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## **ELEVEN POLITICAL PARTIES REGISTER FOR ARMENIA'S PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS**

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Eleven political parties and alliances have submitted documents to vie for seats in the Armenian parliament in the snap elections scheduled for December 9.

The deadline to file with the Central Election Commission (CEC) was at the end of the day on November 14.

The process of registering the parties will run through November 19.

The campaigning period will be from November 26 through December 7, with December 8 to be declared a day of silence in which no campaigning will be allowed ahead of the vote.

Acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian announced in October that he was resigning from the post of prime minister in order to dissolve parliament and force early elections. He has continued to perform his prime-ministerial duties until a new parliament and prime minister are elected.

Pashinian pushed for early parliamentary elections following his bloc's landslide victory in the mayoral race in the capital, Yerevan, in a bid to unseat his political opponents in the Republican Party (HHK), who have maintained a majority in parliament.

Pashinian's My Step alliance consists of current government members and supporters of the movement that came to power in a wave of peaceful street protests last spring.

The list of candidates of the former ruling HHK is headed by former Defense Minister Vigen Sargsian.

Armenia's ex-president and ex-prime minister, Serzh Sarkisian, who was ousted by Pashinian in what many in Armenia call a velvet revolution in April and May, is not among the candidates and will not be involved in the campaign, according to his party.

Vigen Sargsian declared that the HHK is aiming to finish second in the polls because it is now the sole genuinely opposition force in Armenia.

Pashinian allies have voiced skepticism that the HHK can win any seats in the next parliament.

The Prosperous Armenia Party headed by tycoon Gagik Tsarukian is also among parties that will bid for seats in the 101-member National Assembly.

The list of the newly created Sasna Tsrer All-Armenian Party is headed by Varuzhan Avetisian, one of the leaders of an armed group that seized and for two weeks held a police compound in Yerevan in July 2016, making political demands to the then-government.

Avetisian and most other members of the group were arrested but later released and eventually amnestied under the new Armenian administration. The group has vowed to cease armed struggle and engage in the political process.

Other parties that submitted documents include: Bright Armenia, headed by lawmaker and former Pashinian ally Edmon Marukian; the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaktsutyun); the Orinats Yerkir Party; the alliance of the Hanrapetutyun (Republic) and Free Democrats parties called We.

Three little-known parties -- the Christian-Democratic Rebirth Party, the National Progress Party, and the Citizens Decision Social Democratic Party -- have also registered.

<https://www.rferl.org/a/eleven-political-parties-register-armenian-parliamentary-elections/29601516.html>

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