

ARMENIA

Election Observation Mission 2026 Final Report

Final Report

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Historical and Political Context

Armenia is a small, landlocked country in the South Caucasus with a population of approximately three million people. Its capital and largest city is Yerevan, and it shares borders with Georgia to the north, Azerbaijan to the east, Iran to the south, and Turkey to the west. The borders with Azerbaijan and Turkey have remained closed for decades. Armenia is one of the world's oldest Christian nations, having adopted Christianity as a state religion in the early fourth century, and the Armenian Apostolic Church occupies a central place in national identity. Armenian is the official language, though Russian remains widely spoken as a legacy of seventy years within the Soviet Union. That Soviet inheritance, together with the country's geographic position between Russia, Turkey and Iran, has shaped a political identity defined by questions of security, sovereignty and external dependence, questions that sit at the very heart of the 2026 election.

Having declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Armenia is one of Europe's younger democracies, and its three decades of statehood have been marked by economic hardship, large-scale outmigration, and an unresolved territorial conflict with neighbouring Azerbaijan over the region of Nagorno-Karabakh (known to Armenians as Artsakh). That conflict, more than any single domestic issue, has repeatedly reshaped the country's politics, and its definitive resolution in Azerbaijan's favour has been a topic in these elections.

Facts about Armenia

- Independence from the Soviet Union declared in 1991; the modern republic traces its statehood to the First Republic of 1918.
- A landlocked state in the South Caucasus; its borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan are closed, leaving Georgia and Iran as its only open borders.
- Following a 2015 constitutional referendum, Armenia became a parliamentary republic, fully in effect from 2018.
- In 2023, the entire ethnic-Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh — well over 100,000 people — was displaced to Armenia after an Azerbaijani military offensive.
- Around 2.5 million citizens were registered to vote in the 7 June 2026 parliamentary elections.

A Parliamentary Republic

Armenia operates as a parliamentary republic with a multi-party system. Until 2015 it was a semi-presidential state, but a constitutional referendum that year transferred executive authority from the president to the prime minister and the parliamentary majority. Since the reform took full effect in 2018, the President, currently Vahagn Khachaturyan, elected by parliament in 2022 for a single seven-year term, holds a largely ceremonial role, while the Prime Minister is the country's most powerful office-holder.

Legislative power rests with the unicameral National Assembly (Azgayin Zhoghov), elected for a five-year term. The constitution guarantees a minimum of 101 seats, but this number can expand through two distinctive adjustment mechanisms. First, a "stable majority" rule ensures that the

winning force commands at least 52 % of seats: if no party or coalition reaches that level, and no governing coalition is formed within the prescribed period, additional mandates are allocated, or, failing that, a second round is held between the two leading forces. Second, the system guarantees representation for at least three political forces and reserves four seats for the country's recognised national minorities, Assyrians, Kurds, Russians and Yazidis. These provisions are designed to combine proportionality with governmental stability, and they meant that the 2026 vote returned a National Assembly of 105 seats.

From Velvet Revolution to the Loss of Karabakh

The current political order in Armenia was born of the 2018 "Velvet Revolution." That spring, weeks of peaceful mass protests, led by the then-opposition member of parliament Nikol Pashinyan and his Civil Contract party, forced the resignation of Serzh Sargsyan, who had governed for a decade and was seeking to extend his rule by moving from the presidency into the newly strengthened post of prime minister. Sargsyan stepped down in April 2018, and parliament elected Pashinyan prime minister in May. Snap elections later that year handed Pashinyan's alliance a commanding majority, on a platform of anti-corruption reform and democratic renewal.

The optimism of 2018 was overtaken by the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. In the autumn of 2020, the 44-day Second Nagorno-Karabakh War ended in a decisive Azerbaijani victory and a Russian-brokered ceasefire that deployed Russian peacekeepers to the region. The defeat triggered a domestic political crisis that Pashinyan ultimately resolved by calling early elections in June 2021, which his party again won. The conflict reached its conclusion in September 2023, when Azerbaijan launched a swift military offensive that dismantled the authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh and prompted the flight of almost the entire ethnic-Armenian population, more than 100,000 people, to Armenia within a matter of days. Crucially, the Russian peacekeeping contingent did not intervene. For much of Armenian society, that failure marked the collapse of the security guarantee on which the country had relied for a generation, and it has cast a long shadow over the politics of the years since.

Geopolitical Reorientation

The loss of Karabakh and the perceived unreliability of Moscow accelerated a significant shift in Armenia's foreign policy. The government suspended its active participation in the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation and moved to deepen ties with the European Union and the United States. A European Union civilian monitoring mission has operated along the Armenian side of the border with Azerbaijan since 2023, and in March 2025 the National Assembly adopted legislation formally endorsing the objective of EU accession. In parallel, Yerevan invested heavily in a negotiated settlement with Azerbaijan and a normalisation process with Turkey: in August 2025, Prime Minister Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev signed a United States–brokered peace declaration in Washington.

This reorientation is neither complete nor uncontested. Armenia remains deeply tied to Russia economically, through trade, energy and the remittances of Armenians working there, and Russia retains a military base at Gyumri. Moreover, the peace process carries a politically sensitive condition: Azerbaijan has linked a final treaty to amendments to the Armenian constitution, which

would require a national referendum and, in turn, a substantial parliamentary majority. The question of how far, and how fast, Armenia should move away from Moscow and towards the West therefore became one of the defining questions of the 2026 election.

Political Polarization and the Pre-Election Environment

Armenia approached the June 2026 vote in a state of heightened polarisation. These were the first regularly scheduled parliamentary elections since 2017, following the two snap elections of 2018 and 2021, and they unfolded amid widespread public dissatisfaction with the government over the economy, the aftermath of the war, and the direction of the peace process. The principal cleavage pitted the ruling Civil Contract party, which presented continuity, the peace agreement and integration with the West as the responsible path against an opposition that advocated repairing relations with Russia and criticised the government's concessions to Azerbaijan. The governing party framed the contest as a choice between peace and a return to war, associating opposition forces with the prospect of renewed conflict; opposition parties, in turn, accused the government of authoritarian tendencies and of mishandling the national interest.

The campaign environment was further charged by a confrontation between the government and the Armenian Apostolic Church, and by the prosecution of prominent opposition and Church figures. The most significant of these involved the businessman Samvel Karapetyan, owner of the Tashir Group and widely regarded as Moscow's preferred figure, who was detained in June 2025 after a statement in defence of the Church and charged with calling to seize power, charges he rejected as politically motivated. He led his newly formed Strong Armenia party from house arrest, while a separate opposition bloc, the Armenia Alliance, was associated with former President Robert Kocharyan. International and domestic observers, including the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE ODIHR), characterised the campaign as competitive and offering voters a genuine choice, while also describing it as highly confrontational and noting that the large number of criminal cases brought against opposition candidates raised concerns about the perception of selective justice. Civil-society monitors and external reporting additionally pointed to an intense foreign-influence dimension, including alleged Russian disinformation campaigns directed against the government, and the authorities adopted amendments to the Electoral Code in early 2026 that tightened the rules governing election observers.

Armenian electoral law

The legal framework governing elections in Armenia is primarily established by the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia and the Electoral Code of the Republic of Armenia. The Electoral Code, adopted in 2016 and amended several times since, is the main legal act regulating the organization and conduct of elections.

Elections in Armenia are administered through a three-tier election administration system. The Central Electoral Commission (CEC) oversees the electoral process, registers political parties and electoral alliances, adopts election-related regulations, and announces official election

results. Territorial Electoral Commissions (TECs) coordinate elections within their respective areas of responsibility and supervise Precinct Electoral Commissions (PECs). PECs administer polling stations, verify voters' identities, organize voting, count ballots, and submit precinct-level results to the higher electoral authorities.

A defining feature of Armenia's parliamentary electoral system is the use of a proportional representation system through closed party lists in one nationwide constituency. Political parties and electoral alliances compete through electoral lists, and seats in the National Assembly are allocated in proportion to the votes received by each party or alliance, subject to the electoral thresholds established by law. This was the second parliamentary election conducted under the party-list proportional electoral system following the 2021 electoral reforms.

Following the 2021 reforms, electoral thresholds were changed. Political parties must receive at least 4% of the vote to participate in the distribution of mandates. Alliances must receive 8% if they are composed of up to three political parties, and 10% if they are composed of four or more political parties. Another important element of Armenian electoral law is the gender quota for candidate lists. Political parties and electoral alliances are required to submit gender-balanced lists, where representatives of the same sex may not exceed 70% in each group of three candidates. In practice, this means that at least 30% of candidates must be from the less represented gender. This requirement applies to the main part of the electoral list, while the section reserved for national minority candidates is regulated separately.

To be eligible to run for the National Assembly, a candidate must be at least 25 years old, have exclusively held Armenian citizenship during the previous four years, have permanently resided in Armenia during the same period, have the right to vote, and have command of the Armenian language. Candidates may be nominated only through political parties or electoral alliances, as independent candidacies are not permitted in parliamentary elections. Electoral lists may also include non-party candidates, but their number may not exceed 30% of the total number of candidates on the list. Certain public officials and office holders are restricted from standing as candidates, including judges, prosecutors, military personnel, police officers, electoral commission members, and other categories defined by law.

Armenian citizens who are 18 years of age or older have the right to vote in parliamentary elections. However, persons recognized by a court as legally incapacitated, as well as persons convicted of serious or especially serious intentional crimes who are serving their sentence, do not have the right to vote. Voting is conducted in person, and proxy voting is prohibited.

To strengthen the integrity of voting and prevent multiple voting, polling stations use electronic voter registration equipment. The technical equipment contains the electronic list of voters and is used to register voters, verify their participation, and exclude double registration. After the voter is registered, the equipment prints a voting pass, which the voter then presents to the relevant commission member before receiving the ballot papers.

One distinctive feature of Armenia's voting procedure is the use of separate ballot papers for each political party or electoral alliance. The voter receives one ballot paper for each political party or

alliance running in the election, as well as one ballot envelope. The voter enters the voting booth, selects the ballot paper of the political force they wish to vote for, places that ballot paper into the envelope without folding it, and drops the unused ballot papers into a separate box installed inside the voting booth.

After leaving the voting booth, the voter approaches the precinct electoral commission member responsible for applying self-adhesive stamps and supervising the ballot box. The commission member applies a self-adhesive stamp to the ballot paper through the cut-out section of the envelope. This stamp is an essential element for the validity of the ballot during the counting process.

Another distinctive feature is the use of video recording and online broadcasting from polling stations. During National Assembly elections, cameras are installed in all polling stations to allow the voting process and the summarization of voting results to be recorded and broadcast online. The cameras are positioned to cover key procedural areas, including voter registration, distribution of ballot papers and envelopes, the ballot box, and counting procedures, while preserving the secrecy of the vote. This mechanism is intended to increase transparency and allow broader public oversight of election-day procedures. It also allows to monitor the process remotely

Election observation is another important feature of Armenia's electoral framework. Domestic civil society organizations, foundations, international organizations, foreign observers, media representatives, and visitors may observe elections in accordance with accreditation procedures established by law. Observers have the right to be present at electoral commission sessions and polling stations, observe voting and counting procedures, access election-related documents within the limits prescribed by law, take notes, and record concerns in the precinct electoral commission's registration journal.

About the election itself

The regular elections to the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia were held on 7th of June 2026. These were the ninth parliamentary elections in the country.

Initially, 19 political forces, including 17 political parties and 2 alliances, were registered to participate in the elections. Following the withdrawal of one political party, 18 political forces competed in the elections: 16 political parties and 2 political alliances. The field included both established political forces and newly formed parties.

According to the final results announced by the Central Electoral Commission, 1,476,769 voters participated in the elections, representing 58.9% of eligible voters. This turnout was higher than in the previous parliamentary elections of 2021, when turnout was around 49.4%, and the 2018 snap parliamentary elections, when turnout was around 48.6%.

According to the final results, the ruling Civil Contract Party received 726,819 votes, or 49.75% of the vote. The Strong Armenia Alliance (comprising the Strong Armenia, New Era and United Armenians political parties) came second with 340,006 votes, or 23.27%, while the Armenia Alliance (comprising the Armenian Revolutionary Federation and Forward Right-Center political parties) came third with 144,983 votes, or 9.92%. The Prosperous Armenia Party received 58,287 votes, or around 3.98%, and did not pass the 4% threshold for parliamentary representation.

The new National Assembly therefore consists of 105 deputies, with Civil Contract holding 64 seats, Strong Armenia Alliance 29 seats, and Armenia Alliance 12 seats. The Civil Contract received a parliamentary majority and was able to form the government independently.

At the same time, Civil Contract's 64 mandates do not give the party a two-thirds constitutional majority. This means that, although Civil Contract can independently adopt constitutional laws and make several key institutional appointments requiring three-fifths, it cannot independently adopt most constitutional amendments or decide to put certain constitutional amendments to referendum. For such decisions, Civil Contract would need at least 6 additional votes from opposition MPs. The party also does not have the three-fourths majority required to elect the President of the Republic in the first round, however, lower thresholds apply in subsequent rounds.

One of the most politically significant post-election issues concerned the invalidation of voting results in three polling stations: 10/51, 35/65, and 12/13. The results of polling stations 10/51 and 35/65 were invalidated because military personnel concentrated at those stations continued voting after the official end of the voting period. The results of polling station 12/13 were invalidated because ballot papers for one of the participating political forces were absent at the polling station. The Central Electoral Commission determined that the invalidation of these results did not affect the overall election outcome and did not schedule repeat voting in these polling stations.

However, the invalidation of these three polling station results became a matter of public and political debate, as alternative calculations revealed that their inclusion could have changed the parliamentary threshold outcome for the Prosperous Armenia Party. According to those calculations, Prosperous Armenia had received 222 votes in the three invalidated polling stations. If these votes had been included, the party's result would have increased to 4.003%, allowing it to pass the 4% threshold and receive parliamentary mandates.

This issue was significant not only for Prosperous Armenia, but also for the overall distribution of mandates in the National Assembly. Alternative calculations suggested that, if Prosperous Armenia had entered parliament, it would have received 5 mandates, while the Civil Contract's mandate count would have decreased from 64 to 61. In that scenario, Civil Contract would still have held a parliamentary majority, but would not have independently controlled three-fifths of the National Assembly.

This distinction is institutionally important because three-fifths of all deputies are required for the adoption of constitutional laws and for several key institutional appointments. Therefore, the invalidation of the three polling station results became one of the most consequential post-election legal and political questions. The issue also affected public perceptions of the electoral process, as opposition parties, election-monitoring organizations, and public commentators questioned whether the final distribution of mandates fully reflected the voters' will. As a result, the CEC's decision not to hold repeat voting in the three polling stations contributed to broader post-election debate about representativeness, public trust, and the legitimacy of the final results.

Several political forces challenged the election results before the Constitutional Court. The applications were submitted by the Strong Armenia Alliance, Wings of Unity Party, Democracy Law Discipline Party, Prosperous Armenia Party, For the Republic Alliance of Democracy Defenders Party, Armenia Alliance, and New Power Reformist Party. On 4 July 2026 The Constitutional Court ultimately decided to leave in force the Central Electoral Commission's decision of 14 June 2026 on summarizing the results of the elections.

Post-Election Environment

Following the June 2026 parliamentary elections, the post-election environment was shaped by two main developments. The first concerned legislative amendments initiated by members of the ruling Civil Contract faction, which introduced new residency requirements for voting in elections. Under the adopted amendments, Armenian citizens aged 18 or older are eligible to vote in regular parliamentary elections only if they have been physically present in Armenia for at least 366 days within the 730 days preceding the 48th day before election day. For snap parliamentary elections, the same requirement applies to the 730 days preceding the 28th day before the vote. In practice, these changes may affect Armenian citizens who have lived abroad for longer periods due to work, education, family circumstances, or permanent residence abroad.

The amendments were introduced in the context of public debate around the participation of Armenian citizens returning from Russia and other countries to vote in the elections. Critics, including several civil society and human rights organizations, argued that the amendments could disproportionately affect citizens residing abroad, raise constitutional concerns, and restrict citizens' political rights. Concerns were also raised regarding the speed and procedure of adoption, as the legislation was adopted through two readings within a short period during the late June–early July parliamentary session, with limited involvement of civil society organizations and other stakeholders.

Around the same period, reports emerged that some Armenian citizens returning from abroad, particularly from Russia, had received notices to participate in 25-day reserve military training. The Ministry of Defence stated that military police were operating at border checkpoints, including Zvartnots International Airport, to assist military registration authorities in identifying citizens subject to military obligations, and that reserve training obligations applied regardless of the country from which citizens arrived. However, based on publicly available information, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that these measures were applied in a politically motivated or targeted manner against voters based on their political views.

The second major post-election development concerned the legal and political consequences of the final election results and the subsequent arrest of Prosperous Armenia Party leader Gagik Tsarukyan. A few days later after the Constitutional Court rejected the applications and confirmed the final election results, Gagik Tsarukyan was detained and then placed in pre-trial detention for two months on charges of large-scale fraud and money laundering. The authorities presented the case as part of a criminal investigation, while opposition representatives described it as politically motivated. Given that the arrest took place shortly after the Constitutional Court confirmed the election results, and in the context of Prosperous Armenia's post-election legal challenge, the case became one of the most politically sensitive developments of the post-election period.

Despite these legal and political developments, the post-election environment remained generally stable. There were no large-scale nationwide protests, sustained demonstrations, or significant public mobilization following the announcement of the final results or the Constitutional Court's decision. Political contestation was pursued mainly through legal and institutional mechanisms, public statements, and media debate rather than through street protests.

Observation Methodology

The election observation mission was first of all conducted as a *short-term* election observation mission. This entails that the observations did not focus on possible misconduct up until election day, the media landscape, or the [allegations of international vote-buying](#). Although we are well-aware of these, they are not included in the scope of this election observation. As short-term observers, we focus on the electoral conduct at and around polling stations on election day. Therefore, our methodology does not rule out foreign interference, as this is not the scope of the election observation.

Observers conducted their observations in teams of two, and had been trained in election observation methodology, inspired by that of the OSCE-ODIHR. While 20 teams consisted of a mix between international and Armenian observers, 18 teams consisted of only Armenians. This way, the teams could cover the whole country, reaching 15% of the polling stations. Furthermore, the mix of international and Armenian observers made it possible to combine methodologies in this regard.

All observers were trained to the same high standard of non-partisan and non-interference election observation, as per Silba standards. The aim of this approach is to support democratic institutions and free and fair elections. Our observers undergo extensive training, including Silba's training program and the requirement to complete the OSCE/ODIHR observer courses for both long-term and short-term monitoring, a training seminar course before the election, as well as our training leading up to election day. This comprehensive preparation ensures that our teams are well equipped to perform their duties with the highest level of professionalism. Furthermore, the election observation was conducted using the app Votemonitor, which is part of the Infrastructure for Good developed by Code for Romania.

The Armenian legal framework allows for both international and local election observation. On the 7th of June, the Danish and observers and coordinators were accredited as local observers through our Armenian partner, the youth-led and youth-oriented NGO Armenian Progressive Youth (APY). Along with other similar organizations such as *European Dialogue and Democracy Association* (EDDA), Silba/VU did not receive accreditation as international observers, and thus had to be accredited through local organizations. The official reasoning received by the Armenian MFA was that none of the organizations applied for accreditation within reasonable time of the deadline. This is, however, disputed by both Silba and VU. Furthermore, the official communication from the MFA must also be considered lackluster, since VU never received an official rejection, and Silba only received it four days before the election. This change in observer status had no implications for the observers, since the rights of international and local observers are the same. Also, this non-international status was reflected in the Silba methodology and training of observers.

Key findings and recommendations

1. Opening procedure

Observers assessed the opening procedures positively, describing them as calm, smooth and professional. Polling stations generally opened on time, with only minor delays reported in a few cases. The required election materials were available, and opening procedures were largely followed. Observers also assessed PEC members as well-prepared and knowledgeable about the procedures. In most polling stations observed, no issues were reported during the opening.

The irregularities observed during the opening procedures were minor and included impeded views of the opening, the presence of police and unauthorized persons, and proxy conduct.

Presence of police and unauthorized persons: Police presence was recorded in several polling stations during the opening, including officers observing the proceedings for extended periods before remaining in an adjacent room (which led election officials to lock the connecting door and ratify the decision in a signed record), as well as officers periodically checking on the proceedings from the doorway. There were also isolated instances of unauthorized persons present during the opening, including individuals without accreditation observing the proceedings from close proximity. In one case, an individual attempted to enter the polling station as a proxy on two separate occasions without displaying a badge or other identification but was denied entry.

Proxy conduct: As observed throughout the electoral process, proxy conduct featured among the irregularities observed at the opening. These included proxies being present before the official opening time, not wearing visible accreditation badges despite repeated warnings from the chairperson, or leaving the polling station to retrieve a badge without recording their departure. Other incidents involved proxies touching ballots laid out on the table before being stopped by the chairperson, making allegations of missing ballots and, in one instance, sealing the ballot box instead of the chairperson.

Other procedural irregularities: Some observers reported that they did not have an unimpeded view of the opening procedure, and in one instance observers were not permitted to see the zero-reference form. Additional procedural shortcomings included voters entering the polling station before the official opening time, thereby interrupting or hindering the opening procedure; the safe being opened and ballots laid out ahead of schedule; the transfer of ballots from the safe to an open cabinet, leaving observers uncertain as to whether this constituted a procedural violation; and the omission of recording ballot serial numbers, which was later corrected before the opening.

2. General observation

Observers assessed the conduct of voting positively overall. The remarks on misconduct below should be considered in light of this general assessment.

Conduct of proxies. Most of the misconduct observed during voting concerned proxies from political parties rather than PSOs. There were instances of party proxies attempting to interfere with the electoral process, including directing voters, confronting PSOs, standing too close to voting booths and the ballot box, assisting voters with the voting procedure (thereby assuming the role of PSOs), approaching and attempting to influence voters, making allegations against proxies from other parties, and, in few instances, failing to display accreditation badges.

Some tensions were recorded between proxies and PSOs, including one episode of altercation involving a local observer, a proxy and a PSO. In two polling stations in rural areas, proxies were observed campaigning inside the polling station. There were also instances where the number of proxies from the same party exceeded two, the allowed number. Lastly, there were some indications of campaign activity outside polling stations, mostly led by proxies.

Unauthorized persons (incl. police). In at least one instance, non-invited police officers were present in the polling station. In addition, there were few instances of unidentifiable people approaching voters and proxies, both inside and around the polling stations.

Secrecy of the vote. The secrecy of the vote was generally ensured. Voting booths were mostly positioned so as to protect ballot secrecy, and in many polling stations windows behind the booths were closed, did not overlook the booths, or were effectively covered by curtains to obscure the view. In one instance, concerns regarding the placement of benches in relation to voting secrecy were raised, and the chairperson responded by moving them.

Nevertheless, in some polling stations, the secrecy of the vote was not completely ensured. This included booths positioned in front of windows that were not fully covered, or were obscured only by see-through curtains or improvised materials such as paper. In several polling stations, the backdrop behind the booths was a door rather than a wall. In one case, the door opened onto a hallway used by voters accessing the toilet, and in another onto what appeared to be an adjoining room.

Observers also noted instances where the positioning of voting booths itself compromised secrecy. In some polling stations, booths were placed sufficiently close together that it was

possible to see into adjacent booths, and in one case a booth was positioned at a lower level than the others, posing a similar risk. In another instance, booths faced into the room rather than towards the wall.

Group and accompanied voting. Observers recorded some instances of group voting, involving both family and non-family members, although family members (particularly couples, but also parents with children) accounted for the majority of cases. There were also instances of voters being accompanied despite no apparent need for assistance.

In most cases, PSOs intervened promptly by separating voters, preventing them from entering the booth with their partner or redirecting them to a separate booth. However, in a few instances, no intervention took place. In at least two polling stations, an elderly couple voted together despite being informed that this was not permitted, with one case also compromising the secrecy of another voter's ballot. There were also several cases of a family member accompanying a voter into the booth to assist them.

In one polling station, two voters attempted to show each other their completed ballots, but they were stopped before this occurred.

Polling station layout, equipment and accessibility. The layout of polling stations was generally satisfactory. Nevertheless, in some smaller polling stations, limited space resulted in crowding and queues that possibly affected the voting process. Several observers reported congestion around the ballot paper distribution table, particularly where this task was handled by only one commission member, as well as around the voting booths during busier periods. In some polling stations, the movement of voters between different stages of the process, such as between fingerprint scanning and voter registration, caused minor collisions or confusion. In one instance, a voter, apparently frustrated by the crowding and pace of the process, deposited the ballot without the required stamp.

In a few polling stations, voting booths were not in suitable conditions, including one case of visibly broken booths, which the chairperson acknowledged and attempted to repair. There were also isolated cases where voting materials were temporarily lacking, including envelopes and ballot paper slips for certain parties. Furthermore, a high number of polling stations lacked accessible entrances for persons with disabilities, including at least one polling station under renovation that was considered particularly unsuitable. Braille was provided when needed.

Procedural shortcomings. Voters were not always acquainted with the voting procedure, leading some to enquire of other voters and observe their conduct at the voting booths.

A limited number of procedural mistakes related to the voter lists were also recorded. In one instance, a voter was initially prevented from voting because their signature appeared to have already been registered. The matter was subsequently clarified, and the voter was allowed to cast their ballot.

Observers' freedom of movement. In some cases, observers were not allowed to move freely within the polling station, look inside the voting booths when empty, or consult the journal. In one

instance, the polling station chairperson aggressively addressed the observers during their duty, compelling them to leave the polling station.

3. Closing procedures

Overall assessment. Polling stations generally closed on time. The closing and counting procedures were overall conducted in an orderly, calm and professional manner, with PSOs generally demonstrating commitment to following the prescribed procedures. The shortcomings described below should be considered in light of this overall positive assessment.

At the same time, observers noted indications that some PEC members lacked sufficient training, with some commission members expressing uncertainty about procedural requirements and, in one instance, repeatedly seeking guidance from a party proxy. There were some instances of disagreement that resulted in delays, although the prescribed procedures were ultimately followed.

There were also shortcomings affecting the transparency of the closing procedures, including inconsistencies in the counting of the supplementary voter list, unused self-adhesive stamps and voter passes, as well as instances of incorrect sealing of electoral material envelopes.

Police presence was recorded in some polling stations during the closing and counting process, including one case in which an officer was asked to intervene in a dispute but did not do so, and another in which an officer contacted the chairperson requesting to speak directly by phone with a party representative.

Counting and reconciliation. The most frequent source of disagreement concerned inconsistencies between the number of signatures, voter passes, machine registrations, and ballots counted. In several polling stations, these discrepancies resulted in prolonged discussions before counting could proceed. In one instance, a discrepancy ranging from one to four votes led to more than an hour of discussion before counting was allowed to begin. Similar inconsistencies were observed elsewhere between the number of signatures, the number of ballots and voter passes. In most cases, these were resolved through recounts or explained by a remark in the journal, although in some instances the superior election authority had to be consulted or the CEC contacted directly.

The determination of ballot validity was a recurring source of confusion, particularly in relation to envelopes containing multiple ballots and folded or torn ballot papers. In several cases, chairpersons were initially uncertain of the correct procedure and sought clarification by phone from a superior before reaching a decision. In one polling station observers reported a change in practice during the count following a message read out by a proxy stating that unintentionally folded or torn ballots should be counted as valid.

Requests for recounts, including those initiated by party proxies disputing ballot validity or reconciliation figures, occurred in several polling stations, and in one instance an undercount of issued stamps was identified and corrected following a recount.

Further irregularities included ballots and electoral material envelopes that could not be properly sealed because of adhesive failure, as well as difficulties completing the protocol due to discrepancies in the supplementary voter list.

Observers also raised concerns regarding the chain of custody of sensitive electoral materials. In some instances, such materials appeared to be left unattended during the closing process. In one polling station, the bag containing ballot envelopes remained unsealed until shortly before transport, while in another, stamps and voter lists were sealed only some time after counting had concluded.

Proxy interference during counting. As observed throughout the electoral process, there were multiple instances of party proxies interfering with the counting procedure. Reported cases included proxies touching ballots, moving ballot boxes, handling envelopes, assisting PSOs with procedural tasks, helping locate voter passes, arranging tables, and, in one instance, sitting at the counting table and handling ballots before being asked to stop. In another case, a proxy placed a hand inside the ballot box.

In one polling station, a proxy was observed repeatedly consulting with the chairperson on procedural matters throughout the counting procedure. Observers also reported some instances of proxies making political remarks about other parties during the process, as well as one case where the number of proxies representing the same political party exceeded the permitted limit of two, with the additional proxy expressing dissatisfaction after being asked to leave.

One particularly notable incident involved proxies removing ballots cast for a specific political party from the counting table and taking them to another table to conduct a separate recount. In several polling stations, proxy interventions resulted in heated discussions, delays and confusion during the counting process.

There were also isolated instances of PEC members making inappropriate remarks referring to specific political parties during the count.

Access to protocols. Following the completion of counting, the PEC prepares the official polling station results protocol. Observers and proxies are legally entitled to receive reference copies of the protocol, which serves as an important transparency safeguard and allows them to compare precinct-level results with officially tabulated results.

Several observers reported difficulties accessing, reviewing or obtaining protocol copies. In some polling stations, observers had to insist repeatedly before receiving them, while in others, copies were provided only after prolonged discussions. There were also reports of incomplete protocol documentation, including copies distributed with missing signatures, names or official stamps, as well as one instance in which observers received a protocol with a section left blank.

Observers also reported procedural shortcomings in the preparation of the protocols. PEC members experienced some difficulties completing the protocols, including confusion during the reconciliation process that required ballots to be recounted in batches, and a discrepancy linked

to the supplementary voter list that had to be resolved by phone before the protocol could be finalized.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

The overall conduct of the elections was assessed as satisfactory, despite some instances of misconduct. The electoral process was generally smooth, and the procedures and standards were largely followed. Some procedural mistakes were observed, mainly due to confusion (queues and crowds) and limited familiarity with procedures among voters and, in fewer instances, PSOs. Some voters were not fully acquainted with the voting procedure, leading some to seek guidance from other voters and observe other voters' conduct at the voting booths. PSOs generally followed the prescribed procedure in a professional and confident manner, despite exceptional cases where they did not react promptly to irregularities, and showed hostility towards observers.

Police presence was recorded in some polling stations during the closing and counting process, despite restrictions on police presence inside polling stations under the Armenian Electoral Code.

A significant proportion of the observed irregularities involved party proxies. In several instances, proxies attempted to interfere with the electoral process, including by directing voters, confronting PSOs, standing too close to voting booths and ballot boxes, assisting voters with the voting procedure (a responsibility of PSOs), making allegations against proxies from other parties, interfering with the counting procedure, and, in a few instances, failing to display accreditation badges.

The secrecy of the vote was mostly ensured. However, in some polling stations, voting booths faced uncovered windows or doors, or were positioned too far from the wall, posing risks to ballot secrecy. The layout of polling stations was overall satisfactory, although some smaller ones experienced crowding and a significant number lacked accessible entrances for persons with disabilities.

There were some limitations to observers' ability to fully exercise their rights, including cases where they were not allowed to move freely within polling stations, look inside empty voting booths, or consult polling station journals. Likewise, during the closing procedure, observers reported difficulties obtaining protocol copies, including cases where copies lacked required signatures, names, or stamps.

Lastly, we regret that the CEC did not grant accreditation to several international civil society organisations, which obliged us and similar smaller organisations to undergo local accreditation through relevant Armenian partners.

Recommendations to the Central Electoral Commission of Armenia, as well as relevant Armenian legislators:

- Issue clear guidance to police officers on their permitted role inside polling stations, ensuring that police presence is limited to what is legally required during opening, voting and counting procedures.

- Strengthen the enforcement and practical application of the Electoral Code provisions relating to party proxies, including the permitted number of party proxies per polling station, the obligation to display accreditation badges, and restrictions on party proxy interference with the electoral process.
- Ensure stricter implementation of ballot secrecy requirements, including appropriate positioning of voting booths so that they do not face windows, doors, or open areas, and ensure sufficient spacing or booth design to prevent voters from viewing neighbouring booths.
- Provide clear instructions to PEC members on the prohibition of group and accompanied voting, and require consistent intervention when such cases occur.
- Provide additional guidance on closing and counting procedures, including the counting of unused self-adhesive stamps and the determination of ballot validity.
- Ensure the accessibility of polling stations for voters with disabilities, including through the provision of step-free access, functional ramps and other necessary adaptations.
- Review the layout and staffing arrangements of polling stations expected to receive high turnout, in order to reduce congestion around ballot distribution points and voting booths and ensure that voters can complete all stages of the voting procedure without obstruction.
- Strengthen chain-of-custody procedures for sensitive electoral materials, including by requiring their prompt sealing and secure handling upon completion of counting procedures.
- Enforce observers' legal rights, including their freedom of movement within polling stations, access to polling station journals, and the timely provision of complete protocol copies.
- Strengthen PSO and PEC training to ensure consistent application of polling station procedures, including counting and ballot validity determination. Furthermore, any amendments to the Electoral Code should be adopted sufficiently in advance of elections to allow adequate preparation and comprehensive training on updated procedures.
- Review the accreditation system for international observers to allow foreign civil society organisations to apply directly without requiring a formal invitation letter, and to establish a clearer, more predictable and accessible process for international organisations.

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Organizers

The project

For the June 7th Armenian parliamentary election all three organisations deployed observers as part of a larger project centered around furthering democratic understanding, democratic participation and cultural exchange between Armenian and Danish youth. Therefore, the three organizations co-organized the mission, with Silba being in charge of methodology and training.

Silba

Silba - Initiative for Dialogue and Democracy is a Danish non-partisan and nonprofit youth organization which aims to strengthen democratic dialogue, institutions and organizations. Silba organizes local and international activities, with its main focus being on election observation missions, long term international projects and local engagement.

VU

VU - Liberal Youth is a Danish youth political party who works purposefully with international cooperation to strengthen our liberal values globally and improve conditions for young people around the world. Through partnerships with organisations like LYMEC and IFLRY and DUF. We help shape the international political agenda.

APY

Armenian Progressive Youth is a dynamic non-profit organization based in Armenia. Established in 2009 by a group of passionate young individuals, its mission is to foster youth engagement in decision-making processes and empower young people to develop their leadership skills.