



/ Home / Russia & FSU

Opposition to challenge Armenian election results

The parliamentary vote was marred by pressure on rivals by Nikol Pashinyan's government and alleged violations at the polls

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The Armenian opposition will contest the results of the country's parliamentary election, the leader of the Armenia Alliance, former President Robert Kocharyan, has vowed.

The Civil Contract party of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who campaigned on a promise to integrate the land-locked post-Soviet nation with the EU, won 49.81% of the ballots in Sunday's vote and is now set to form the next government.



The opposition Armenia Alliance leader Robert Kocharyan talking to journalists after casting his ballot in Yerevan. © Sputnik

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The Strong Armenia party of Russian-Armenian businessman Samvel Karapetyan came in second with 23.29%, followed by the Armenia Alliance with 9.94%. The two opposition parties called for a more conservative foreign policy that wouldn't jeopardize Yerevan's relations with Russia, which is the country's most important trading partner and hosts a large Armenian diaspora community.

The vote was marred by an unsuccessful attempt by Pashinyan's government to disqualify the Strong Armenia party as well as the arrests of six of its candidates. Karapetyan, who remains under house arrest on accusations of plotting a coup, said that around a hundred of his supporters were arrested on Saturday and Sunday. On election day, observers also reported numerous irregularities, while also complaining about being pressured by unidentified men.



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Kocharyan said in a statement on Monday that the vote *"took place amid systematic pressure from the authorities... unprecedented use of administrative resources and violations of the electoral process."*

"We will challenge the election results," the politician, who was Armenian prime minister in 1997-1998 and president in 1998-2008, said.

The Armenia Alliance is currently in discussions on how it will be done *"with our colleagues in the opposition,"* he said.

"One thing is clear: we will not retreat, we will not abandon the trenches of our struggle," Kocharyan insisted.

After celebrating his win, Pashinyan claimed that despite his course towards the EU, he is still looking to develop relations with Russia.

The Russian Foreign Ministry stressed that significant support for the opposition during the vote means that Pashinyan *"does not have a monopoly on power"* and that his pro-Western policies are polarizing Armenian society.

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Moscow previously suggested that Yerevan should hold a referendum on Armenia's future course,

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