



Armenia

Last update:	10 April 2017
Population:	3,051,250 million (CIA Factbook 2016 est.)
Prime minister:	Karen Karapetian
President:	Serzh Sarkisian
Governemental type:	Presidential Representative Republic (to be transformed into parliamentary in 2018)
Ruling coalition:	RP, ARF
Last election:	2 April 2017 (parliamentary elections)
Next election:	February 2018 (presidential elections)
Sister parties:	Armenian Revolutionary Federation - Dashnaktsutsyun

In recent years, Armenia failed in its attempt to sign an EU Association Agreement. Instead, on 2 January 2015, the country became a full member of the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union. Nevertheless, Armenia continues to seek deeper cooperation with the EU, and is planning to sign an agreement in lieu of an Association Agreement, which will be less far reaching. The country remains strongly dependent on Russia in terms of energy supply and security, which is the main obstacle for further integration in the West. Russia's military presence is very important because of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict where Armenia and Azerbaijan have been fighting for over two decades with not much success to settle a peace agreement.

Internally, Armenia has been receiving relatively positive assessments of its democratisation process; the run up to national elections has been quite free and fair in recent years, even if the election day itself would usually be marked by falsifications. A recently passed constitutional amendment will transfer Armenia into a parliamentary republic in 2018, with the sweeping powers of the president transferred to the PM and cabinet. The opposition has been critical, believing that this is simply an attempt by the current President Serzh Sarkisian to remain in power in a different capacity after the end of his second and final presidential term.

Political Situation

Internal situation

Recent reports show that human rights violations remain an important issue in Armenia. Authorities interfered in a number of peaceful protests that took place throughout the year. In several instances, police dispersed protesters using force. Local human rights defenders continued to raise concern over high numbers of reported beatings and ill-treatment in police custody.

The US State Department has noted "systemic corruption" as one of the most frequent and serious forms of human rights violation in Armenia, saying the authorities are not doing enough to tackle it. Local anti-graft watchdogs like the Anti-Corruption Center (ACC), which operates as the Armenian branch of Transparency International, are highly sceptical about government assurances of intention to tackle corruption. Armenia ranked 94th out of 174 countries and territories evaluated in Transparency International's 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI).

Violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity are serious problems as well. A few incidents were recorded when women's rights activists were threatened and assaulted, as well as threats to Women's Resource Centre following its calls for gender equality legislation. The anti-discrimination draft bill, prohibiting all forms of discrimination, was abandoned after the government initiated the process to join the Eurasian Economic Union.

According to Reporters Without Borders' recent report regarding the freedom of media, there is a significant degree of pluralism and relatively little state censorship, but journalists continued to face pressure and violence from pressure groups.

During the 2013 elections, international observers noted that the vote was well-administered and that authorities had demonstrated a general respect for freedom of assembly and expression. However, pressure on voters, with the use of administrative resources, and interference in the voting process remained concerning. As in previous elections, observers noted procedural violations and

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irregularities in the tabulation of votes. Grave violations were observed on election day, particularly regarding the interference by proxies from the ruling party.

Armenia - EU relations

In the wake of a positive conclusion to four year during negotiations between Armenia and the EU on an Association Agreement, it seemed that Armenia could start to look forward to deeper cooperation with the EU, which would hopefully bring strong economic and political benefits. However, only months before the planned signing of the Association Agreement, President Serzh Sarkisian suddenly decided to make Armenia a part of the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) instead, thereby precluding the AA. On 2 January 2015, Armenia became a full member of EEU. The move is widely believed to be the result of strong Russian pressure in the areas of economy, energy and security.

On 29 November 2013, an EU-Armenia joint statement was adopted at the Vilnius Summit reconfirming the commitment of the parties to further develop and strengthen comprehensive cooperation in all areas of mutual interest. Armenia and the EU are committed to further cooperation aimed at the continuous improvement of areas including democratic institutions and judiciary, promotion of human rights and rule of law, good governance, fight against corruption, strengthening of the civil society, and others. Armenia and the EU plan to sign a cooperation agreement that would substitute the failed Association Agreement, but in a major change from the AA, the new agreement will not include a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) between the EU and Armenia.

Nagorno-Karabakh

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the territory called Nagorno-Karabakh. An Armenian populated enclave in Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh, has been de facto independent from Azerbaijan since the war in the early 1990s, that ended with a truce signed in 1994. The now 'frozen conflict' has been ongoing for over two decades without a peace agreement. There are still frequent shootings across the frontline, with dozens of deaths each year. Each side blames the other for military casualties. Azerbaijan lost swathes of territory during the conflict, and more than 600,000 ethnic Azeris from Karabakh and nearby regions were forced to flee. More than 300,000 ethnic Armenians who used to live in Azerbaijan were also displaced by the conflict.

Peace negotiations mediated by the Minsk Group, under the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), have seen little progress. Internationally, Nagorno-Karabakh is considered part of Azerbaijan, but its Armenian inhabitants call themselves citizens of the Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) Republic. Although self-governed, it depends financially and militarily on Armenia. Frustrated by the lack of a diplomatic solution, Azerbaijan's leadership has threatened to retake the territory militarily. Oil-rich Azerbaijan has spent billions of US dollars on modern weaponry. Most of the arms are supplied by Russia, which has caused deep concern in Russia's official military ally, Armenia. Armenia believes that the conflict settlement should be based on the Nagorno-Karabakh people's right to self-determination and uninterrupted land communication with Armenia, under jurisdiction of the Armenian side. Armenia also seeks international guarantees for the security of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Activism

Since 2010, protests sparked by civic initiatives have become very common in Armenia's capital Yerevan and, to a lesser extent, in the smaller cities of Gyumri and Vanadzor. These initiatives have mainly been organised by a post-Soviet generation of young civic activists without any political party affiliation, and address a range of issues including the environment, cultural preservation, consumer rights, labour and employment issues, as well as human rights. However, they are distinct from formal, professionalised NGOs in a number of key aspects, which include the issues they address, their organisational structures, their repertoires of action, and their lack of engagement with foreign donors. Although civic initiatives in Armenia address very specific and sometimes narrowly focused issues (e.g. saving a waterfall, public park, preventing a public transport price hike etc.), their emergence is informed by and articulates much broader concerns about corruption, the absence of rule of law, lack of democracy, rise of oligarchic capitalism, and the failure of formal political elites to address the concerns of ordinary Armenian citizens.

The introduction and spread of social media, including Facebook and YouTube, as well as live-streaming technology has allowed civic activists to access information more easily and to organise and mobilise much more effectively and rapidly. Most of the recent initiatives – with the biggest ones under the hashtags #NoToPlunder or #ElectricYerevan - have been at least partly successful. The government was forced to negotiate to reach a compromise. This new social phenomenon in Armenia is becoming a bigger force than the opposition parties, hence, parties have tried to jump on the bandwagon and join the protesters. However, since the activists do not label themselves as any kind of organisation, it remains unclear how they should be dealt with, how they should be referred to, and what their role is in current politics of Armenia.

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Elections

Electoral System

Armenia is a presidential representative republic. The president is the head of state and the head of government. The executive power is exercised by the government, the legislative power by both the government and the parliament. The parliament - National Assembly - consists of 131 deputies that are directly elected every five years. The Electoral Code, amended in 2005, provides for the deputies to be elected according to a mixed electoral system. 90 deputies represent the parties or blocs that have overcome the 5 percent and 7 percent voting threshold, respectively. They are elected on a proportional basis. The other 41 deputies are elected from single-mandate constituencies by means of a one-round majoritarian system.

Since the constitutional amendments of 2005, political parties have gained power with respect to the years before 2005. The influence of the president has therefore diminished compared to the power of the political parties. Groups in parliament have changed, new ones have been formed and oligarchs gained influence over politics. New political parties were created based on economic power, rather than on political ideology. Still, most parties present themselves with a certain ideological background. Following another constitutional amendment, passed in a national referendum in 2015, Armenia is set to become a parliamentary republic after the end of the second and final presidential term of current President Serzh Sarkisian. The opposition has been critical of this, believing it is simply a way for Sarkisian to remain in power in a different capacity after his final presidential term ends in 2018.

Parliamentary Elections

On 2 April 2017, Armenia held parliamentary elections, which brought a large victory for the ruling party, giving the Republican Party (Hayastani Hanrapetakan Kusaktsutyun, HHK) of president Serzh Sarkisian an absolute majority in the parliament. The HHK will most likely seek a coalition with the Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaktsutyun (ARF-D), which gained 6,6% of the vote, repeating the situation in 2012, when the two parties also formed a coalition. Main opposition alliance led by billionaire Gagik Tsarukyan won 27.3% of the votes, and the new Yelk (Way Out) Alliance about 7%. This leaves several parties and alliances, such as the Free Democrats Party, Armenian Renaissance Party, Communist Party of Armenia, Armenian National Congress-People's Party of Armenia Alliance and the Ohanyan-Raffi-Oskanian Alliance without any seats in the parliament, as they were unable to reach the required 5 to 7% of the votes. These are the last elections before Armenia changes from a semi-presidential to a parliamentary system. The change is following a controversial referendum on constitutional change held in December 2015, where the voter turnout was only 51 percent, barely enough to make the vote valid. This parliament will be the first parliament to have more power than the president. The change is following a controversial referendum on constitutional change held in December 2015, which had a very low voter turn-out. Critics say this change will enable the current president to stay in power in another capacity. This parliament will be the first parliament to have more power than the president, so the major win of the Republican Party is all the more significant for the continuation of its power in the coming years.

Campaign

During this campaign, candidates tried to get the direct support of the voters on the street, taking selfies and shouting slogans with megaphones, hoping to convince their citizens to vote for them. This major attention for the voters is the result of the constitutional amendments, changing the current semi-presidential system to a parliamentary system. Another development, competition between candidates of the same party, is the result of the 2016 Electoral Code, allowing up to 15 candidates from each party in each of Armenia's voting districts, instead of only one candidate. Due to this extra competition, more incidents of violence were reported: Supporters of a candidate of the HHK allegedly beat up the campaign manager of another HHK candidate from the same district. In addition to the question whether parties were oriented towards the West or more pro-Russian, the common theme throughout all the campaigns were the economic problems that Armenians face in their day-to-day lives.

Aftermath

About 60 percent of the Armenians voted in the parliamentary elections. While some opposition leaders immediately claimed fraud,

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the aftermath of the elections was remarkably calm. This had to do with the new Electoral Code, which was amended to prevent fraudulent practices during the elections under a historic deal reached between the opposition and the ruling party. It allowed the installation of 1500 webcams in the polling stations, as well as the introduction of electronic voter authentication devices with fingerprint recognition software. The technical equipment was paid for by the European Union and the United States. There were some technical problems, including the devices being unable to even recognize the fingerprint of president Sarkisian. Also, online live streams of the webcams at the polling stations was unavailable during the morning. Yet, it seems to be one of the most credible elections in years in Armenia.

Monitoring mission report

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) had 300 election observers in place, and the Citizens Observer, an Armenian civil society organization and watchdog group had 3000 people who monitored the election. They both reported instances of vote buying, voter intimidation and presence of unauthorized persons in the voting stations, but they were mildly positive about the 2016 Electoral Code. “There is little doubt that, since the last time the citizens of Armenia voted, efforts have been made, including through logistical improvements, to raise the quality of the electoral process. The authorities should be praised for working to inform the electorate of this new, quite complex, electoral legislation. It is a pity that, despite all of the legal and organizational changes, these elections did not remove long-standing doubts about the reliability and integrity of electoral processes in the country,” said Liliane Maury Pasquier, Head of the delegation from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. “The use of new voting technologies cannot alone restore confidence in elections – crucial in a genuine democracy – just the same as better legislation is only effective if applied in good faith.”

Results Elections 2017

Party	Percentage	Seats
Republican Party of Armenia (HHK)	49.17%	58
Tsarukyan Alliance	27.35%	31
Yelk Alliance	7.78%	9
Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaktsutyun (ARF-D)	6.58%	7
Armenian Renaissance	3.72%	0
Ohanyan-Raffi-Oskanian Alliance	2.07%	0
Free Democrats Party	0.94%	0
Armenian Communist Party	0.75%	0
Armenian National Congress-People’s Party of Armenia Alliance	1.66%	0

Presidential Elections

On 18 February 2013, Armenia held presidential elections. The elections were easily won by incumbent President Serzh Sargsyan, backed by his Republican Party. He was re-elected for another term of five years. Observers of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) said the election process ‘had improved’, but was lacking competitiveness: three major opposition forces – Armenian National Congress (HAK), Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnaktsutyun and Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK) - did not participate or back other candidates. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) observation mission described the elections as free, transparent and competitive. The election was, nevertheless, overshadowed by some serious incidents regarding challenging opposition candidates.

The official results showed that Serzh Sargsyan won the election with some 58 percent of the votes, enough to win the presidency outright. Former Foreign Minister Raffi Hovhannesyan came in second with about 37 percent of the votes. Voter turnout was 60 percent. Nevertheless, the opposition was weakened by the refusal of some potential challengers to participate in the elections.

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Candidate Paruir Hairikyan was shot in the shoulder in an assassination attempt in January. Another presidential candidate, Andreas Ghukasyan, went on a hunger strike. Major potential challengers, former president Levon Ter-Petrosyan, backed by the Armenian National Congress, and Gagik Tsarukyan of the Prosperous Armenia Party, refused to compete, because they expected the election to be rigged.

Serzh Sarkisian hailed the results, thanking his voters and stating "these elections once again proved in the most responsible moments Armenian people can come together and make the right decisions". Raffi Hovhannisyan contested the results, however, as he refused to concede defeat and has accused the authorities of carrying out fraud to ensure Sarkisian receives another five-year term. Officials have acknowledged reports of violations, but have rejected claims of a voting fraud conspiracy.

Social Democratic Parties

Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaktsutyun (ARF-D)

Party Leader: Hrant Markarian

Number of seats: 5

<http://www.arfd.info/>

The Armenian Revolution Federation was established in 1890 in Tbilisi. During the First Armenian Republic the party was in power, but it was banned following the Sovietisation of 1920. The party, however, continued to function in the diaspora. The party was reintroduced in Armenia after 1988, but was banned in 1994 by then President Levon Ter-Petrosyan on allegations of terrorism. The president took this and other allegations (following the constitution) to the Supreme Court. The Court concurred only with one of the president's accusations, that the ARF broke the Law on Parties by having non-Armenian citizens in its leadership. In 1998 Kocharian re-allowed the party and asked it to support him in his campaign for the presidential elections. The support was, however, more pragmatic than ideological. Since then it has also been part of the ruling coalition of Kocharian's successor, Serzh Sarkisian, but left the coalition in protest over the rapprochement with Turkey, which climaxed with the signing of the normalisation protocols between Armenia and Turkey in 2009. Although the process stalled shortly afterwards, ARF stayed in the opposition.

The ARF has set its mind on "the creation of a free, independent and united Armenia" and is prominent in Nagorno-Karabakh, the break-away region of Azerbaijan de facto independently governed by local Armenians. The "Dashnaks" hope to once reunite the entire Armenian diaspora on the united Armenian lands. The party therefore is popular among the diaspora Armenians and receives much financial support from them. The main objectives of the party are the establishment of a minimum wage of 50,000 Drams, the establishment of an anti-corruption entity, and a minimum retirement benefit.

The party describes itself as essentially national, socialist, democratic and revolutionary. It is based on social justice, democracy and national self-determination for the Armenian people. The ARF is internationally recognised as a social democratic party, and became a full member of the Socialist International (SI) in 2003. Already in 1907, the ARF became a member of the SI. Currently, the party is seeking to intensify the relationship with the Party of European Socialists (PES).

The ARF has an extensive network of local organisations, also beyond the Armenian borders, and is structurally well-functioning.

Since the 2012 parliamentary elections, the ARP holds 5 seats in the National Assembly.

Other Parties

Republican Party (Hayastani Hanrapetakan Kusaksutyun) (RP (HHK))

Party Leader: Serzhe Sargsyan

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Number of seats: 69

<http://www.hhk.am/en/>

The conservative Republican Party (RP) was founded in 1990, and sees itself as the follower of the ideas of the Armenian national hero Garaghin Nzhdeh. According to his teachings, the trust in the nation's power, will, capacities, and future depends on the recognition of the nation. The party therefore stresses the importance of the nation over other religious, social or partisan entities.

The party has its roots in the National Independence Party founded in the 1970s in Soviet Armenia, pursuing Armenia's independence as its goal. The main founder, Ashot Navasartian, as well as former and now deceased leader Antranik Margaryan, were political prisoners in Soviet times. Current leader Serzhe Sarkisian has been a Comsomol leader in Karabagh.

Currently, there are two main factions within the RP: those who have been a member of the Republican Party since the foundation, and those who joined the party during the waves of 1998 and 2006. The new wave is considered the "nouveau riche", which did not have any economic power prior to the break-up of the Soviet Union.

Political stability is the biggest interest for the RP. Other important issues are growth of GDP, increase of number of jobs, and a growth of the retirement payments. The RP is conservative in its values, but rather neo-liberal in its economic policies. In 1998, the small RP was joined by the political branch of the Yerkrepah Union, an organisation of Karabakh war veterans, and became one of the more influential parties of Armenia.

The RP has been in governance since 1998, when it was part of the Unity bloc, a coalition of the RP and the People's Party. This bloc was dissolved in 2001 as a result of different opinions about new president Kocharian. After the 2003 elections, the RP became the biggest party in parliament when many non-partisan deputies aligned with the RP. These deputies generally are from the wealthy local elites and have the same interests as the RP: stability in their powerful position. The party has been in power ever since. The 2012 parliamentary elections were again won by the RP, who consequently managed to form a new coalition.

Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK)

Party Leader: Naira Zohrabyan

Number of seats: 37

<http://www.bhk.am/en>

The Prosperous Armenia Party was formed in January 2006 by millionaire businessman Gagik Tsarukian, who used to be a close associate of the president. BHK is a liberal conservative party. The party started out as rather pro-presidential and traditionally supported the governmental side. After the 2007 elections, Prosperous Armenia formed a coalition with the Republican Party. During the 2012 elections, the party managed to win 37 seats. The BHK nevertheless chose not to join the governing coalition, but for some times avoided calling itself an opposition party. However, it gradually became more and more critical of especially the economic policies of the government. This climaxed in a short but tense standoff between Tsarukian and President Sarkisian in March 2015, after which Tsarukyan stepped down and announced that he would quit active politics. Tsarukyan's successor, BHK MP Naira Zohrabyan, has started rebranding BHK into a 'real' opposition party. She was elected during the same congress where Tsarukyan made his announcement to retire.

Yelk (Way Out) Alliance (Yelk)

Party Leader: Edmon Marukyan

Number of seats: 9

Armenia's Yelk (Way Out) alliance was created by Human Rights activist Edmon Marukyan as a way out from the socio-political crisis, after he was elected as a non-partisan candidate in the National Assembly during the elections of 2012. He and his party Bright Armenia formed an alliance with the leaders of the opposition Hanrapetutyun (Republic) Party and the Civil Contract party in December of 2016 and announced to run for the parliamentary elections in January of 2017. The leaders of the three parties are also the main leaders of Yelk: Edmon Marukyan, Nikol Pashinian and Aram Sarkisian.

Yelk declared at its founding that it will strive for a "European model of the democratic, rule-of-law and social state" and is thus

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clearly pro-European. This is a change of one of the alliance members, Civil Contract, which used to advocate a more neutral foreign policy. Yelk presents itself in other ways as a 'way out' to the normal politics: It has a strong focus on socio-economic problems, and announced it will seek a way out of the crisis. It also says it wants to offer people an alternative and give them to opportunity for radical changes.

In the parliamentary elections of 2 April 2017, the first national elections in which it participated, Yelk ended up in third place, gaining 7.8% of the votes and nine seats in parliament. During the campaign for the parliamentary election, it was Civil Contract leader Nikol Pashinian who sought the spotlight the most.

Heritage (Zharangutiun)

Party Leader: Raffi K. Hovannisian

Number of seats: 5

<http://www.heritage.am/en/>

The Heritage party was founded in 2002 and nationally registered in 2005. It first competed in the national elections of 2007, in which they entered parliament and won six seats.

Their foreign policy can be characterised as balanced, but also as pro-Western. The Heritage party underlines the good relationship with Russia, China and India, but sees European integration and cooperation as the key to progress. European integration is not a goal on its own, but rather a tool for improved well-being, prosperity and security. With Turkey, Heritage advocates an open and honest dialogue. Domestic policy goals are legal reforms, the development of civil society and the economic policy of Armenia. Heritage states that sustaining the competitiveness of the market helps the Armenian economy grow. Furthermore, the party believes that reducing poverty and building good social services are very important for the future of Armenia. By taking these measures, Heritage has the objective to reduce emigration from Armenia and stop the "brain drain" from the country. It is generally assumed that the "Heritage" party has the only party leader with clean hands and a clear track record in Armenian politics.

Following President Sarkisian's 2013 last-minute decision to abandon the negotiated Association Agreement with the EU and opt instead for membership in the Russian-led Eurasian Union – widely believed to have been made under strong Russian pressure – Heritage strongly opposed this decision.

Free Democrats

Party Leader: Khachatur Kokobelyan

Number of seats:

The Free Democrats Party was led by Alexander Arzumanyan, starting as a faction that broke away from the opposition bloc Armenian National Congress (Hay Azgayin Kongress – HAK) in 2010. Alexander Arzumanyan used to be the first ambassador to the United States and to the United Nations, before serving as Minister of Foreign Affairs until 1998. He started this pro-European party which has relatively young members and members of parliament. Its current leader Khachatur Kokobelyan challenged the current move of the government towards Russia and membership of the Euroasian Economic Union. They are known as the most progressive party in Armenia, even presenting the first female presidential candidate in 2013, Anush Sedrakian.

During the parliamentary elections of 2012, the Free Democrats formed a bloc with the Heritage (Zharangutyun) party, in order to pass the electoral threshold for a place in the parliament. Together they received five seats, three of which went to the Heritage Party, two to the Free Democrats. The alliance fell apart soon after the elections, after Heritage leader Raffi Hovannisian accused Kokobelian of neglecting to follow a pre-election agreement: Kokobelian was supposed to resign and give his seat to another member of the alliance. The choice of the Free Democrats, to put Anush Sedrakian forward as a possible presidential candidate a month later, showed the final break of the alliance: Hovannisian was expected to be the presidential candidate of the opposition bloc.

In the last parliamentary elections of 2 April 2017, they were unable to gain seats in parliament on their own, receiving only 0.94% of the votes.

Armenian National Congress (Hay Azgayin Kongres) (HAK)

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Party Leader: Levon Ter-Petrosyan

Number of seats: 7

<http://www.anc.am/>

After the 2012 parliamentary elections, Armenian National Congress gained 7 seats in the National Assembly of Armenia. HAK is a coalition of 13 opposition parties in the Republic of Armenia, led by former President Levon Ter-Petrosyan and formed in 2008. Its direct predecessor was the Pan-Armenian National Movement. During the March 1 2008 Armenian protests, the HAK played a major role in organising demonstrations and pushing for the government of President Serzh Sargsyan, who defeated Ter-Petrosyan in the 2008 election according to official results, to accept the demands of protesters. Those protests ended with clashes with the police, resulting in 10 deaths. HAK's main goals are to attain complete freedom of speech, access to media and assembly, to assure an independent investigation of the crimes of March 1 2008, initiate democratic reforms and hold a pre-term presidential and parliamentary elections.

Armenian Renaissance (Orinats Yerkir; formerly 'Rule of Law') (OEK)

Party Leader: Artur Baghdasarian

Number of seats: 6

<http://www.hvk.am/>

The Armenian Renaissance is a centre-right party founded in 1998 and aims to reform the state's legal system. The party leader, Artur Baghdasarian, has put human rights, reform of the court system, improved availability of legal representation for citizens, and an economic liberal policy high on the agenda. The party usually cooperates with the government.

In 2006 the party ceased to be the third party of a ruling coalition. Since the 2012 elections it holds 5 seats in parliament.

People's Party of Armenia (Hayastani Zhoghovrdakan Kusaktsutyun) (PPA (HZhK))

Party Leader: Stepan Demirchian

Number of seats: 0

Karen Demirchian, who was the leader of Communist Armenia from the 1970s to the 1990s, founded the People's Party in 1998. When he was killed in the 1999 attack on the National Assembly, his son Stepan took his role. This leftist party aims to establish government of the people and the strengthening of the Armenian independent statehood. The PPA was the most important party in the Justice Bloc, which ceased to exist just before the 2007 elections. The party's main issues are a 100 percent proportional electoral system, the implementation of a new administrative-territorial division in Armenia, and the support of closer cooperation with the CIS.

The party currently does not hold any seats in parliament.

Biographies

Serzh Sarkisian

President

Born in 1954 in Nagorno-Karabakh, Serzh Sarkisian started his career as a metal turner, until he became head of the communist party's youth department. As tensions rose over Nagorno-Karabakh between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, Sarkisian became chairman of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic Self-Defence Forces Committee and was subsequently elected to the Supreme Council of Armenia in 1990. He organised several battles in the Nagorno-Karabakh War and is considered to be one of the founders of Nagorno-Karabakh's and Armenia's armed forces. Sarkisian started his national political career in Armenia in 1993, when he became the Armenian Defence Minister. In 2007 he became Prime Minister, but one year later he won the presidential elections. He is widely considered to have been picked by his predecessor Robert Kocharian to succeed him. He had the backing

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of the ruling Republican Party in a strong victory in the first round. The elections were marred by violent protests. Sarkisian is the third President of Armenia.

During his presidency he has pledged to comply with the Council of Europe's demands for an end to the government's crackdown on the opposition. In 2011 however, protests against Sarkisian started again. A striking moment for his presidency were the protocols with Turkey aimed to normalise the relations between the two countries, and open the border between them which had been closed since 1994. The process, initiated by Sarkisian, was hailed as a unique chance from the beginning, but ended without any results, when Turkish authorities tied the normalisation process to a solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the interest of Azerbaijan. Furthermore, Sarkisian has made an appeal to the UN to help bring peace to Nagorno-Karabakh while warning for increasing war rhetoric from the Azerbaijani side.

Karen Karapetian

Prime Minister

Karen Karapetian (1963) is an Armenian politician who has been Prime Minister of the country since 13 September 2016. He has no political affiliation. Before he became prime minister, Karapetian lived in Russia for six years, holding senior executive positions in Russian subsidiaries of the Gazprom gas giant. He had managed Armenia's Gazprom-controlled gas distribution network before serving as mayor of Yerevan from 2010 to 2011.

Just one month into his term as mayor, Karapetian arguably sparked the 2011 Armenian protests when he ordered the municipality to enforce a strict ban on street trading.

Karapetian is married and has three children. He holds a PhD in economics from the Yerevan State University.

Gagik Tsarukyan

leader Tsarukyan Alliance

Gagik Tsarukyan was born in 1956 and is known for his wealth as self-made man and as a former Olympic wrestler. His business concern Multi Group includes large companies in the alcohol, dairy and gas branch. He entered politics in the early 2000s, with his party Prosperous Armenia. He has very close ties to former President Robert Kocharyan, both as business partners and in politics. Some critics claim it was also Kocharyan who pushed Tsarukyan towards politics, saying that without his influence Prosperous Armenia would have never existed. In 2007, at entering national politics, Prosperous Armenia won 18 seats in the parliament.

During the years that followed, his party developed more and more as an opposition party, which eventually led to a clash between him and the president Serzh Sargsyan. The president accused him of parliamentary absenteeism and started to investigate his businesses and those of his allies. After this clash, Tsarukyan officially stepped down as political leader, leaving Prosperous Armenia to his right-hand Naira Zohrabyan and pulling back from political life, focussing entirely on his business empire.

A few months before the elections of April 2017, Tsarukyan returned to the political arena as leader of the Tsarukyan alliance, which includes his own former party Prosperous Armenia and several smaller parties. It won 31 seats, and is the second party after the ruling Republican Party. Until now it is unclear to which extent he is going to be a strong 'opposition' leader: the government elite did not seem surprised when he suddenly returned to politics, and he has made few critical remarks towards the presidential party. Moreover, his business empire requires him to keep good contacts with the government elites, as it was seriously threatened during the 2012 clash.

Raffi Hovannisian

Leader of Heritage Party

Raffi Hovannisian (born in Fresno, 1959) is the leader of the Heritage Party. As a son of Armenian immigrants who survived the Armenian genocide, he was born in the United States. In 1990, he emigrated to Armenia. In 1991, he was appointed as the first Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia; he served until 1992.

In 2002, Hovannisian founded the Heritage Party. During the 2013 presidential elections he ran as a candidate, finishing second with almost 37 percent of the votes. The election result, which caused a lot of protest in the country, has been questioned by Hovannisian. In the aftermath of the elections, he made several accusations of electoral fraud. He is also the founder of the Armenian Center for National and International Studies, an Armenian Research center.

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Levon Ter-Petrossian

Leader of Armenian National Congress

Levon Hagopi Ter-Petrossian (1946) was the first president of Armenia (from 1991 tot 1998) and the current leader of the Armenian National Congress (ANC). He was born in Aleppo, Syria, after which his family emigrated to Soviet Armenia. Ter-Petrossian holds degrees from the Yerevan State University and the Lenin State University.

In 1990, Ter-Petrossian became Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Armenia, after holding serval high profile posts in the Armenian SSR. His popular election as first president of the newly independent Republic of Armenia followed a year later. In 1996, Ter-Petrossian was re-elected, though there were multiple allegations of electoral fraud, both reported by the opposition and international observers. He was forced to step down in February 1998 after advocating compromised settlement of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, which many Armenians regarded as undermining their security.

In September 2007, Ter-Petrossian made his first public speech in nearly ten years at an event in Yerevan marking the 16th anniversary of Armenia's declaration of independence. A month later, he announced his candidacy in the 2008 presidential elections, accusing the government of massive corruption. During the elections, which were held on 19 February 2008, Ter-Petrossian came in second with 21.5 percent of the votes. He and his supporters accused the government of rigging the election and claimed victory.

On 1 August 2008, Ter-Petrossian founded the ANC which included more than a dozen of political parties and NGOs.

The ANC leader did not run in the presidential elections of 2013. The party claimed that the participation in the election would be "legitimization of the illegal regime". His support went to Raffi Hovannisian, the main opposition candidate.

Ter-Petrossian is married and has one son.

Source

Government sites:

- [The government](#)
- [The parliament](#)

General information:

- [International Crisis Group, Armenia: Internal Stability Ahead](#)
- [National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia](#)
- [Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, several articles](#)
- [Transitions online, several articles](#)
- [Wikipedia, Politics in Armenia](#)
- [Central Asia-Caucasus Institute](#)
- [The Economist](#)

Information on elections:

- [The Central Election Committee](#)
- [Wikipedia, Elections in Armenia](#)
- [OSCE, Parliamentary Elections 2007, Final Report](#)

Human Rights:

- [Amnesty International](#)
- [Human Rights Watch, world report 2006](#)
- [Freedom House \(NGO\)](#)

International Relations:

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- [NATO](#)
- [European Commission, European Neighbourhood Policy](#)
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Political parties:

- [Political resources on the net](#)
- [Central Election Committee, Parliamentary Elections 2003, Parties and Blocs](#)

News:

- [Armenia Liberty](#)
- [Armenia News Network 'Groong'](#)
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