

Update on Presidential Elections in Armenia

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The views expressed in this document are those of independent researcher-analysts, and do not represent the official position of International IDEA. The information, analyses and conclusions are based on the articles of Armenian and international media (printed and broadcast), announcements of the political forces, consultations with various experts and analysts.

On 19 February 2007, the Presidential Elections were held in Armenia. The polls were open from 8AM until 8PM.

Turnout:

According to the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) 1.642.057 voters, or 69.26% of the eligible voters participated in the elections. The highest turnout - 74.81% - was in the region of Gegharkunik. The lowest turnout was in the region of Shirak - 63.70%.

Preliminary Results:

According to the Election Code, the CEC should publish preliminary results no later than 24 hours after elections, i.e. 20.02.08 8PM. However, CEC summed up the results much earlier and published them on 20.02.08, at 12 PM.

1. Serge Sargssyan (Prime Minister): 52.8%
2. Levon Ter-Petrossyan (First President): 21.5%
3. Arthur Baghdasaryan (Country of Law, ex-parliamentary Chairman): 11.6%
4. Vahan Hovannessyan (ARF, Parliament Deputy-Chairman): 6.12%
5. Vazgen Manukyan (National Democratic Union): 1.28%
6. Tigran Karapetyan (Popular Party): 0.6%
7. Artashes Geghamyan (National Unity): 0.46%
8. Arman Melikyan (ex-foreign Minister of N.Karabagh): 0.27
9. Aram Harutunyan (naitonal Concord): 0.19%

Among eight members of the CEC, two members did not sign the protocol of preliminary election results. These were the representatives of Country of Law and Heritage parliamentary parties (both opposition). The representative of ARF attached a special opinion to his signature, where he mentioned a number of violations in several territorial electoral commissions.

Thus, according to the official preliminary results, Serge Sargssyan wins in the first round of election; the final results will only be published on 26 February 2008.

The Presidents of Armenia, France, Russia, Georgia, Nagorno Karabagh and Turkey already sent their congratulations to Sargssyan on 20.02.08, shortly after announcement of the final results. So did the Catholicos of all Armenians, as well as Charles Aznavour.

International observers:

The election observation mission of CIS assessed the elections in line with the Armenian electoral legislation and called all the international actors who share their view, join this statement.

The International Election Observation Mission (joint: OSCE/ODIHR, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, European Parliament, PACE) assessed elections "mostly in line with the country's international commitments, although further improvements are necessary to address remaining challenges".

The OSCE/ODIHR mission will stay in Armenia and very probably, will publish a 3rd interim, post-election report.

Complaints:

Many of the local election observers and human rights organizations have reported many cases of violence on the Election Day, mainly from the side of agents supporting Serge Sargssyan and against supporters, party agents of Levon Ter-Petrosyan as well as in a few cases, Arman Melikyan. This has included beating, kidnapping, frightening of the people, both, men and women.

There have been a number of complaints about incorrect calculation of votes, and demand for re-calculations.

Criminal cases:

The prosecutor's office of Armenia has received 11 applications and has already started criminal cases on 8 of them. The other 3 applications are still in the stage of examination and discussion.

Candidates and election results:

Not all the candidates agree with the announced official results. Thus, *Levon Ter-Petrosyan* and his associates do not accept the election results. On 20.02.08, 15:00 according to different media, 100-200.000 people participated in Ter-Petrosyan's demonstration in Yerevan. The demonstration continued with rally to the Central Election Commission, and ended at 20.30 in the evening. On 21.02.08, Ter-Petrosyan and his supporters were again in the center of Yerevan and announced a 24 hours non stop "seated strike" at State Opera's Freedom Square since 21.02.08 evening and they called it as "People's protestation headquarters".

They presented three main demands:

- 1) to announce February 19 elections invalid and appoint new elections
- 2) to sentence all the criminals who have been involved in election fraud
- 3) to provide them live broadcast on Public TV in order to communicate with the people directly.

According to the announcement of Levon Ter- Petrossyan on 21.02.08 meeting, Manvel Grigoryan and Gagik Melkonyan, the two Deputy-Ministers of Defense, have joint the people of Armenia i.e.: Levon Ter-Petrosyan's movement and said that they wont allow that army is deployed against people. Manvel Grigoryan is also the head of "guerilla union".

Heghine Bisharyan, the Vice President of "Country of Law Party" has participated in the demonstration of 21.02.08. She read the statement of their party headquarters, and mentioned

that they are with the people in the struggle against injustice. However, she did not make any statement about joining Ter-Petrosyan.

Levon Ter-Petrosyan and his supporters announce that they are ready to go to the end and win and Levon Ter -Petrosyan mentioned it is going to be no violence from their side and they will use all legal mechanisms and have a very concrete programme of action.

There has been no violence against the demonstrates by now, but the national security forces, special army and the police are ready to act.

Arthur Baghdasaryan has demanded to announce elections invalid in about 100 precincts and has asked for re-calculation of votes in about 200 election precincts. His election headquarters has disseminated an announcement that they will fight against election fraud and will discover the cases. They have already called a number of territorial electoral commissions to organize re-calculation of votes in different electoral precincts, and to invalidate some of the results in other polling stations. In the result of re-calculation process in one of the precincts, it turned out that around 300 votes had been taken from other candidates and added to the votes of Serge Sargssyan.

ARF (*Vahan Hovanessyan*) has accepted its defeat. The Chairman of Bureau while answering to the journalists said that within ARF discussions are ongoing in order to come up with special statement. He also mentioned their concern on the widespread election bribery and vote buying.

Candidate *Aram Harutunyan* has accepted election results and congratulated Serge Sargssyan and the people of Armenia.

The other candidates, Vazgen Manukyan, Artashes Geghamyan, Arman Melikyan and Tigran Karapetyan have not yet come up with official statements.