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Analysis  
1 month before  
the poll

# Republican Party led by the President of the Republic Serzh Sarkisian is the main favourite in the general elections in Armenia.

On 23rd February last the Armenian authorities announced that the next general elections would take place on 6th May. Nine political parties are running: the five parties represented in the National Assembly, the only chamber in parliament comprising the Republican Party of Armenia (HHK), Prosperous Armenia (BHK), the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (HHF), Rule of Law (Orinats Erkir, OEK) and Heritage (Z), which is standing in a coalition with the Free Democrats of Khachatur Kokobelian, as well as the Armenian National Congress (HAK), the Communist Party (HKK), the Democratic Party and the United Armenians.

The Armenian government led by Prime Minister Tigran Sarkisian (HHK) has comprised the Republican Party, Prosperous Armenia and Rule of Law since 21st March 2008. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation was a member of the government coalition until 2009 before leaving it because of its opposition to the government's foreign policy.

On 12th February last the Armenians elected their local representatives. The Republican Party led by President of the Republic Serzh Sarkisian won 33 of the 39 country's towns. The opposition claimed that there had been electoral fraud.

The legislative campaign started on 8th April and will end on 4th May. 238 people working in Armenia's embassies or consulates will be able to vote on 27th April and 1st May.

## The parties running

The Republican Party will be led by the President of the Republic, Serzh Sarkisian, who heads the electoral list. Prime Minister Tigran Sarkisian lies third and the Mayor of Erevan, Taron Margarian is 4th. Artashes Geghamian leader of the National Unity Party lies 17th, Khorosow Harutiunian, head of the Christian Democratic Party is 18th and Haik Babukhanian, who leads the Union of Constitutional Law Party, lies 19th

The government's leader, Tigran Sarkisian, declared that his party had chosen to make the fight against poverty one of its priorities in its next mandate as it governs the country. *"The poverty rate has reached 30% in Armenia. Until now we have distributed social aid but in our new programme we are proposing to develop employment and training. The lack of education is the first reason for increasing inequalities and poverty; as a result we are going to work more towards educating our citizens,"* he stressed.

Prosperous Armenia leader, Gagik Tsarukian will lead his party's list. Former Foreign Minister (1998-2008) Vardan Oskanian joined this party saying that only Prosperous Armenia was able to make the next general elections free and transparent. He will be supported by the Solidarity Party led by Sargis Avetisian and the United Labour Party led by Grugen Arsenian.

Rule of Law, a pro-European party, has chosen *"Confidence to build the rule of law in Armenia"* as its slogan. *"Our vision of the future of Armenia is liberal, centrist and European"*, declared the party's leader Arthur Baghdasarian who said that the government coalition formed in 2008 had *"saved the country"*.

As for the opposition the Armenian Revolutionary Federation that lies to the left of the political scale is extremely critical of the government's economic policy. It is fighting for wage and pension increases and an increase in social aid.

Heritage and the Free Democrats, a party founded by former members of the Panarmenian National Movement (PANM) led by the first president of the Republic of Armenia in (1991-1998), Levon Ter Petrossian, in the 1990's, have decided to stand together in these general elections. According to its leader Raffi Hovannisian, this coalition will *"move mountains."*

Many Armenians fear that the next general elections will be marred by electoral fraud, a phenomenon that is frequent in a country where the electoral roll is not public. *"No other country in the world has a law that says that the voters' list must not be made public,"* says Felix Khachatryan, secretary of the Armenian People's Party, who suspects the authorities in power of disposing of the vote of 500,000 Armenians living abroad as it wishes.

Recently four parties – Prosperous Armenia, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Heritage and the Armenian National Congress – signed a joint declaration that promises to *"defend the Armenians' vote"*. Galust Sahakian, the parliamentary leader of the Republican Party, qualified this action as *"romantic"* and stressed it was not possible to sign a text like that in a hurry.

On 3rd February last the editor in chief of the daily *Haykakan Zhamanak*, Hayk Gevorgian, has been arrested. The newspaper had already been forced to pay a fine of several million drams for having slandered the family of former President of the Republic (1998-2008) Robert Kotcharian. According to a recent poll by the Centre for Political and Public Studies two-thirds of the Armenians (66%) say they do not have any confidence in the elections on 6th May.

### The Armenian Political System

The Armenian Parliament is monocameral. Its only chamber, the National Assembly (Azgayin Zhoghov), has 131 members elected for five years. 90 of them are appointed by the simple majority within a single national constituency and 41 others are appointed in a proportional election in 41 constituencies. Every political party has to win a minimum of 5% of the vote to be represented in the National Assembly (7% of the vote for coalitions). Moreover, the lists have to include a minimum of 15% of women amongst their candidates. The latter have to be aged at least 25. Finally every party has to

pay a deposit of a thousand times the minimum salary which is reimbursed if it wins a 5% minimum of the vote. On 27th December 2011 Heritage and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation suggested that all 131 members of the National Assembly be elected according to a proportional system. They criticise the fact that the 41 MPs elected by the majority vote benefit the parties in power whom they help assert their majority. They also point to the aptness of the proportional system for a *"small"* State and a lightly populated country. Stepan Demirchian, leader of the People's Party, says that the measure would lead to a reduction in electoral fraud and David Harutiunian, chairman of the Legal Affairs Committee in parliament stresses that it would be beneficial to the emergence of political parties. On 29th February the draft law was rejected by the National Assembly: 56 MPs voted against, 30 approved it. The Republican Party said that this measure was bad for democracy and declared that it would take the country towards a dictatorship.

5 political parties are represented in the National Assembly at present:

- the Republican Party of Armenia (HHK), a centre-right movement founded in 1990 and led by the present president of the Republic Serzh Sarkisian, has 64 seats;
- Prosperous Armenia (BHK), a centrist liberal party in April 2004 founded in April 2004 by businessman Gagik Tsarukian, has 18 seats;
- the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaktsutiun, HHD), socialist, led by Vahan Hovhannisian, with 18 MPs;
- Rule of Law (OEK), centrist liberal party led by Artur Baghdasarian, has 16 seats;
- Heritage (Zharangutiun, Z), centrist liberal founded in 2002 by Raffi Hovannisian, has 9 MPs.

According to the polls the Republican Party and Prosperous Armenia are the two parties that will win in the general elections with 39% and 36% of the vote respectively. The Armenian National Congress is due to win 8.5% of the vote and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, 6.1% of the vote. Finally Heritage-Free Democrats and Rule of Law are due to win 5% of the vote each.

**Reminder of the general election results of 12th May 2007 in Armenia**

Turnout: 59.35%

Political Parties	No. of votes won	% of votes won	No of seats won
Republican Party of Armenia (HHK)	458 258	33,91	64
Prosperous Armenia (BHK)	204 483	15,13	18
Armenian Revolutionary Federation (HHD)	177 907	13,16	18
Rule of Law (OEK)	95 324	7,05	16
Heritage (Z)	81,048	6	9
Others	288 706	21,25	0

Source : Armenian Central Electoral Commission (<http://www.elections.am/proportional/election-82>)

## The Armenian General Elections are not due to bring about any Change

9 political parties are running in the general elections that are to take place on 6th May in Armenia. These include the 5 parties that are represented at present in the National Assembly, the only chamber in parliament: the Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) of the President of the Republic, Serzh Sargsyan and of Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan; Prosperous Armenia (BHK), led by business man Gagik Tsukian; the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (HHD) led by Vahan Hovhannisian; Rule of Law (Orinats Erkir, OEK) led by Artur Baghdasarian and Heritage (Z) led by Raffi Hovannisian, who is standing in a coalition with the Free Democrats led by Khachatur Kokobelian. 4 other parties are also running: the Armenian National Congress (HAK) that rallies 18 parties, the Communist Party (HKK), the Democratic Party and the United Armenians.

**D-7**  
7 days before  
the poll

The Republican Party, led by the President of the Public, Serzh Sargsyan, is the main favourite in the general elections. His programme insists on eradicating social inequalities and is planning to implement several measures in support of young people, families, the poorly housed and the elderly.

The Armenian Revolutionary Federation, a government member from 2007 to 2009 (the present government rallies the Armenian Republican Party, Prosperous Armenia and Rule of Law) is putting forward many specific measures to eradicate poverty and to improve the Armenian standard of living. Hence the party wants to increase retirement pensions to 63,000 drams (31,255 drams in 2012) and to raise the minimum hourly wage from 196 to 400 drams. The Vahan Hovhannisian Party

is promising the creation of 200,000 new jobs and wants to give 150,000 drams to each citizen to cover medical expenses (63,000 drams at present), to build more apartments for big families and to increase the birth rate in Armenia (by 50,000 births annually).

*"There will be infringements on 6th May. To win more votes the authorities are exaggerating the number of voters,"* declared Heritage MP, Armen Martirosian. The President of the Republic Serzh Sargsyan asked all of those responsible to *"do what is necessary for the elections to be free, fair and transparent."*

Officially Armenia has 2,482,593 voters (figure of 16th April last), i.e. +359,614 in comparison with the last election on 12th May 2007, just as the most recent census reveals that the country has 400,000 citizens

less than five years ago. The Head of State explained that the increase in the number of voters came from the registration on the electoral rolls of Armenians living abroad. Colonel Hovhannes Kocharian, head of the passport and visa department of the Armenian Police Force said that 3000 names had been withdrawn from the electoral rolls including 2000 who have died. He blamed families, who do not do what is necessary when a relative dies, for the continued registration of the dead on the rolls.

The international community and notably the EU are watching the election carefully. *"Of course the way the election takes place will show us how Armenia has developed and this will affect the relations we form with the country,"* indicated Michael Mann, spokesperson of Catherine Ashton, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and the Security Policy.

*"No one can say that the next general elections will be*

*free and fair,"* said Manuel Sargsian, Director of Research at the Armenian Centre for National and International Studies. Likewise, according to a recent poll, more than eight Armenians in ten (83%) believe that the next elections will be neither *"fair nor free"*.

Alexander Iskandarian, Director of the Caucasus Institute stresses that the elections on 6th May are not due to bring any major change to the composition of the Armenian parliament. In his opinion no more than 6 parties will rise above the 5% voting mark obligatory to be represented in the National Assembly (7% of the vote for coalitions). The most recent polls credit the party led by the President of the Republic, Serzh Sargsyan with 37% of the vote. He is to be followed by his government partner, Prosperous Armenia, which is due to win 34% of the vote, the Armenian National Congress, 8.5%. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation and Rule of Law are due to win 6.7%. Finally Heritage is due to win 5.5%.

## The Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) of Serzh Sargsyan, President of the Republic retains power.

### Results

The Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) of President of the Republic Serzh Sargsyan came out ahead in the general elections that took place on 6th May in Armenia with 44.08% of the vote. He took the lead over Prosperous Armenia (BHK), the centrist liberal member of the outgoing government led by Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan (HHK) and businessman Gagik Tsarukian, which won 30.30% of the vote i.e. double its result in the last general elections on 12th May 2007. The National Armenian Congress (HAK) came third taking 7.07% of the vote. Heritage (Zharangutiun, Z), a centrist liberal party led by Raffi Hovannisian, which stood in a coalition with the Free Democrats of Khachatur Kokobelian, won 5.75%; the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaktsutiun, HHD), a socialist opposition party led by Vahan Hovhannisian, lost ground with 5.69% of the vote and Rule of Law (OEK), a centrist liberal member of the outgoing government led by Artur Artur Baghdasarian, won 5.48%. The other three parties running i.e. the Communist Party (HKK), the Democratic Party and the United Armenians each won under 1% of the vote.

Turn out totalled 62.26% i.e. a higher rate than that recorded in the last general elections on May 12th 2007 (+ 2.91 points).

The general election on 6th May was a test for Arme-

nia after the last presidential election on 19th February 2008. After Serzh Sargsyan's victory many Armenians spoke of electoral fraud. Demonstrations by the opposition led to riots and ten deaths.

"The election took place in a calm atmosphere – we did

not see any serious infringements” said the head of the observation committee from the International Centre for the Expertise of Electoral Systems (ICES), Alexandre Tsinker as the elections came to an end. “We believe that this election was a major step towards the enhancement of democratic values in the Republic of Armenia,” stressed the head of the surveillance mission of the Community of Independent States (CIS) and Vice-President of the Community’s Executive, Vladimir Garkoun, who qualified the general elections as “free, transparent and competitive.”

“I want everything to be calm, peaceful and in line with the law. This is the guarantee for progress,” declared President Sargsyan after placing his voting slip in the box on 6th May.

9 000 members of the police force had been called in to

maintain order in the event of turbulence but the streets of Armenia remained calm after the election.

The general elections on 6th May brought little change to the composition of the National Assembly, the only Chamber in Parliament. It augurs well for Head of State, Serzh Sargsyan who will be running in an election in February 2013 in a country that has succeeded in respecting international democratic standards. “If we have the best possible general elections, that are totally free and honest – it will be a major precedent,” declared Richard Giragossian of the Regional Research Centre before the election. “But it will not be enough because the oligarchs are still powerful, parliament will still be submissive and the law will still be the preserve of the ruler;” he added however.

#### General Election Results on 6th May in Armenia

Turnout 62.26%

Political Parties	No of votes won	% of votes won
Armenian Republican Party (HHK)	631 036	44,08
Prosperous Armenia (BHK)	483 803	30,30
Armenian National Congress (HAK)	101 238	7,07
Heritage-Free Democrats (Z)	82 376	5,75
Armenian Revolutionary Federation (HHD)	81 414	5,69
Rule of Law (OEK)	78 428	5,48
Communist Party (HKK)	15 203	1,06
Democratic Party	5 256	0,37
United Armenians	2 943	0,21

Source : Armenian Central Electoral Commission <http://www.elections.am/proportional/election-24104/>

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