoyed stakeholders' trust. Insufficient oversight and regulation of campaign finances limited transparency and opportunity for public scrutiny. Voters' access to impartial and reliable information was negatively impacted by the polarised media environment, biased media coverage, and a divisive online campaign with the use of manipulative content. Election day proceedings were assessed overwhelmingly positively in the vast majority of polling stations observed.

80. The PACE delegation is however concerned by the CEC's invalidation of polling station results that were decisive for entry into parliament of one opposition party, without substantiated justification, especially given the significance of its impact, or provision for a repeat poll, thereby affecting the overall result and representation.

81. The Russian Federation's interference and foreign information operations reached a scale unprecedented in a Council of Europe member State.

82. The authorities must now address the observed issues (continuous foreign interference, media and information manipulation, manipulation of social resources, mass disenfranchisement through CEC decisions and the persistent perception of selective prosecution) with determination in order to counter any erosion of public confidence in the electoral processes.

83. The election results indicate that the Armenian people have chosen the pro-European path. Society has demonstrated its democratic resilience despite the shortcomings observed and external pressures on an unprecedented scale. The newly elected authorities have thus received a clear mandate from the people, which they must now honour.

84. The elections confirmed Armenia's ability to organise complex elections in a technically proficient, generally peaceful, and inclusive manner. The PACE delegation acknowledges the professionalism and dedication of electoral staff and the constructive spirit of the majority of stakeholders and voters. However, for Armenian democracy to progress, urgent institutional and legal reforms are required, especially in relation to campaign finance, party-political use of the State, legal redress of electoral disputes, and the resilience to external threat.

8. Mr Rubinyan had been heading the Armenian delegation to the PACE until then.

85. The main issues of concern were:

– the particularly tense geopolitical context, with direct foreign interference and unprecedented pressure, particularly from the authorities of the Russian Federation;

– persistence of vote buying;

– misuse of administrative resources in campaigning;

– major deficiencies in effective, timely judicial remedy for violations;

– the disenfranchisement of an opposition party's electorate, with significant parliamentary consequences.

86. These findings confirm the Assembly's position that elections and their observation do not relate solely to polling day, but constitute a process comprising several stages, each of which must be analysed and assessed in order to reach a well-founded conclusion. The work done by the Council of Europe can be understood through the "electoral cycle", which provides a guide to each step of the electoral process and is divided into three parts: the pre-election period (legal framework, planning and implementation, training and education, voter registration, electoral campaign); the election period (operations and election day, verification of results) and the post-election period.

87. The PACE delegation therefore encourages the authorities of Armenia to:

– further strengthen national capacity for identifying and responding to information operations and economic leverage coming from the Russian Federation;

– strengthen the independence of appointments in election administration;

– allow a broader range of stakeholders standing to pursue complaints in courts;

– provide for extended timelines and more flexible remedy for precinct level and overall election disputes;

– close loopholes on pre-campaign and third-party finance;

– fully regulate use of administrative resources and sanction effectively any abuse;

– ensure public broadcaster impartiality and greater transparency of private media ownership;

– expand counter-disinformation mechanisms and digital literacy programs;

– end selective prosecution of opposition and ensure full due process in electoral-related trials;

– review law enforcement tactics for compliance with European human rights standards;

– guarantee peaceful assembly and the right to protest for all parties;

– simplify eligibility and documentation for displaced and vulnerable voters;

– accelerate citizenship and registration processes in line with best practice;

– amend the Electoral Code to explicitly require a revote if fundamental representation is at stake, setting specific thresholds and procedures.

88. The Assembly stands ready to work with the Armenian authorities to address the issues highlighted to strengthen the implementation of European democratic standards. This work should be carried out within the framework of the Assembly's monitoring procedure and in close co-operation with the Venice Commission.

Appendix 1 – Composition of the ad hoc committee

Based on the proposals by the political groups of the Assembly, the ad hoc committee was composed as follows:

Chairperson: Mr Damien COTTIER, Switzerland

Vice-Chairperson: Lord David BLENCATHRA, United Kingdom

Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group (SOC)

– Mr Christophe CHAILLOU, France
– Mr Cerni ESCALE CABLE, Andorra
– Ms Edite ESTRELA, Portugal
– Mr Dimitrios MANTZOS, Greece
– Ms Luz MARTINEZ SEIJO, Spain
– Ms Wanda NOWICKA, Poland
– Mr Roberto SPERANZA, Italy*

Group of the European People's Party (EPP/CD)

– Mr Ricardo CARVALHO, Portugal
– Ms Andrea EDER-GITSCHTHALER, Austria
– Mr Tekke PANMAN, Netherlands
– Mr Georgios STAMATIS, Greece*
– Ms Albana VOKSHI, Albania

European Conservatives, Patriots & Affiliates (ECPA)

– Lord David BLENCATHRA, United Kingdom
– Mr Malte KAUFMANN, Germany* (pre-electoral mission only)
– Mr Zsolt NÉMETH, Hungary
– Mr José María SÁNCHEZ GARCÍA, Spain
– Ms Victoria TIBLOM, Sweden

Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)

– Ms Valentina GRIPPO, Italy
– Mr Damien COTTIER, Switzerland*
– Ms Lesia ZABURANNA, Ukraine

Group of the Unified European Left (UEL)

– Ms Laura CASTEL, Spain*

Co-rapporteurs AS/MON (ex officio)

– Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD)
– Mr Piero FASSINO (Italy, SOC)

Venice Commission

– Ms Veronika BILKOVÁ, Venice Commission member in respect of the Czech Republic
– Mr Adria RODRIGUEZ-PEREZ, Legal Advisor, Venice Commission secretariat

Accompanying person

– Lady Tara BLENCATHRA, accompanying Lord David BLENCATHRA

Secretariat / Secrétariat

– Mr Bogdan TORCATORIU, Senior Elections Officer, Elections Division
– Ms Carine ROLLER-KAUFMAN, Assistant, Elections Division
– Mr Rafał SOKOL, Secretary to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

*Participant to the pre-electoral mission

Appendix 2 – Programme of the PACE pre-electoral delegation

Monday, 11 May 2026

8:00-9:00	Delegation meeting, with introductory words by: – Mr Damien Cottier, Head of delegation – Ms Boriana Aberg, co-rapporteur of the Monitoring Committee – Mr Maxime Longangué, Head of the Council of Europe Office in Yerevan – Practical information by the Secretariat
9:15-10:15	Meeting with Ambassador Janez Lenarčič, Head of the ODIHR Election Observation Mission (EOM), Mr Marcell Nagy, Deputy Head of the ODIHR EOM, and members of the ODIHR core team: – Mr Vladimir Misev (political background and traditional campaigning) – Ms Julia Manchin (online environment) – Ms Desislava Hristova (election administration)
10:30-11:30	Meeting with members of the diplomatic corps in Yerevan: – Ms Claudia Busch, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Germany – Mr Alessandro Ferranti, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Italy – Ms Eva Sundqvist, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Sweden – Ms. Andrea Barbara Baumann, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Switzerland – Mr Vassilis Maragos, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Head of the European Union Delegation
11:45-12:45	Round table with representatives of NGOs: – Transparency International Anticorruption Centre: Ms Sona Aivazyan (Executive Director) – Law Development and Protection Foundation (LDPF): Ms Genya Petrosyan (Director) – Human Right House, Ms Sona Mkhitaryan
14:15-15:15	Round table with media representatives: – A1 Plus: Ms Karine Asatryan, Editor-in-Chief – Aravot Daily: Ms Tatevik Harutyunyan – Yerevan Press Club: Ms Meriknaz Harutyunyan, Editor in Chief
15:30-16:15	Meeting with representatives of the Information Systems Agency of Armenia (ISAA): – Mr Nerses Yeritsyan, Chair – Mr. Shant Kassardjian, Cybersecurity Director
16:30-18:00	Meeting with leaders and representatives of extra-parliamentary parties running for elections 16:30-17:00 Part I – “Strong Armenia” party: Mr Artur Danielyan, Ms Lilia Shashanyan 17:10-17:40 Part II – “Wings of Unity” initiative: Mr Arman Tatoyan, Mr Liparit Drmeyan 16:30-17:00 Part III – “Armenian National Congress” Mr Levon Zurabyan, Vice President, Mr Avetis Avagyan – “New Power” party, Mr Hakob Karapetyan

Tuesday, 12 May 2026

9:00-11:45	Meetings with leaders and representatives of the parliamentary factions at the National Assembly

	9:00-9:45 Meeting with “With Honor" Faction, Mr Hayk Mamijanyan, Head of Faction
	10:00-10:45 Meeting with Civil Contract Faction, Mr Hayk Konjoryan, Head of Faction, Mr Arman Yeghoyan, Mr Sargis Khandanyan, Ms Maria Karapetyan
	11:00-11:45 Meeting with “Armenia” Faction, Mr Seyran Ohanyan, Head of Faction, Ms Lilit Galstyan, Ms Anna Grigoryan, Mr Armen Gevorgyan, Mr Armen Rustamyan, Mr Artur Khachatryan
12:00-13:00	Meeting with the Vice President of the National Assembly, Mr Ruben Rubinyan, and members of the Armenian delegation to the PACE: Ms Arusyak Julhakyan, Ms Hripsime Grigoryan, Ms Sona Ghazaryan, Mr Armen Gevorgyan, Mr Armen Rustamyan
13:15	Official lunch on behalf of the President of the National Assembly, Mr Alen Simonyan, hosted by Vice-President of the National Assembly, Mr Ruben Rubinyan
15:10-15:55	Meeting with Mr Vahagn Hovakimyan, President of the Central Electoral Commission (CEC), and members of the CEC
16:10-16:50	Meeting with Mr Artur Nahapetyan, Chairman of the Anti-Corruption Committee
17:00-17:45	Meeting with Ms Anna Karapetyan, Deputy Minister of Justice
18:00-18:30	Preparation and adoption of a statement by the delegation

Appendix 3 – Statement of the PACE pre-electoral delegation

Armenia's elections must not be endangered by foreign interference and a level playing field for all contestants is essential, says PACE pre-electoral delegation in Yerevan

Following a two-day visit to Yerevan on 11 and 12 May 2026, a pre-electoral delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)* has emphasised the importance of conducting the 7 June 2026 parliamentary elections in an environment free from fear, undue foreign influence and misuse of administrative resources. The delegation expressed concern over the increasingly complex and systemic nature of foreign interference affecting Armenia's political and information landscape.

The delegation heard that foreign interference has evolved beyond traditional disinformation, now encompassing illicit political financing, cyberattacks, economic coercion and direct attempts to manipulate the electoral process. These hybrid tactics aim not only to sway public opinion but to secure long-term geopolitical leverage over Armenia.

The delegation was told about direct explicit requests from the Russian President to the Armenian Prime Minister to facilitate the voting of the Armenian diaspora from Russia and of encouragements of a financial nature proposed by the main opposition party to this particular branch of the diaspora to travel to Armenia and vote on election day.

The delegation highlighted that such interference constitutes a continuous and adaptive threat, extending well beyond the election period.

The delegation also noted the declarative support given by certain Western partners to the ruling party.

The delegation welcomes Armenia's legal and regulatory framework to counter undue influence. However, existing mechanisms would benefit from reinforcement to address covert, co-ordinated and cross-border threats. The delegation feels that strengthening institutional capacity, enhancing inter-agency co-ordination and increasing transparency in political finance are all urgently needed.

Looking at the broader pre-electoral environment, the delegation also expressed concern about intensified disinformation targeting human rights defenders, journalists and civil society organisations. Narratives such as accusations of being a "foreign agent" jeopardise public trust and restrict the civic space. The delegation heard reports of co-ordinated inauthentic activity and manipulative social media content and hoped that technology companies will take stronger action against such campaigns.

The delegation is also concerned by the increasing legal pressures, including strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs), which target civil society, journalists and election observers. These tactics risk chilling free expression and deterring democratic participation. The delegation stressed that a vibrant, independent civil society is essential for democratic elections and must be protected from intimidation.

Further issues of concern include growing political polarisation, low public trust in institutions and a general lack of interest in politics, in particular from the young generation. The delegation heard about harsh campaign rhetoric and allegations of misuse of administrative resources, voter pressure, unregulated third-party campaigning, and vote-buying (sometimes disguised as charity).

The unprecedented implication of the Armenian Apostolic Church in politics has also been noted by the delegation.

Transparency and accountability in campaign finance remain critical, especially in view of recent legislative changes that have raised donation limits without fully addressing oversight gaps.

The delegation underscored that safeguarding electoral integrity requires collaboration among national authorities, civil society and international partners, as well as responsible action by digital platforms. It welcomed the constructive co-operation of Armenian authorities and stakeholders ahead of the 7 June 2026 elections, recognising the vote's importance for Armenia's democratic and geopolitical trajectory, especially amid ongoing peace efforts and regional transformation.

The delegation heard allegations of double standards in the justice system, the representatives of the opposition complaining about a large number of politicians and members of the clergy under investigation or on house arrest further to justice decisions.

During its visit, the delegation met with the Vice-President of the National Assembly, members of Armenia's PACE delegation, the leaders of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary parties, the Deputy Minister of Justice, the Chairman of the Anti-Corruption Committee, the Chairman and other representatives of the Information

Systems Agency, the President and members of the Central Election Commission, the Head and Deputy Head of Mission of the OSCE's ODIHR and members of the diplomatic corps in Yerevan, as well as representatives of the media and civil society.

The delegation acknowledged the Central Election Commission's efforts, such as training and partnering with the Information Systems Agency, to enhance cybersecurity.

In the short time before election day, the PACE delegation urges Armenian authorities to intensify efforts to protect against foreign interference and ensure a level playing field for all contestants. It encourages civil society organisations to continue their vital role in monitoring, reporting and promoting democratic standards.

PACE will deploy a fully-fledged election observation mission to observe 7 June 2026 elections alongside observers from ODIHR, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament.

Appendix 4 – Programme of the meetings of the PACE Electoral Observation Mission

Friday, 5 June 2026

9:15-10:15 Internal meeting of the PACE Delegation
- Welcome by Damien Cottier, Head of delegation
- Presentation by Veronika Bílková, Venice Commission
- Presentation by the co-rapporteur of the Monitoring Committee, Piero Fassino
- Presentation by the Secretariat (logistical aspects)

10:40-11:00 Welcome and Introductory Remarks
- Farah Karimi, Special Co-ordinator and Leader of the OSCE Short-Term Observer Mission
- Damien Cottier, Head of the PACE Observer Delegation
- Nathalie Loiseau, Head of the EP Observer Delegation
- Jevrosima Pejović, Head of the OSCE PA Observer Delegation

11:00-13:00 Briefing by the ODIHR Election Observation Mission
- Welcome and overview of the EOM's work: Janez Lenarčič, Head of Mission
- Political overview, contestants and the election campaign – Vladimir Misev, Political Analyst
- Online environment and online campaigning – Júlia Manchin, Political Analyst
- Campaign Finance – Elissavet Karagiannidou, Campaign Finance Analyst
- Legal Framework and election dispute resolution – Smaranda Săndulescu, Legal Analyst
- Election administration, candidate and voter registration – Desislava Hristova, Election Analyst
- Media environment – Egor Tilpunov, Media Analyst
- Security context – Slaviša Kotlaja, Security Expert

14:30-16:00 Socio-Political Context
- Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center, Executive Director Sona Ayvazyan
- EURASIA Partnership Foundation, Program Director, Isabella Sargsyan
- Helsinki Citizens' Assembly-Vanadzor, President, Artur Sakunts
- Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression, Chairperson, Ashot Melikyan
- Regional Center for Democracy and Security, Chairperson, Tigran Grigoryan
- Union of Informed Citizens, Programs Coordinator, Daniel Ioannisyan

16:30-17:00 Representatives of parliamentary parties/alliances contesting the elections

16:30-17:00 Civil Contract: Ruben Rubinyan and Arusyak Julhakyan, candidates

17:00-17:30 Armenia Alliance: Anna Grigoryan and Artur Khachatryan, candidates

17:45-19:15 Representatives of non-parliamentary parties/alliances contesting the elections

17:45-18:15 Prosperous Armenia Party: Elinar Vardanyan, Ara Ayvazya, candidates

18:15-18:45 Republic Party: Ruben Asatryan, candidate

18:45-19:15 Strong Armenia Alliance: Gohar Meloyan, candidate

Saturday, 6 June 2026

09:00-10:30 Campaign and Election Coverage Panel
- Media Initiatives Center-Media.am, Editor in Chief, Gegham Vardanyan
- CivilNet, Editor-in-Chief, Karen Harutyunyan

– Azatutyun-Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Armenian Service, Director, Heghine Buniatyan
– A1+, Editor-in-Chief, Karine Asatryan
– Hetq, Managing Director, Kristine Barseghyan
– Media Diversity Institute, Media Monitor, Seda Arakelyan
– Public Radio of Armenia, Director of Public Radio of Armenia, Armen
– Koloyan, and Head of the News Department, Liana Yeghiazaryan

11:00-12:30 Election administration
– Central Election Commission – Oversight and Audit Service, Head of the Oversight and Audit Service, Tigran Babikyan
– Television and Radio Commission, Member of the Commission, Gohar Mamikonyan
– Information Systems Agency of Armenia, Director, Nerses Yeritsyan
– Anti-Corruption Committee, Garegin Begoyan, Head of the Department for Investigation of Corruption-Related Crimes in the Electoral and Private Sectors

12:30-13:45 ODIHR EOM Briefing continuation
– Election-day procedures – Desislava Hristova, Election Analyst
– Election-day reporting – Anders Eriksson and Andreas Roth, Statistical Analysts
– Work of the Long-term Observers – Kerstin Dokter, LTO Co-ordinator
– Briefing by Long Term Observers deployed in Yerevan and surroundings

13:45 Meeting with interpreters and drivers

Sunday, 7 June 2026

Election Day-Observation in polling stations

(Polling stations open at 08:00 and close at 20:00)

Monday, 8 June 2026

08:00-09:00 Internal meeting of the PACE Delegation (debriefing)

15:00 Press conference

Appendix 5 – Press release of the International Election Observation Mission

Armenia's voters were offered a genuine choice against a backdrop of direct foreign pressure and uneven campaign opportunities

YEREVAN, 8 June-The 7 June 2026 parliamentary elections offered voters a genuine choice among political alternatives in a well-run process, although direct pressure from abroad, in the form of escalating trade restrictions and security threats were observed during the campaign, aimed at unduly influencing voters in favour of the opposition, international observers said in a preliminary statement released today.

The campaign was highly confrontational, with divisive rhetoric, and was marked by allegations of vote-buying and other electoral violations that led to numerous criminal proceedings against opposition candidates and activists, resulting in many opposition supporters refraining from actively engaging in the campaign. This, along with pressure on public sector employees to attend ruling party events, and recently introduced social and economic measures, raised concerns about the equality of opportunity to campaign, the statement says.

"The concentration of arrests and criminal prosecutions against opposition figures contributed to perceptions of selective justice, while a polarized media landscape, inflammatory rhetoric, misinformation, and persistent foreign pressure and interference challenged Armenia's democratic resilience and the integrity of public debate", said Farah Karimi, Special Co-ordinator and leader of the short-term OSCE observer mission. "This underscores the importance of continued efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, safeguard fundamental freedoms, and foster public trust in democratic processes".

"The Armenian elections took place in a particularly tense geopolitical context, with direct foreign interference," said Damien Cottier, Head of the delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. "In particular, pressure and threats from Russia reached an unprecedented and worrying level."

The process was governed by revised election-related laws and regulations that provide a sound basis for democratic elections. Changes in recent years were mostly introduced through extensive consultative process and worked to improve the legal framework, but some gaps and ambiguities persist, and a number of previous ODIHR and Council of Europe Venice Commission recommendations remain unaddressed.

"The importance of these elections, combined with polarizing rhetoric throughout the campaign, created a tense atmosphere for both voters and election officials", said Jevrosima Pejović, Head of the OSCE PA delegation. "Election bodies operated under heightened scrutiny, while voters were exposed to sustained political pressure and intense public debate. Tensions arising from domestic and external factors added to the pressure surrounding these elections and influenced public perception of the quality of electoral administration, highlighting the importance of promoting a constructive political climate and strengthening public confidence in electoral bodies."

The election administration managed technical preparations professionally and efficiently, and enjoyed stakeholders' trust. Election day proceedings were assessed overwhelmingly positively in the vast majority of polling stations observed.

"We met devoted polling station members, a large majority of whom were women, who performed their duties with dedication and attention. Some voters were lacking basic information about their polling stations and voting procedures, and the Armenian authorities should consider working on better voter information," said Nathalie Loiseau, Head of the EP delegation. "The elections were generally peaceful and without incidents. The electoral process was calm and very well organised, procedures seemed meticulously observed, and small inconsistencies before counting were carefully verified."

Online campaigning was extensive, and its regulation is limited, reducing transparency and oversight. The online campaign was confrontational and divisive. The ODIHR mission noted the use of manipulative, false and AI-generated content disseminated by some candidates, as well as inauthentic and third-party accounts to discredit opponents, the government and the electoral process. Overall, the authorities took steps to address disinformation, but the transparency and effectiveness of these efforts were limited by the lack of publicly available information.

Amendments to campaign finance rules expanded the definition of campaign expenditures, increased donation and expenditure limits, and redistributed oversight responsibilities. Still, a number of gaps remain, limiting transparency, accountability and integrity of party and campaign finance.

Despite gender quotas for the election administration and parliament, as well as financial incentives for parties maintaining gender-balanced governing bodies, women's participation in public and political life remained low. Women comprised 37.3 per cent of candidates.

The media environment is pluralistic but polarized, and the ODIHR mission media monitoring found that most outlets were instrumentalized by contestants to amplify mutual insults and divisive campaign rhetoric, offering little substantive analysis of contestants' platforms. Public television displayed clear bias in favour of the ruling party, contrary to its legal obligations and public mandate. At the same time, several private outlets portrayed the government negatively and provided favourable coverage to selected opposition contestants. All combined, this undermined voters' opportunity to make an informed choice.

"Armenia's voters were given-and took-the opportunity to make a genuine choice in a professionally managed election process and a vibrant and pluralistic, if often highly polarized campaign," said Janez Lenarčič, head of the election observation mission from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. "Unfortunately, they had to make that choice against the backdrop of unprecedented foreign interference and pressure, in the form of punitive trade measures and day-by-day threats of further negative consequences contingent on which choice they made."