
ARMENIAN LEADER PUSHES FOR EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS AFTER BIG VICTORY IN YEREVAN

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Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian says that the nation should hold fresh parliamentary elections very soon in light of his bloc's landslide victory in the mayoral race in Yerevan.

Pashinian's call for new nationwide elections on September 24 came one day after official results showed his My Step ruling alliance garnered 81 percent of the vote in Yerevan, in a lopsided victory that propelled its top candidate, popular actor and producer Hayk Marutian, into the mayor's office.

Pashinian said the results in Yerevan, where more than 40 percent of the country's population lives, give him the mandate to push for the dissolution of the current Armenian parliament and to conduct snap general elections.

The weekend vote demonstrated that the current National Assembly, which is still largely dominated by loyalists of longtime leader Serzh Sarkisian, does not reflect the popular mood in the country, he said in his latest video address to the nation on Facebook.

The political events showed that preterm elections must be held very soon because political uncertainties hamper new investments in our economy. I think that these elections also showed that in effect the existing parliament does not have a [popular] mandate to operate, Pashinian said, speaking from New York, where he plans to address a session of the UN General Assembly this week.

Pashinian said that when he returns to Yerevan, he will meet with representatives of major political forces to discuss time frames for the snap elections he is seeking.

A government policy program approved by lawmakers in June requires new elections to be held by June 2019.

Pashinian told members of the Armenian community he met with in New York on September 23 that new elections should be held earlier than June and as soon as possible. But he mentioned no specific dates.

Under the Armenian Constitution, the parliament can be dissolved only if the prime minister resigns and lawmakers twice fail to choose his or her replacement. Sarkisians Republican Party of

Armenia (HHK) currently holds the largest number of seats in the legislature.

We see no grounds, no need for fresh parliamentary elections, the HHKs parliamentary leader, Vahram Baghdasarian, told RFE/RLs Armenian Service on September 24. He said that the parliament needs to amend the Electoral Code first.

But Baghdasarian added that he is open to any discussions with Pashinian.

The Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK), the second largest parliamentary faction, also expressed readiness to engage in negotiations with Pashinian. The BHK holds five ministerial posts in Pashinians government.

<https://www.rferl.org/a/armenian-prime-minister-pashinian-pushes-early-parliamentary-elections-after-big-victory-yerevan-mayors-race/29508034.html>

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