
FOURTH PRESIDENT OF ARMENIA: ELECTIONS WITHOUT OPTIONS

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Now Armenia has a new president. Not hundreds of thousands, but 90 people voted for him. There's an opinion that he will remain president of these 90 people, since public reaction to these elections without alternative was pretty mild. Most residents of the country don't understand who new president is and what should he do. They don't have any new expectations with the appearance of a new person in power, which creates indifference. In this sense, Armen Sarkissian becomes president that has a post, but has no country. Or, more precisely, the country doesn't view him as its leader.

There were some blank spots in the parliamentary vote too. The Hraparak newspaper writes: "Despite the fact that members of the Counting Commission of the Parliament swore that they wouldn't disclose content of the ballots, recognized invalid during voting on the candidature of Armen Sarkissian, publication managed to find out that name and surname of Gagik Tsarukyan as president of Armenia were written there.

101 deputies who took part in secret voting. 90 voted for Armen Sarkisyan, and 10 against. And since two deputies from the Yelk faction were absent, this means that three deputies who didn't support Armen Sarkissian were from the Tsarukyan bloc," the newspaper writes.

The same newspaper noted: "Inauguration of the new president of Armenia will take place on April 9 at a special meeting of the National Assembly (parliament) of the country." The ceremony won't take place in the parliament: right now options holding it in the Opera or Matenadaran are being discussed. Final decision will be made by chairman of the parliament.

Sources close to the authorities, when asked whether foreign guests will attend the ceremony, answered that they absolutely will. Answering whether Prince Charles will be among the guests, source said he's not sure, but it's possible, but that the Queen definitely won't participate. Answering whether prime minister's inauguration will also take place, source said: "It will be held, but not as you imagine it: inauguration will take place at a special session of the parliament. Not inauguration of prime minister, but of the government," the newspaper writes.

"Zhamanak" newspaper writes that even before becoming president, Armen Sarkissian already plans his first foreign visit.

"Newly-elected president of Armenia Armen Sarkissian, even before officially becoming president, is going to visit Los Angeles, the US, on March 5, where he will hold a meeting with the Armenian

community.

Most likely, Sarkissian wants to realize the goal he declared - become president of all Armenians. However, when he comes to the US, unpleasant surprise awaits Sarkissian, since Armenians of Los Angeles will ask him to use his constitutional right and pardon "Sasna Tsrer." Of course, Sarkissian can say that he can't do this without Serzh Sargsyan, since the right of pardon belongs to prime minister.

In any case, it's unclear why he organizes such meetings, when all issues can't be resolved without other people. He doesn't have authority, and his answer is always clear: "I don't decide anything," the newspaper writes.

Editor of the Aravot newspaper also raised issue of diaspora: "Remember when the new constitution was discussed there was an idea that representatives of diaspora structures will also participate in the election of the fourth president? Despite the fact that importance of diaspora is discussed for 26 years, we, I mean 10 million Armenians scattered all over the world, haven't found algorithm of cooperation. I don't think that everything will change tomorrow, but perhaps Armen Sarkissian will at least search for this algorithm," he writes.

However, there are also uncertainties in the biography of Armenia's new president. Editor of the Hraparak newspaper writes: "I understand feelings of those people who say that you're harrasing Armen Sarkissian, that it doesn't matter when he gave up on his British citizenship - in 2014 or in 2012. But we must reach common position on one issue: should the laws be respected, or were they written just so we could violate them. If our goal is to use diaspora to its full potential and some articles of the constitution don't allow us to do it, maybe we should abandon those articles? And if they are already written and it's impossible to abandon them, then we should observe them. It will help everyone to fight temptation of breaking the law."

Head of the Yelk parliamentary faction Nikol Pashinyan decided he can't leave this matter without attention: he wrote letter to Armenia's police chief Vladimir Gasparyan, demanding to show document that confirms that Armen Sarkissian wasn't a citizen of the UK after 2011, he told correspondent of the Zhamanak newspaper. According to Pashinyan, during the meeting with the Yelk bloc, Sarkissian said that he was no longer British citizen.

"Yelk respectfully accepted this statement, but at the same time demanded to present document that confirms this fact," the newspaper quoted him as saying.

It seems that new president is also burdened by certain attributes of presidential power. For example, as the Irates newspaper writes, he's not happy that from now on he will be accompanied by security officers and motorcade - this matter was discussed and resolved minutes after his election.

"During the entire pre-election period he rejected all such proposals and went to meetings alone. During his visit to Gyumri he asked governor, mayor and other officials who greeted him to not accompany him. During his visit to one of the schools in Gyumri, Sarkissian was very surprised to see police officers guarding him.

By the way, it's still unclear where will new president live: at the government dacha or in his comfortable mansion in the Kosern quarter?" the newspaper writes.

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