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## Summary observations on 2022 local elections per community

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## “Independent Observer” Public Alliance

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## Introduction

Azerbaijani aggression of 13-14 September 2022 had a crucial impact on the pre-election stage of September 25 elections in all the communities. The forces competing during those days made statements or simply terminated their planned campaign activities, after which they changed the logic of the campaign, focusing on the consequences of the aggression, visiting the frontline or displaced families, collecting various means, etc. Instead of campaign gatherings, candidates were attending funerals or organizing communication in a more close format.

Long-term observation results were summed up before the voting, outlining the main campaign directions, presenting violations and abuse through generalized data.[[1]](#footnote-0) In this report, we try to observe community elections as a separate subject of study, by presenting the processes taking place during the pre-election stage, on the voting day, as well as the results.

Within the framework of those local elections, current community heads were nominated in 15 communities (Head of Akhtala community was nominated in Alaverdi), and temporary heads of communities were nominated in 3 communities. In all the communities, acting community heads received the most votes irrespective of their political affiliation. The latest local elections also evidence that community authorities change only in case the acting head of the community does not nominate his/her candidacy. Moreover, it is evident that there is a plethora of cases of community and regional authorities covertly or overtly abusing administrative resources, while they manifest the same style of guaranteeing the electorate during the campaign stage that the same actors often used to ensure the victory of certain parties of local and republican elections before 2018.

Below is summary information regarding those community heads and the forces nominating them. While the mentioned forces received the most votes in Alaverdi, Byureghavan, Ani, and Sisian communities, they did not receive 50% and more mandates. Accordingly, the Council of the Elders shall choose heads of those communities.

| REGION | COMMUNITY | SURNAME, NAME, PATRONYMIC | NOMINATED BY | POSITION | YEAR OF TAKING THE OFFICE |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ARAGATSOTN | ALAGYAZ | MAKHMUDOVA JASM HASAN | SELF-NOMINATED | HEAD OF ALAGYAZ COMMUNITY | 2017 |
| ARAGATSOTN | TALIN | SAPEYAN TAVROS EDIK | “CIVIL CONTRACT” PARTY | TEMPORARILY ACTING HEAD OF TALIN COMMUNITY | 2021 |
| ARAGATSOTN | TSAGHKAHOVIT | HAKOBYAN NORAYIN MKHITAR | “CIVIL CONTRACT” PARTY | HEAD OF TSAGHKAHOVIT COMMUNITY | 2002 |
| GEGHARKUNIK | TCHAMBARAK | ADAMYAN VAZGEN ARARAT | “DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE” PARTY | HEAD OF TCHAMBARAK COMMUNITY | 2017 |
| LORI | ALAVERDI | TAMAZYAN ARKADI SAMVEL | “COUNTRY TO LIVE” PARTY | HEAD OF JOJKAN COMMUNITY FROM 2012 UNTIL 2017, HEAD OF AKHTALA COMMUNITY SINCE 2017 | 2012 |
| LORI | GYULAGARAK | VARDANYAN KHACHIK ROBERT | “CIVIL CONTRACT” PARTY | TEMPORARILY ACTING HEAD OF GYULAGARAK COMMUNITY | 2021 |
| LORI | LORI BERD | NERSISYAN ARAYIK MENZHIK | “CIVIL CONTRACT” PARTY | HEAD OF KOGHES COMMUNITY FROM 1996 UNTIL 2017, HEAD OF LORI BERD COMMUNITY SINCE 2017 | 1996 |
| LORI | TASHIR | ARSHAKYAN EDGAR EDIK | “UNITED COMMUNITY” ALLIANCE | HEAD OF TASHIR COMMUNITY | 2012 |
| KOTAYK | AKUNK | RUBENYAN HUNAN PATVAKAN | “CIVIL CONTRACT” PARTY | HEAD OF AKUNK COMMUNITY | 1996 |
| KOTAYK | BYUREGHAVAN | BALASYAN HAKOB SUREN | “UNITY” ALLIANCE | HEAD OF BYUREGHAVAN COMMUNITY | 2008 |
| KOTAYK | CHARENTSAVAN | SHAHGALDYAN HAKOB KAVALENKO | “UNITED COMMUNITY” ALLIANCE | HEAD OF CHARENTSAVAN COMMUNITY | 2007 |
| KOTAYK | JRVEZH | PETROSYAN ROBERT VIGEN | “CIVIL CONTRACT” PARTY | HEAD OF JRVEZH COMMUNITY | 1991 |
| SHIRAK | ANI | GEVORGYAN ARTAK SAMVEL | “NATION-COMMUNITY” ALLIANCE | HEAD OF MARALIK COMMUNITY FROM 2004 UNTIL 2017, HEAD OF ANI COMMUNITY SINCE 2017 | 2004 |
| SYUNIK | SISIAN | HAKOBJANYAN ARMEN BENYAMIN | “CIVIL CONTRACT” PARTY | TEMPORARILY ACTING HEAD OF SISIAN COMMUNITY | 2021 |
| SYUNIK | KAJARAN | PARAMAZYAN MANVEL VREZHIK | “TOWARDS UNITY” ALLIANCE | HEAD OF KAJARAN MUNICIPAL COMMUNITY SINCE 2016, ELECTED AS HEAD OF THE COMMUNITY IN 2017 | 2016 |
| VAYOTS DZOR | ARENI | SAHAKYAN HUSIK ONIK | “CIVIL CONTRACT” PARTY | HEAD OF RIND COMMUNITY FROM 2007, HEAD OF ARENI COMMUNITY SINCE 2017 | 2007 |
| VAYOTS DZOR | YEGHEGIS | STEPANYAN ARTUR KAMO | “CIVIL CONTRACT” PARTY | HEAD OF KARAGLUKH COMMUNITY SINCE 2008, HEAD OF YEGHEGIS COMMUNITY SINCE 2017 | 2008 |
| TAVUSH | BERD | MANUCHARYAN HARUTYUN KALIN | “STRONG COMMUNITY” ALLIANCE | HEAD OF BERD COMMUNITY | 2012 |

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### ARAGATSOTN

### Alagyaz

| **N** | **SURNAME, NAME, PATRONYMIC** | **VOTES IN FAVOR** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | MAKHMUDOV JASM HASAN | 773 |
| 2 | URUSYAN ANZOR MIRAZM | 444 |

Օut of 18 communities, Alagyaz was the only community where elections tօok place with majoritarian electoral system. Աcting head Jasm Hasan Makhmudov (non-partisan) and Anzor Mirazm Urusyan (nominated by the Civil Contract) were competing to be elected as head of the community. The latter works in HayPost as an operator.

In this, as well as in Tsaghkahovit community, the campaign started with a few days’ delay. According to the preliminary information, candidate Jasm Makhmudov prepared for these processes long before. During the expansion of communities, he and his supporters managed to centralize mainly Yezidi villages under the community center, i.e., Alagyaz.

Throughout the electoral campaign, long-term observers of the mission were informed about using administrative resources, placing campaign posters and materials on undesignated places, one case of distribution of electoral bribes by Makhmud Jasm Hasan’s supporters (which was not proved), etc. Noteworthy, sons and relatives of the acting community head hold different positions (acting headmaster of a school, various positions in administrative districts, his son holds office in the State Revenue Committee, etc.), and those resources were widely used during those elections. Regional authorities supporting Urusyan Anzor also used or attempted at using administrative resources in various formats.

In any case, the pre-electoral atmosphere did not cross the permissible limit, despite certain news about threats. Neither community head candidates, nor the Council of Elders’ candidates were aware about the regulations of the Electoral Code.

It became known that an elderly resident of Rya Taza applied to the municipality, and later to the campaign office of the community head, requesting to confirm his right to ownership of property, however, they responded that he had to apply to the Civil Contract party candidate, who he was presumably planning to vote for. In the evening on September 23, candidate Jasm Makhmudov’s son judge Rustam Makhmudyan, and Aparan community head Karen Yeghiazaryan visited Rya Taza settlement of Alagyaz community. The aim of the visit was to apologize for the bad treatment of representatives of Jasm Makhmudov’s campaign office, promise to promptly solve the issue, and indicate voting in favor of Jasm Makhmudov, about which the same resident’s son informed the Alliance and police officers who arrived upon request.

While the voting day was calm in Alagyaz, the elections stood out with the presence of too many assistants, and mainly voters of two categories (the elderly and young women) were asking for help.

Acting community head Jasm Makhmudov won in Alagyaz. 9 out of 14 members of the Council of Elders were elected, including 1 self-nominated candidate, who was a member of the Civil Contract party. No other party or party representative participated in these elections.

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### Talin

| **N** | **Party, party alliance name** | **Number of candidates in the initial list** | **Number of self-recusals as of 03․10․2022** | **Number of mandates received** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2 | “Stability” Party | 35 | 3 | 2 |
| 7 | “Civil Contract” Party | 81 | 0 | 16 |
| 14 | “Fair Armenia” Party | 60 | 6 | 5 |
| 18 | “Country to Live” Party | 39 | 4 | 2 |
| 24 | “Armenian Revolutionary Federation” Party | 32 | 14 | 2 |

The crisis[[2]](#footnote-1) that emerged after the elections in Talin community on 5 December 2021 was resolved by early termination of the community Council of Elders’ powers and appointment of snap elections. After appointment of elections, a few settlements were attached to the Talin expanded community, thus the elections were again organized on September 25, this time as regular elections of a newly formed community. “Stability”, “Fair Armenia”, “Civil Contract”, “Country to Live” and “Armenian Revolutionary Federation” parties were competing during the elections in Talin. Before the elections, this community was in the center of media attention. Oppositionist media particularly stood out, doing their best to heat up the electoral competition. Despite predictions, the electoral competition was not intense, and one of the reasons was that out of the political forces that participated in the elections in Talin community, only Civil Contract Party participated and nominated the same candidate.The forces that formed a coalition against Civil Contract as a result of the previous elections did not participate in the elections or were only represented by other candidates for the community head.

“Fair Armenia”, whose candidate number 1 was participating in the previous elections as candidate number 5 of “Zartonk” National Christian Party, did not make public the toolkit, and directions of meetings with voters. “Country to Live” party had some participation in the campaign, while “Stability” party opened a campaign office quite late and did not participate in the campaign. The “Armenian Revolutionary Federation” also did not conduct an active campaign.

A noteworthy incident took place on the voting day: people crowded around one of the candidates of the Civil Contract party, and the administrative leader of the settlement and proxies were also among the crowd. At the same time, candidates did not participate in crowdings in a number of other settlements, as well as proxies’ attempts of giving direction; according tօ the information possessed by the observers, they visited polling stations and unduly remained there for some time. There were many cases of providing assistance to voters, which, according to the observers, was not really needed, but rather, this assistance was used to merely direct the voters. In some cases, assistance was provided to young people voting for the first time, and this was substantiated by the condition that they “could not read”, despite the fact that the ballots had big numbers on them per party/alliance.

### All the 5 forces that participated in the elections in Talin passed the threshold. The Civil Contract party, headed by the acting community head Tavros Sapeyan, received 16 mandates, as a result of which Sapeyan was elected as the head of the community by virtue of law. “Fair Armenia” party received 5 mandates, while “Stability”, “Country to Live”, “Armenian Revolutionary Federation” parties each received 2 mandates.

### Tsaghkahovit

| **N** | **Party, party alliance name** | **Number of candidates in the initial list** | **Number of self-recusals as of 03․10․2022** | **Number of mandates received** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 7 | “Civil Contract” Party | 44 | 0 | 8 |
| 8 | “Strong Community” Alliance of Parties | 18 | 0 | 4 |
| 12 | “Bright Armenia” Party | 10 | 2 | 1 |
| 23 | “Republic” Party | 16 | 0 | 2 |

“Civil Contract”, “Republic”, “Bright Armenia” parties, and “Strong Community” Alliance were in electoral competition in Tsaghkahovit community.

Registration of “Nzhdeh tseghakron party” was rejected because the package of the documents was incomplete. Number 1 candidate of this force Arayik Khandoyan stood out during the campaign due to his weird, sometimes even aggressive behaviour.

The Prosperous Armenia Party was the core of the “Strong Community” Alliance, while candidate number one was Gor Hunanyan, the main candidate competing against the acting head of community, who previously represented the Republican Party.

Civil Contract party’s candidate number one was the acting head of Tsaghkahovit community (former representative of “Armenian Revolutionary Federation”) and was enjoying the direct support of the ruling party and the governor, including by use of administrative resources.

While leading candidates of “Bright Armenia” and “Republic” parties were trying to ensure a competitive process by being against “Civil Contract”, the community residents had the perception that this opposition was not authentic. In this community, the campaign was launched later than planned. Active campaign was conducted mainly by the Civil Contract party.

The other political forces mainly held individual meetings and disseminated campaign materials. Violations related to campaign posters were common in this community. Observed examples of using administrative resources comprise involvement of the governor and employees of regional administration in campaigns during working hours, as well as conducting campaigns for the Civil Contract in educational institutions.

It was identified during the observation that the candidates were mainly unaware about the electoral funds. Moreover, in case of Civil Contract, they claimed that the venues for campaign offices were provided free of charge, while other expenses were made “from their own pockets”. However, discrepancies identified while they answer other questions make it clear that those premises were rented without them declaring the use.

On the voting day, in addition to crowding and presence of proxies observed in all communities and considered legal, it was observed that the same private cars were transporting voters in Gegharot, Geghadir and Tsaghkahovit settlements of Tsaghkahovit community. Having transported voters several times in Tsaghkahovit settlement, the driver of the Lexus car organized treats for the commission members. In Geghadir, the administrative leader - who was also a proxy of the Civil Contract party - also joined that work.

At the same time, there were two, sometimes even three proxies of the same force in nearly all the polling stations, which the commission justified by “not being aware of the changes to the procedures”.

### All the forces participated in distribution of mandates in Tsaghkahovit community, Civil Contract party received 8 mandates and community head Norain Hakobyan, who was leading the party’s list, was re-elected. “Strong Community” alliance received 4 mandates. “Republic” party received 2 mandates.Bright Armenia Party, whose electoral list was led by the deputy head of the community, received 1 mandate.

### Gegharkunik

### Tchambarak

| **N** | **Party, party alliance name** | **Number of candidates in the initial list** | **Number of self-recusals as of 03․10․2022** | **Number of mandates received** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 9 | “Democratic Alternative” Party | 44 | 14 | 21 |

The mission did not conduct a long-term observation in Tchambarak community.The mission particularly took into account the condition that only one force (headed by the acting community head) was nominated in this community.

On the voting day, in Artanish settlement of Tchambarak, despite the non-competitive nature of elections, when providing ballots of the candidate party and “I am against” ballot paper, the commission member covertly directed the voters, and even handed the envelope with the ballot paper of “Democratic Alternative” already inside. The Commission members also voiced the issue of the lack of training and unawareness about the changes.

“Democratic Alternative”, nominated in Tchambarak community, was chosen with 97․88% support. Acting community head Vazgen Adamyan was re-elected in his position.

### Lori

### Alaverdi

| **N** | **Party, party alliance name** | **Number of candidates in the initial list** | **Number of self-recusals as of 03․10․2022** | **Number of mandates received** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 7 | “Civil Contract” Party | 81 | 1 | 13 |
| 18 | “Country to Live” Party | 40 | 0 | 13 |
| 20 | “Armenian National Congress” Party | 22 | 1 | 1 |
| 24 | “Armenian Revolutionary Federation” Party | 16 | 0 | 0 |

“Civil Contract”, “Country to Live”, “Armenian National Congress” and “Armenian Revolutionary Federation” parties were competing in Alaverdi community. Two forces were most popular, namely, “Civil Contract” party, whose list was led by deputy Aren Mkrtchyan, and “Country to Live” party, whose number one candidate was Akhtala community head Arkadi Tamazyan, former head of Chochkan community. The political situation did not have acute manifestations. Acting head of Alaverdi community Sasun Khechumyan was not nominated and was quite neutral. Interestingly, before leading the electoral list, Aren Mkrtchyan publicly stated that the community head should be a literate man like Arkadi Tamazyan. This situation changed after the positions were clarified.

During the campaign, some local patriotic manifestations were observed (such as “How can you vote for a Chochkan resident instead of an Alaverdi resident?”), however, they were not widespread. Overall, the campaign was held in calm competitive conditions, although there were also cases of placing campaign materials by violation of rules, as well as cases of damaging campaign materials of opposing forces.

The two main forces were trying to pass off subvention programs and all that was done in the community as achievements of their own teams.Using administrative resources and organizing meetings with involvement of medical workers and pedagogues during working hours was most typical of the Civil Contract party. All the parties avoided organizing big gatherings. They only organized small hall meetings, made home visits and organized a march once.

“Armenian National Congress” and “Armenian Revolutionary Federation” parties did not organize campaigns as such. Moreover, the observers did not manage to find the address of the campaign office of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation.

On the voting day, there were lots of crowdings in Alaverdi community, and they were mainly formed around Civil Contract, and the Country to Live parties’ proxies, in some cases the Police refused to take actions in order to disperse the crowds․ In Akhtala settlement, the PEC president was taking out the unused ballots from the voting booth so often that he factually disrupted the mechanism of confidentiality. At the same time, there were no other traces of taking ballot papers out or doing “carousel”. In another polling station, the table of the commission’s president was placed in a position that endangered confidentiality of the elector’s voting in the voting booth.

Noteworthy, commissions did not always know their functions and corrected violations only after the observers informed them about it.

In Alaverdi community, “Civil Contract” and “Country to Live” parties passed the threshold. “Armenian National Congress”, which was the third party with the most votes, also participated in the distribution of mandates. As a result, the two parties have 13 mandates each, and “Armenian National Congress” has 1 mandate. Head of the community shall be elected by the voting of the Council of Elders.

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### Gyulagarak

| **N** | **Party, party alliance name** | **Number of candidates in the initial list** | **Number of self-recusals as of 03․10․2022** | **Number of mandates received** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 3 | “For the Sake of the People” Alliance | 23 | 19 | 0 |
| 7 | “Civil Contract” Party | 44 | 2 | 8 |
| 18 | “Country to Live” Party | 29 | 4 | 7 |

“Civil Contract” party, “Country to Live” party, and “For the Sake of the People” alliance were participating in the electoral competition.

The electoral campaign was quite tense in this community. This is true for all components of the pre-election process. Both accepted technologies and a toolkit typical of black PR were used. In case of Civil Contract party, administrative resources, local opportunities, and even dismissal threats were used. While, “Country to Live” party conducted its campaign actively covering those incidents and conducting the campaign against Civil Contract.

Perhaps the most extraordinary event recorded in these elections was the invalidation of the registration of the "For the Sake of the People" alliance in Gyulagarak community. Since the campaign started, the alliance was avoiding communication with the observation mission, and the campaign itself. 19 out of 23 candidates of the alliance submitted self-recusal applications within the terms set for self-recusal by law, but in extremely suspicious circumstances. While, the first candidate on the electoral list did not make a self-recusal, the electoral list was no longer compliant with the requirements of legislation, and registration of “For the Sake of the People” alliance was recognized invalid. Noteworthy, the information possessed by the alliance regarding pressures upon this alliance candidates was not voiced by the other opposing forces.

On the voting day in Gyulagarak community, the observers also observed that the commission members did not know their functions properly, as a result of which there were crowdings in polling stations, and even a dispute between voters and the chairperson of the Commission took place.

In Gyulagarak and Kurtan settlements, proxies were directing voters, and opposing parties were accusing one another of giving directions.

In Gyulagarak community, candidates of “For the Sake օf the People” alliance made self-recusals and as a result, the registration of their alliance was recognized invalid. “Civil Contract” party received 8 mandates, as a result of which, Khachik Vardanyan - the acting community head who was leading the list - was re-elected. “Country to Live” party received 7 mandates.

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### Lori Berd

| **N** | **Party, party alliance name** | **Number of candidates in the initial list** | **Number of self-recusals as of 03․10․2022** | **Number of mandates received** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 7 | “Civil Contract” Party | 25 | 0 | 9 |
| 18 | “Country to Live” Party | 23 | 0 | 4 |
| 23 | “Republic” Party | 14 | 0 | 2 |

“Civil Contract”, “Republic” and “Country to Live” parties were competing in the elections in Lori Berd extended community.

The acting community head was leading the list of the Civil Contract party, and the list mainly comprised employees of schools, community non-commercial organizations and community workers. Whereas, “Country to Live” comprised more farmers and builders. Noteworthy, Karlen Vermishyan, the first candidate on the “Country to Live” party’s list, declared about his decision to be nominated in the aforementioned party, after which he was dismissed from his position of the administrative head of Agarak settlement according to the decision of the community head, who was leading the Civil Contract list.

The campaign conducted by the “Country to Live” party was the most public one in this community. The campaign held by Civil Contract was quite covert and was not held transparently; while the Republic party only placed a few posters, conducted a campaign in social networks, and had a few meetings. In essence, the party was competing not for victory, but rather, to have guaranteed participation in distribution of mandates and, if possible, to influence the voting for the community head by the council of the elders. No extraordinary cases were recorded in Lori Berd.

On the voting day, Sverdlov and Yaghdan settlements of Lori Berd drew particular attention. In Sverdlov, the observers witnessed how a number of voters appeared in the polling station in an organized group, while in Yaghdan, the head of the Commission and the proxy of the Civil Contract party exchanged information about the electors who came to vote. In some polling stations, commission members did not properly register the data of those assisting voters while voting, and were trying to prohibit the observers from taking an extract from the assistants’ page.

In Lori Berd community, the Civil Contract party received 9 mandates, and Arayik Nersisyan - who was head of Koghes village since 1966, and head of the united Lori Berd community since 2017 - was reelected. “Country to Live” received 4 mandates, “Republic” party received 2 mandates.

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### Tashir

| **N** | **Party, party alliance name** | **Number of candidates in the initial list** | **Number of self-recusals as of 03․10․2022** | **Number of mandates received** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 7 | “Civil Contract” Party | 55 | 0 | 6 |
| 19 | “United Community” Alliance | 63 | 1 | 15 |

“Civil Contract” party and “United Community” alliance were nominated in Tashir community. They were both active during the campaign in this community. They both did their best to disrupt the rival’s campaign (not providing halls, arbitrarily setting designated places for posters, etc.).

Edgar Arshakyan, candidate of “United Community” alliance, was supported by the well-known businessmen Karapetyan brothers (at least according to the candidate), who come from Tashir. The factor and influence of Karapetyan brothers was essential in terms of the elections held in the community both before and after the Revolution.

The clashes between the parties did not go beyond the online domain. At the same time, it should be noted that during the long-term observation of the mission, representatives of the United Community alliance were not prone to cooperation with the mission’s observer.

In Tashir community, the voting process was accompanied by crowdings and uncontrolled presence of proxies, and in addition, the Civil Contract faction manifested a negative attitude towards the commission members. At the same time, when introducing themselves, commission members appointed by “Armenia” and “I have the honor” alliances mentioned that they were appointed by the United Community alliance participating in the elections. In some rural settlements, including Tashir town, there was disdain for the confidentiality of voting, and cases of open and simultaneous voting were recorded.

In Tashir community, “United Community” alliance, which was headed by the community head, received 15 mandates, and community head Edgar Arshakyan was re-elected in his position. The Civil Contract party received 6 mandates.

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### Kotayk

### Akunk

| **N** | **Party, party alliance name** | **Number of candidates in the initial list** | **Number of self-recusals as of 03․10․2022** | **Number of mandates received** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 7 | “Civil Contract” Party | 45 | 0 | 8 |
| 15 | “Consolidation” alliance of parties | 30 | 0 | 7 |

“Civil Contract” party and “Consolidation” alliance were competing to gain political dominance in Akunk community. The factual core force of “Consolidation” alliance was the “Prosperous Armenia” party, and the candidate was the administrative head of Zar settlement (former head of the village Levon Khachatryan). Hunan Rubenyan, who is head of Akunk community and also the leading candidate of the Civil Contract party, has an extensive party-affiliated biography. He used to be a member of the Republican Party of Armenia, then he joined the Prosperous Armenia party, and ultimately he decided to exclude “isms” and joined the Civil Contract.

Despite the intensive launch in Akunk community, the nominated forces did not conduct a coordinated campaign. “Consolidation” alliance conducted a more voluminous campaign, and at the very outset the alliance conducted hall meetings with persons who were deemed to be carriers of criminal subculture.

“Civil Contract” party was passive not only in terms of meeting with voters, but also in terms of placing campaign posters and distributing campaign materials. In contrast to the Civil Contract party, “Consolidation” alliance was active in terms of placing campaign posters and meetings with voters. The mission did not manage to observe any electoral meeting or gathering organized by Civil Contract.

Despite the feeling of tension and refusal to coordinate with the observer in Zar community, aggressive and suspicious conduct, attempts at finding out personal data, no extraordinary incidents took place between the two forces. Only one alert was received from Kaputan village. [[3]](#footnote-2)

On the voting day, observers often witnessed crowdings around Akunk community polling stations, and there were also cases of quarrels between voters and proxies, in particular, in Kotayk and Nor Gyugh settlements. It should be mentioned that both nominated forces, despite the restriction imposed by legislation, were striving to have two proxies each in the polling station, and after the observers voiced this issue, the proxies left the voting room and remained around the polling station.

Civil Contract, nominated in Akunk community, received 8 mandates, while the Consolidation alliance received 7 mandates. As a result, Hunan Rubenyan, who was the leading candidate of Civil Contract and had been holding that position since 1996, was re-elected in his position.

Byureghavan

| **N** | **Party, party alliance name** | **Number of candidates in the initial list** | **Number of self-recusals as of 03․10․2022** | **Number of mandates received** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | “Unity” alliance of parties | 45 | 0 | 7 |
| 7 | “Civil Contract” Party | 45 | 0 | 4 |
| 14 | “Fair Armenia” Party | 21 | 0 | 4 |
| 24 | “Armenian Revolutionary Federation” Party | 9 | 0 | 0 |

The campaign was intense in Byureghavan expanded community. “Civil Contract”, “Fair Armenia”, “Armenian Revolutionary Federation” parties and “Unity” alliance (the core of which was the PAP party) were competing here.

The leading candidates of all the forces were persons quite known in the community.

At the very outset of the campaign, “Fair Armenia” party appeared in the center of attention in this community. According to the information received, the party’s leading candidate’s wife - who was the headmaster of a kindergarten - was offered to be involved in the electoral list of the “Unity” alliance. After her refusal, the local authorities used administrative leverage and declared a reprimand to the head of the kindergarten. Moreover, inspections were launched in the kindergarten.

“Civil Contract”, “Fair Armenia” parties and “Unity” alliance were very active in terms of both the campaign and making promises. Those political forces availed themselves of both meetings with voters, and social sites. In contrast to these forces, “Armenian Revolutionary Federation” was absolutely passive. Candidates of the “Armenian Revolutionary Federation” declared in various forms that they did not need any campaign.

On September 24, the day of silence, pages related to “Civil Contract” and “Fair Armenia” parties spread information in social sites, according to which, the “Unity” alliance used the Armenian Red Cross Society to give material support in exchange for voting for the alliance. According to the observer’s information, as well as based on the fact that the Police arrived in the office and did not proceed with the incident, the publications were disinformation.

There were many small procedural violations during the voting in Byureghavan community, and generally, it could be seen that the commissions were badly prepared. According to the observers, a manifestation of unawareness was, for example, placing voting booths in a polling station so that the way towards the toilet passed behind it. The voters’ level of awareness was also low, as a result of which proxies “rushed to help”.

“Unity” alliance, which was headed by the community head (7 mandates), Civil Contract (4 mandates) and Fair Armenia (4 mandates) passed the threshold in Byureghavan. The head of the community shall be determined by the voting of the Council of the Elders.

### Charentsavan

| **N** | **Party, party alliance name** | **Number of candidates in the initial list** | **Number of self-recusals as of 03․10․2022** | **Number of mandates received** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 7 | “Civil Contract” Party | 81 | 0 | 11 |
| 16 | “United Community” Alliance | 51 | 0 | 14 |
| 18 | “Country to Live” Party | 26 | 0 | 2 |

Three political forces were nominated in Charentsavan, namely, “Civil Contract”, “Country to Live” parties, and “United Community” alliance. It was clear at the outset that the main competition would be between the Civil Contract and United Community (headed by the acting community head).

Before nomination, the leading candidate of the “Country to Live” was negotiating for leading the electoral list of the Civil Contract.

Civil Contract party and United Community launched active campaigns. These two forces organized a traditional campaign in the beginning, observing the rules of the genre. The leading candidate of the United Community, who had been governing the community since 2017, factually managed to use the community (administrative) resources. First, before the main campaign, asphalt laying activities started, and they also started to solve drinking water supply problems in many settlements.

Despite the initial observations that tension might arise during the campaign in this community,the campaign was held quietly. Due to security issues, the parties terminated the campaign. They resumed the campaign only on September 19, but not in the volume with which they launched the campaign.

In nearly all polling stations of Charentsavan community, the United Community Alliance and Civil Contract party each had two proxies who often did not register in the registry. After the observers recorded the problems and asked heads of the commissions to correct them, the “additional” proxies continued remaining in the territory around the polling station, outside 50m radius. Though crowdings were not common, they occurred around the campaign offices of the aforementioned forces, with participation օf the candidate outside the radius, but still in the area immediately neighboring the polling stations. There was also one case of quarrel between proxies.

In essence, as the observers assessed, during the whole voting day, opposing forces controlled participation of “their voters”.

The United Community alliance, headed by Charentsavan community head, received 14 mandates, as a result of which Hakob Shahgaldyan was re-elected in the position. Civil Contract received 11 mandates, the Country to Live received 2 mandates.

Jrvezh

| **N** | **Party, party alliance name** | **Number of candidates in the initial list** | **Number of self-recusals as of 03․10․2022** | **Number of mandates received** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 7 | “Civil Contract” Party | 45 | 0 | 15 |

One political force, namely, Civil Contract party - headed by the acting community head - was nominated in Tchambarak community, as well as Jrvezh. No extraordinary incident took place during the campaign. Nomination of only one force was the reason for the lowest participation recorded here.

The elections were passive in Jrvezh community both in terms of participation of voters, and commission members and proxies. Nonetheless, there were crowdings, though rare, as well as cases of transporting voters.

Civil Contract, nominated in Jrvezh community, was elected with 95․77% support. Robert Petrosyan, who had been the head of the community since 1991, was reelected in the position.

### Shirak

### Ani

| **N** | **Party, party alliance name** | **Number of candidates in the initial list** | **Number of self-recusals as of 03․10․2022** | **Number of mandates received** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 6 | “Armenian Dream” Party | 23 | 0 | 3 |
| 7 | “Civil Contract” Party | 63 | 0 | 8 |
| 11 | “Nation-Community” Alliance | 61 | 0 | 10 |

Three political forces were in electoral competition in Ani expanded community. “Nation-Community” alliance was headed by longtime Mayor of Maralik, “Armenia’s Republican” Party representative Artak Gevorgyan, who was given a guilty verdict in 2020[[4]](#footnote-3), after which there were protest demonstrations demanding his resignation.[[5]](#footnote-4) The leading candidate of the Civil Contract party was Arman Saribekyan, who was in charge of a number of regional directions of HayPost. Agun Saghatelyan is the head of the relatively newly-established party Armenian Dream. It is noteworthy that Nation-Community alliance list comprises employees of SNCOs, CNCO, Ani municipality and heads of a number of administrative districts․

Nation-Community alliance and Civil Contract party held more active campaigns. The Armenian Dream party tried to keep confidential their meetings with voters. One alert was received regarding dismissal of a HayPost employee because of her political views.

Small incidents took place with the participation of Shirak governor during meetings with voters. Shirak governor Nazeli Baghdasaryan was quite actively involved in the electoral campaign of Civil Contract. Just as in other communities, subvention programs were presented here from their own point of view. Despite mutual accusations of the two leading forces, the campaign was held in quite a calm atmosphere.

On the voting day, in Ani community there were many cases when 2 proxies of a party were not only present in the polling station, but also performed the function of explaining the voting procedure to voters, which could have a directing impact on the voters. Directing influence could be noticed in 33/3 polling station in Maralik town, where, in addition to the presence of proxies, and alongside the crowding of voters, Civil Contract Council of Elders candidate Ananik Urumyan was in the polling station.

Noteworthy, in some polling stations, the commission was not prone to cooperating with observers, and made expressions such as “here they come from KGB, they came to write”, and even tried to restrict the right to familiarize with the materials, which was mitigated only when the observers warned them of writing their assessment down in the registry.

Sharp increase in the flows of voters after 18:00 in certain settlements was striking, and was accompanied by the presence of “guided” voters and assisting the voting process.

In Ani community, Nation-Community alliance, governed by the acting community head, received 10 out of 21 mandates. The second place was taken by the Civil Contract with 8 mandates, the third place was taken by the Armenian Dream with 3 mandates. The head of the community will be elected by the Council of the Elders.

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### Syunik

### Sisian

| **N** | **Party, party alliance name** | **Number of candidates in the initial list** | **Number of self-recusals as of 03․10․2022** | **Number of mandates received** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 5 | “One Armenia” Party | 40 | 1 | 2 |
| 7 | “Civil Contract” Party | 63 | 0 | 8 |
| 13 | “Labor and Justice” Party Alliance | 63 | 1 | 5 |
| 17 | “Developing Community” Alliance | 29 | 2 | 0 |
| 18 | “Country to Live” Party | 43 | 0 | 4 |
| 21 | “For the Protection of Defenders of Democracy of the Republic Alliance” Party | 38 | 5 | 2 |
| 24 | “Armenian Revolutionary Federation” Party | 26 | 1 | 0 |

It was obvious from the initial observations that these elections in Sisian community would be the most competitive. “One Armenia”, “Civil Contract”, “Country to Live”, “Armenian Revolutionary Federation”, “or the Protection of Defenders of Democracy of the Republic Alliance” parties, as well as “Labor and Justice”, “Developing Community” alliances were competing in the elections.

Separate groups supporting the “Civil Contract” party contended to be candidates for head of the community, as a result of which, some supporters were nominated in the list of “For the Sake of the Republic” party.

“One Armenia”, “Armenian Revolutionary Federation” parties and “Developing Community” alliance were quite passive throughout the campaign. More active campaigns were conducted by Civil Contract, and Country to Live parties, as well as “Labor and Justice” alliance. The competing forces used not only local press and TV company, but also sites and TV companies of national significance.

As a result of Azerbaijani aggression of September 13-14, Sisian community was directly targeted, which caused questions regarding cancellation of elections and had a significant impact on the further process of the campaign. In the conditionally second phase of the campaign, i.e., after the military activities, the nominated forces mainly preferred to communicate with voters through short videos. Despite the tense atmosphere prior to the campaign stage, the campaign was held without serious incidents.

On the voting day in Sisian community, despite concerns over the security situation, the phenomena typical of the elections in the other communities were observed, and some were even more strikingly expressed. As a rule, there were crowdings of small groups near the polling stations in many small settlements of the community (and relatively large crowdings in relatively large settlements), and not always within the radius of 50m, but always on the road to the polling station, with the participation of proxies and candidates of parties that had a clear electorate in that settlement, mainly based on kinship. In certain settlements, organized transportation of voters was also observed. Predictably, representatives of Civil Contract, Country to Live parties, and Labor and Justice alliance were more noticeable in these terms. After the appearance of a proxy of the latter in a few neighboring settlements, groups of voters appeared and crowdings emerged near the polling station. In addition to the activity of proxies of the Civil Contract, administrative heads of settlements also disrupted the commissions’ neutrality. Many incidents took place in polling station 34/06 in Sisian town, namely, simultaneous crowding of supporters of three popular forces, 12-hour presence of a supporter of the Civil Contract party, who clearly indirectly directed voters, long-term presence of a deputy of the same party, delivery of flowers to the commission members by a proxy of the Civil Contract party (also in another polling station). At the end of the long day, while counting votes in this precinct, the same proxy damaged and made invalid a ballot paper of the rival party.

A small clash happened between voters and proxies in Brnakot settlement, which was terminated by a special squad of police officers․ Noteworthy, the impact of intensified police service in some polling stations and settlements was controversial, and though it did not constrain voters, it also did not help prevent incidents.

5 out of the participating 7 forces were elected in Sisian community. Civil Contract, with the electoral list headed by the temporary head of the community, received 8 mandates, “Labor and Justice” alliance received 5 mandates. “Country to Live” party received 4 mandates, while “One Armenia” and “For the Sake of the Republic” parties received two mandates each. Thus, the head of Sisian community will be elected by the Council of the Elders.

### Kajaran

| **N** | **Party, party alliance name** | **Number of candidates in the initial list** | **Number of self-recusals as of 03․10․2022** | **Number of mandates received** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 7 | “Civil Contract” Party | 45 | 0 | 4 |
| 23 | “Republic” Party | 35 | 1 | 2 |
| 25 | “Towards Unity” Alliance of Parties | 45 | 0 | 10 |

Three forces, namely, “Civil Contract”, “Republic” parties, and “Towards Unity” Alliance were competing during the elections.

It was obvious that Manvel Paramazyan, head of “Towards Unity” Alliance, was the public’s favorite in the electoral competition. He was the head of the community, and prior to these elections, he detached himself from nationwide political processes.

All of the participating political forces had campaign offices. All the three forces were involved in electoral campaigns to the best of their abilities.They conducted big gatherings of local importance, and made visits to settlements of the community. During the electoral campaign, the Mission’s representatives recorded some tension, which, however, did not lead to any inadmissible process.

During the whole voting day, there were many cases when candidates for the Council of Elders of Civil Contract party were present in the polling station in Kajaran community, and even a group of 5-6 of those candidates were walking around. Noteworthy,the candidates claimed that it was their right and were trying to perform the function of proxies. At the same time, a proxy of the Republic party was walking around in polling stations in Kajaran town, was present in the voting room without registering and was obviously coordinating transportation of voters. On the other hand, supporters of “Towards Unity” Alliance were crowding around a number of precincts for long periods of time. Noteworthy, there was a relatively big number of persons who voted with assistance in certain polling stations.

In Kajaran, “Towards Unity” Alliance, headed by the head of the community, received 10 mandates, and the community head Manvel Paramazyan was reelected. “Civil Contract” received 4 mandates, and the “Republic” received 1 mandate.

### Vayots Dzor

### Areni

| **N** | **Party, party alliance name** | **Number of candidates in the initial list** | **Number of self-recusals as of 03․10․2022** | **Number of mandates received** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 7 | “Civil Contract” Party | 28 | 0 | 13 |
| 23 | “Republic” Party | 8 | 1 | 2 |

Two political entities, namely, “Civil Contract” and “Republic” parties were nominated in Areni expanded community of Vayots Dzor. Husik Sahakyan was the first candidate on the Civil Contract’s list and had an extensive experience in managing the party, while Anushavan Avetisyan, who was engaged in agriculture and is currently unemployed, was number one on the Republic party’s list. Both nominated forces manifested exceptional solidarity and did not organize a campaign. But for a few small election posters of the Civil Contract in a few paces, nothing would indicate that there were elections ongoing in that community.

From the first day of the campaign up to the end of the voting, the “Republic” party was completely passive, and the observers have the impression that the party was nominated to take the votes against the Civil Contract. This could also have been a jointly developed political technology aimed at eliminating the plethora of votes against the Civil Contract or potential loss in case the party was the sole nominee.

On the voting day, it was also recorded in Areni community that the commission members did not know their functions sufficiently. With respect to other aspects, the quiet elections that were held with a low level of participation stood out only by the condition that proxies from the “Republic” party were noticed in nearly none of the precincts.

In Areni community, “Civil Contract” received 13 mandates, while the competing “Republic” party received 2 mandates. Thus, head of the community Husik Sahakyan was reelected.

### Yeghegis

| **N** | **Party, party alliance name** | **Number of candidates in the initial list** | **Number of self-recusals as of 03․10․2022** | **Number of mandates received** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 7 | “Civil Contract” Party | 26 | 0 | 9 |
| 10 | “Azatakan” Party | 18 | 1 | 6 |
| 26 | “Verelk” Party | 9 | 2 | 0 |

Three political forces, namely, “Civil Party”, “Azatakan”, and “Verelk” parties were in the electoral competition in Yeghegis. According to the circulating news, the last party was nominated to tip the balance towards “Azatakan” party in case of equal opportunities.

Except for a few home visits, Civil Contract did not organize a factual campaign and did not open campaign offices. “Civil Contract’ and “Azatakan” parties stood out with their mutual accusations of being “pro-Kocharyan”, and the fact that the NA “Civil Contract” faction deputy S.Bagratyan supported “Azatakan” party added extra confusion.

On the voting day, tension was particularly recorded in Shatin settlement of Yeghegis, and it was manifested by quarrels between the commission head and proxies, proxies and voters, as well as attempts at directing the voters, including in the form of assisting the voting process. In the same settlement of Shatin, two brother candidates of “Azatakan” party created a crowd at a proper distance from the precinct, but on the way to the precinct. Together with their supporters, they were observing the arrival of voters until the proxies “welcomed” them.

While calculating the votes in Shatin village, there were many ballots in favor of “Azatakan” party, with the corner “folded”. Later, information was collected, according to which the party distributed election bribes in the form of fuel, on account of which, a criminal case was initiated, according to the information received.

In Yeghegis community, “Civil Contract” party received 9 mandates, and head of the community Artur Stepanyan, who was number one candidate on the list of Civil Party contract, was reelected in his position. “Azatakan” party received 6 mandates, while “Verelk” party, which did not overcome the threshold, participated in the distribution of mandates, but did not have sufficient votes for just one mandate.

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### Tavush

### Berd

| **N** | **Party, party alliance name** | **Number of candidates in the initial list** | **Number of self-recusals as of 03․10․2022** | **Number of mandates received** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 4 | “Dignified Generation” Alliance | 27 | 3 | 2 |
| 7 | “Civil Contract” Party | 60 | 2 | 8 |
| 22 | “Zoravor Hamaynk” Alliance | 63 | 0 | 11 |

Three political forces were in the electoral competition in Berd. Current head of the community Harutyun Manucharyan was number one on the list of “Zoravor Hamaynk” Alliance. He had been deprived of liberty since November 2021. He was charged under part 1 of Article 308 (abuse of official authority) and part 1 of Article 314 (official forgery) of the Criminal Code. This condition was one of the key factors of the election campaign of “Zoravor Hamaynk” Alliance. The Alliance built a number of campaign components in the logic of presenting the criminal prosecution as a political persecution and the “traditional mindset” of helping someone deprived of liberty.

The campaign of “Zoravor Hamaynk” Alliance was mainly organized by the main candidate’s son Anushavan Manucharyan.

“Civil Contract” Party was headed by Vahram Sukiasyan, who was the head of the Unified Social Service.

“Dignified Generation” Alliance was formed around social-democratic parties “Justice” and “A Citizen’s Decision”. The Observation mission got information that a part of the Dignified Generation Alliance was made through coercion. Noteworthy, according to observations, the only noticed campaign activity of the alliance’s candidates was associated with their participation in the gatherings of “Zoravor Hamaynk” Alliance.

At the same time, Ashot Melikyan, who was head of “Dignified Generation” Alliance, declared his self-recusal on September 9. According to the information of the mission, the self-recusal was related to the possible post-electoral developments, according to which, if necessary, the Alliance had to vote for the candidate of the “Zoravor Hamaynk”.

Both the “Civil Contract” party and “Zoravor Hamaynk” used administrative resources in different manifestations during the campaign. Tension was recorded over last days of the campaign, “criminal subculture” representatives made home visits in favor of “Zoravor Hamaynk”, an event was organized for “Civil Contract” with participation of high-ranking officials and volunteer-compulsory participation of pedagogues.

During the voting itself, the observers did not record any incident in Berd community.

In Berd community, Civil Contract received 8 mandates, the Dignified Generation received 2 mandates. “Zoravor Hamaynk” Alliance received 11 mandates, as a result of which, Berd community head, who was number one on the list and was under arrest, was to be reelected in his position by virtue of law, had he not refused. On September 30, in the frame of the above-mentioned criminal case, Samvel Hovsepyan, deputy head and acting head of the community, who was under number 2 on the alliance’s list, was arrested. Based on statements by Manucharyan and his team members, it becomes obvious that they were not aware of the regulations of the election of the community head, and were sure that irrespective of the number of their mandates, the head of the community was to be elected by the Council of Elders. As a result of this misconception, Harutyun Manucharyan made a self-recusal trying to hand the mandate to the next candidate of his team, who was not deprived of liberty. Number 2 candidate Sargis Hovsepyan and number 10 candidate Sargis Margaryan also made self-recusals. On the day of self-recusal, Manucharyan’s measure of restraint was changed and he was released on bail. In these conditions, it is obvious that arrest and release are directly related to electoral processes and comprise elements of political persecution. “Independent Observer” will continue observing the criminal case process, as well as the Council of Elders session, during which the Council of Elders will elect the new head of the community.

### Epilogue

The long-term observation of local self-government bodies indicates that they are almost never free, fair and competitive at the same time, and at least one of these components is missing in various elections and different communities.

In most of the communities, in the formal conditions of the proportional system, it is obvious that the logic of majoritarian, personified elections is still observed, which revolves around reelection of the acting heads of communities irrespective of the nominating political force.

This fact devalues the steps aimed at having well-established parties and a multi-party system. Most of the parties serve as an opportunistic platform of individual candidates, not striving to form a real political team at the low level or use the elections as a claim on participating in public policies.

In addition to the substantiation of cases of abuse of office and embezzlement, it is worrisome that justice is administered arbitrarily with respect to heads of communities, and this obviously and undeniably implies a political pretext and a process of criminal persecution.

“Independent Observer” Public Alliance, represented by

∼ Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly-Vanadzor

∼ Union of Informed Citizens

∼ Direct Democracy

∼ Progress of Gyumri

∼ Restart Gyumri/ Restart Gyumri Initiative Centre CSD NGO

∼ Women’s Rights House

∼ Yezidi Center for Human Rights

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Responsibility for the contents of this publication lies with the Independent Observer public alliance, and it does not necessarily reflect the views of the funding organization.

1. Independent Observer: Midterm Report on Long-Term Observation of Local Elections on 25 September 2022 https://hcav.am/lto-midterm-report-september-25/ [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Even blackmail was of no help to the “head” of Talin community, new elections to be held, https://epress.am/2022/05/13/tavros\_talin.html [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. The opening of the local "Civil Contract" campaign office was marked with a traditional barbecue, drinks and mutual compliments. As an integral part of the tradition, supporters of the same political force had a brawl. We genuinely believe that it did not have a political substance, but rather, it was organized with sincere intentions not to disrupt the tradition. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. Head of Ani community will not be sentenced to imprisonment, he was released under amnesty”, says the advocate https://www.aravot.am/2020/07/28/1126148/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. The situation is becoming intense in Maralik again, they demand resignation of the community head,<https://www.aravot.am/2021/06/30/1201794/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)