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ABBREVIATIONS

ARF – Armenian Revolutionary Federation

CEC – Central Electoral Commission

CUA - Civil United Alliance

EC - Electoral Code

NA – National Assembly

NGO – Non-governmental organization

NKR - Nagorno Karabakh Republic

RA – Republic of Armenia

TEC – Territorial Electoral Commission

UIC - Union of Informed Citizens

NKCP - Nagorno Karabakh Communist Party

INTRODUCTION

The Union of Informed Citizens (UIC) Stepanakert Office conducted an observation mission of the presidential and parliamentary elections in the Republic of Artsakh, as well as the second round of presidential elections.

Ten parties and alliances of two parties were nominated for the parliamentary elections of the Republic of Artsakh. Fourteen candidates were nominated for the presidential elections.

113 short-term observers, 5 lawyers, 9 data entry specialists, 6 observer coordinators were involved in the observation mission of the March 31 national elections. Thirty percent of the observers were citizens of the Republic of Artsakh, and the rest were citizens of the Republic of Armenia. There were 281 polling stations in the Republic of Artsakh, and one polling station in Yerevan (in the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Artsakh).

METHODOLOGY

The Union of Informed Citizens observed 49 polling stations, including one polling station in Yerevan, and the work of all 8 Territorial Electoral Commissions, as well as observation was conducted through 9 mobile groups. The observed polling stations were selected through statistical sampling. The sample was based on the number of population, the number of polling stations, and the number of voter turnout in the given area during the previous elections.

On the voting day, the following information was collected by 95 election observers through 5 separate observation forms:

- PEC session
- Vicinity of the polling station as of 14:00, 20:00
- Polling station as of 14:00, 20:00
- Vote counting (tabulation) session
- Tabulation of votes for presidential elections
- Tabulation of votes for parliamentary elections.

Eight TEC observers collected information on the sessions of all Territorial Electoral Commissions through a special observation form.

The headquarters of the nominated candidates / parties and the general situation around the polling stations (to identify cases of controlled voting) were observed by 18 mobile observers. The mobile groups completed 34 observation forms on violations.

On April 14, in the second round of presidential election of the Republic of Artsakh, taking into account the force majeure situation due to novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Artsakh, the Union of Informed Citizens had to limit the permanent presence of a small number of observers from Armenia in the polling stations to the extent possible, and used an alternative methodology for election observation. In the second round of election, 65 observers were involved in the mission. The latter followed the voting process with the help of video cameras installed in 48 polling stations, and 3 groups carried out mobile observation. An observer support group was involved in the mission, consisting of 3 lawyers, 1 data entry specialist, 4 coordinators and 5 media monitoring specialists.

48 observers observed all the polling stations in Stepanakert and regional centers, where video cameras were installed. The observation was conducted through 3 types of observation forms. The following information was collected from 48 polling stations:

- PEC session
- Polling station as of 10:00, 12:00, 14:00, 16:00, 18:00, 20:00
- Vote counting and tabulation.

The number of voters in 10 polling stations was calculated by 10 observers in order to compare them with the official results later.

Seven mobile observers conducted observations mainly in Stepanakert, but during the day they visited and registered violations in the polling stations located in Shushi, Askeran, Martakert, and Martuni, and in their vicinity. At the end of the day, the mobile observers visited 3 Territorial Electoral Commissions in Stepanakert, Shushi and Askeran, partially observing their work. Twenty observation forms on violations were filled in by mobile groups.

In both observation stages, the legal team provided legal consultation to the observers, and in case of reports of violations, appropriate actions were taken.

This report has elaborated and summarized all the information collected through the observation forms used during the first and second rounds of the elections.

As for the media monitoring methodology, it was implemented throughout the first round of the election campaign, from February 26 to March 29, as well as on the day of silence. The following TV channels were subjected to quantitative and qualitative analysis: Artsakh TV (the Public TV of Artsakh), as well as 6 Armenian TV channels broadcast in the territory of Artsakh (1TV, i.e. Armenian Public TV, 5TV Channel, Armenia TV, "Shant", "Yerkir Media", "Kentron" TVs, which are included in the social (free) packages of "Artsakhkap" and Pace Radio and Television Company. The time allotted to the presidential candidates and to the parties (party alliances) participating in the parliamentary election campaign was calculated, both in direct and indirect speech, the tone of coverage was assessed. In the case of Artsakh TV, the monitoring was carried out from 16:00 to 24:00 (the entire broadcast), and during the prime time (18:00-24:00) in the case of the others.

In addition to TV channels, three Artsakh media outlets were monitored (online versions of "Free Artsakh" and "Aparazh" newspapers, artsakhpress.am news website) and 5 Armenian media outlets (1in.am, tert.am, news.am, and online versions of Hraparak and "Haykakan Zhamanak" newspapers).

MAIN LEGAL REGULATIONS

On June 22, 2019, the Electoral Code of the Republic of Artsakh (due to enter into force on January 1, 2020) was adopted, implying that the 2020 national elections in Artsakh were to be held under a new code.

During the presidential election of the Republic of Artsakh, the whole territory of Artsakh is one majoritarian constituency and the President is elected by the absolute majoritarian system, and by the relative majoritarian system in the second round.

The National Assembly consists of 33 deputies, elected by the proportional system, from one multi-mandate constituency, from the number of candidates nominated by the electoral lists of the party (party alliance). In the parliamentary elections, the threshold is 5% for parties, and 7% for party alliances.

A three-tier system of electoral commissions is formed to organize and conduct the elections. The Central Electoral Commission and 8 Territorial Electoral Commissions are permanent bodies, and Precinct Electoral Commissions are formed during elections.

Three members of the Central Electoral Commission are appointed by the President of the Republic, and one member is appointed by each parliamentary party (faction). Thereafter, each CEC member appoints one member of each Territorial Electoral Commission, and each member of the Territorial Electoral Commission of the constituency appoints one member of each Precinct Electoral Commission.

Electoral and criminal codes ban charity by candidates during the pre-election campaign, as well as the combination of campaign and charity. Certain types of abuse of administrative resources, giving and taking electoral bribes (and mediation) are also criminalized.

During the elections, the Public Radio and Public Television of Artsakh are obliged to provide non-discriminatory conditions for the presidential candidates and the parties (party alliances) participating in the parliamentary elections.

Voting is held only in the precinct centers formed in the territory of the Republic of Artsakh. Citizens of the Republic of Artsakh residing in other countries and having the right to vote can participate in the national elections at the diplomatic or consular missions of the Republic of Artsakh (such is available only in Yerevan).

Voter registration is done only through paper lists prepared by the relevant police department (and military lists are prepared by the defense agency). People with disabilities can choose their preferred polling station before the election, and be included in the voter list of that polling station by informing the Police.

If presidential and parliamentary elections are held at the same time, separate ballots are prepared for each voting, which are obviously different from each other in color. Ballot envelopes are not used.

The vote tabulation starts immediately after the end of the voting and cannot be interrupted. Observers, media representatives and proxies can enter the polling station at any stage, follow the preparation, voting and/or tabulation processes, as well as make videos, and get acquainted with all the election documents.

Voter lists (except for lists of military servicemen) are subject to publication on the police website, and voter-signed lists are available for examination at Territorial Electoral Commissions.

The results of the national elections can be appealed to the Supreme Court of Artsakh, and other decisions of the electoral bodies can be appealed to the Court of General Jurisdiction.

POLITICAL CONTEXT

The last presidential elections in Artsakh took place in 2012, as a result of which Bako Sahakyan was elected President. The last parliamentary elections were held in 2015 by the majoritarian system, and four by-elections were held. As a result, before the 2020 national elections, there were 32 deputies from 5 factions in the National Assembly of the Republic of Artsakh ("Homeland" (16 deputies), "Democracy" (6 deputies), "ARF" (6 deputies), "Movement 88" (3 deputies) and "Renaissance" (1 deputy)) and one independent deputy.

In 2017, a new Constitution was adopted in Artsakh, according to which a transitional period was defined for the country in 2017-2020, until the end of the term of office of the National Assembly. In July 2017, the National Assembly elected Bako Sahakyan president for a second term.

In July 2019, a new Electoral Code was adopted, according to which the President of the Republic and the National Assembly shall be directly elected by the voters. The parliamentary elections shall be held by the proportional electoral system, from one multimandate constituency, from the number of NA deputy candidates nominated by the electoral lists of parties and party alliances.

According to the new Constitution, the election of the National Assembly shall be held at the same time as the election of the President of the Republic.

After the revolution in Armenia in 2018, the political life in Artsakh became significantly more active, and a number of new parties emerged. As a result, 14 presidential candidates were nominated in the 2020 national election, and 10 parties and 2 party alliances in the parliamentary election.

With the spread of the novel coronavirus epidemic, the 2020 elections were held under pressure from the general public, who demanded declaring a state of emergency and postponing the elections. Some of the candidates stopped campaigning at some point, others changed the format to some extent, holding meetings only outdoors or communicating with voters via Facebook Live.

As a result of the first round of elections, none of the presidential candidates received the required number of votes, and candidates Arayik Harutyunyan and Masis Mailyan continued the race in the second round of election. On April 5, Masis Mailyan called on citizens "not to take part in the second round of voting in the face of the growing risk posed by the novel coronavirus." In fact, Mailyan did not campaign in the second round, but neither did he withdraw his candidacy.

VOTER EDUCATION

Taking into account the experience of the local elections in 2019, the Union of Informed Citizens decided to conduct a voter education campaign.

Within the framework of the campaign, 8 videos were prepared, disseminated on social networks and broadcast on TV. The videos emphasize the importance of elections, the principle of power belonging to the citizen, the powers of government bodies, the inadmissibility of electoral bribery, the importance of secrecy of the ballot and other issues.

The videos were broadcast on the Public Television of Artsakh (more than 5,000 seconds in total), and had 435,500 views on social networks.

Two of the topics, the inadmissibility of electoral bribery and the secrecy of the ballot, were also featured on 39 large billboards in the capital Stepanakert and in all regions.

FURNISHING OF POLLING STATIONS AND VIDEO RECORDING

Article 57 of the Electoral Code of the Republic of Artsakh stipulates that the voting room shall be as large as possible, enabling the regular work of PEC members and those who have the right to be present in the voting room throughout the voting period, as well as well as to allow PEC members, and those who have the right to be present in the voting room to keep the ballot box (es), the voting booths (provided that the secrecy of the ballot is not violated), the part from the voting booths to the ballot box (es) in the field of vision.

The observers registered a number of issues related to the furnishing of the voting room. In 10 of the 49 polling stations observed in the first round of the elections, there were issues with the position of the voting booths, which could lead to a violation of the secrecy of the ballot. In the above cases, there was a door, a free open area behind the voting booths or an open window on one side. In 6 out of 10 cases, additional measures were taken to ensure the secrecy of the ballot, including upon urges by observers.

The area of 4 polling stations was too small and insufficient to ensure the normal voting process and the activities and free movement of people having the right to be present in the polling station.

Although there is no legal requirement for video broadcasting, a few days before the elections, with the funding of the Government of the Republic of Artsakh, with the efforts of the Human Rights Defender and the Public Television, and with the Union of Informed Citizen's advisory support, all polling stations in Stepanakert (48 polling stations with the possibility of observing the realization of the suffrage of almost 53% of the voters of the republic) were equipped with cameras. The whole voting process in these polling stations was broadcast on the YouTube channel of Artsakh Public Television. The installation of video cameras (with all its technical deficiences) provided an additional opportunity to monitor the elections through video and audio broadcast, and increased the transparency of the elections.

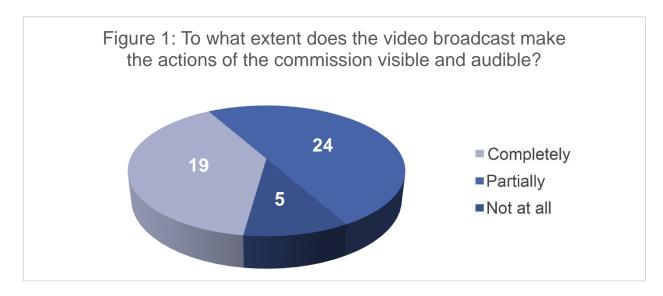
In the second round of elections, we carried out the observation mostly through video cameras. Numerous disruptions were recorded during the whole day in connection with the video recording. Thus:

- During the 7:00-8:00 PEC session, in two of the 48 polling stations the broadcasting did not work at all, and there were failures in one of them.
- During the whole period of voting from 8:00 to 20:00, there were regular video recording interruptions in 22 out of 48 polling stations. Moreover, from the beginning there was no video broadcast from the 1/26 polling station, and worked only from 13:20, and in 1/20 polling station it was interrupted at 11:20 and recovered after 20:00.

• After 20:00, during the vote counting session, there were regular broadcast interruptions in 9 polling stations.

The representatives of the observation mission were in direct contact with the team dealing with the technical problems related to the video cameras, and some of the issues were quickly resolved.

To the question to what extent the video recording makes the actions in the voting room visible and audible, including whether the voting booths and the ballot box are visible, the observers answered as follows.



In the case of 60% of the polling stations, the entrance to the polling station, the voter route, the voting booth, the ballot boxes, the members of the commission carrying out functions were partially or completely not visible. The observers noted that the position of the voting booths in 5 polling stations was such that it could violate the secrecy of ballot. In other 5 polling stations, the voting booths and / or ballot boxes were not visible from the side of the video cameras. The mobile observers of the mission visited these polling stations during the day, suggested making changes in furnishing, and the suggestions were mostly accepted by the chairpersons of the commissions.

ACCESSIBILITY OF POLLING STATIONS

Article 65 (8) of the Electoral Code of the Republic of Artsakh stipulates that in order to make voting accessible to voters who face difficulties in participating in the voting, the Central Electoral Commission shall provide additional opportunities to ensure the free expression of the voters' will and the secrecy of the ballot.

By Decision N 47-N of January 16, 2020, the CEC established the actions that can be taken to ensure accessibility of voting.¹

According to the statement by Srbuhi Arzumanyan, Chairperson of the Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Artsakh, during the online press conference the day before the voting, all the polling stations in Stepanakert were provided with ramps, and in the regions it was done partially if building conditions allowed.² It should be noted that even in Stepanakert, the mission observers reported instances of absence of ramps or the presence of stairs above the ramp or a very narrow entrance door in 4 of the 48 polling stations observed in the first round of election.

Despite the CEC chairperson's statement that all polling stations would be equipped with a Braille tablet and a magnifying glass, on election day, polling stations were provided with a magnifying glass only.

Besides, Article 10 (3) of the Electoral Code of the Republic of Artsakh stipulates that voters with mobility-related disabilities may be included in the list of polling stations where there are accessible conditions for their movement, by being temporarily removed from the voter list by place of registration.

The accessibility of the polling stations was mostly monitored by the mission in the first round of election.

More than half of the monitored polling stations (25 polling stations) were located in schools, 8 in cultural institutions, 7 in community clubs, 3 in banquet halls, 2 in kindergartens, and 4 in other state or private institutions. The polling stations were mostly located on the 1st floor, only 2 were located on the 2nd floor.

The entrance of 13 out of 49 observed polling stations was even, and 7 had ramps. Therefore, 29 polling stations were not accessible for people with mobility problems even before reaching the entrance. The slope of 5 of the mentioned 7 ramps was higher than 7°. The entrance of 29 of the 49 polling stations observed was not wide enough for the wheelchair. According to the observers, in 27 of the voting rooms there was a possibility to move freely in a wheelchair.

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¹ Decision N 47–N of 16 January, 2020 of the CEC of the Republic of Artsakh http://cecnkr.am/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/47.-ndqumnn_plnLu-nulugnn.pdf

² https://www.facebook.com/cecnkr.am/videos/2582905208651679/

In general, out of the 49 polling stations observed, only 6 were assessed as accessible by all parameters, the entrance of 2 of them was even, the doors were wide, there were no other obstacles at the entrance to the polling station, and it was possible to move freely in the polling station in a wheelchair, and in 4 of them there was a ramp, the entrance doors of the polling station were wide, there were no other obstacles at the entrance, and it was possible to move freely in a wheelchair in the polling station. However, in all 4 polling stations the slope of the ramp was greater than 7 degrees.

The observers assessed 13 polling stations as completely inaccessible by all parameters.

In some polling stations, commission members tried to secure the right to vote for persons with disabilities through blatant violations of the law.

[In 1/23 polling station in Stepanakert, the chairperson of the commission organized the voting of a person with mobility problems at the entrance of the polling station in the presence of proxies and observers.]

[In 5/9 polling station in Berdashen, a person with mobility problems, who came without a wheelchair by car, could not enter the polling station due to its inaccessibility. The proxy of the United Homeland Party, who was obviously interested in organizing the voting of that voter, arranged with the chairperson of the commission to go and bring the wheelchair by car from home, after which the voter was taken to the polling station in a wheelchair. The voter was able to move freely in the polling station, but voted next to the voting booth, as it was not convenient to vote inside the booth in a wheelchair.]

VOTER LISTS

According to Artsakh law, voter lists are maintained by the Police (Passport and Visa Department), which is responsible for ruling out repetitions in the lists, moving citizens from additional lists to the main list, and publishing the lists. In particular, the lists must be published on the police website (www.police.nkr.am) 40 days and 2 days before the voting day. The voter lists are composed of the main list, the additional list by location, the additional list of voters with no registration address, the additional list of police officers, the additional list of inpatient facilities. In addition, the Ministry of Defense maintains a list of voters registered in military units.

Although it was not planned to monitor the voter lists within the framework of the mission, after the first round of elections we noticed a recurring name of the same person in the additional lists (the citizen was included in the additional lists by location in the 1/11 and 1/13 polling stations in Stepanakert).

As a result of this finding, it was decided to examine all the additional voter lists (comparing them with the main list), which, however, failed because, contrary to the requirements of Article 13 of the Electoral Code, the additional lists were not published on the police website. An inquiry was sent to the Police of the Republic of Artsakh for the same purpose, who reported that the copies of the lists were not preserved, their copies were given in full to the Precinct Electoral Commissions.

Given that the Precinct Electoral Commissions, in turn, passed the additional voter lists to the Territorial Electoral Commissions, and their electronic versions are no longer available (if the information provided by the Police is correct), it was no longer possible for the mission to verify them in full (along with the main lists), and to finally clarify the issue of the presence or absence of other recurring names. The aforementioned activity can only be done digitally, as there are about 105,000 voters on the voter lists, which does not allow any manual (non-electronic) verification of repetitions.

At the same time, the Police informed the mission that in the first round of elections they had received 200 applications for inclusion in the additional list by location. However, 669 voters were included in the list by location and 697 in the list of voters without a registration address. However, it should be noted that a person can appear in the additional list by location only upon his/ her own application (Article 10 of the Electoral Code).

In the second round of elections, the voter lists (with all the components) were published on the Police website, which made it possible to check for the presence of recurring names. As a result of the digital verification of the voter lists, no recurrence of voters' names was detected in the voter lists for the second round of election, and the mission noted that the violations that took place in the first round were not repeated in the second round.

REGISTRATION OF OBSERVATION MISSIONS

Article 30 of the Electoral Code of the Republic of Artsakh stipulates that local and foreign non-governmental organizations whose statutory objectives include democracy, protection of human rights, and who do not support any presidential candidates and parties (party alliances) running in the parliamentary elections have the right to observe elections.

Nine local organizations and 10 international organizations, all from Armenia, were accredited to observe the elections.

Part 2 of Article 31 of the Electoral Code of the Republic of Artsakh stipulates that applications for accreditation or making changes (additions) to the list of accredited observers shall be submitted to the Central Electoral Commission after setting the election date, but not later than 10 days before the voting day. Pursuant to Paragraph 8 of Article 31 of the Electoral Code of the Republic of Artsakh, the Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Artsakh reaffirmed the above-mentioned term by Paragraph 5 of the Decision N 21-N of January 16, 2020. However, examining the accreditation decisions published on the CEC website, it becomes clear that a number of observer organizations, and the Central Electoral Commission itself, did not take the deadlines seriously. In particular, 4 organizations were accredited after the deadline (March 21) and / or made changes in their lists. Those are the "Legal Education and Oversight", "Against Violations of Law" NGOs, as well as the representatives of the CEC, and NA deputies of the Republic of Armenia. The small study allowed to reveal about 20 cases of late accreditation of the media.

The Electoral Code of the Republic of Artsakh does not provide for additional accreditation of observers in the event of a second round of presidential elections. On April 9, just 5 days before the second round of election, the CEC of the Republic of Artsakh announced about accepting applications to accredit new observers or make changes in the lists of already accredited observers. It contradicted both the Electoral Code of the Republic of Artsakh and Decision N 21-N of January 16, 2020 of the Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Artsakh both in in terms of content and deadlines. In response to the inquiry about the legal grounds for the statement, the CEC clarified that the initiative was justified in the situation caused by the novel coronavirus epidemic, as well as the fact that the electoral legislation of Artsakh does not envisage regulation of the accreditation of new observers for the second round of election, and based on the need to ensure the publicity of the preparation, holding of the elections, as well as the observation of the electoral process envisaged by Article 8 of the Electoral Code.

As a result, 6 organizations made additions to their preliminary lists:

- 1. Transparency International 4 observers
- 2. International Center for Civic Assistance 11 observers
- 3. "Against Violations of Law" NGO 1 observer
- 4. "For the People" NGO 31 observers
- 5. "Aparazh" Youth Union NGO 2 observers
- 6. Legal Education and Oversight NGO 9 observers

In total, additional 58 observers were accredited.

In the second round of the election of the President of the Republic of Artsakh, comparing the names of the observers in the registers of 35 polling stations under the jurisdiction of Stepanakert Territorial Electoral Commission No. 1 with the list of accredited observers, we found that observers registered by Legal Education and Oversight NGO in 22 polling stations (10 people in total) were not accredited. Their data are not available in the accreditation list of the organization published on the website of the CEC of Artsakh. The mobile observers of the mission noticed that the certificates of some of the observers from that organization did not have the names of the observers, which means that Legal Education and Oversight NGO carried out an observation mission in violation of the law.

The circumstance of accreditation of observer organizations after the deadline in the first round of election, the accreditation of new observers in the second round, the initiative to make additions and changes in the lists of accredited observers prove that the Central Electoral Commission of Artsakh is not determined to comply with the requirements of electoral legislation, and ranks current situational problems above them.

The Union of Informed Citizens accredited the observers through two organizations, the observers who are citizens of the Republic of Armenia were accredited through the Yerevan office, and the observers who are citizens of the Republic of Artsakh were accredited through the Stepanakert Office. Given that according to law, the accreditation shall be done no later than 10 days before voting day, and in practice there are many instances of observer withdrawals (there was an especially high probability of withdrawals during the novel coronavirus outbreak), the mission accredited three times more observers than actually participated in the observation.

VOTING DAY: FIRST ROUND

As it was mentioned, on March 31, 2020, the Union of Informed Citizens carried out an observation mission during the national elections of the Artsakh (1st round) in 49 polling stations in all regions of the Republic of Artsakh, the statistical distribution of which allows assessing the whole process of organizing and holding the voting.

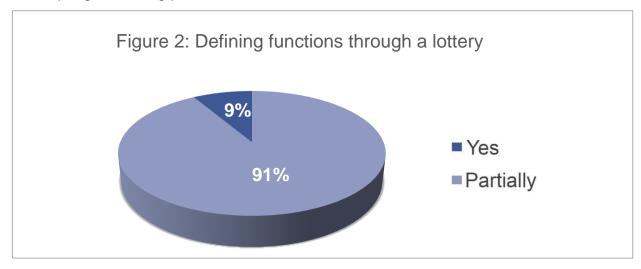
The data from observation forms completed on the voting day based on observations conducted in 49 polling stations and 8 Territorial Electoral Commissions are summarized below in separate sections. The report also contains direct quotations from observers to specify the manifestations of violations.

Voting Preparation

This section presents the observations on the morning session of the Precinct Electoral Commissions in the first round of the election (7:00-8:00). While observing the voting preparation process, the observers examined the furnishing and accessibility of the polling station, which is presented in the "Election Organization" section of this report.

In terms of voting organization, it should be noted that in 4 polling stations the functions of the commission members were partially defined by lotteries. In the case of 3 of them, a lottery was held, but not for all the shifts since they did not know the procedure. In their words, they planned to hold a lottery every 2 hours during the voting. In one case, a lottery was held partially, allowing a member of the commission with a disability to be at the ballot box permanently.

During the day, being in different polling stations, including those that were not included in the list of the main 49 polling stations, the mobile groups of the mission found more than 15 cases of not holding or partially holding the lottery. In some of them, the commission held a lottery every two hours during the day, changing the functions, interrupting the voting process.



[As of 11:00 am, in Taghavard 5/13 polling station of Martuni region, one of the mobile groups of the mission found that no lottery had been held, each member of the commission had assumed one function for the whole day. When the mobile group informed the chairperson of the commission about it, he clarified that he had been told that the issue could be settled internally in this way, and there was no need for a lottery, but he did not mention who told him about it. Later, at 19:00, another mobile group noticed in the register of the given polling station that everyone had taken the same papers, six times. The observers expressed doubts on whether a lottery had been held. The chairperson of the commission insisted that it had been held, and everyone had the same function.]

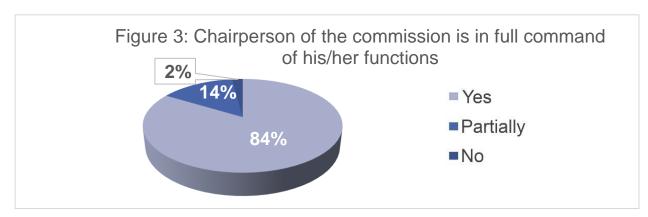
In 5 of the observed polling stations, a person who did not have the right to be present at the commission session entered the polling station. In 3 of the cases, that person was the police officer, whom the chairperson of the commission had not invited. In one case, a candidate came to the polling station and took part in the whole session, although following the observers' urges the chairperson informed him/her that he had no right to be there, but, nevertheless, not sufficient steps were taken to remove him. In the other two cases, there was an unknown person, a cleaner, who regularly came throughout the day to clean the area, but this was not recorded anywhere.

[The key to the safe in 1/32 polling station of Stepanakert was in the possession of a person unknown to the observer, who came during the session and opened the safe. The chairperson of the commission claimed that he had left the key at home, and that is why it was brought by someone else. This was not recorded in the register.]

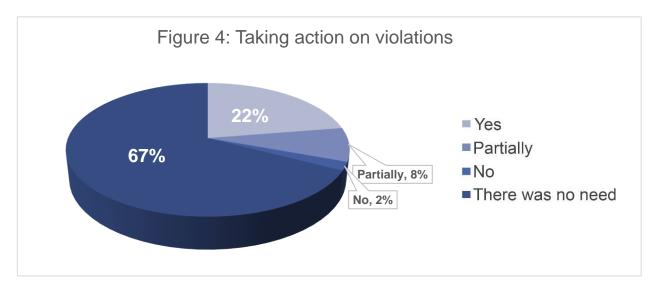
In 1/19 polling station, there was a locker with a key instead of a safe. The cover of the ballot box was damaged in 2 polling stations, which was changed during the session.

One case of violation of the observer's rights was registered at the morning session. He was not allowed to take pictures of the register, and the chairperson of the commission promised to find out whether it was allowed to photograph it or not.

According to the observers, in 16% of the observed polling stations, the chairperson of the commission did not have proper knowledge of his/her functions.



In 4 out of 49 polling stations the procedure of the commission session was partially observed, and in 3 polling stations the secretary or other members of the commission took over the functions of the chairperson.

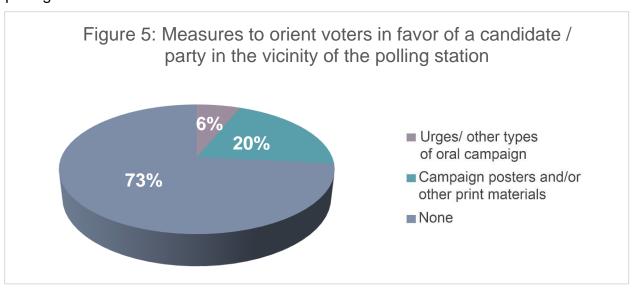


In one of the observed polling stations, the competent bodies did not take any action at all in connection with the violations, and in 4 of them they did it partially.

The situation in the vicinity of the polling stations during voting

On March 31, 2020, from 8:00 to 20:00, the observers followed the situation in the vicinity of the 49 observed polling stations. According to those observations, the following situation was registered.

Voter orientation in favor of some candidate, party / alliance took place in 13 of the polling stations observed.



Including:

- In favor of Arayik Harutyunyan in the vicinity of 7 polling stations
- In favor of Ashot Ghulyan in the vicinity of 3 polling stations
- In favor of Masis Mayilyan in the vicinity of 2 polling stations
- In favor of Hayk Khanumyan, Ashot Dadayan, Vitaly Balasanyan in the vicinity of 1 polling station
 - In favor of "Free Homeland CUA" Alliance in the vicinity of 5 polling stations
- In favor of ARF and United Homeland parties in the vicinity of 2 polling stations each
- In favor of Independence Generation Party, National Renaissance Party, Democratic Party of Artsakh, and Conservative Party of Artsakh in the vicinity of 1 polling station each.

The observations show that it is mostly about the printed materials, which in some cases were removed during the day. Posters / printed campaign materials were noticed by the observers of the mission in 7 polling stations, with 1 in favor of Masis Mailyan, 6 in favor of Arayik Harutyunyan, 1 in favor of the Free Homeland- CUA Alliance, 1 in favor of the United Homeland Party and 1 in favor of the ARF. Throughout the election day, the observers of the mission mostly noticed campaign materials of "N6" Arayik Harutyunyan posted on the cars in different settlements.

Mobile observers registered the following case in the vicinity of 5/30 polling station in Martuni region: "The citizen was urging the voters in front of the polling station to vote for Vitaly Balasanyan, the mobile group informed the police about that. However, before the police would take action, the given person left after hearing the conversation of the observers with the police.

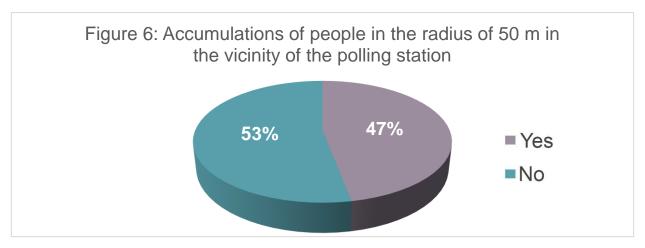
The mission observers did not notice any cases of distribution of election bribes in the vicinity of the observed polling stations.

In the vicinity of 4 of the observed polling stations (8%), the observers observed cases of transporting voters to the polling station by the same cars or minibuses, in some cases this was a regular practice.

[In 8/31 polling station, the village mayor, a member of the council of elders and a police officer regularly transported voters.]

[In 6/1 polling station, the organized regular transportation of voters was carried out by Arayik Harutyunyan's supporters.]

Accumulations of people in the vicinity of the polling stations were caused by the formation of queues of voters due to letting voters into the polling station in small groups (due to the coronavirus situation), also because voters did not leave the area after voting and because there were non-voters in the vicinity of the polling station.

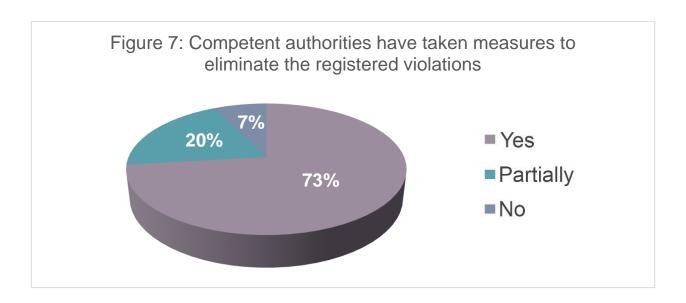


Moreover, in 50 percent of the cases, there were frequent or permanent accumulations of people. In about a third of the cases, the accumulations were with the participation of the community leader and / or the proxies of the candidates (mostly Arayik Harutyunyan). In some cases, the accumulations created the risk of influencing voters' decision but they were eliminated through the mediation of the on-duty police officer. It should be noted that the police officers acted mainly at the urging of the chairperson of the commission, and the chairperson mostly acted after being urged by the observer.

The mobile observers of the mission also spotted accumulations of people and vehicles in the vicinity of 8 polling stations, within a radius of 50 meters. They were connected with the distribution of personal protective equipment outside due to the epidemic, the voting of servicemen and families coming together to the given polling station, as well as the presence of a shop or headquarters in the area.

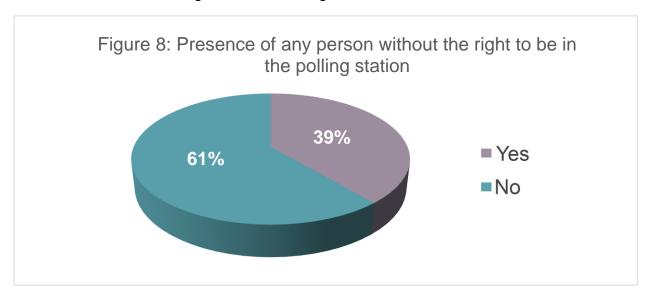
[There were accumulations of people and vehicles in the vicinity of 2/5 polling station in Avetaranots. The headquarters of the United Homeland Party was located near the polling station, where the voters entered and left. Noticing the mobile group, the headquarters was immediately closed, and with the intervention of the police, the accumulations of people were eliminated, but not those of the cars.]

Only in 73% of the observed polling stations did the competent authorities take action to eliminate all the registered violations, but mainly not on their own initiative. And in 27% of polling stations, either they did not take action or those actions were not enough in terms of prevention, elimination or registration of violations.



Situation in the polling station during voting

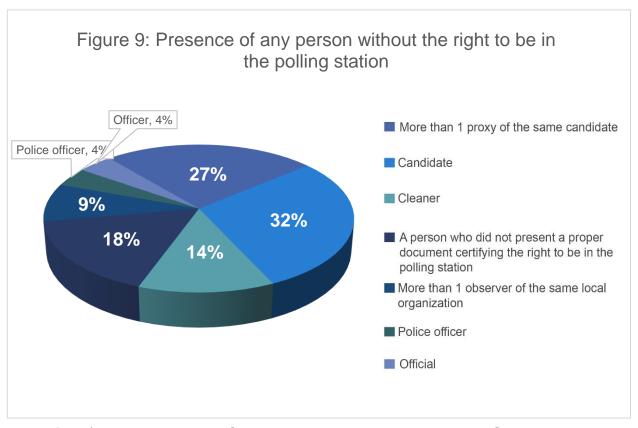
On March 31, 2020, during the first round of the national elections of the Republic of Artsakh, from 8:00 to 20:00, observers were constantly in the polling station and observing the situation and violations inside 49 polling stations. According to those observations, the following situation was registered.



In 9 polling stations, 22 cases of persons not having the right to be present in the polling station were registered, which were distributed as follows:

In most cases, people were not informed that they could not be present there and did not attach importance to that requirement.

[In the 7/2 polling station in Shushi, Artsakh MP candidate Metakse Hakobyan (Justice Party) insisted that she had the right to be present at the polling station.]



[In 5/4 polling station in Chartar, NA deputy candidate Apres Serzhik Margaryan entered the polling station, but he was not registered as a voter in that polling station.]

[Nelsik Poghosyan, the presidential candidate, came to 1/28 polling station in Stepanakert and started asking questions accompanied by cameras. The observers told the chairperson of the commission that the candidate had no right to be there, but the chairperson of the commission told the observers that he had the right to be present there and showed some paper. The secretary informed the observers that he/she recorded his visit in the register.]

[1/32 polling station in Stepanakert: Presidential candidate Ashot Dadayan entered the polling station, and checked the seal of the ballot box. The sealed paper on the ballot box was constantly falling due to the poor quality of the glue. The chairperson explained the situation and invited the candidate out.]

By the way, in 1/7, 1/12 and 1/29 polling stations in Stepanakert, the mobile observers of this mission registered that the ballot box was not properly sealed.

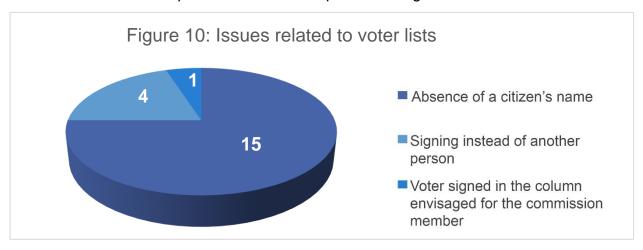
In some polling stations, observers noticed that more than one representative of the same candidate / party or observer mission was registered in the register. In most cases, those people had already left the polling station, but there were no exit hours in the register.

In 4 cases, the voter presented another document instead of an identity document, and the commission did not allow him/her to vote. In 2 cases, the voter carried another

person's passport, tried to vote instead of a family member or neighbor, but the cases were prevented.

In 82% of the 49 polling stations observed, there were no problems with the voter lists. Problems with the voter lists were registered in 9 polling stations. The registered cases were distributed as follows:

Ten cases of absence of people's names were registered in the E / 1 polling station in Yerevan, the voters were not registered in advance, and on the day of the elections they went to the polling station. Two of the instances of signing on behalf of another person were cases of the same family members signing on the spot instead of each other, and in the other case a person with visual impairments signed in the box below.

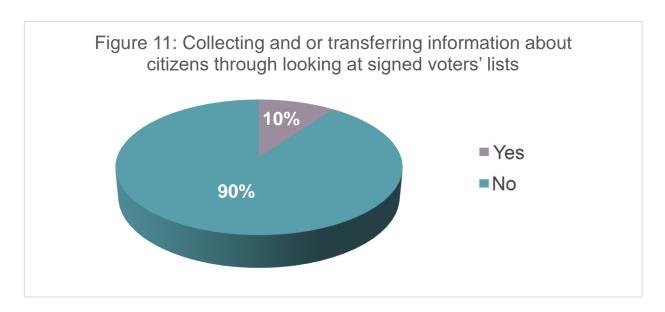


[Seeing a signature in the voter list in front of his name, the voter left the polling station without voting and never returned.]

[The lists of voters posted outside 6/15 polling station in Charektar were outdated, the number differed by 3 voters. They changed it after noticing.]

The observers noticed 3 attempts to remove the sealed ballot paper from the polling station. In two cases, it was only due to receiving a pen from outside and going back to vote. In one case, the citizen photographed his/her ballot paper, and when they tried to intervene, the citizen tried to take out the ballot papers, and when the chairperson did not allow it, the citizen tore the ballot paper and left. A protocol was drawn up in connection with the incident.

Instances of getting acquainted with the signed voter list and / or transferring information about voters who did not vote to other persons were registered in 5 polling stations.



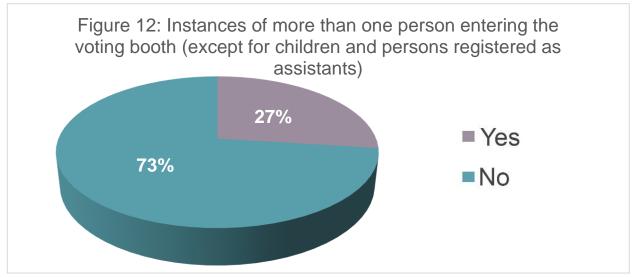
In the registered cases, the chairperson of the commission (1 case), members of the commission (3 cases), a proxy (2 cases), an observer (1 case) were involved. In the case of an observer, the mission observer noted that he was getting acquainted with the lists, but no attempt was made to transfer information.

[In 8/5 polling station in Mijnavan, the chairperson of the commission, who had taken the names of the signed lists, sent them to someone in a green Ford car and those people were brought to the polling station to vote.]

In addition to looking at the lists, there were proxies who had their own lists, for example:

[In 2/5 polling station of Avetaranots, the proxy of the United Homeland Party wrote names in the notebook, put pluses in front of it. In the second half of the day the same notebook was with the proxy who replaced him, who continued that "work".]

In 13 polling stations, there were cases when more than one person entered the voting room, without registering as a helper.

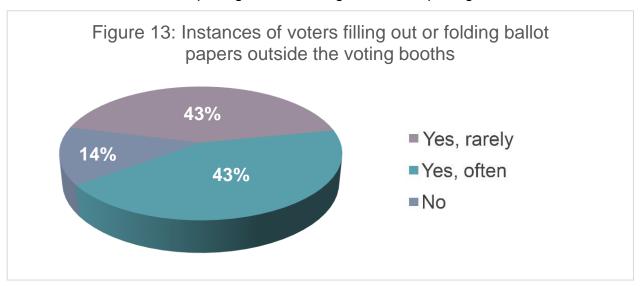


According to observers, in the vast majority of cases, these persons were family members or relatives. According to the observers, the registered cases are connected with ignorance. Only in 1/32 and 1/16 polling stations were they of a controlling nature. Moreover, in 1/32 polling station there were many such cases.

In 2 polling stations, the observers noted that there were cases when the helper's data was not registered in the register.

[In the 5/30 polling station in Shekher of Martuni region, the media representative in the voting room, and the proxies told the mobile group of the mission that the helper registered once, and helped three people, as well as told them who they should vote for. No protocol was drawn up on this occasion before the group's arrival, but at the urging of the group, the chairperson of the commission drew up a protocol.]

At the end of the day, the observers of the mission recorded that according to the register, the number of voters who were not able to vote independently in the 49 polling stations observed, was more than 700. Moreover, that number was especially high in certain polling stations. For example, 69 cases of helping voters to vote were registered in 5/4 polling station in Chartar, 55 in 5/9 polling station in Berdashen, 51 in 3/32 polling station in Tumi, 36 in 3/36 polling station in Togh, 34 in 2/1 polling station in Askeran.



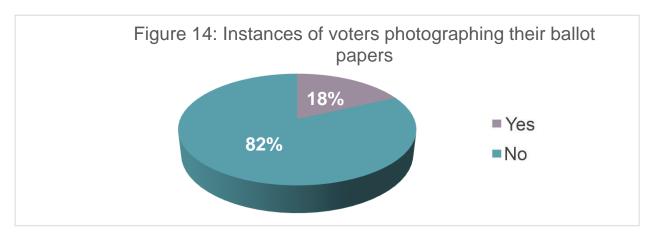
The most frequent violations were the cases of filling or folding the ballot papers outside the voting booth. Such cases were observed in 86% of the observed polling stations, moreover, in half of them the cases were frequent. In total, about 700 cases were registered, and these actions were done mostly by the elderly.

[2/1 polling station in Askeran: The voting took place inside the voting booth, but the folding process took place outside the voting booth. This process took a long time and was visible to others. When the chairperson of the commission saw that there was already

another voter in the voting booth, he/she would intervene, would take the ballot paper from the voter's hand, fold it, and then return it to the voter.]

In 9 polling stations, a total of 13 cases of voters photographing their own ballot papers were observed. In the case of 4 mentioned cases, with the intervention of the present persons, the photos were deleted from the voters' phones, and a protocol was drawn up.

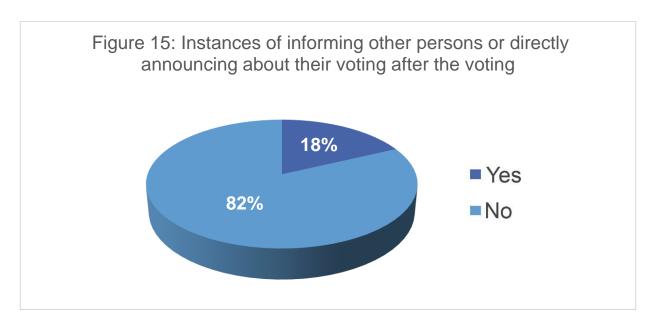
[The representative of the Central Electoral Commission, who visited 1/35 polling station in Stepanakert, warned that they should be careful about the attempts to photograph the ballot paper, because similar attempts were made in other polling stations.]



The mobile groups of the mission also noticed instances of photographing ballot papers and found out that those cases were not always recorded.

[In 1/22 polling station in Stepanakert, the proxies demanded to register the fact of photographing their own ballot paper by the voter, but the chairperson of the commission objected, and did not draw up a protocol. After the arrival of the mobile group, the chairperson called the Territorial Electoral Commission, then gave the proxies a new opportunity to write their assessment in the register.]

Cases of disclosing their own voting choice were registered in 9 of the observed polling stations. In total, 20 such cases were registered. In 3 cases the voter stated that he was voting for Arayik Harutyunyan in a loud voice, in 1 case – for Masis Mailyan.



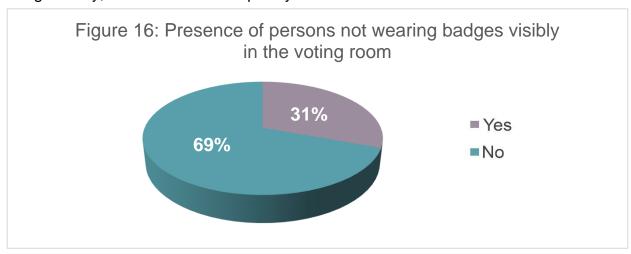
[In 5/9 polling station in Berdashen, the voter approached Vitaly Balasanyan's proxy and showed him his ballot paper.]

Instances of of not wearing the badge (by persons entitled to be in the voting room) were registered in 15 of the observed polling stations. In total, 38 such cases were registered.

In 26 cases, the badge was not visibly worn by proxies, of which:

- 2 from Free Homeland Party
- 2- Arayik Harutyunyan
- 4 Vitaly Balasanyan.

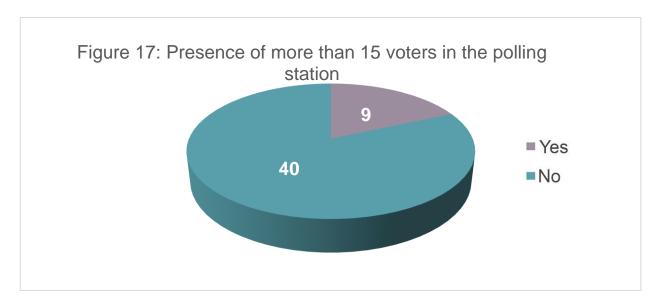
In other cases, observers did not specify which candidate / party the proxies who violated the law represented. In most cases, after the mission observers turned to the chairperson of the commission, and the latter urged the proxies, they began to wear the badge visibly, but often it was temporary.



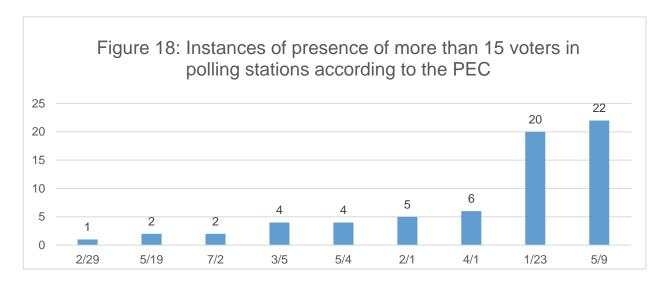
It is noteworthy that in 9 cases the members of the commission, including the chairperson and the secretary, did not wear the badge visibly.

[Vitaly Balasanyan's proxy in 5/24 polling station in Machkalashen regularly failed to wear the badge. In the first half of the day the chairperson reprimanded him/her on that occasion, but to no avail, and in the second half he stopped reprimanding.]

There were 66 cases of more than 15 voters being present in the polling stations. It was observed in 18% of the observed polling stations.



In all cases of accumulations of people, the chairperson of the commission settled the situation independently or by involving the police. These cases are arranged by polling stations as follows:

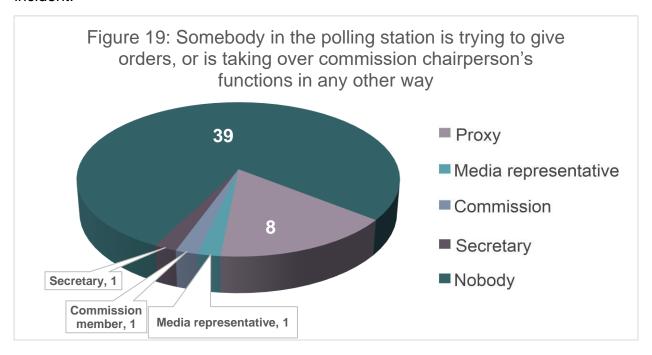


Cases of influencing the expression of will of the voters with campaign materials, calls or other directing measures inside the precinct center were observed in 1/4 polling station - 2 cases, and in 5/4 polling station - 1 case.

[1/4 polling station in Stepanakert: Both cases were registered by proxies. The first proxy entered with a bag bearing the logo of the United Homeland Party, and in the second case the proxy entered with a picture of Vitaly Balasanyan on the notebook, depicting the logo and the slogan on the cover.]

[5/4 polling station in Chartar: The ARF proxy entered in a uniform with the party logo. The observers turned to the chairperson of the commission and escorted him out.]

The mobile observers of the mission registered a case of campaigning in 4/30 polling station of Nor Karmiravan community. Sona Aghekyan introduced herself as a media representative, and carried out a campaign in favor of Vitaly Balasanyan. The mobile group urged the chairperson of the commission to draw up a protocol about the incident.

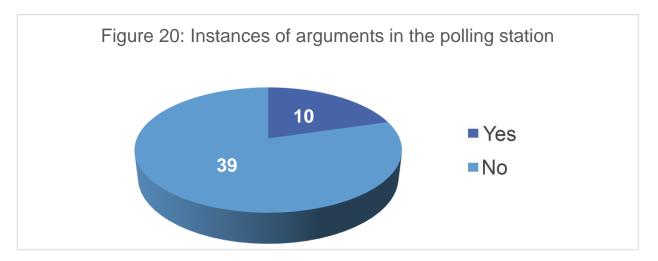


In 20% of the 49 polling stations observed, cases were registered when someone took over the functions of the commission chairperson. In 8 polling stations, those functions were taken over by proxies. The observers of the mission mentioned cases related to the proxies of Free Homeland Party, United Homeland Party, Masis Mailyan, Vitaly Balasanyan, Ashot Ghulyan.

[2/1 polling station in Askeran: During the accumulations of people, the proxy raised his voice, created a mess, tried to help the chairperson. Another time the proxy gave instructions, shouted at the polling station. Another proxy instructed the voters on which voter list to go to, constantly asking for the number of voter turnout. When observers urged the proxy not to direct voters, the latter insisted that everyone was people he knew, and he just wanted to help.]

Violations and assessments were not recorded in the register or were not always recorded in 12 of the 49 polling stations observed.

15 cases of arguments were registered in 20% of the observed polling stations. No cases of physical violence were reported.



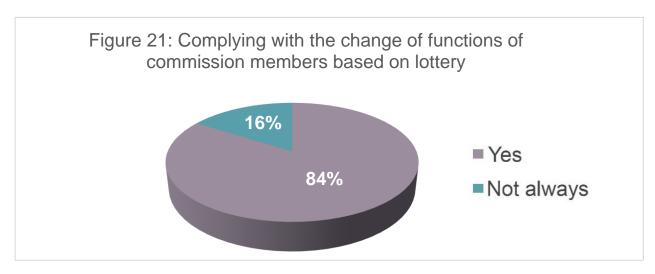
In 10 cases, the proxies were parties in the arguments. Moreover, in 4 cases these were Vitaly Balasanyan's proxies, who got into an argument with the chairperson of the commission, the police, the village mayors. In 7 cases the chairperson of the commission or other members were parties in the argument, in 4 cases - the voters, in 2 cases – journalists and community leaders, in 1 case a candidate and observer. In 5 cases, in order to stop the argument, the police officer on duty was invited by the chairperson of the commission to the polling station to intervene. The main reason for the argument was the non-elimination of violations by the commission, the misunderstanding of this or that regulation.

[1/4 polling station in Stepanakert: MP candidate, leader of the Artsakh Revolutionary Party came with accusations, noting that he has evidence that some of the citizens took sealed empty ballot papers and handed them over to someone else. He noted that observers and proxies should stand in the polling station so that what is happening in the voting booth can be seen through the camera. The candidate was removed by the chairperson.]

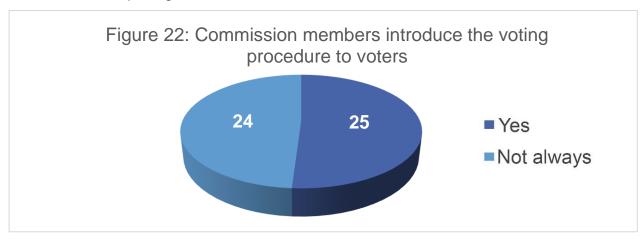
[In 5/24 polling station in Machkalashen, Vitaly Balasanyan's proxy had an argument with both current and former community leaders, the latter being the head of Arayik Harutyunyan's pre-election headquarters of the area.]

[In 7/2 polling station in Shushi, the LuysPress.am journalist showed obviously aggressive behavior towards the mission observers, forcing them to give an interview. The observers refused, and the journalist pressured, threatened, mocked and insulted the observers. The commission did not take any action in connection with the incident.]

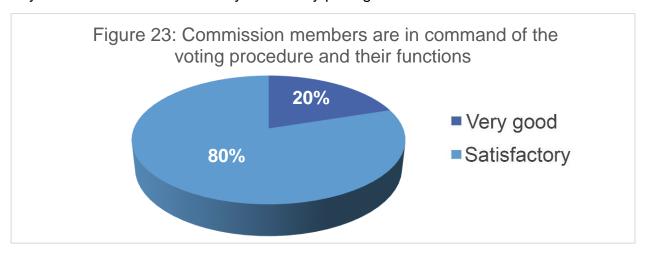
In 8 polling stations, the change of the functions of the commission members on the basis of the lottery was not always carried out.



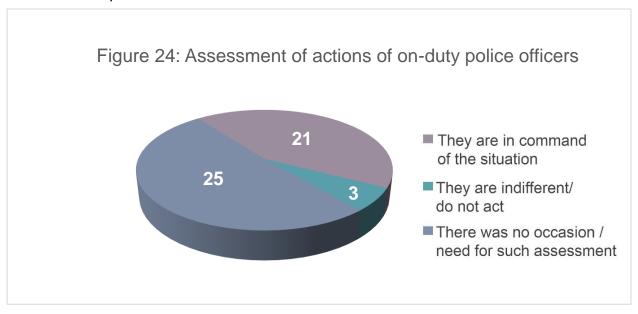
The members of the commission did not always present the voting procedure to the voters in 24 polling stations.



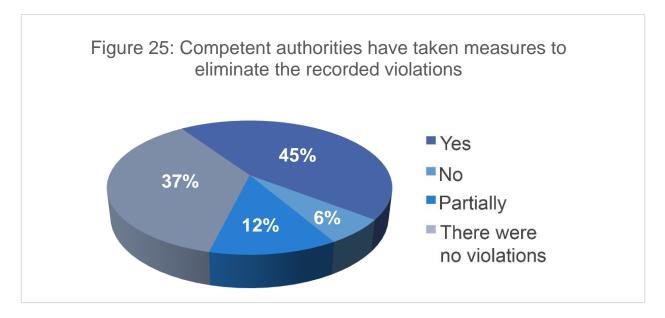
Only in 10 of the 49 polling stations observed did two mission observers assess the work of the commission as very good throughout the voting. In 39 polling stations, the observers assessed that work as satisfactory in the middle of the day or throughout the day. It was not assessed as very bad in any polling station.



The observers assessed the actions of the on-duty police officers as unsatisfactory in only 3 of the observed polling stations, noting that the police officers were indifferent to the violations or showed inaction. Observers in 21 polling stations noted that the police are in control of the situation.



According to observers, in 6% of the observed polling stations, the competent authorities did not take proper action, and in 12%, partial action was taken to eliminate the violations.



In most of the polling stations observed, the chairpersons of the commissions tried to settle the issues and to prevent violations, but in most cases they did so after observers and sometimes proxies drew their attention to those issues or urged them.

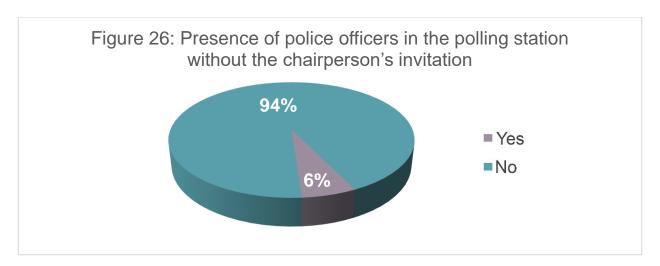
In 32 of the observed 49 polling stations, the mission observers took action on deficiencies or violations by contacting the commission chairperson, alerting a lawyer or

a mobile group, and in some cases contacting an on-duty police officer at the polling station.

Vote Tabulation

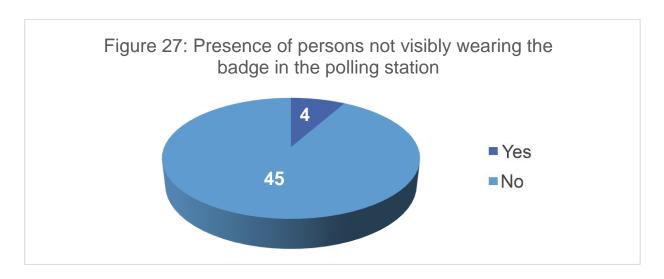
In the first round of the election, the observers of the mission observed the process of vote counting (tabulation) in 49 polling stations, where the following situation was registered.

In 3 of the observed polling stations, the police officer was present at the vote counting session in the voting room, but had not been invited by the chairperson of the commission. In 2 of them he did not interfere in the process, but was not removed. The chairperson of the commission noted that he did not know why the police officer was there. In one case, according to the police officer, he was asked about the election results by the police, and when the chairperson announced the results of the votes, he recorded them in his notes.



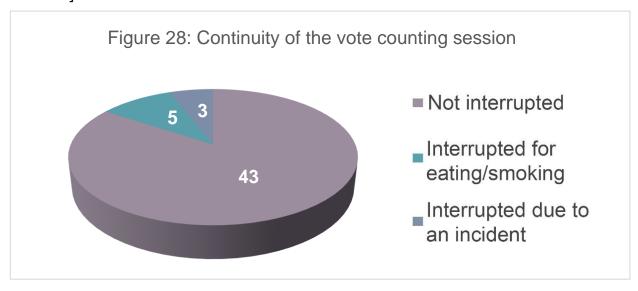
Two proxies of Arayik Harutyunyan were present at the session in 1/16 polling station in Stepanakert, and in 2/17 polling station of Khnatsakh community of Askeran region, the village mayor was present, who, according to the observer, was obviously a supporter of Arayik Harutyunyan, and his wife and daughter were members of the commission.

At the vote tabulation session, there were persons without badges in 8% of the observed polling stations, 7 cases in total. In 3 cases these were proxies and members of the commission, in one case - a candidate.



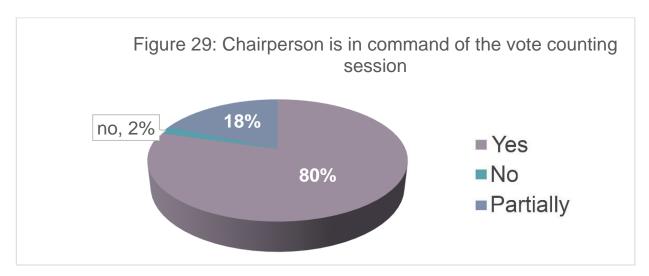
In 5/19 Karmir Shuka polling station, after the polling station was closed, the vote tabulation process did not start immediately, as the commission decided to have a break. In 4 polling stations the session was interrupted for eating / smoking (moreover, twice in one of them). In 3 polling stations there was an incident, one of which was related to the difference between the signatures of the voters and the existing ballot papers, the second due to the health issue one of the commission members had. The other is presented below, quoting the observer:

[In 1/28 polling station in Stepanakert, there was an argument between the proxy of the Justice Party, the chairperson of the commission over the interpretation of valid and invalid ballot papers. When the mark was a little out of the box, it was considered valid in the case of Arayik Harutyunyan, and in the case of the other candidates, it was considered invalid. The journalist who was present there also started an argument, saying that the tabulation would not continue. The chairperson of the Artsakh CEC, representatives of the RA CEC also came to the polling station in connection with this incident.]



The above-mentioned 8 cases were registered in 6 polling stations.

According to the observers, in 80% of the 49 polling stations observed, the chairperson of the commission was in command of the vote counting procedure.



The observers recorded the following cases related to the vote counting procedure and activities of the commission:

- Ballot counting in 4 polling stations was not carried out in accordance with the established procedure. The ballots were taken out of the ballot box in batches or by other members of the commission.
- In 2 polling stations, the commission was not guided by the law in the process of declaring the ballots invalid. In one case, Arayik Harutyunyan's ballot was considered valid, while in a similar case ballots of other candidates were not. In the other case, the voter had made a note both on the serial number of the candidate and in the box. The observer informed that it was invalid, and the commission decided that it was valid.
- Direct participation of persons other than the members of the commission in the vote counting process was observed in 1 polling station (Masis Mailyan's proxy).
- In 2 polling stations they tried to fill in the data in the register with a pencil, but after the observer's remark they used a pen.
- In 2 polling stations they tried to record not true numbers in the protocols to correct some inaccuracies.
- In 1 polling station, a case of a commission member having consumed alcohol was observed.

In 1/28 polling station in Stepanakert about 20 ballots with obvious dark marking were observed, all in favor of Arayik Harutyunyan.

In 3/32 and 4/17 polling stations, ballots with markings of other colors were observed, which the commission considered invalid. It should be reminded that it is true that voting with different colored pens can be used as a means of control by the candidates, but the Electoral Code of the Republic of Artsakh does not define a color of the voting pen, and thus the actions of the commission were not lawful.

In case of national elections, the Electoral Code of the Republic of Artsakh stipulates that first the results of the presidential election must be fully tabulated, and only after that the ballot box for parliamentary election shall be opened. In 7 of the 49 polling stations observed, it is true that the counting of the ballots of the presidential candidates had been tabulated before the opening of the ballot box for parliamentary election, but the bag was not closed. It was closed at the end with the tabulation of the parliamentary election results. In additional 8 polling stations, according to the time mentioned on the protocol, the end time of the tabulation of votes for parliamentary and presidential elections was the same.

The rights of the mission observers were not violated during the vote counting session.

VOTING DAY: SECOND ROUND

As it was mentioned, on April 14, 2020, the Union of Informed Citizens carried out an observation mission in the second round of the presidential elections of the Republic of Artsakh with a methodology different from the first round. Due to the spread of the novel coronavirus, including the cases registered in the Republic of Artsakh, the mission tried to minimize the participation of observers in the on-site processes. During the second round of election, all the polling stations in Stepanakert and the regional centers were observed, following their live broadcasts through the video cameras installed in the polling stations. The observation forms were modified to include questions that could be answered through online observation. In this respect, compared to the first round, in the second round it was possible to observe fewer aspects of the electoral process.

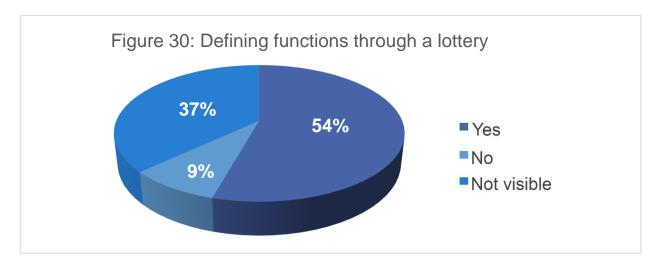
During the day, observations were carried out in 3 most problematic polling stations in Stepanakert, Askeran, Shushi and Martuni regions through 3 mobile groups.

The following sections summarize the data of the observation forms completed as a result of the observations made in 48 polling stations on the voting day, as well as separate examples are given.

Voting Preparation

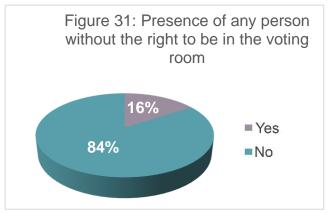
The morning session of the commission was observed in 46 polling stations, as the live broadcast from 2 polling stations did not work in the period from 7:00 to 8:00 in the morning.

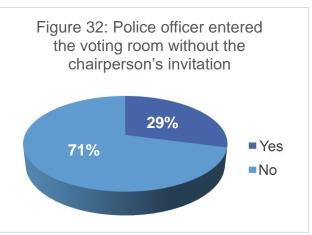
The functions of the members of the commission were clearly defined through a lottery in 54% of the polling stations, in 9% of the polling stations no lottery took place at all, and in 37% of the polling stations the lottery process was not visible / audible through video broadcast. In the case of 9 out of 17 such polling stations, the observers noted that the members of the commission were not in the voting room during that period, suspecting that it was possible that the voting took place in the next room. According to the logic of the Electoral Code, the voting room is defined as the working area for the electoral commission on the voting day, so organizing the morning session of the commission in another area is considered a procedural violation.



The following was observed during the session of the commission:

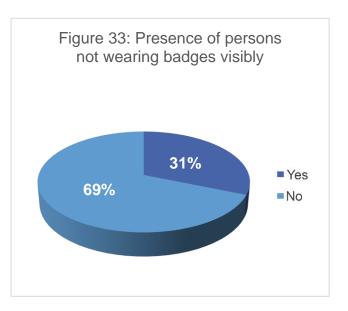
- The entry of a person having the right to be present in the polling station was obstructed in 1 precinct center.
- More than 17 cases of unauthorized persons being present in the precinct center were registered in 9 polling stations.
- In 14 polling stations, the police officer entered the polling station about 30 times without the invitation of the chairperson of the commission.
- In 15 polling stations, 23 cases of the presence of persons not wearing the badge visibly were registered.
 - An argument was registered in 1 polling station.





 Voting in 3 polling stations started before 8:00.

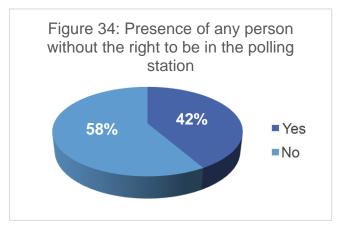
As the CEC of the Republic of Artsakh had stipulated by a special decision that all persons present at the polling station must wear protective equipment (masks, gloves), the observers of the mission also observed instances of violation of these rules throughout the day. The presence of 24 people without protective means was observed in 11 polling stations at the morning session of the commission.

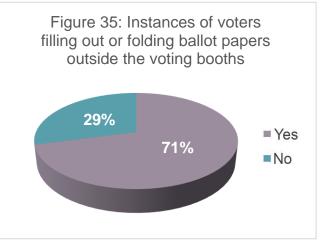


Situation in the polling station during voting

On April 14, 2020, in the second round of presidential elections in Artsakh, from 8:00 to 20:00, observers constantly observed the situation and violations inside the polling stations through online broadcast. Accordingly, the following situation was registered in the 48 polling stations observed:

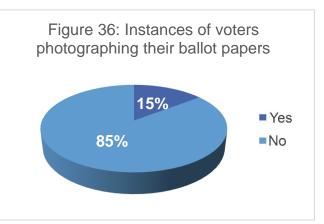
- In 1 polling station, the entry of a person entitled to be present in the polling station was prevented. [The observer who came to 1/25 polling station in Stepanakert was registered after 10 minutes of negotiations.]
- 80 cases of the presence of a person without the right to be in the voting room were observed in 20 polling stations, including numerous cases of presence of police officers in the polling station.
- In 34 polling stations, more than 260 cases of voter filling out or folding the ballot paper outside the voting booth were observed.
- In 7 polling stations, 9 cases of photographing the ballot by a voter were observed.

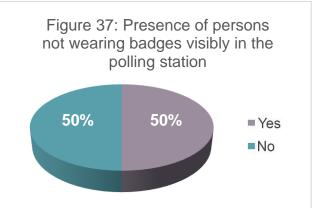


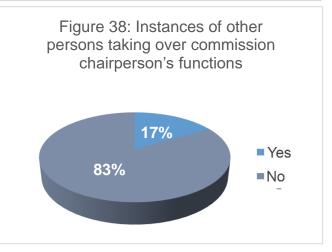


- In 24 polling stations, 86 cases of persons not wearing the badge visibly (including commission members) were observed.
- In 8 polling stations, 21 cases of assuming the powers of the commission chairperson by another person were observed.
- 4 cases of an argument were registered in 3 polling stations.
- In 3 polling stations, 15 cases of accumulations of voters in the voting room were observed during the day.
- More than 200 cases of violation of the procedure established by the CEC of the Republic of Artsakh were registered in 24 polling stations, when the participants of the electoral process in the observed polling stations did not wear protective equipment to prevent the spread of the epidemic.

In addition to the above-mentioned cases, the observers mentioned a number of issues in the additional observations section. These were mainly related to the numerous cases of improper furnishing of the polling station, commission members not performing







their functions properly, not shifting the functions in the prescribed manner, leaving the polling station for a long time, leaving things unattended. Also situations have been described which, under live broadcast conditions, are difficult to confidently classify as a violation of this or that type. Examples include:

[1/10 polling station in Stepanakert: The members of the commission are regularly absent from the voting room. The ballot box is often left unattended.]

[1/13 polling station in Stepanakert: There is no one near the ballot box. A voter approaches, opens the ballot box on his own, throws the ballot there and leaves.]

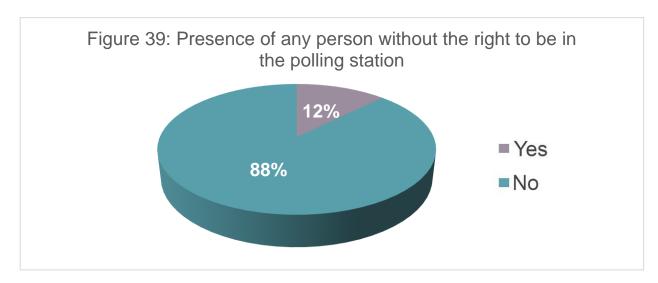
[1/17 polling station in Stepanakert: The member of the commission responsible for the ballot box is almost always absent; in many cases the voters open the ballot box themselves, and sometimes the chairperson of the commission.]

[1/24 polling station in Stepanakert: There was no shift of the commission members' functions. The chairperson of the commission performed the functions of a member of the commission, the members of the commission carefully studied the voter lists. A commission member was looking through the voter list and making notes.]

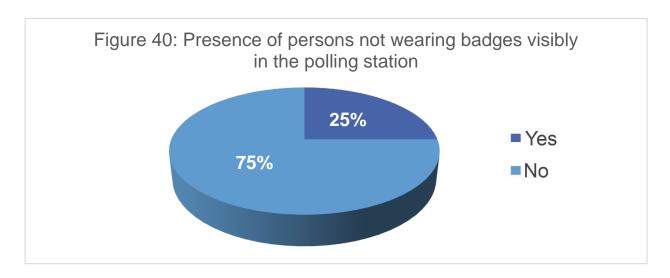
Vote Tabulation

The mission summarized the vote tabulation session of the second round of the presidential elections in Artsakh through online broadcasting organized in 48 polling stations. During the vote counting sessions in those polling stations, the following was recorded:

- Interruption of the vote tabulation session in 2 polling stations,
- 11 cases of the presence of a person not having the right to be in the voting room, which were registered in 6 polling stations,

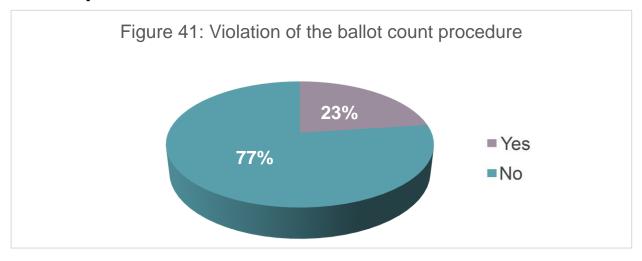


• In 12 polling stations, 27 persons not wearing the badge visible were present at the vote tabulation session,



- 17 cases of a police officer entering the polling station without the order of the chairperson of the commission, which were registered in 7 precinct centers. Example: [1/22 polling station in Stepanakert: The ballot box was opened by the police officer, who remained in the voting room till the end].
 - The ballot counting procedure was violated 36 times in 11 polling stations.

[1/17 polling station in Stepanakert: The ballots are not taken out in turn, but in batches by the member of the commission; and the contents of the ballot paper are often not shown.]



[1/15 polling station in Stepanakert: The names of the candidates are announced and placed in the same place next to the member of the commission who collects Arayik Harutyunyan's ballots. There were more than a dozen such cases. The issue of declaring the ballot invalid is decided by the chairperson together with the member of the commission collecting invalid ballots.]

More than 40 cases of violation of the procedure established by the Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Artsakh were registered in 14 polling stations, when the participants of the electoral process in the observed polling stations did not wear protective equipment to prevent the spread of the epidemic.

Observation of Territorial Electoral Commissions

The observers of the Union of Informed Citizens Stepanakert Office observed the work of the Territorial Electoral Commissions of all 8 regions after 20:00 on March 31, the day of the national elections in Artsakh. During the second round of the presidential election on April 14, the mobile observers of the mission visited 3 Territorial Electoral Commissions - Stepanakert, Shushi and Askeran, partially observing their work.

In the first round of elections, the following situation was registered in the Territorial Electoral Commissions.

A media representative was prevented from entering the No. 1 Territorial Electoral Commission of Stepanakert.

[The chairperson of the commission talked to an unknown person on the phone for about 10 minutes, saying that his instructions said that observers and proxies could be present at the TEC, and nothing was written about media representatives, and he could not verify it by the Electoral Code now. He added that the area was small, and even without the presence of media representatives there was not enough space. As a result, no media representatives visited the TEC throughout the observation.]

In 2 TECs, the full staff of the commission was not present after 20:00. In the Shushi TEC, the chairperson had sent a member of the commission to one of the polling stations, from where they received rumors that clashes between proxies were possible during the vote counting.

In 2 TECs, commission members regularly provided oral information to third parties. In one case, the observer failed to notice the connection of third parties with any political force participating in the elections. The other example is from Shushi TEC:

[The member of the commission who supported "Free Homeland - CUA", and Arayik Harutyunyan was calling and reporting numbers.]

In the case of 4 out of 8 TECs, the election documents were not always brought by the chairperson and secretary of the precinct electoral commission. For example:

[All the materials from 4/20 polling station were brought by the village mayor; the bag was open. The mayor of the village was sent back together with the bags, with the demand that the chairperson and the secretary of the commission shall come, after which they accepted the documents.]

In 3 Territorial Electoral Commissions there were problems with the materials brought from the polling stations, mainly the bags were transported with violations. The most common violation was related to the seal and the register, as well as the placement of a small bag in a large one, in some cases the bags were not fully closed. The bags

from 14 polling stations were damaged. The small bags with voter signed lists brought from 23 polling stations were not closed properly. Seeing the numerous violations related to the closing of the bags, one of the members of the TEC in Martakert, greeted the bags coming from the polling stations outside, saying that the bags should be closed and brought in again so that the violations would not be recorded.

In 4 PECs, there were cases when the signed protocols of the voting results were brought with violations. Sometimes they were placed in a common bag, and sometimes one of the copies was filled in at the TEC. The registers of 20 polling stations and the seals of 14 polling stations were not brought separately, but were placed in bags.

After receiving the bags at the Hadrut TEC, the commission did not ensure their safe storage, which was due to the small size and inconvenience of the area.

Documents (materials) from 4 polling stations (1/2, 1/3, 1/22, 1/27) were handed over to the Territorial Electoral Commission after 8:00 in the morning.

In 6 TECs instances of having changed non-baseline data in the protocols brought from the polling stations were revealed, and such changes were made in 3 TECs. The cases stemmed from ignorance, referred to simple negligence, inaccuracies resulting from miscalculation.

In 3 TECs, the requirement of printing the voting results table and posting it in a visible place every 3 hours was not observed. It was related to the fact that polling stations sent improper documents, and TECs had to waste extra time due to this circumstance.

Of the 8 PECs, the office of only 1 TEC was sufficient for the commission and observers to work effectively.

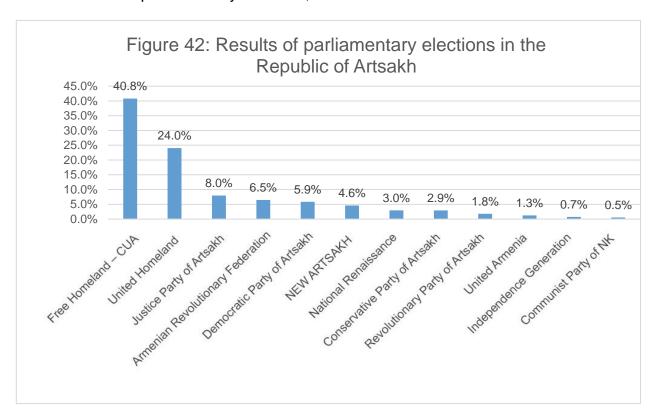
The on-duty police officer actively participated in the session and assisted the members of the commission at the Hadrut TEC. He made regular calls, which seemed suspicious to the observer.

Apart from not being aware of many procedural peculiarities, some PECs did not even know the number of their commission, they thought that the commissions were not numbered. The observers mainly assessed the capacities of the Territorial Electoral Commissions as poor. The latter did not know how to act in different situations, sometimes did not respond properly to the questions of the precinct commissions, and due to ignorance they preferred not to intervene.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

According to the information published on the official website of the Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Artsakh, 72.5% of the total number of voters (104,866 voters) took part in the March 31, 2020 national elections, with 75,989 voters voting in the parliamentary and 76,001 in the presidential election.

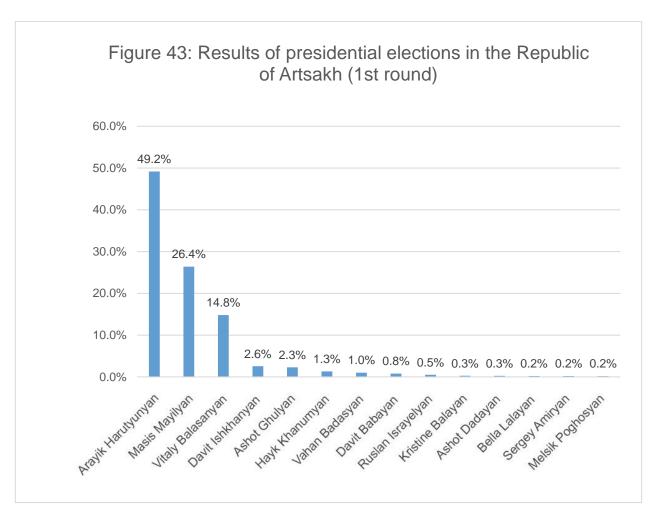
As a result of the parliamentary elections, the votes were distributed as follows:



The threshold of 5% (for parties) and 7% (for alliances) was exceeded by 5 political forces, and the parliamentary seats of the National Assembly were distributed as follows:

- 1. Electoral list of "Free Homeland CUA" Alliance sixteen seats,
- 2. Electoral list of United Homeland Party nine seats,
- 3. Electoral list of Justice Party of Artsakh three seats,
- 4. Electoral list of Armenian Revolutionary Federation Party three seats,
- 5. Electoral list of Democratic Party of Artsakh two seats.

According to official data, the results of the first round of presidential election were distributed as follows:



None of the candidates received more than 50% of the votes, so the second round of elections was scheduled, in which one of the candidates Arayik Harutyunyan got the opportunity to participate with 49.2% of the votes, and Masis Mailyan with 26.4% of the votes.

In the situation caused by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), a number of political forces, non-governmental organizations, including those carrying out observation missions, as well as citizens, issued a statement urging the authorities of the Republic of Artsakh to cancel the elections. After the first round of elections, when a coronavirus infection case was registered in Artsakh, the wave became more active. On April 15, one of the candidates, Masis Mailyan, issued a statement noting: "The national elections held on March 31 were very far from the electoral developments expected by the Artsakh society in the new conditions. I just take note of the information published by the CEC of the Republic of Artsakh after the voting, the assessments of the Armenian observation mission. I urge our citizens not to participate in the second round of voting in the face of the growing hazard posed by the novel coronavirus." In fact, Masis Mailyan withdrew from the race, despite the fact that his name officially remained on the ballot paper, and in the second round of the presidential election held on April 14 the citizens (5428) voted in his favor too.

According to official data, 47,165 voters participated in the second round, which makes up 45% of the total number of voters. Based on the 88% (39,860) of votes out of the total number of 45,288 voters who voted for the two presidential candidates, the CEC of the Republic of Artsakh decided to announce Arayik Harutyunyan elected President of the Republic of Artsakh. The Central Electoral Commission (CEC) stated that there were no violations of the Electoral Code of Artsakh during the run-up to the elections and during the voting which could affect the election results.

The mission also counted the number of voters in 10 polling stations, which was very close to the official results in 8 polling stations, and there was a significant difference in the other two polling stations (in one of the two polling stations, however, there was a video broadcast failure).

The mission carried out some comparative analysis in terms of turnout in the two rounds of elections. During the first round of elections the turnout was 70% in urban communities, 76% in rural areas (the difference is 6%), and in the second round it was 35% in urban areas and 56% in rural areas (the difference is 21%).

Moreover, in 22 polling stations (all in rural communities) the turnout during the second round was higher than in the first round, which has no reasonable sociological and political explanation.

The highest turnout (91%), was registered in 8/32 and 8/6 polling stations, respectively 11% and 9% more than in the first stage. Higher turnout (by 9%) was registered in 8/37 and 8/55 polling stations. It should be noted that the urban polling stations were equipped with cameras. There was no video broadcast in any rural area. No observation was conducted in those rural areas, and opposition proxies were not present at all.

It is true that the number of voters in rural polling stations is small, but, nevertheless, the relatively high turnout is strangely inexplicable, leading to more alarming conclusions, especially in the light of absence of competition in the second round and the novel coronavirus outbreak.

This suggests that there were gross violations in most of the polling stations not controlled by the civil society and the opposition.

MEDIA MONITORING

General Overview

The media environment in the Republic of Artsakh is distinguished by the lack of diversity, and thus pluralism.

The Public Television (Artsakh TV) does not provide 24-hour airtime, it starts at 16:00 and continues until midnight. The political events are covered by three news programs, as well as within the framework of the "Parliamentary Hour" and "Face to Face" programs. The Russian-language news program *Vestnik* is broadcast once a week.

In addition to Artsakh TV, ArTV of Artsakhkap CJSC, Pace Cinema and Pace Chat TV channels of Pace TV and Radio Company also operate in the country. The two companies also rebroadcast Armenian TV channels.

The only print newspaper covering the events in Nagorno-Karabakh is *Free Artsakh*, which is funded from state subsidies, as well as the official newspaper of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation called *Aparazh*. Artsakh Press news agency (artsakhpress.am), which is affiliated with one of the political forces, is more active in the online domain.

Several other news sites operating in the Artsakh segment of the online domain are more like blogs. They cannot have a big impact due to the small audience.

There is no research on the rating of media outlets and TV channels among the population of Artsakh.

Legal Regulations

According to Article 20 of the Electoral Code of the Republic of Artsakh, presidential candidates, as well as parties and party alliances running in the parliamentary elections, shall have the right to use the free and paid airtime (including live) of Artsakh Public Radio on equal terms. The procedure for allocating that airtime and the schedule shall be established by the CEC.

According to paragraph 3 of the same article, the Artsakh Public Radio and Television shall provide "non-discriminatory conditions" for candidates in news programs, "unbiased information without assessments" about their campaign. Moreover, the "non-organization of events by nominated candidates or parties (party alliances) or the lack of information from those events shall not be a ground for the media not to publish information about their campaign. The provisions of paragraph 3 shall apply to other terrestrial broadcast channels.

According to paragraph 11 of the same article, impartial, non-discriminatory coverage shall be provided by newspapers and magazines established by state or local self-government bodies.

However, these legal regulations, do not apply to Armenian TV channels rebroadcast in Artsakh, as well as to online media, which may have a major impact on the elections.

TV Channels

Artsakh TV

Artsakh Public Television does not provide 24-hour airtime. The broadcast starts at 16:00 and continues until midnight. During that time, three newscasts ("The Day") are broadcast at 16:00, 20:00 (main broadcast) and around 23:40. During the campaign, a separate campaign block was created in the main evening news programs, in which they referred to the campaigns of the forces nominated for presidential and parliamentary elections. In addition to the "The Day" news program, Artsakh TV aired a Russian news program (*Vestnik*) once a week, which did not cover the campaign during the monitored period, only CEC Chairperson Srbuhi Arzumanyan was interviewed on the last day of the campaign. In some cases, the candidates for president and MP were covered within the framework of their institutional functions, mainly during the "Parliamentary Hour" program.

The campaign was also covered in the "Face to Face" program, which was launched before the campaign, and has a debate format involving two guests.

At 17:00, a block of paid and free airtime for campaign candidates started, within the framework of which voter education was carried out. Voter education videos were also shown at different times of the day, an average of 5 times a day.

The statements of the Police and Defense Army regarding the elections were referred to, respectively, within the framework of "02" and "Fight for Survival" programs.

On the last day of the campaign, a televised debate was organized in which all the presidential candidates were to take part. Apart from the debate, no program was launched on Artsakh TV to specifically cover the campaign.

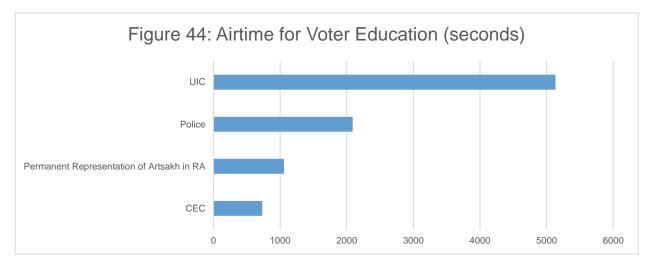
In general, the TV channel refrained from mentioning candidates with regard to their non-institutional functions outside the scope of the campaign. Nevertheless, as a result of monitoring of non-news programs, such a case was reported with the mention of three candidates.

On the day of silence and on election day, the TV channel increased the number of newscasts. Some rules of the day of silence were observed.

Voter Education

From March 7 until the end of the campaign, Artsakh Public TV provided more than 9,000 seconds to voter education in addition to the coverage of candidates. In particular, the Union of Informed Citizens Stepanakert Office, the Police, the Permanent Representation of Artsakh to the Republic of Armenia, the Central Electoral Commission provided the voters with information on the procedure of participation in the elections and

voter rights. As a rule, these videos were shown at the beginning, during and at the end of the airtime provided to the political forces or before / after the news broadcast.



Political Advertising: Regulations

On February 26, in accordance with Article 20 (2) of the Electoral Code of the Republic of Artsakh, the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) set the procedure and schedule of free and paid airtime on Artsakh Public Television for the parties (party alliances) participating in the parliamentary elections.

According to the CEC decision, from February 27 to March 29 inclusive (16:00-24:00), the presidential candidates were to be provided with no more than 30 minutes (1800 seconds) of free airtime on the Public Television, and no more than 80 minutes of paid airtime (4800 seconds), on the terms of all candidates being allocated 9 times free and 8 times paid airtime.

As for the political forces nominated in the parliamentary elections, each of them should have been allocated no more than 60 minutes (3600 seconds) free and no more than 120 minutes (7200 seconds) paid airtime on Public TV from February 27 to March 29 inclusive (16:00-24:00), moreover, on the terms of all the political forces being allocated 9 times free and 8 times paid airtime. However, the schedule attached to the CEC decision (Appendix 3) sets 9 times free and 9 times paid airtime (maximum 15 minutes per day) for each political force, resulting in a maximum of 135 minutes (8100 seconds) of paid airtime per candidate instead of 120, as stated in the decision.

Political Advertising: General Overview

From February 27 until the last day of the campaign (February 29), the Artsakh Public Television provided the candidates with free and paid airtime according to the CEC schedule.

On February 27, the campaigns for parliamentary and presidential elections were interrupted by other programs in the political advertising block, and started at 17:00 and 18:00 respectively.

On February 27 and 28, the presidential and parliamentary elections campaign bloc was broadcast under the common headline "2020 presidential and parliamentary elections" (Picture 1), which causes some confusion, as it does not allow to distinguish whether the airtime is provided to the candidate or to the party (party alliance) that nominated him/her. This is due to the fact that it is difficult to understand from the content of the campaign videos whether it is the presidential



Picture 1

candidate's campaign or that of the political force that nominated him.

In particular, according to the CEC schedule, on February 28, presidential candidate Masis Mailyan had 10 minutes of paid airtime, and the party alliance that nominated him (New Artsakh) was not entitled to airtime that day. In the case when the political advertisement is presented under the headline "2020 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections of the Republic of Artsakh", and the campaign video of the presidential candidate Masis Mailyan begins and ends with the logo of the "New Artsakh" alliance, one gets the impression that the video is part of the parliamentary campaign block (and not the presidential campaign) and New Artsakh has no airtime within this framework.

These issues have been settled since February 29. The presidential and parliamentary election campaigns were separated by separate headlines and followed each other. The political advertising block started at 17:00 with labels "Political advertising" (if it is free) and "Political advertising: Paid airtime" (if paid). Another small confusion arose on the air on March 9, when Masis Mailyan and Arayik Harutyunyan's political advertisements were not separated, and immediately followed each other.



Picture 2

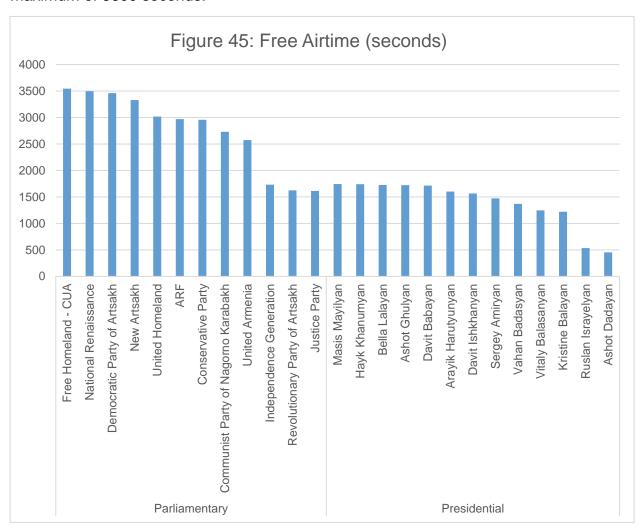


Picture 3

Free Airtime

Figure 45 shows that all the political forces participating in the parliamentary election campaign used their free airtime. Moreover, it was almost completely used up by the Free Homeland-CUA Alliance, and the National Renaissance Party, and the Democratic Party of Artsakh was the third. Justice Party, Artsakh Revolutionary Party and Independence Generation Party used the least free airtime (Figure 45). All political forces

used free airtime a maximum of 9 times. In total, none of the political forces exceeded the maximum of 3600 seconds.

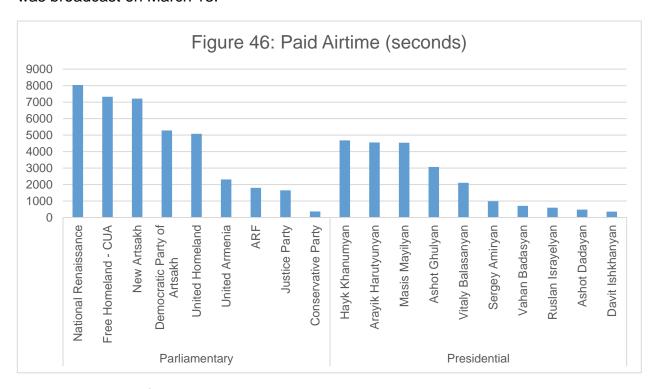


As for the presidential candidates, Masis Mailyan, Hayk Khanumyan, Bella Lalayan, Ashot Ghulyan, Davit Babayan used almost all of their free airtime, approaching but not exceeding 1800 seconds within 32 days. Ashot Dadayan and Ruslan Israelyan used their free airtime less, and Melsik Poghosyan did not use it at all (Figure 45).

Paid Airtime

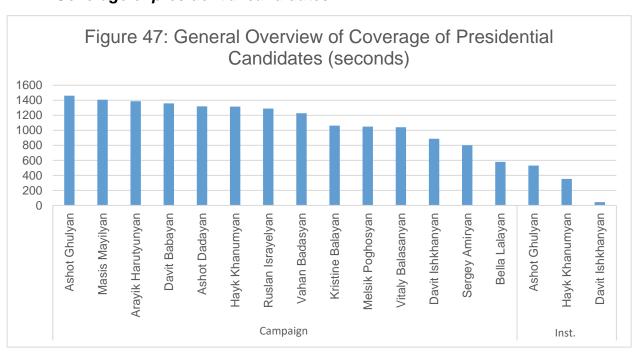
It can be seen from Figure 46 that the National Renaissance Party used the most of the paid airtime allocated to the parties and blocs nominated for parliamentary elections, approaching the maximum of 8100 seconds. It is followed by "Free Homeland - CUA" and "New Artsakh" alliances. Paid airtime was not used at all by the Independence Generation Party, the Revolutionary Party of Artsakh and the Communist Party of Nagorno Karabakh. All candidates were provided with paid airtime a maximum of 9 times, except for National Renaissance Party (10 times). Artsakh TV informed the Central Electoral Commission and Public Services and Economic Competition Regulatory Commission of the Republic of Artsakh that on March 12 the political advertisement of the National Renaissance Party was interrupted due to technical problems, so an

agreement was reached with the party leader Hayk Khanumyan, and the continuation was broadcast on March 13.



The same from Figure 46 shows that Hayk Khanumyan, Arayik Harutyunyan, Masis Mailyan used (almost equally) the most airtime for the presidential candidates, approaching but not exceeding the established maximum 4800 seconds. Melsik Poghosyan, Davit Babayan, Bella Lalayan and Kristine Balayan did not use paid airtime at all. The presidential candidates were provided with paid airtime up to a maximum of 8 times, as defined by the regulation.

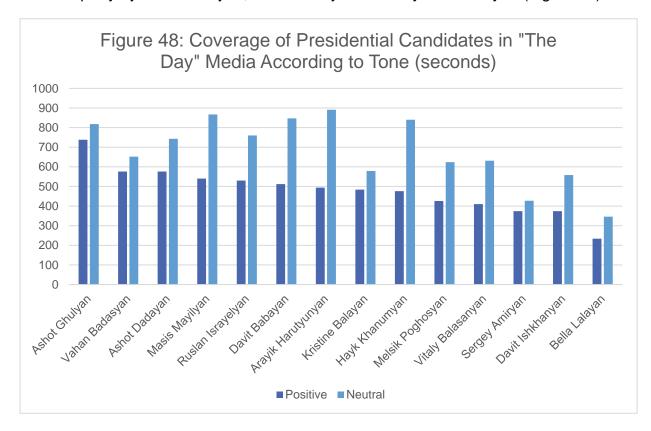
Coverage of presidential candidates



In addition to their paid and free airtime, the candidates participating in the presidential campaign were mentioned in three programs of Artsakh TV: "The Day" (including "The Day: Appendix"), *Vestnik* and "Parliamentary Hour". In the last two programs, they have been mentioned mostly based on their institutional functions. However, out-of-campaign coverage does not make up a large percentage; in fact, only three candidates were mentioned based on their institutional functions: Ashot Ghulyan, Hayk Khanumyan, and David Ishkhanyan, for a total of 928 seconds. The general picture of the coverage of the presidential candidates on Artsakh TV can be seen in Figure 47 (this calculation does not include the the debate and the paid and free airtime).

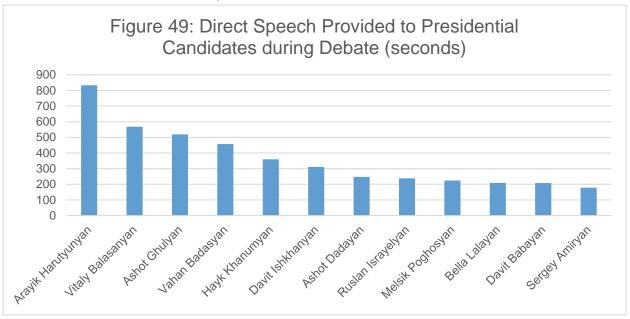
The actual campaign of the presidential candidates was covered only in the broadcasts of "The Day" news outlet (either the presidential or the parliamentary election campaign was covered every day), the campaign block was separated from the other news by a special logo. As can be seen in Figure 47, Ashot Ghulyan is the most covered politician in the campaign, Masis Mailyan, Arayik Harutyunyan, Davit Babayan, Ashot Dadayan, Hayk Khanumyan, Ruslan Israelyan, Vahan Badasyan were given almost equal airtime. Bella Lalayan received significantly less coverage than others.

The presidential candidates were covered in a mostly neutral and positive tone, which is due to the indirect and direct speech provided to the candidates. No negative tone coverage was reported during the monitoring. The candidate covered with the most positive tone is Ashot Ghulyan, followed almost equally by Vahan Badasyan and Ashot Dadayan. Arayik Harutyunyan received the most coverage in neutral tones, followed almost equally by Masis Mailyan, Davit Babayan and Hayk Khanumyan (Figure 48).

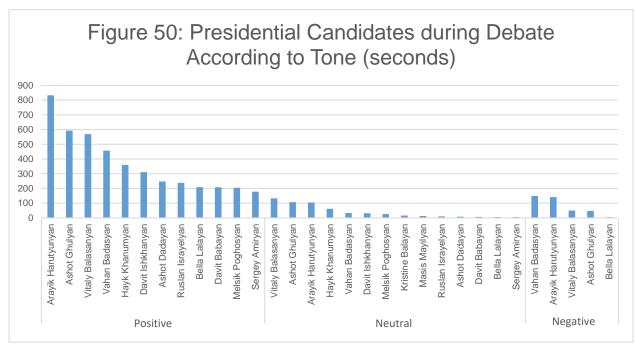


Debate

On the last day of the campaign (March 29) a big TV debate was organized on Artsakh TV with the participation of 12 out of 14 presidential candidates. Masis Mailyan and Kristine Balayan refused to take part in the debate. The host informed about it at the beginning, quoting the candidates' statements. The debate took place with overall observance of the norms of equal airtime.



Of the candidates participating in the debate, Arayik Harutyunyan used the opportunity to speak directly the most - more than 800 seconds, Sergey Amiryan the least - about 200 seconds (Figure 49). However, it should be noted that no candidate was given more airtime than the direct speech set for him, some candidates simply did not make full use of that time. This difference in the allotted time of direct speech is also due to the fact that according to the debate format, the candidates had the opportunity to ask each other



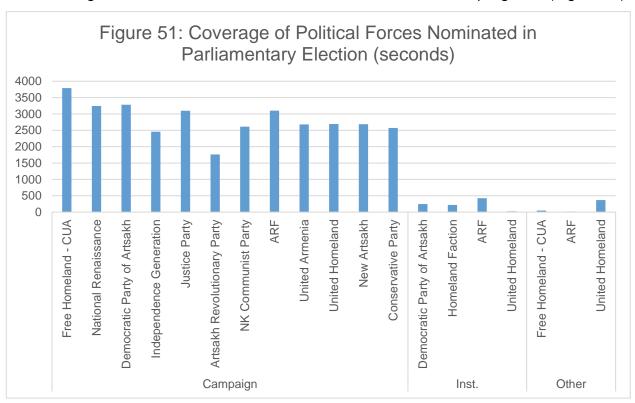
questions, and it goes without saying that if the questions are addressed to more than one candidate, he/she automatically gets more airtime.

In general, positive (at the expense of direct speech) and neutral tone prevailed in the debate. Vahan Badasyan, Arayik Harutyunyan, as well as Vitaly Balasanyan, Ashot Ghulyan, Bella Lalayan were predominantly mentioned in a negative tone. However, it should be noted that the negative tone did not make up a large percentage of the total.

In general, it can be said that the televised debate was well organized, and was already a positive event in itself, although no real debate took place between the candidates. Moreover, some candidates did not make full use of their airtime, while others used it to point out each other's strengths.

Coverage of political forces nominated in parliamentary elections

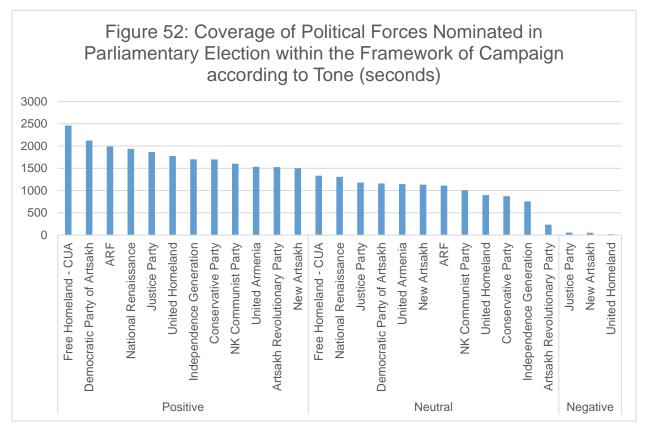
The campaign of the parties and party alliances nominated in the parliamentary election was covered within the framework of "Face to Face" program of "The Day" news agency. Some MP candidates were mentioned during the "Parliamentary Hour" program, with coverage of their institutional functions, as well as in non-news programs (Figure 51).



The "Free Homeland - CUA" alliance was covered the most within the framework of the campaign, which is almost equally followed by the Democratic Party of Artsakh, the "National Renaissance", the ARF and Justice Party. The Artsakh Revolutionary Party was the least covered one (Figure 51).

Within the framework of the campaign, the political forces nominated in the parliamentary election and their candidates were mentioned in mostly positive and neutral tones, and only three forces ("Justice", "New Artsakh", "United Homeland") were also

mentioned in a slightly negative tone. "Free Homeland - CUA" was mentioned the most in a positive tone, followed by the Democratic Party of Artsakh and the ARF (Figure 52).



"Face to Face"

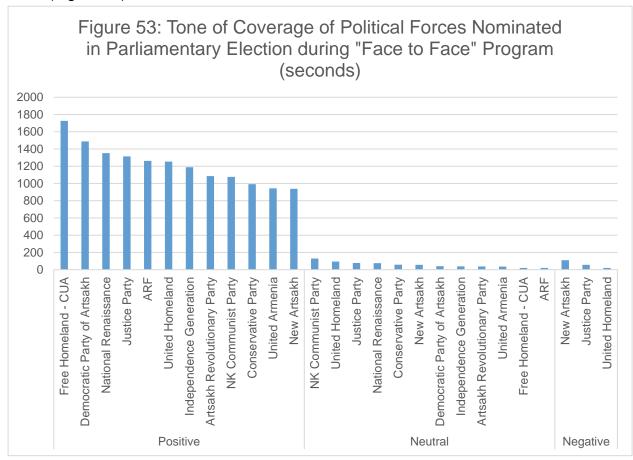
During the parliamentary election campaign, a positive event was the broadcast of the "Face to Face" program in debate format on Public TV, in the framework of which airtime was provided to all 12 political forces participating in the parliamentary elections. However, the lottery of the participants of the debate was held from the beginning according to the parties and alliances. Accordingly, the two party alliances participating in the campaign ("Free Homeland - CUA" and "New Artsakh") debated with each other, and a lottery was held for the parties.

In addition, the program was not broadcast live, it was edited, as a result of which, according to alarms we received, in some cases the candidates' accusations made against the third candidate were not aired.

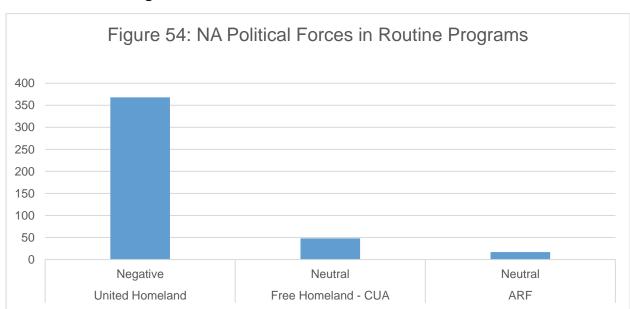
During the campaign, 7 programs of "Face to Face" were broadcast, each program was repeated the next day. At the beginning of the campaign (on February 27) CEC Chairperson Srbuhi Arzumanyan, member of the Public Services and Economic Competition Regulatory Commission, Gagik Khachatryan, were hosted by the "Face to Face", and presented the procedures for conducting and covering the elections.

The most mentioned political force in the program is the "Free Homeland - CUA" alliance, the least - "New Artsakh". Moreover, it is noteworthy that the representatives of these forces debated with each other. During the program, the political forces were

mentioned in a mostly positive tone, which was ensured by the direct speech provided to them (Figure 53).



Routine Programs



In addition to the campaign and institutional coverage, some of the MP candidates were also covered in non-news programs. Thus, in such programs, the leader of the "United Homeland" Party Samvel Babayan was mentioned in a mostly negative tone; he was not on the party list, but was the one leading the campaign. In particular, on March

21 and 22, Artsakh TV aired the films "Terrorism against Statehood", and "Our President", which tell about the assassination attempt against Arkady Ghukasyan and his path. In both films, Samvel Babayan was mentioned in a negative context.

Besides, Lusine Gharakhanyan, nominated by the "Free Homeland - CUA" alliance, appeared in the advertisement of the "School" program, but the program did not air. Another candidate nominated by the ARF, Armen Sargsyan, was again mentioned in a neutral tone in the film "Andrey Petrosyan 70" (Figure 54).

Other TV Channels

Of the Armenian TV channels, **5TV Channel** covered Artsakh's national elections more actively, only in the context of the presidential election, giving an obvious advantage to one of the candidates, Vitaly Balasanyan. Given the large number of candidates, it is natural that it would be impossible to fully cover all 14 candidates in the same report. Therefore, several candidates were mentioned in the same report, but very often those candidates were repeated on different days, and some candidates were not covered at all.

Thus, the most covered candidate on 5TV Channel is Vitaly Balasanyan, who was not only included in general reports with other candidates (13 reports on the campaigns where Balasanyan was allotted more time than others), but was also covered in indirect speech with a positive tone. During the campaign, the 17-minute film "Askeran Bullet" about Balasanyan and the announcement of the film "April of Victory", in which Balasanyan speaks, were shown twice. Balasanyan was also mentioned as a possible winner on the basis of opinion polls. Reports of his campaign were often accompanied by vox-pops, where citizens said they would vote for Balasanyan.

The second most covered candidate on this TV channel is Arayik Harutyunyan, who was mostly mentioned in a neutral and positive tone (7 reports from the campaign), followed by Ashot Ghulyan (6 reports in a neutral tone). Within the framework of coverage of the actual campaign, Masis Mailyan was mentioned 4 times, Davit Babayan - 3, Kristine Balayan, Bella Lalayan, Hayk Khanumyan - 2 times, Davit Ishkhanyan and Ashot Dadayan - 1 time each.

In addition, interviews with candidates Arayik Harutyunyan, Vitaly Balasanyan, Davit Ishkhanyan, Bella Lalayan, Davit Babayan and Ashot Ghulyan were conducted in the "Interview" pavilion for an average of 30 minutes. The interviews lasted about 30 minutes, with the exception of the interview with Balasanyan, which lasted about 45 minutes.

On March 29, the TV channel rebroadcast the televised debate. The day of silence was not observed.

"Armenian Public TV" covered it mainly in the form of interviews with candidates (interviews with presidential candidates began before the start of the official campaign; a monitoring conducted since February 19 showed that Davit Babayan and Davit Ishkhanyan were invited to the Public TV before the start of the campaign) during the

official campaign. During the official campaign, Masis Mailyan, Arayik Harutyunyan, Vitaly Balasanyan, Hayk Khanumyan, Vahan Badasyan, Ashot Ghulyan, Kristine Balayan were hosted by Petros Ghazaryan, as well as the leader of the United Homeland Samvel Babayan, who was not nominated through the electoral list.

Public TV has covered the campaign several times in its main news programs, including several candidates in one report. Reports were neutral, all candidates were given equal time and covered with equal tone. During the monitored period, Arayik Harutyunyan was mentioned 6 times in the news programs, Masis Mailyan - 5, Vahan Badasyan - 4, Vitaly Balasanyan and Davit Babayan - 3 times each, Davit Ishkhanyan and Hayk Khanumyan - 2 times each, Samvel Babayan, Ashot Ghulyan, Ruslan Israyelyan, Bella Lalayan and Artur Osipyan - 1 time each. It is noteworthy that the TV channel focused mainly on the presidential race, and from MP candidates only Samvel Babayan and Artur Osipyan were covered.

The day of silence was observed by Public TV.

Armenia TV is the only monitored TV channel that has clearly distinguished between the presidential and parliamentary election campaigns. Within the framework of one news program, the TV channel covered either the presidential or the parliamentary race in one report. In the reports, the candidates were given equal airtime and referred to in a neutral tone. Eleven out of 14 presidential candidates were covered: Vitaly Balasanyan, Davit Babayan were mentioned 3 times each, Kristine Balayan, Arayik Harutyunyan, Hayk Khanumyan, Davit Ishkhanyan, Masis Mailyan - 2 times each, Sergey Amiryan, Bella Lalayan, Ashot Ghulyan – 1 time each. All of the 12 political forces participating in the parliamentary elections were covered (once or twice), except for the Revolutionary Party of Artsakh.

Apart from the news release, no reference was made to the elections in other formats. It is noteworthy, however, that from the middle of the campaign, March 15, the coverage was stopped, and the day of silence was not observed. The March 30 news program referred to the televised debate that took place the day before.

Kentron TV and **Shant TV** were also monitored, which did not cover the Artsakh national election campaign in any way. **"Yerkir Media"** was limited to mentioning ARF candidate Davit Babayan within the framework of the ARF 130th anniversary, as well as airing a 30-minute interview with Bella Lalayan, the repetition of which was shown once.

Online Media

The website of the state-run *Free Artsakh* newspaper in Artsakh published interviews with presidential candidates Davit Ishkhanyan, Bella Lalayan, Masis Mailyan, Kristine Balayan, Sergey Amiryan, Vitaly Balasanyan, Davit Babayan and Arayik Harutyunyan during the campaign. All interviews were neutral and balanced, with questions being repeated from time to time. However, presidential candidates Hayk Khanumyan, Ruslan Israelyan, Vahan Badasyan, Ashot Ghulyan, Melsik Poghosyan and Ashot Dadayan were left out of the same format coverage. The candidates nominated in

the parliamentary election were not mentioned; two analytical articles on the elections were published during the campaign, where no names were mentioned. The day of silence was observed.

"Artsakhpress" website predominantly covered Arayik Harutyunyan's campaign, regularly published the data of the polls and sociological surveys proving the probability of his victory. In general, Arayik Harutyunyan and the "Free Homeland - CUA" alliance led by him were mentioned in 22 publications, only in a positive tone. Vitaly Balasanyan was mentioned 8 by the news outlet, mainly in a neutral and negative tone. Masis Mailyan was mentioned 4 times, two of which in a negative context, two in the context of polls as a candidate following Arayik Harutyunyan as a probable winner. Ashot Ghulyan, Davit Ishkhanyan (ARF), Samvel Babayan (Artsakh Democratic Party) were mentioned less,1-3 times. There was no reference to the campaigns of other political forces.

The official ARF newspaper "**Aparazh**" covered exclusively the campaign of ARF presidential candidate Davit Ishkhanyan and ARF candidates nominated in the parliamentary election. One article about Samvel Babayan was republished in the pages of the newspaper in a negative tone, another article about the same Babayan is in a news style ("The court rejected Samvel Babayan's lawsuit against the Passport and Visa Department of the Police of the Republic of Artsakh").

1in.am, one of the online Armenian media outlets, has been quite active in covering the national elections in Artsakh, launching a separate rubric called "Artsakh is electing".

Thus, 1in.am mentioned 8 out of 14 candidates running in the presidential elections, as well as Samvel Babayan (who was not nominated by the list, but led the campaign of the "United Homeland") and Grigory Sahakyan, leading the list of the "New Artsakh" alliance.

Despite the diversity of candidates, however, the pages of this media outlet have an obvious preference for covering one of the candidates, Arayik Harutyunyan. The latter was covered in all formats, in the form of text and video interviews; his Facebook posts and campaign videos posted on that platform were regularly republished, videos from the campaign were published, several polls were conducted by the media, where citizens mentioned only Arayik Harutyunyan as a presidential candidate. In total, the length of the videos (campaign and interview) with this candidate was more than 200 minutes.

The second most mentioned candidate is Masis Mailyan, who was allotted about 62 minutes in a video format, and his Facebook posts were published at regular intervals. In addition, a 40-minute interview with the head of his election headquarters Grigory Sahakyan was published.

Interviews were also published with Davit Babayan (58 minutes), Samvel Babayan (45 minutes), Vahan Badasyan (44 minutes), Ashot Ghulyan (42 minutes), Hayk Khanumyan (33 minutes) and Ruslan Israelyan (28 minutes).

Vitaly Balasanyan's campaign was covered only in the first days of the campaign in the form of two official press releases. Since March 1, Balasanyan was mentioned only in analytical publications, in interviews with political scientists (other candidates), mainly in a negative tone.

On March 29, the live TV debate between the presidential candidates was broadcast by the media outlet. The day of silence was not observed.

News.am also covered the elections in Artsakh mainly in the context of the presidential race. Exceptions are several references to Samvel Babayan, which are mainly related to presidential candidate Masis Mailyan, and the "Free Homeland - CUA" alliance was mentioned once.

This media outlet has given obvious preference to Vitaly Balasanyan, about whom, with some exceptions, there were references almost every day, often through several news stories a day. Balasanyan's campaign was covered mainly through his Facebook posts, official press releases, and less in the form of reprints in the print media. There were also opinion articles, mainly in text format; some publications were accompanied by short reports from the campaign. Besides, Balasanyan was also mentioned in indirect quotations, when various circles expressed their support for him. During the campaign, News.am also published several polls (in some cases from unreliable sources), according to which Vitaly Balasanyan has the best chance of winning. In fact, Balasanyan was covered exclusively in a positive and neutral tone.

The second most covered candidate by the media is Arayik Harutyunyan, whose campaign was again covered in the form of republishing Facebook posts, and to a lesser extent in press publications. Harutyunyan was mostly covered in a positive and neutral tone, except for one case when the article was in a negative tone.

Ashot Ghulyan, Davit Babayan and Davit Ishkhanyan were covered significantly less, again in the form of republishing Facebook posts. Ruslan Israyelyan was mentioned in some cases, and from the political forces, the Revolutionary Party of Artsakh was mentioned.

Masis Mailyan's campaign was not covered as such; in the last days of the campaign, his Facebook posts were published several times in which he urges to declare a state of emergency and postpone the elections. Mailyan was mentioned more in indirect publications in the press, mainly in a negative and neutral tone. In one case, an inappropriate vocabulary was used against Masis Mailyan, noting that he is surrounded by "bastards of Soros". On the last day of the campaign, News.am completely rebroadcast the televised debate on Artsakh TV, providing separate excerpts from it in text format, including on the day of silence.

Vitaly Balasanyan is again the most covered candidate by **Tert.am**. His campaign was presented in the form of official press releases, reposts of Facebook posts, as well as opinion articles, interviews, print media publications (24 publications in total). The texts

were mostly accompanied by a video. Some of the videos covering the campaign also included polls with citizens, in which the respondents supported Vitaly Balasanyan.

The second most covered candidate, again in a positive and neutral tone, is Arayik Harutyunyan, whose campaign was covered mainly in the form of Facebook posts and reposts of official press releases (7 publications, 1 of which was an interview).

Davit Ishkhanyan and Ashot Ghulyan were mentioned twice each (positive and neutral), and Masis Mailyan was mentioned twice in a negative and neutral tone. Ruslan Israyelyan was once mentioned in the context of postponing the elections.

Tert.am rebroadcast the televised debate organized by Artsakh TV, then introduced some episodes of it in 6 separate articles. The day of silence was not observed.

The website of "**Hraparak**" daily referred to the elections in Artsakh mainly with analytical articles, which were mostly directed against Masis Mailyan and Samvel Babayan. In particular, Masis Mailyan was mentioned in a negative tone in 22, Samvel Babayan in 13 articles (by the way, the author of most of the analyses is Vahram Atanesyan). There was no reference to the campaign of these candidates, except when Samvel Babayan's 20-minute interview was published in the last days of the campaign.

Vitaly Balasanyan's campaign was covered the most, mainly in the form of official press releases issued by his office. Arayik Harutyunyan was covered the least, mainly in the form of reposts of Facebook posts.

Vitaly Balasanyan was covered in a positive tone in 7 analytical articles (or indirect speech), and Arayik Harutyunyan in 8 publications. Of the other candidates, Hayk Khanumyan was mentioned twice (neutral), Vahan Badasyan was mentioned once (negative), Ashot Ghulyan was mentioned in the context of his Facebook post calling for participation in the elections, and Ruslan Israyelyan was mentioned once for calling for postponing the elections, together with the candidates who joined him (Masis Mailyan, Sergey Amiryan, Kristine Balayan and Ashot Dadayan). One article referred to the declarations of the presidential candidates, with the exception of Kristine Balayan. The day of silence was not observed.

Of the monitored online media outlets, the **Haykakan Zhamanak (Armenian Times)** website covered the elections in Artsakh the least. Throughout the campaign, Arayik Harutyunyan was mentioned 4 times on the website (1 of which was in the form of an interview, 3 in the form of reposting Facebook posts), once the official message of the "Free Homeland - CUA" alliance was published, Masis Mailyan was mentioned twice, again in the form of official press releases, Hayk Khanumyan, Vahan Badasyan and Davit Babayan were interviewed once. On the day of silence, "Haykakan Zhamanak" published Mailyan's statement on why he did not participate in the debate.

Thus, the results of the monitoring show that, taking advantage of the legal gap, the candidates running in the national elections put the main emphasis on campaigning not through the regulated Artsakh terrestrial TV channels, but through the online media

outlets that are not subject to those regulations. As a result, although Artsakh TV generally adhered to the rules of equal coverage, the Artsakh audience was somewhat affected by the unequal coverage of candidates in the online domain and on Armenian TV channels.

ACTIONS OF THE MISSION ON RECORDED VIOLATIONS AND RESPONSE OF COMPETENT AUTHORITIES

During the observation mission, numerous violations of the electoral legislation were revealed or detected. The mission submitted criminal reports to the Prosecutor General's Office regarding the violations, which in principle contained actions prohibited by the Criminal Code of the Republic of Artsakh. The vast majority of these acts concerned electoral bribery, abuse of administrative resources, and breach of secrecy of the ballot. In total, the Union of Informed Citizens Stepanakert Office submitted 20 reports to the Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Artsakh, which accounted for 25% of all cases received by all means.

The submitted reports refer to the following articles of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Artsakh:

- Article 147.1 (Forcing to campaign or refuse to campaign, essentially abusing administrative resources) - 4 episodes
 - Article 148 (Falsification of election or voting results) 1
 - Article 150 (1) (Violation of the procedure for publishing voter lists) 1 episode
 - Article 150 (2) (Violation of the procedure for compiling voter lists) 1 episode
 - Article 151 (Voting more than once or instead of another person) 5 episodes
 - Article 152 (Violation of the secrecy of the ballot) 6 episodes
- Article 154 (Bribing voters, violation of the ban on charity during the elections or obstruction of the exercise of the free will of the voter) 8 episodes
 - Article 269 (Hooliganism) 1 episode.

Criminal cases were initiated on 6 out of 20 reports (by the way, in 4 of them the lawsuit was rejected, then the decision was changed as a result of appealing to the Prosecutor's Office). At the time of preparation of the report, only two of these cases are still under investigation, and one of the cases has merged with one of those cases. Such a picture is a result of the apparent lack of will of the criminal investigation and investigative bodies, as well as the prosecutor's office to bring the criminal cases to a logical conclusion after May, as well as the problematic definition of the secrecy of ballot in the Criminal Code.

In particular, the case (Article 147.1 of the Criminal Code) of obstructing the entry of the candidates and supporters of the Revolutionary Party to Martuni city by the Mayor of Martuni on March 18 (during the pre-election campaign for the first round of election) (Article 147.1 of the Criminal Code) is still under investigation. The other case under

investigation concerns violations of the procedure for maintaining and publishing voter lists described in this report (the cases initiated based on our reports were united). It should be noted here that the head of the Passport and Visa Department of the Police Jivan Ghahramanyan was dismissed from his post and sent to the personnel reserve.

Moreover, in July 2020 the Artsakh National Assembly adopted thr Law on Amnesty. Article 2 (9) of the law provides an exception for almost all electoral crimes (i.e. amnesty does not apply to them), it does not include Article 147.1 (which is, in fact, an article prohibiting the misuse of administrative resources and refers to the case of the mayor of Martuni), Article 150 (relating to the maintenance and publication of voter lists) and Article 152 (relating to the secrecy of the ballot).

In view of the aforementioned circumstances, the mission concludes that both the political authorities and the law enforcement agencies of the Republic of Artsakh did not have enough will to prosecute those who committed electoral crimes.

CONCLUSIONS

Observing the national elections of the Republic of Artsakh, the observation mission of the Union of Informed Citizens recorded a situation which contained some positive aspects compared to the previous elections, but the mission has also recorded numerous shortcomings of the electoral process, violations and insufficient political will to eliminate them. By their nature, most of the irregularities reported by observers could have affected the election results.

- Some of the serious shortcomings in the furnishing of the polling stations identified by the mission were due to building conditions, but most were seen as a result of the poor capacities of the commission members.
- 13 of the 49 polling stations observed were assessed as completely inaccessible by all parameters, while others had problems of various kinds. Although the polling stations were equipped with a magnifying glass for the visually impaired, the Braille tablet was not provided.
- The video recording introduced in 48 polling stations increased the transparency of the process, even provided an opportunity for observation missions to observe the election process online and was an additional control mechanism.
- The fact of accreditation of observer organizations after the deadline set in the first round and the initiative of accrediting new observers in the second round, and making additions and changes in the lists of accredited observers prove that the Central Electoral Commission of Artsakh is not determined to comply with the requirements of electoral legislation, and prioritizes current procedural issues over the requirements of the legislation. The presence of unaccredited observers in the polling stations as a result of the empty badges provided to the observer organizations by the CEC exacerbates this concern.
- Numerous instances of looking at the signed voter lists and / or transferring
 information about voters who did not vote yet to other persons, more than one person
 entering a polling station, filling out or folding ballot papers outside the polling station,
 photographing one's own ballot, and voters announcing about their voting decision testify
 to controlled voting and influence of some forces on the free expression of will of citizens.
- The non-conduct or partial conduct of their functions by precinct electoral commissions carries risks both from the point of view of non-transparent implementation of the process and from the point of view of the commissions ignoring the law. The cases of the chairperson of the commission not having proper command of his / her functions, other persons taking over the functions of the chairperson, not taking steps towards violations in the polling stations, not drawing up protocols on the violations prove that the commissions still lack proper establishment.

- The numerous problems related to the packaging of documents brought to the Territorial Electoral Commissions, the improper command of their functions in those commissions, and the detection of numerous violations also speak of the gaps in the capacity of the commissions at all levels. Nevertheless, the election commissions were generally willing to work with observers, and many shortcomings due to ignorance were eliminated at the suggestion of observers.
- The Artsakh Police did not take proper measures to prevent and detect crimes committed in the pre-election stage and on the voting day. Moreover, especially in the second round, the police themselves did not comply with the requirements of the Electoral Code, being present at the polling station many times without the chairperson's invitation.
- The presence of campaign materials and posters in the vicinity of the polling stations on the day of the voting indicates lack of clear mechanisms or lack of will to remove them.

It should be noted that the Union of Informed Citizens did not carry out a long-term observation mission, but it was carried out by our partner "Akanates" observation alliance, which raised concerns about the use of administrative resources and the charity during the pre-election campaign. The Union of Informed Citizens has also received numerous complaints about charity during the campaign and associated with certain candidates. Very often the charity activities were expressed in the form of provision of construction materials and within the framework of other government programs. However, it was introduced as support provided by one of the candidates, namely, Arayik Harutyunyan. These circumstances give grounds to think that there was exertion of influence on the will of the voters prohibited by the electoral legislation.

These concerns are compounded by the numerous breaches of the secrecy of ballot on election day. Moreover, given the circumstance that those violations are of a latent nature, and, as a rule, were rarely observed by observers, we can assume that they were much higher in number than it has been observed. Thus, in that respect, it is not possible to give an accurate estimate of the overall picture. Accordingly, it is impossible to give an exact quantitative assessment of the percentage of voters in the Republic of Artsakh who, being constrained by the charity they received or the administrative levers applied to them, were not able to express their real will in the voting booths.

Thus, it can be stated that the national elections in the Republic of Artsakh took place in a competitive environment, but the degree of fairness of that competition differed significantly from the requirements set for elections in democratic societies. However, it is to be welcomed that the Artsakh public (including the professional community) has a prevailing perception that the 2020 elections were significantly more democratic than the 2015 parliamentary and 2012 presidential elections. Unlike the previous elections, this time neither the electoral subjects nor the observers questioned the fact that there was no ballot stuffing and falsification of voting results in the polling stations.

Both during the pre-election period and in the first and second rounds of elections, there were violations that could have had a significant impact on the results of both the parliamentary and presidential election.

Although the authorities of the Republic of Artsakh have made significant efforts to ensure the transparency of the elections, there was an apparent lack of political will to fight against violations (their prevention, disclosure and holding the guilty accountable).

SUGGESTIONS

- Clearly define the concepts of polling station, precinct center, voting room in the Electoral Code of the Republic of Artsakh, with special emphasis on where the electoral commissions will perform their functions.
- Ensure access to published information on electoral processes for persons with disabilities. Provide additional resources to ensure full accessability of polling stations and the voting procedure, minimizing the need to come and vote with the help of another person, ensuring the person's right to a secret ballot; stipulate by law the requirement to organize and conduct voting only in accessible precinct centers; give visually impaired voters the opportunity to vote independently by providing Braille tablets to polling stations.
- Develop clear mechanisms for observer accreditation format and deadlines, ruling out violations of the Electoral Code and presence of non-accredited observers at polling stations.
- Introduce electronic voter registration devices that will reduce the risk of double voting and voting on behalf of another person, as well as the presence of persons not eligible to be at the polling station.
- Ensure by law the availability of video cameras in polling stations to provide for the transparency and public oversight of the election process on the voting day, and ensure that all polling stations are provided with cameras.
- Provide clear mechanisms for removing pre-election posters and campaign materials on the silence day and election day; establish strict control and sanctions.
- Provide ongoing quality training for Precinct Electoral Commissions; ensure mandatory testing for commission members before each election; ensure the availability of commission training and testing materials, and accessibility of the venue.
- Enhance the level of knowledge and skills of the Territorial Electoral Commissions, make their work more transparent by fixing the requirement to equip the commission headquarters with cameras, ensuring online broadcast of all the activities of the commission on the voting day and during the examination of appeals.
- Prepare and publish accessible guidelines, conduct trainings, and raise awareness for all participants in the election process (candidates, commissions, observers, media representatives, proxies, police officers).
- Develop legal regulations that will rule out unfair campaign opportunities through Armenian TV channels broadcast in Artsakh.

- Establish appropriate regulations to rule out hate speech on social networks and online domain during the election campaign.
- Amend the article of the Criminal Code related to the secrecy of the ballot, bringing it in line with the risks described in the Electoral Code of the Republic of Artsakh.
- Ensure efficient proactive detection of electoral crimes and prosecute persons who have committed such crimes.
- Legally introduce the institute of ballot envelopes as a mechanism to ensure the secrecy of the ballot.

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

"Union of Informed Citizens Stepanakert Office" Consulting NGO is a non-profit non-governmental organization. The organization does not pursue political, religious or commercial goals, and is not affiliated with any party.

The principles the organization adheres to are the following: legality, publicity, nondiscrimination, conscientiousness, voluntary membership, equality of members, selfgovernment, collegial-style management and accountability.

In its activity, the organization is governed by the Civil Code of the Republic of Artsakh, the Law of the Republic of Artsakh on Non-Governmental Organizations, other legal acts and the Charter.

The Union of Informed Citizens Stepanakert Office was founded on July 23, 2019 by a number of members of the Union of Informed Citizens NGO.

The Union of Informed Citizens Stepanakert Office aims to promote the development of civil society and the strengthening of democracy in Artsakh.

On September 8, 2019, the Union of Informed Citizens Stepanakert Office carried out an observation mission during the elections of the local self-government bodies of the Republic of Artsakh with a grant provided by the decree of the Government of the Republic of Armenia.

In 2020, by the decision of the tender commission set up by Decree 192-A of the RA Prime Minister, the Union of Informed Citizens Stepanakert Office received a grant to conduct an observation mission of the national elections in Artsakh. In particular, the organization received a grant of AMD 60 million for the first round of elections, and AMD 20 million for the second round of presidential elections.

In addition to the election observation missions, the Union of Informed Citizens Stepanakert Office also organized public discussions and media literacy trainings in Artsakh. The members of the organization have had regular meetings in Artsakh with various local public and political figures and civic activists.