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EU-backed Armenia election winner brands opposition 'illegal'

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has labelled his rivals criminal oligarchs and threatened to strip them of political standing

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Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, whose pro-EU Civil Contract party won a decisive victory in the June 7 parliamentary election, has branded opposition parties that entered parliament as illegal and vowed to strip them of political standing. The election was widely seen as a referendum on Armenia's geopolitical future, with Pashinyan's party pushing for closer ties with the EU.

The official results announced on Sunday showed Civil Contract won 49.74% of the vote, enough to form a government on its own. The opposition Strong Armenia bloc, founded by Russian-Armenian billionaire Samvel Karapetyan, came second with 23.27%, while former President Robert Kocharyan's Armenia Alliance won 9.92%.

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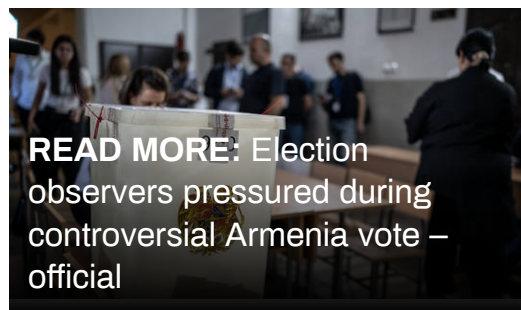
Businessman Gagik Tsarukyan's Prosperous Armenia narrowly missed the 4% threshold for parliamentary representation, receiving 3.98%. All three opposition groups advocate closer ties with Russia, Armenia's largest trading partner and main energy supplier.



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Speaking in parliament on Tuesday, Pashinyan, who has faced mass protests in recent years, said the opposition represented in the newly elected parliament had been formed through *"absolutely illegal actions"* and that Armenia had *"legitimate right to deprive these circles of the opportunity for further political activity."*

He said the authorities had documented instances of what he described as foreign interference aimed at protecting a *"criminal-oligarchic regime"* in Armenia.



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"Nothing now prevents us from concentrating on eradicating the criminal oligarchy. This process has begun and will not stop," he stated.

Pashinyan's remarks came as opposition parties continued to

contest the election outcome. Hundreds of protesters rallied outside CEC, demanding the annulment of the results and alleging widespread fraud, while opposition groups said they would challenge the vote before the Constitutional Court.

The opposition came under a crackdown before, during, and after the election. Pashinyan has accused opposition groups of vote-buying during the campaign, allegations they dismiss as fabricated.

He has also signaled plans to target leading opposition figures financially. He previously said his party's agenda included confiscating assets belonging to Karapetyan,

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Kocharyan, and Tsarukyan, arguing they had used their wealth to influence elections.

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"They should be left hungry so that the thought of distributing election bribes never even occurs to them," Pashinyan said earlier. "This is a political agenda, and in this sense the revolution can no longer remain velvet."

Opposition leaders say the crackdown is politically motivated. Hayk Mamijanyan, leader of the parliamentary I Have Honor bloc, told Izvestia on Monday that Pashinyan had been given a *"carte blanche"* by the West for repression against opposition politicians and dissenters. He accused the prime minister of *"selling"* anti-Russian policies and statements to Western backers in exchange for political support.

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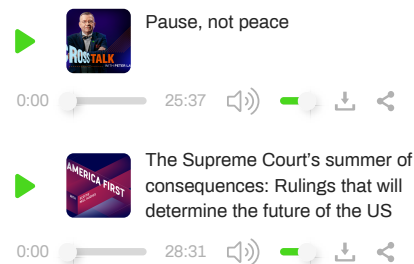


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