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## ARMENIAN PARLIAMENT APPROVES CHANGES TO ELECTORAL SYSTEM

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The Armenian parliament has adopted changes to the country's Electoral Code that the opposition says are aimed at helping Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian win snap elections expected in June.

The amendments, announced on March 24 by Pashinian, whose My Step faction dominates the National Assembly, will switch the Caucasus country's electoral system to a fully proportional one.

Armenians have until now voted for parties and alliances as well as individual candidates. In the last two general elections, parliament seats were equally distributed among candidates picked through national party lists and individual races.

The amendments adopted on April 1 mean that the next election will be held only on a proportional, party-list basis. Only by pro-government lawmakers voted for the changes.

No one from the opposition faction Bright Armenia participated in the vote, while lawmakers from the opposition Prosperous Armenia faction boycotted the parliamentary meeting.

Following talks with the opposition, Pashinian on March 18 agreed to hold early general elections on June 20 in an effort to defuse a political crisis sparked by a war late last year with Azerbaijan over the breakaway Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Armenia has been in the grip of political upheaval since November, when Pashinian signed a Moscow-brokered cease-fire agreement with Azerbaijan that ended six weeks of fighting in and around Nagorno-Karabakh.

Under the deal, a chunk of Nagorno-Karabakh and all seven districts around it were placed under Azerbaijani administration after almost 30 years of control by ethnic Armenian forces.

The opposition held demonstrations in a bid to force Pashinian to step down over his handling of the war, during which more than 6,000 people were killed.

But the prime minister, whose My Step faction dominates parliament, has refused to resign, agreeing to early elections instead.

<https://www.rferl.org/a/armenian-parliament-approves-electoral-system-changes/31182505.html>

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