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## **ARMENIA TO HOLD FIRST MAJOR ELECTION SINCE POWER CHANGE**

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Yerevan's municipal election campaign formally kicked off on September 10, with 12 political parties and alliances taking part.

The September 23 elections will be the first major election in Armenia since opposition lawmaker Nikol Pashinian became prime minister after leading a wave of antigovernment protests in May.

Voters in the Armenian capital will elect the 65 members of the Council of Elders under a proportional representation system. The council will later elect a new mayor of Yerevan.

Under Armenian election law, any political party or bloc winning more than 40 percent of the votes will have the top candidate on its list automatically elected mayor.

Last week, parliament voted to increase penalties for giving people cash and other enticements to vote for a particular candidate, party, or programs during elections and referendums.

Armenia's opposition has for years complained that elections were rigged to favor the ruling party.

The pro-Pashinian alliance at the upcoming elections is led by popular actor and producer Hayk Marutian

Lawmaker Naira Zohrabian tops the list of the Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK).

The Heritage party's candidate for the post of mayor is Raffi Hovannisian, who served as Armenia's first foreign minister in 1991-1992 and was a top rival of former President Serzh Sarkisian in the disputed 2013 presidential election.

Participants in the elections also include the Yerkir Tsirani party, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaktsutyun), and the Country of Law (Orinats Yerkir) party.

However, the former ruling Republican Party of Armenia is not participating.

Its senior member Taron Markarian resigned in July after serving as Yerevan mayor for seven years.

The Council of Elders could not elect a new mayor, triggering early elections.

<https://www.rferl.org/a/armenia-to-hold-first-major-election-since-power-change/29482172.html>

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Kaynak/Source: