

# Comprehensive Summary of the Preliminary Report of the Akanates Observation Mission

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## Preliminary Report on the 2026 National Assembly Elections in Armenia Observation period: April 1-May 5, 2026

*Source: Akanates Observation Mission preliminary report, 34 pages.*

*This document is an unofficial English summary/translation prepared for informational purposes. It is not an official translation of the original report. In the event of any inconsistency or discrepancy, the Armenian-language original prevails.*

### Executive overview

The preliminary report of the Akanates Observation Mission presents findings from the pre-campaign period ahead of Armenia's June 7, 2026 National Assembly elections. Covering April 1-May 5, 2026, before the official campaign period, it examines election administration, registration of political forces and observers, candidate lists, early campaigning, alleged electoral violations, use or perceived misuse of administrative resources, party finance transparency, and obstacles to observation.

Overall, the report indicates that the formal electoral framework was functioning and key administrative deadlines were generally observed. At the same time, it identifies significant integrity risks before the official campaign period had begun. The main concerns relate to early campaigning outside effective financial oversight, alleged voter pressure and material inducements, possible misuse of administrative resources, weak party-finance transparency, involvement of children in political activities, formalistic gender representation, and cases of non-cooperation or obstruction toward observers.

### 1. Observation methodology

Akanates applied a multi-source methodology combining desk research, field observation, official inquiries, semi-structured interviews, meetings, media and social media monitoring, and citizen reports submitted through the [iditord.org](https://www.iditord.org) platform. During the reporting period, 61 long-term observers worked across the areas served by Armenia's 38 Territorial Electoral Commissions.

The mission carried out extensive fieldwork: 120 visits to Territorial Electoral Commissions; observation of 22 training and licensing courses for Precinct Electoral Commission members; 277 visits to party and alliance regional offices; attendance at 73 pre-election events; 140 meetings with local self-government representatives; 1,312 interviews with residents involving 1,468 citizens; and 18 meetings with state bodies, media representatives, and observer organizations. Where possible, identified issues and alleged violations were checked through several independent sources. In relevant cases, the mission submitted reports to competent law-enforcement bodies.

### 2. Election administration and registration

Akanates monitored all 16 Central Electoral Commission sessions held online between February 9 and May 5, 2026. During this period, the CEC discussed 73 agenda items, adopted 99 decisions, and prepared 3 protocols, most of which concerned the organization of the

parliamentary elections. Several decisions addressed important procedures, including observer accreditation, filling vacant leadership positions in Territorial Electoral Commissions, commission registers, and the packaging and transfer of election documents.

The report raises concerns about the transparency and substance of CEC sessions. Decisions were generally adopted unanimously, while public discussions often consisted mainly of reading draft decisions. The report highlights the CEC chair's statement that much of the discussion takes place "off-camera" and that commission members often come to sessions having already reached consensus. Akanates argues that public sessions should include substantive deliberation, since their publication is meant to ensure transparency and accountability. The report also notes that CEC decisions and agendas are published as PDFs and are not machine-readable, while one decision on election-related costs was published but not accessible on the CEC website.

All 38 Territorial Electoral Commissions held sessions to approve polling station lists and numbering within the legal timeframe, and observers generally assessed their work as normal, open, and constructive. However, problems were recorded, including difficulties contacting some commissions, insufficient office and technical conditions, internet disruptions, incomplete furnishing or ongoing repairs, and physical inaccessibility of some premises. The report also raises concern about the presence of certain public officials and public-sector figures in commissions, noting that this may create real or perceived risks regarding impartiality and public trust.

A total of 19 political forces applied to participate in the elections: 17 parties and 2 alliances. Together, the alliances and parties represent 22 parties formally involved in the electoral race. The CEC registered party and alliance lists, granted some political forces time to correct deficiencies, and refused registration of several individual candidates whose documents were not corrected within the deadline. The CEC also accredited 13 local organizations for election observation, including 3 joint observation missions. In one case concerning the Free Vote joint observation mission, the Administrative Court overturned the CEC's rejection of the participation of the "MENQ" Lori youth NGO, finding that statutory goals must be assessed substantively rather than formally.

### **3. Candidate lists and early campaigning**

The 19 political forces submitted electoral lists containing 2,128 candidates in total. Civil Contract submitted the largest list, with 293 candidates, while Wings of Unity and the For the Republic Democratic Defenders Alliance submitted the smallest lists, with 80 candidates each. After one candidate from the latter was not registered, the list fell to 79 candidates, revealing a legal gap because the law does not clearly regulate such a situation.

All political forces formally complied with the gender quota requiring that no gender exceed 70 percent in each group of three candidates. However, the report finds that this compliance was largely formalistic. In most lists, women were usually placed third in each group of three rather than in leading positions. No political force had a woman as the first-listed candidate, and only the Republic Party had a woman as the second candidate. Candidate ages ranged from 24 to 88; the youngest median list belonged to Against Everyone, while the oldest median list was the Armenian National Congress. Civil Contract had the highest share of employed candidates, at approximately 96.6 percent, many of them holding public office or public-service positions.

Although the official campaign period was scheduled to begin on May 8, 2026, the report finds that several political forces had already begun de facto campaigning months before election day. The most visible early campaigning was attributed to Civil Contract, the Strong Armenia alliance,

the Armenia alliance, Wings of Unity, and associated movements, especially the "In Our Way" movement, which preceded the registration of Strong Armenia and the formation of the alliance. The mission documented the use of leaflets, posters, large billboards, LED and other advertising, social media advertising, public events, vehicles, buses, and other campaign tools. The central concern is that spending before the official campaign period falls outside the relevant reporting mechanisms and therefore remains largely outside state and public oversight.

#### **4. Alleged violations, children, and administrative resources**

The report records several types of alleged electoral violations, including possible vote buying, promises of benefits, charity-related concerns, employer pressure, forced participation in rallies, and material incentives for voters abroad. Akanates received information about alleged promises of favorable treatment, money, jobs, or material support in exchange for electoral support. In several cases, the mission submitted reports to law-enforcement bodies.

Through anonymous citizen interviews, observers recorded 57 cases in which respondents specifically mentioned the organized arrival of people from Russia to participate in the elections, allegedly in support of the Strong Armenia alliance. The report also refers to online materials encouraging or facilitating travel to Armenia or voting for Strong Armenia. It further describes alleged pressure by employers and managers in private-sector and public-service-related organizations, as well as claims that employees were instructed or pressured to attend rallies or campaign-adjacent events, including the April 11 Strong Armenia rally and the "Voice of Peace" music festival in Gyumri.

Akanates expresses concern about the involvement of minors in political or campaign-adjacent activities. The report cites cases involving minors at a Strong Armenia rally, schoolchildren performing a song associated with Civil Contract messaging, children welcoming the prime minister with symbols and gestures associated with Civil Contract, teenagers distributing Strong Armenia materials, and school-aged children present near a meeting with the Armenia alliance leader during school hours. The report recommends that parties and political figures refrain from involving children in political rallies and other mass campaign events.

A major section of the report addresses the use or perceived misuse of administrative resources. Akanates lists several government or local-government initiatives adopted or publicized shortly before the elections that may create risks or perceptions of electoral influence, including salary increases, benefit increases, tariff reductions, and cash payments to specific groups. In some cases, state bodies stated that the measures had been planned earlier, but the report notes that these explanations did not fully dispel concerns regarding timing.

The report also raises concern about the blurring of government and ruling-party messaging, particularly around peace and national security. Examples include videos filmed in the prime minister's office and published on official or semi-official channels, coverage by the state news agency Armenpress of Civil Contract's intra-party campaign activity without comparable identified coverage of other forces, and the "Voice of Peace" music festivals. Akanates assesses some of the prime minister's videos as containing elements of campaigning in favor of the ruling party and involving the use of public resources in a way that could provide political advantage.

#### **5. Party financing and observation environment**

The report identifies serious weaknesses in political finance transparency and accountability. Although many political forces had already conducted active and visible pre-election campaigning, related expenses were either unavailable or outside reporting mechanisms due to

legal gaps. Complete information on parties' 2026 financial flows will only become available in 2027, making it impossible to assess pre-campaign spending in real time.

Out of the 22 parties involved in the electoral process, 9 reported financial activity in 2025, and 4 received state funding. Civil Contract reported approximately 774.8 million AMD in total income, including about 234.7 million AMD in state funding. It received about 416.7 million AMD in donations and 113.3 million AMD in membership fees. Around 65 percent of its donations came from 109 individuals who each transferred at least 1 million AMD.

The report criticizes the practice of parties submitting "zero" financial reports, arguing that parties normally have at least office, utility, or in-kind support costs that should be reflected. Public statements by some party representatives and supporters appeared inconsistent with zero reports or raised questions about undeclared donations, in-kind support, or possible prohibited funding sources. Akanates submitted applications to the Corruption Prevention Commission, which initiated relevant proceedings.

The report further notes that some political forces campaigned actively before registering as parties or through movements and initiatives, including Strong Armenia's activity under the unregistered "In Our Way" movement and Wings of Unity's activity as an initiative before party registration. This creates risks of circumventing financial reporting rules and prevents the public from understanding how large-scale campaign activity was financed.

The report also documents cases of obstruction, non-cooperation, or hostile treatment toward observers. In Kapan, an Akanates observer was not allowed to remain at a publicly announced Strong Armenia meeting after being identified as an observer. Another case occurred at an Armenia alliance office in Ashtarak, where an office representative allegedly behaved aggressively and insulted observers despite the visit being arranged in advance. The report also states that Strong Armenia regional offices repeatedly refused to communicate with observers, explaining that they had been instructed by lawyers not to interact with observers.

## **Key findings**

The formal electoral framework was functioning, and key administrative deadlines were generally met. However, CEC transparency was weakened by the formal nature of public sessions and the use of non-machine-readable documents; some Territorial Electoral Commissions faced accessibility, infrastructure, and communication problems; all political forces formally met gender quota rules, but women were rarely placed in leading positions; several political forces conducted visible early campaigning before the official campaign period, while related spending remained outside effective oversight; the report records alleged violations, including vote-buying-related promises, employer pressure, forced rally attendance, and material incentives for voters abroad; children were involved in several political or campaign-adjacent activities; risks of misuse or perceived misuse of administrative resources were identified, especially in relation to ruling-party and state messaging; party finance transparency remains weak, particularly for pre-campaign spending, zero reports, late registration, and unregistered movements; and several cases of obstruction, non-cooperation, or hostile treatment toward observers were documented.

## **Overall assessment**

Taken together, the report's findings suggest that the pre-election environment was marked by substantial integrity risks even before the official campaign began. The most serious concerns relate to unequal campaign conditions, opaque financing, possible misuse of administrative resources, alleged voter pressure and material inducements, involvement of children in political

activities, and insufficient accountability mechanisms. The report does not present these issues as a final assessment of the election as a whole; rather, it documents risks and alleged violations identified during the pre-campaign observation period and, where appropriate, referred to competent authorities.