

# Comprehensive Summary of the Akanates Observation Mission Report

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## *Report on the 2026 National Assembly Elections in Armenia*

*Observation period: May 6–22, 2026*

*Source: Akanates Observation Mission 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.*

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## Executive Overview

The Akanates Observation Mission monitored Armenia's 2026 National Assembly election campaign from May 6 to 22, 2026. The report examines election administration, party registration and candidate lists, campaign conduct, campaign materials, possible pressure on voters and employees, misuse of administrative resources, involvement of children and public-sector employees, law-enforcement responses, and campaign finance.

Overall, the technical administration of the elections appeared largely stable. Territorial electoral commissions generally had adequate premises, equipment, and working conditions, and observer cooperation was mostly constructive. At the same time, the campaign environment raised serious concerns. Akanates recorded aggressive political rhetoric, obstruction of campaign activity, possible pressure on citizens and workers, problematic use of public institutions and officials, involvement of children in political events, and campaign-finance transparency gaps. These issues affect the equality of electoral competition and the ability of voters to make free political choices.

## Observation Methodology

Akanates combined desk research, field observation, official inquiries, interviews, media and social media monitoring, and reports submitted through the [iditord.org](https://www.iditord.org) platform. The mission deployed 61 long-term observers across the areas served by Armenia's 38 territorial electoral commissions. During the reporting period, observers made 63 visits to territorial electoral commissions, observed five training or licensing sessions for precinct commission members, visited 242 campaign offices, attended 176 campaign events, met 44 local self-government representatives, and conducted 632 interviews with community residents.

## Election Administration

During the reporting period, the Central Electoral Commission held seven sessions and adopted 93 decisions, most of them directly related to the organization of the elections. It processed 82 candidate withdrawal applications, resulting in the cancellation of 81 candidate registrations. The CEC also adopted decisions related to asset and income declarations, commission offices, commission membership, and the consent process concerning criminal prosecution and deprivation of liberty in relation to one candidate.

Territorial electoral commissions generally operated without major disruption. However, Akanates noted several shortcomings, including temporary furnishing or internet issues, security concerns in some premises, lack of transport compensation for commission members visiting polling stations, and communication difficulties with one commission. The mission also criticized the CEC's publication of agendas and decisions in non-machine-readable PDF format, which complicates public oversight and data analysis.

Observer access was mostly respected, but several cases caused concern. In one instance, a commission requested deletion of a photograph of a register page containing passport data of persons present at a meeting. Akanates disagreed with the interpretation that such documents could be restricted from observers. The mission also recorded a political neutrality concern when a deputy chair of a territorial commission attended a Civil Contract campaign event.

## Political Parties, Candidate Lists, and Programs

The report notes that 2,107 candidates were included in the first parts of candidate lists submitted by political forces. On average, 82 percent were members of the relevant parties or alliances. Akanates found that 35 individuals from nine parties were included on the lists of eight other political forces without formal alliances being created. Although this is not prohibited, the practice may allow political actors to avoid stricter rules that apply to formal alliances, including requirements related to congress decisions, deposits, finances, and electoral thresholds.

Akanates emphasized that campaign programs are essential for informed voting and later accountability. While Armenian law does not require parties to publish programs, the mission stressed that their absence weakens meaningful political competition. As of May 21, only 10 of the 19 political forces had campaign programs published on the CEC website.

## Campaign Offices and Materials

Observers generally did not face systemic obstacles when visiting campaign offices, but several incidents were recorded. These included aggressive and insulting behavior toward an observer at a Prosperous Armenia office in Yerevan, denial of entry to a Civil Contract campaign office, and refusal by a Wings of Unity office to answer observer questions locally.

Akanates documented multiple problems with campaign materials, including posters placed in unauthorized locations, posters exceeding permitted size limits, posters on residential buildings, commercial facilities, utility poles, gas stations, vehicles, and other non-designated places. Several materials lacked legally required information about the commissioner, print run, or printing company. The report also refers to an allegation that a municipal utility vehicle in Kapan was used to install Wings of Unity posters, raising possible administrative-resource concerns.

## Pressure, Organized Participation, and Employer Influence

The mission recorded reports suggesting possible organized transportation or mobilization of citizens from abroad, including from Russia and Abkhazia, allegedly in connection with support for the Strong Armenia alliance. These reports included claims that people were encouraged or assisted to travel to Armenia to vote and, in some cases, were promised help with documents.

Akanates also documented concerns about private-employer influence. One reported case involved employees of the Tashir-Kar factory allegedly being transported against their will from Tashir to Yerevan to attend a Strong Armenia rally. The mission submitted a crime report to law-enforcement bodies regarding this case. Other reports concerned mass transportation to a Prosperous Armenia campaign event and alleged employer-linked mobilization. Such incidents raise concerns about whether citizens and employees could make political choices freely and without fear of workplace consequences.

## Use of Public Institutions, Employees, and Children

One of the report's central concerns is the involvement of educational institutions, public-sector employees, and children in campaign activities. Akanates recorded cases where school directors, teachers, kindergarten employees, cultural institution staff, municipal employees, and other public-sector representatives allegedly attended campaign events during working hours or in an official capacity. Several cases involved Civil Contract events attended by education and community-sector employees.

The mission reported cases where schoolchildren were allegedly released from classes early or brought to campaign events, including events involving the Prime Minister. Children were reportedly given flags, political symbols, or campaign-associated clothing, and in some cases were instructed about appearance or clothing. Similar concerns were recorded in relation to other political forces, including minors wearing Strong Armenia shirts and caps or distributing campaign leaflets.

Akanates underlined that Armenian law restricts political activity in educational institutions and campaigning by educational staff in their official capacity. The mission concluded that political forces often failed to take visible steps to prevent children's involvement in campaign activities. It also noted that the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports had issued reminders and applied disciplinary measures in some cases, with materials sent to law-enforcement bodies for legal assessment.

## Campaign Rhetoric and Obstruction

The campaign environment was highly polarized and often marked by aggressive, insulting, or demeaning rhetoric. Akanates found that political debate frequently shifted from programmatic competition to confrontation between government and opposition forces. Sensitive issues such as security and the loss of Artsakh were used in emotionally charged ways, deepening polarization. The report expresses particular concern that public officials, who are expected to show restraint, also engaged in harsh and degrading language.

A serious obstruction incident was recorded on May 16 in the Tashir enlarged community, where supporters of Strong Armenia allegedly obstructed a Civil Contract campaign march led by Defense Minister Suren Papikyan. According to information cited in the report, the incident involved blocking the road with vehicles, loud music, and violence against participants. A criminal proceeding was initiated, with 11 people charged.

## Misuse of Administrative Resources

Akanates identifies possible misuse of administrative resources as a major problem. The report stresses that public resources must be used neutrally and must not serve the interests of any party or candidate. It criticizes certain government initiatives announced during the campaign period that could have been introduced earlier, including the Prime Minister's campaign-period proposal concerning restoration of driving privileges for some people deprived of licenses. Akanates considered the use of a Facebook vote on this public-safety issue problematic because it shifted state policy-making into a campaign setting without clear legal or professional justification.

The report also records many allegations involving public-sector resources, officials, or employees in campaign activity, mainly connected with Civil Contract. These included claims that community employees put up posters, officials campaigned during working hours, service vehicles were used for campaign purposes, local officials accompanied campaign events, educational staff were mobilized, and public-institution pages shared campaign content.

Additional concerns included reports that people were afraid to express political preferences, serve as precinct commission members nominated by opposition forces, rent premises to campaign offices, or volunteer for opposition-linked activity because of fear of job loss or retaliation. Akanates also refers to alleged door-to-door data collection by district-administration employees in Yerevan, including questions about residence, absence from the country, and political preferences, in some cases alongside distribution of Civil Contract campaign materials.

## Law-Enforcement Conduct and Fundamental Rights

Akanates expressed serious concern about several law-enforcement responses. In one case, Armen Hovhannisyan was detained after tearing a Civil Contract campaign poster. The report states that the alleged act should have been treated as an administrative offense punishable by a fine rather than as a criminal offense. Hovhannisyan was detained, later transferred to a mental health center, and died by suicide. Akanates considered the use of criminal tools and deprivation of liberty in this case unlawful and dangerous for electoral freedoms and the rule of law.

Another case concerned activist and forcibly displaced Artsakh resident Arthur Osipyan, who had a heated exchange with the Prime Minister during a Civil Contract event. He was removed, detained, charged under several Criminal Code articles, and later remanded in custody. Akanates assessed that even if the statements were harsh or inappropriate, they fell within the scope of political criticism and did not justify the criminal charges. The report also criticized police actions during a protest near the Government building as disproportionate and lacking a legitimate basis.

## Campaign Finance and Transparency

Akanates reviewed campaign-finance transparency and noted that oversight responsibilities are divided between the Corruption Prevention Commission and the CEC Oversight and Audit Service. The mission found that different publication timelines, formats, and methods made comparison and public analysis difficult.

As of May 17, campaign funds of the 19 participating political forces had received AMD 761.29 million. The largest inflows were reported by Civil Contract, Armenia Alliance, and Strong Armenia. As of May 14, party bank accounts had received AMD 867.62 million in donations from 806 individuals. During the first ten days of the campaign, participants spent AMD 457.75 million, or about 60.1 percent of received campaign funds.

Akanates also raised concerns about broad or unclear expenditure categories. In the Prosperous Armenia declaration, expenditures were reportedly listed by supplier rather than by goods or services purchased, making meaningful analysis impossible. Despite these issues, the CEC Oversight and Audit Service conclusion stated that no violations had been found. The report also noted high Meta advertising spending by Strong Armenia, which spent USD 140,651 from April 22 to May 21, about three times more than all other political forces combined.

## Overall Assessment

The report presents a mixed picture. Election administration was generally functioning, and preparations were proceeding without major technical disruption. However, the campaign environment was affected by serious concerns related to unequal conditions, possible administrative-resource misuse, pressure on voters and employees, involvement of children and public-sector employees, aggressive rhetoric, obstruction of political activity, and questionable law-enforcement responses.

Akanates' findings suggest that a credible electoral process requires more than technically functioning commissions. It also requires political neutrality of public institutions, protection of voters from coercion, respect for children's rights, restraint by public officials, transparent campaign finance, and proportionate law-enforcement conduct. The report points to the need for stronger safeguards against misuse of administrative resources, clearer campaign-finance publication, better protection of observers' rights, stricter prevention of children's involvement, and more responsible behavior by political actors throughout the campaign.

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