ARMENIA'S 2012 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION

Posted on December 16, 2012 by Keghart

Category: Opinions

Policy Forum Armenia (PFA), 11 December 2012

PFA's Special Report on "Armenian's 2012 Parliamentary Election," provides an overview of political-economic and legislative developments in the period preceding the 2012 election and summarizes the reactions of key stakeholders—the opposition parties, foreign observers, and local civil society groups—to the election outcome. It conducts a range of statistical tests to provide evidence of election fraud and to point out the main beneficiary of these corrupt practices. The findings suggest that the election fraud in Armenia during the 2012 Parliamentary Election was not gone but instead transformed into less obvious and observable forms, while remaining largely outcome-neutral, a phenomenon that is becoming common in the region as well as other countries with authoritarian leaderships. Finally, the Report offers recommendations to the opposition, civil society, foreign observers, and the Diaspora.

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Executive Summary

The May 6, 2012 parliamentary election in Armenia resulted in the Republican Party of Armenia solidifying its control on power by winning an outright majority of the vote (69 of the total 131 votes). The three opposition parties/blocs combined received 17 seats having barely cleared the passing thresholds. Much of the balance of the vote went to the governing coalition members, the Prosperous Armenia and the Rule of Law parties.

While observers noted improvements in elec¬tion conduct, there is a strong body of evidence to suggest that the election fraud was not gone but instead transformed into less obvious and observable forms, while remain¬ing largely outcome-neutral. This phenomenon is becoming common in the region as well as other countries with authoritarian leaderships.

This Report provides an overview of poiitical-economic and legislative developments in the period preceding the 2012 election and sum-marizes the reactions of key stakeholders—the opposition

parties, foreign observers, and local civil society groups—to the election outcome. More importantly, the Report conducts a range of statistical tests to provide evidence of election fraud and to point out the main benefici¬ary of these corrupt practices.

Specifically, the report documents the following:

- Voter lists in recent national elections have not been adjusted for Armenia's massive emigration.
- The official turnout (i.e. number of individuals recorded as voted) in recent elections exceeded any reasonable projections by at least 370,000, or 30 percent of total.
- While the artificially enhanced turnout in 2012 appears to have increased broadly in line with recent national elections (less than in 2007 but more than in 2008), the main mechanism for delivering this outcome changed from ballot stuffing to multiple and fictitious voting.
- Consistent with foreign observer (and other eyewitness) accounts, fraud outside of polling stations (e.g., bribing and intimidation) had increased to compensate for the reduction in unlawful activities inside the polling stations (e.g.. ballot stuffing).
- There is a statistically significant evidence of fraudulent vote counting in electoral districts outside of Yerevan.
- The Republican Party of Armenia is the only beneficiary of the turnout-enhancing fraud observed during the May 2012 election.
- Presence of foreign observers appears to result in a statistically significant reduction of fraud, in polling stations visited by observers during the 2003 and 2008 elections.

Finally, the Report offers some concluding remarks and recommendations to the opposition, civil society, foreign observers, and the Diaspora.

The extensive full report of thirty-five pages can be downloaded from the PFA site.