

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	221
Land:	Armenien
Kilde:	Freedom House
Titel:	Nations in Transit 2014 – Armenia
Udgivet:	10. juli 2014
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	19. november 2014

Nations in Transit 2014 - Armenia

Publisher [Freedom House](#)

Publication Date 10 July 2014

Cite as Freedom House, *Nations in Transit 2014 - Armenia*, 10 July 2014, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53d2080512.html> [accessed 18 September 2014]

Disclaimer This is not a UNHCR publication. UNHCR is not responsible for, nor does it necessarily endorse, its content. Any views expressed are solely those of the author or publisher and do not necessarily reflect those of UNHCR, the United Nations or its Member States.

Capital: Yerevan

Population: 3.0 million

GNI/capita, PPP: US\$8,140

Source: The data above are drawn from The World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2014*.

2014 Scores

Democracy Score: 5.36

Regime Classification: Semi-Consolidated Authoritarian Regime

National Democratic Governance: 5.75

Electoral Process: 5.75

Civil Society: 3.75

Independent Media: 5.75

Local Democratic Governance: 5.75

Judicial Framework and Independence: 5.50

Corruption: 5.25

NOTE: The ratings reflect the consensus of Freedom House, its academic advisers, and the author(s) of this report. The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author(s). The ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 7 the lowest. The Democracy Score is an average of ratings for the categories tracked in a given year.

Executive Summary:

The first years following Armenia's independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 were extremely turbulent. The withdrawal of Soviet economic support, a war with neighboring Azerbaijan, an energy crisis, and a transportation blockade that left landlocked Armenia with just two open borders – one with war-torn Georgia and the other with Iran – all contributed to the country's economic collapse in the early 1990s. Following a ceasefire in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in 1994, Armenia's economy began to recover, but the territorial conflict with Azerbaijan continued to simmer and the blockade by Azerbaijan and Turkey remained in effect.

Abrupt economic restructuring and a decline in living standards in Armenia's post-Soviet economy have caused social frustration and political apathy. Excessive overlap between political and economic interests in Armenia has depleted public trust in political elites, as has their record of rigged elections and corrupt administrative practices. Results of every national election since 1995 have been challenged by the opposition, which, as a result, does not recognize the legitimacy of Armenia's parliament, president, or constitution and remains personality-driven and passive between elections. Mass postelection protests in spring 2008 evoked a violent response from the authorities, leaving ten protesters dead and hundreds wounded. Armenia was hard hit by the global economic recession, revealing structural flaws – primarily a bloated construction sector reliant on investment from the United States and Russia.

From 2012 to 2013, the ruling center-right Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) won a virtual marathon of elections, starting with parliamentary elections in May 2012, followed by local elections in most communities in September, presidential elections in February 2013, and elections to the City Council of the capital city, Yerevan, in May. The legitimacy of the ruling party is actually extremely low, and social discontent is on the rise as the economy continues its slow recovery; however, the opposition is passive and weak, unable to create a viable or united political movement. In the presidential poll, the Heritage Party's Raffi Hovhannisyan achieved a record result of almost 40 percent, yet less than three months later, at local elections in Yerevan, the "Barev Yerevan" bloc established by Heritage won only 8.5 percent. In this atmosphere, the ruling party easily reaches its goals, whereas social protest is expressed primarily by means of civic activity that does not necessarily upset the political system. This political situation contributes to plurality in the media and to the development of civil society, but the need for viable political forces active outside election cycles is imminent.

National Democratic Governance. Despite the occurrence of competitive elections, the dominance of the ruling HHK was reinforced in 2013 due to the weakness of the opposition. There was no progress in peace negotiations with Azerbaijan over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh province. Progress towards European integration was undermined by the Armenian government's reorientation toward the Russia-led Customs Union. *Armenia's national democratic governance rating remains unchanged at 5.75.*

Electoral Process. Presidential and Yerevan City Council elections in 2013 showed some improvement in the quality of election administration, conditions for campaigning, and balanced media coverage. Although the scope of violations decreased from the previous year, vote buying and voter intimidation remained major issues. In the presidential poll, the Heritage Party's Raffi Hovhannisyan achieved a record result of almost 40 percent, but the bloc that Heritage established for the local elections in Yerevan less than three months later received only 8.5 percent of the vote. *Armenia's electoral process rating remains unchanged at 5.75.*

Civil Society. Armenia's civil society remains active, diverse, and independent. In 2013, civil society-led public campaigns – most notably against an increase in transportation costs and changes to the national pension system – gained scope and had more impact on policymaking. However, a consistent agenda was lacking, and most campaigns were event-driven. *Armenia's civil society rating remains unchanged at 3.75.*

Independent Media. Television remains the most popular medium and is coopted by political forces, with leading national stations controlled by the ruling party. However, Armenia's online and

print media are pluralistic and independent, and the popularity of online news sources is increasing. Building on a trend from the previous year, election coverage was mostly balanced and informative. The practice of politically motivated defamation suits significantly decreased in 2013. *Armenia's independent media rating remains unchanged at 5.75.*

Local Democratic Governance. While nominally independent, Armenia's self-governed communities remain weak and underfunded. The long-planned community enlargement project is stalling. Elections for the City Council of Yerevan in 2013 were an improvement over previous local elections, but the dominance of the ruling party persisted. *Armenia's local democratic governance rating remains unchanged at 5.75.*

Judicial Framework and Independence. Judicial bodies remained dependent on the executive branch and entrenched in a tradition of human rights violations. No significant structural improvements were made in 2013 to Armenia's overcrowded and unsanitary prison facilities, though a general amnesty late in the year did release 700 inmates. *Armenia's judicial framework and independence rating remains unchanged at 5.50.*

Corruption. Corruption persists as a major and deeply rooted societal concern in Armenia. Senior public officials were not prosecuted for corruption in 2013 though the overall number of lawsuits increased. Anticorruption measures did not come to head in 2013. *Armenia's corruption remains unchanged at 5.50.*

Outlook for 2014

Because no national elections are planned for 2014 and as the Karabakh peace process is at a standstill, no significant changes are likely to occur. Civic activity will continue to develop amidst a growing diversity of political activity and extra-parliamentary forms of political engagement. However, as civil society organizations remain too weak to have a fundamental impact on politics, the Republican Party will most likely hold its ground with ease. The main challenge in foreign relations will be sustaining cooperation with Russia while also trying to collaborate with the European Union.

National Democratic Governance:

Armenia's political system operates on the basis of consensus among elite groups that control economic and political resources. Society has little leverage over legislative processes or political decision-making; consequently, trust in governing institutions is very low. Only 11 percent of respondents to a late 2013 survey claimed to have full or significant trust in the parliament – down from 16 percent the previous year. Trust in the prime minister and cabinet dropped 7 percentage points, to 13 percent; and trust in President Serzh Sargsyan declined from 27 percent in 2012 to 19 percent in 2013.^[1]

Despite the weakness of the incumbent government, the even greater weakness of the opposition allows the Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) to dominate the political sphere. Over time, the HHK has merged with the state bureaucracy, further cementing the ruling party's control of resources. The results of every election since 1995 have been contested by the opposition, which is fragmented and personality-driven and remains passive between elections..

Presidential elections in February 2013 saw Sargsyan reelected with 58.6 percent of the vote. First runner-up was the head of the Heritage Party, Raffi Hovhannisyan, who won 36.7 percent of the vote. Hovhannisyan, an American-born Armenian who had been the country's first foreign minister after independence in 1991, fared better than expected, receiving a majority of votes in Shirak province, in several large cities (including Gyumri and Vanadzor, the second- and third-biggest towns in Armenia), and in three districts of the capital city, Yerevan.^[2]

Hovhannisyan followed the opposition tradition of the last two decades by refusing to acknowledge his defeat, and Heritage organized countrywide protests on his behalf, including an alternative inauguration ceremony in early April. Nevertheless, postelection tensions were far lower than in 2008, when opposition protests ended in bloodshed. The duration of rallies and the number of participants were also lower, and no clashes with police ensued. The protests gradually faded, and Heritage continued losing momentum until May 2013, when its candidate for the local elections in Yerevan received 8.5 percent – a dramatic difference from the 43 percent Hovhannisyan had won in Yerevan three months prior.^[3]

In August, Armenia began a constitutional review process in preparation for the first amendments to the constitution since 2005. One of the changes under discussion at year's end was the idea of transforming Armenia into a parliamentary republic. Critics of the proposal have suggested that this could be used to extend President Sargsyan's rule after his second term ends in 2018.^[4]

A November 2013 report by the Armenian National Statistical Service claims that nearly one-third of Armenian citizens lived in poverty in the previous year, with 13.5 percent classified as "very poor" and 2.8 percent "extremely poor."^[5] In October 2013, Finance Minister Davit Sarkisyan presented a more optimistic picture, stating that Armenia is "no longer poor" by international standards.^[6] The economy was badly hit by the global economic recession due to systemic vulnerabilities, particularly in the construction sector, and is still recovering. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew 7.5 percent in the first quarter of 2013 but slowed to just 0.6 percent in the second quarter and 1.4 percent in the third.^[7]

Armenia's main foreign export partner is the European Union (EU), but its economy also has strong ties to Russia, which controls the country's energy system. A potential increase in the cost of gas imports from Russia has been on the table since 2012 and finally occurred in May 2013, when Russia raised the gas price for Armenia from \$180 to \$270 per cubic meter, leading to widespread protests.^[8] Inflation, which had remained below 3 percent throughout 2012, accelerated, peaking at over 9 percent in August.^[9] Meanwhile, Armenia was short on external financing, including funds needed to pay off foreign debt. In September, Armenia issued \$700 million in Eurobonds, using most of them to pay off its debt to Russia.^[10] Remittances from Russia also account for over 20 percent of Armenia's GDP.^[11]

Russia's sway over Armenian foreign policy was highlighted in 2013 by a sudden change of course in Armenia's relations with the EU. Before September 2013, Armenia was preparing to sign an Association Agreement with the EU that included Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) provisions. The negotiations were finalized on 24 July and the signing of the agreement was scheduled for November.^[12] However, plans for the DCFTA were abandoned shortly after Russia flexed its muscles by announcing a \$4 billion arms deal with Azerbaijan, Armenia's neighbor and rival in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.^[13] On 3 September, after an unscheduled last-minute meeting with President Vladimir Putin in Moscow, President Sargsyan announced that

Armenia would be joining the Russia-led Customs Union, membership in which precludes Armenia from signing the Association Agreement.^[14] Russia responded by guaranteeing Armenia the military presence and support it needs to feel safe as oil-rich Azerbaijan continues its military buildup.^[15] The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan was no closer to a resolution at year's end. In August, former U.S. Ambassador to Bulgaria James Warlick was appointed to co-chair the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, the international body in charge of peace negotiations in the conflict. Ambassador Warlick's mission is to revive the peace talks amidst persistent shelling across the border, which continues to claim lives on both sides.^[16] In addition to frequent violations of the ceasefire, the persisting idea of national enmity in both Armenia and Azerbaijan further complicates a highly charged dialogue.^[17]

In November, Turkey announced that it would consider opening its land border with Armenia as an incentive for moving progress forward on peace negotiations over Nagorno-Karabakh.^[18]

Electoral Process:

Armenia is a semipresidential republic in which the president is the head of state and ministerial appointments require approval by the parliament. In practice, President Sargsyan has far more power than prescribed by the constitution, using the HKK majority in the parliament to ensure his right to hand-pick ministers and other appointed officials. Therefore, presidential elections in Armenia are a major means to shaping the national political landscape.^[19] The year 2013 was crucial in this respect, as it began with a presidential election in February and continued with elections to local communities and the City Council of Yerevan in May, closing a cycle that had begun with parliamentary elections in May 2012.

The limited participation of major opposition parties, in addition to generally low citizen engagement, reflected the superficial quality of the electoral process in Armenia. In December 2012, the leaders of Prosperous Armenia, the Armenian National Congress, and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation announced their withdrawal from and lack of support for the race.^[20] This left Raffi Hovhannisyan of the Heritage Party – a minor party that had received 6 percent of the vote in the 2012 parliamentary elections – as the main representative of an opposition that had already resigned from its role in electoral politics. Voter turnout was 60.2 percent, a decline from the 69.8 percent at the 2008 presidential elections.^[21] Only 6,251 local observers were active on election day – one-fifth the number active during the 2012 parliamentary elections.^[22] There were also 632 international observers, about half of them affiliated with the OSCE Office on Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).^[23]

Press coverage of presidential candidates was notably more balanced than in previous elections. The Yerevan Press Club reported that just 16 percent of the airtime of TV and radio presenters was devoted to Sargsyan, whereas runner-up Hovhannisyan received 28 percent and some minor contenders receiving coverage comparable to that of the incumbent.^[24] International observers praised the balanced coverage but also criticized the lack of televised debates between candidates.^[25]

OSCE observers noted the professional quality of election administration, respect for fundamental freedoms, adequate conditions for campaigning, and balanced media coverage. At the same time, they pointed out important flaws, including misuse of administrative resources, pressure on voters,

and undue interference on voting day.^[26] Domestic observers echoed their concerns, emphasizing vote buying for petty cash or gifts, violations of the voting process, and cases of ballot stuffing.^[27] The greatest number of serious violations, including large-scale ballot stuffing, was observed at station no 17/05 in the city of Artashat, 30 kilometers from Yerevan.^[28] Overall, however, both domestic and international observers noted a decrease in the number of violations; the OSCE reported that violations serious enough to affect the outcome of the election occurred at 5 percent of polling stations,^[29] compared to 9.4 percent in the 2012 parliamentary elections.^[30]

In the absence of strong competitors, Sargsyan campaigned passively. Three of his opponents declared hunger strikes during the run-up to the election day, the longest of which lasted three days and none of which appeared to affect the overall campaign.^[31] One contender, Paruyr Hayrikyan, was shot in the shoulder in a botched assassination attempt three weeks before election day. Another marginal candidate, Vardan Sedrakyan, was found guilty of organizing the attempt and sentenced to 14 years in jail.^[32]

The only semblance of serious opposition campaigning came from Hovhannisyan's team, which employed American-style door-to-door outreach and extensive social media. Hovhannisyan's platform centered on vague promises of social equality and recognition of the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh. Although Hovhannisyan did not try to unite opposition factions, he achieved high public recognition (40 percent against Sargsyan's 41) and received 37 percent of the vote.^[33] Citing electoral fraud, he refused to accept the election results and filed a petition with the Central Electoral Commission (CEC).^[34] The CEC responded that it had never seen such an "unsubstantiated and groundless petition,"^[35] but it still annulled the results of Station 17/05 in Artashat, where the greatest number of grave violations was observed.^[36]

Hovhannisyan dubbed his postelection pushback the "barevolution," a wordplay on the colloquial Armenian greeting "barev" ("hello") and a reference to his direct campaigning style.^[37] The barevolution peaked when hundreds of protesters attended an alternative inauguration ceremony for Hovhannisyan on 6 April (the day Sargsyan was sworn in for his second term).^[38] The momentum from the protests did not last long, and Heritage's "Barev Yerevan" bloc received just 8.5 percent of the vote at Yerevan City Council elections the next month.^[39]

Although the postelection events show one of the positive aspects of Armenian domestic politics – that is, the responsiveness of civil society – they also highlight persistent underlying flaws of the electoral system. These extend beyond violations to a deep mistrust of elections within the electorate itself, a lack of issue-based dialogue, and weak interparty dialogue both during and beyond elections. As these issues are mutually reinforcing, they contribute not only to general wariness of elections as a democratic institution but also a low level of public engagement with political issues.

Civil Society:

As of 2012, the Ministry of Justice had registered 4,543 civil society organizations (CSOs) in Armenia,^[40] although only 15-20 percent of them are consistently active.^[41] The strengths of Armenian civil society are advocacy, infrastructure, expertise, and organizational capacity, while their main weaknesses are feeble connections to the public and poor financial sustainability. As many CSOs rely heavily on foreign funding, their activities and continuity are vulnerable to funding fluctuations or interruptions.

Public perception of CSOs is another problem. According to Caucasus Barometer data for 2013, there is more mistrust than trust of organized civil society among the Armenians. For example, 18 percent of respondents "fully" or "somewhat" trusted NGOs in 2013, compared to 21 percent in 2012; levels of distrust stood at 36 percent in 2013, while ambivalence ("neither trust nor distrust") was reported by 34 percent of respondents.^[42]

Despite these weaknesses and unlike organized political elites, civil society actors (more often individuals and groups, rather than major organizations) remained active in 2013, organizing their activities around a number of social, political, and economic issues and successfully affecting key government decisions. Throughout the year, civil society activity occurred on an event- or issue-driven basis rather than through comprehensive organizational agendas. As the year began with the presidential election, CSOs also began with monitoring, dialogue around associated issues, and – after the results were announced – demonstrations either in support of or against the winner. Although fewer domestic organizations acted as observers in 2013 than in 2012,^[43] the weakness of organized debate and dialogue among political actors left civil society to serve as an alternative arena for politics. The activities of domestic observers during the 2013 elections actually highlighted one of the burgeoning successes of civil society in the past few years – namely, use of social media, the internet, and public journalism. The crowdsourcing platform iDitord ("iObserver"), which has been launched before the parliamentary elections in 2012, was successfully used to allow activists and ordinary citizens from across the country to record and publicize their observations (including videos, photos, and information on violations).^[44] It is perhaps the best example of a small but growing dimension of innovation in Armenian civil society.

Public protests took place frequently in 2013, increasing in scope, efficiency, and even international notice.^[45] The best example was the movement against the increased cost of public transportation in Yerevan, which grew into perhaps the most dynamic social campaign in recent history. Contrary to the pre-election promises of newly elected Mayor Taron Markaryan, the Yerevan Department of Transportation announced a 50 percent rise in bus fares in July, raising them from AMD 100 to AMD 150 (from \$0.25 to \$0.37, approximately) per trip.^[46] The mayor's office justified the decision by citing high inflation and the increased price of Russian gas, the fuel used by municipal buses. Mass protests ensued, led by activists and drawing notable youth participation. This was the largest non-political movement in recent years, involving up to 7,000 participants. Even more notable than the high participation and youth involvement was the practice of solidarity through civil disobedience that emerged between diverse social groups. In addition to a number of bus drivers continuing to accept the lower fare, ordinary citizens as well as groups of celebrities began offering shared rides to commuters, culminating in a shadow transportation system facilitated by its own website, FreeCar.am.^[47] One week after the beginning of the protests, the mayor's office gave in to public pressure and suspended its decision to raise transportation fares, although it admitted that current fares are insufficient to provide quality service or decent pay for drivers.^[48] After this, most protests dissolved, but one picket remained round-the-clock in front of the City Council building. One of its participants was assaulted by unknown persons.^[49] Commenting on the movement, Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan (unrelated to President Sargsyan) not only hailed it as definitive for Armenian civil society but also said that it was fueled by youth who are motivated by a quest for social equality, justice, and protesting against poverty.^[50]

Young Armenians were also highly active in August 2013, when the Ministry of Education announced its intentions to raise state university tuitions by \$50-\$500, depending on department and degree. After several days of protests, a bill was passed that set an upper limit on tuition fees

and prescribed more financial incentives for high grades, although fees increased in some universities, anyway.^[51]

Minor protests took place throughout the year. A recurrent protest issue was the plight of Karabakh war veterans, many of whom are living in poverty. The protest escalated over time, and one of the veterans was arrested in September.^[52] A number of marginal and radical groups were also active in 2013. An anonymous illiberal group that calls itself the "One Nation Party" targeted religious minorities, putting up numerous posters calling for intolerance towards "sects." The City Council organized the removal of the posters, but they reappeared. This type of intolerance is not uncommon in a country where 90 percent of residents identify with Armenian Apostolic Church, which is afforded privileges by law; though minority religious groups made no major legal complaints in 2013, they have often been subjected to societal intolerance and discrimination, including by employers and media.^[53] The issue of sexual minorities also came to the spotlight in July, when a marginal conservative group called the All-Armenian Parents Committee staged protests against the newly adopted Law on Ensuring the Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities of Women and Men, meant to ensure equality and criminalize gender-based discrimination. The protesters argued that by introducing the term "gender" into Armenian legislation, the law gives a legal foothold to sexual minorities. The public's attention was thus shifted from the equality of men and women, which remains highly problematic in practice, towards the issue of sexual minorities. Several women's CSO reported harassment.^[54] The protests subsided after the law was sent back for amendment in September.

Compared to previous election years, the level of violence against civil society activists and between activists and the police was relatively low in 2013. Although police often stopped gatherings and detained demonstrators, the only full-scale clash between law enforcement and protesters occurred when a group of nationalists, many of them wearing Guy Fawkes masks, gathered at Freedom Square in Yerevan on 5 November, armed with wooden poles, homemade explosives, and flares. Their leader, Shant Harutyunyan, the head of the obscure nationalist Tsaghakron Party, proclaimed a revolution and called on his supporters to seize the Presidential Palace and other government buildings. As the protesters exited Freedom Square, the riot police moved in to arrest them. In the ensuing scuffle, the protesters used their homemade explosives and poles. Several police officers were hurt, and 37 protesters were detained. Seventeen were later released, and the remaining 20 are awaiting trial on various charges.^[55] Two prominent CSO staff – Haykak Aramashyan, Project Coordinator of the Yerevan Press Club, and Suren Saghatelian, a board member of Transparency International's Armenia chapter – were also assaulted in the street on 5 September; a criminal investigation was ongoing at year's end.^[56]

At the end of the year, protests unfolded in connection to two major issues that will continue into 2014. The first, Armenia's potential membership in the Russia-led Customs Union, incited not only demonstrations but also discussion of Armenia's international role and future.^[57] The second concerned a new law that would require citizens born after 1973 (that is to say, a group including Armenia's young professional class) to pay 5 percent of their monthly earnings to a pension fund.^[58] The movement set up a website, Dem.am ("I'm against" in Armenian), which subsequently became their slogan. On December 17, a 1,500-strong rally against the pension reform included activists from political parties. At the end of the year, it was yet unclear whether civil society actors would be able to facilitate dialogue with the government or affect the proposed pension reform in a meaningful way. However, the protests did grab the attention of major opposition parties, four of which submitted a case against the proposed changes to the Constitutional Court.^[59]

Independent Media:

Print and online media in Armenia are diverse. The online community is growing rapidly, and the internet is becoming an increasingly reliable platform for independent information and opinions. However, television remains by far the most popular medium for news and entertainment, and political bias in broadcast media is heavy. As with coverage of the parliamentary elections in 2012, however, campaign coverage in 2013 showed a significant and increasing level of balance.

A poll conducted in January-February 2013 reported that the internet was a main source of information for 37 percent of respondents (up from 15 percent in 2010). Television was a main source for 91 percent (down from 95 percent in 2010), whereas radio and print press were down at 12 percent and 14 percent, respectively.^[60] In 2013, 46 percent of Armenians went online at least once a week, whereas just 15 percent bought newspapers.^[61] Since the internet is a free medium in Armenia,^[62] online access means that more users have access to alternative sources of information. In 2013, the majority of Armenian youth were online and in social networks; a reported 580,000 Armenians used Facebook every month.^[63]

Two national television stations, Kentron and Yerkir Media, campaigned for the opposition in 2013. Although the law forbids media to be affiliated with political parties, Kentron serves as the media arm of the Prosperous Armenia party, while Yerkir promotes the interests of the Dashnaktsutyun party. Election coverage monitoring by the Yerevan Press Club showed that coverage of the presidential campaign was balanced,^[64] whereas during the campaign to Yerevan City Council, the ruling party was more often covered in a negative light for the first time in its history, with the most criticism coming from Kentron and Yerkir.^[65]

Politically motivated defamation lawsuits became less common in 2013.^[66] Suits were filed against Mir TV, several opposition newspapers (*Zhoghovurd*, *Hraparak*, *Aravot*, *Haykakan Zhamanak*), and the portal News.am, among others, but all of them were dismissed. In May, blogger Tigran Kocharyan won a defamation lawsuit against an opposition weekly, *Chorrord Ishkhanutyun*, after the paper ran a story accusing him of "fascism" and using other derogatory language against him.^[67]

Meanwhile, the number of threats and attacks against journalists increased from 4 cases in 2012 to 10 in 2013.^[68] On 24 August, the coordinator of the Armenia Today news agency was detained by police during a civic protest and, according to his testimony, assaulted by officers while inside a police vehicle.^[69] On 27 April, a police officer pushed and verbally abused Ani Hovannisyan, a reporter for Hetq.am, a website run by the Investigative Journalists NGO.^[70] Following a police investigation, the officer in question was fired. However, on 3 May, threats against Hovhannisyan appeared in the online comments to her video report. Five days later, she received a call from a Russian phone number with threats against her and her family. The editorial staff of Hetq believes the abuse may have been linked to research Hovhannisyan was doing on offshore accounts of public officials and Armenian investments in Georgia.^[71]

Several instances of interference with the work of journalists were also registered during the February elections. A member of the organization Journalists for Human Rights was attacked at polling station 17/05 in the city of Artashat, the site of many serious electoral violations. An incident involving two more journalists – reporters from the news site 1in.am and the *Hraparak* newspaper – occurred at the same station. At polling station 9/27 in Yerevan, a reporter for *Aravot* was assaulted.^[72]

Online media – including social media – were involved in as many conflicts and lawsuits in 2013 as traditional news sources. At the end of 2012, parliamentary deputy Tigran Urikhanyan (Prosperous Armenia) sued blogger Edgar Barsegyan for a satirical photo collage he had published online. The online community came to Barsegyan's defense, causing Urikhanyan to withdraw his claim in May 2013. In June, journalist Armen Dulyan was fired from his job as a presenter on Shant TV for making a derogatory Facebook comment about the public broadcaster.^[73] Not long after that, a police officer received an official reprimand for making an abusive Facebook comment about a journalist.^[74]

The official report on the implementation of the EU Neighborhood Policy in Armenia in 2012 (published March 2013) criticized the state of media freedom in Armenia, recommending improvements in broadcasting legislation that would encourage the pluralism of broadcasters.^[75] In October, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Dunja Mijatović met with Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandyan and reminded him of the need to introduce long-promised amendments in broadcasting legislation to ensure pluralism.^[76]

Intellectual property, both legally and in practice, was not well protected in 2013. Media reports from major outlets were frequently recycled online, often without mention of the source. On 21 May, the editors-in-chief of nine Armenian print media published a statement expressing concern over the growing number of copyright violations online and asserting that online media republishing other outlets' work should be required to sign contracts with the original publications.^[77] A month later, the editors of 15 online media made a joint statement to the same effect.^[78] In response, the parliament adopted amendments to the Law on Copyright. Mentioning sources is now obligatory when quoting from newspapers, and copying an entire story requires the consent of its author.^[79] The draft legislation was shared with journalists and adjusted on the basis of their feedback before its adoption on 30 September.

Local Democratic Governance:

Local governance in Armenia is weak and inefficient, as remains true in many postcommunist states. Each of Armenia's self-governing communities has a representative body called the Council of Elders with 5 to 15 members and an executive body (municipality) led by the community head (mayor). Council members and mayors are elected via public ballot for three-year terms. Mayors are accountable to the Council of Elders, although implementation procedures are often lacking.

Armenia's total population is approximately 3 million, with over one-third of the population concentrated in Yerevan. This means that many of the Armenia's 915 communities are very small and cannot collect sufficient revenue to sustain basic services. Communities' main expenses are education (33.2 percent) and municipal administration and services (26.3 percent).^[80] The income of municipal budgets accounted for just 2.7 percent of Armenia's GDP in the first half of 2013,^[81] with over half of this amount coming from state budget subsidies.^[82] Most taxes go directly into the state budget, and communities only receive land and real estate taxes. The smaller the community, the less financially sustainable it is. Indeed, the only financially independent community of Armenia is the capital city, Yerevan. No changes to taxation or community income structures were made in 2013, nor did the government move forward with a long-planned reform merging Armenia's communities into 200 larger units. The main obstacle to the latter change is resistance from mayors, many of whom will lose their jobs if it is implemented.

For the first time, elections in most of Armenia's communities in 2012 brought victory to HHK in a majority of the country's municipalities. Previously, the majority of mayors had no party affiliation; now, two out of are HHK members. Local officials in several regions where Sargsyan lost in 2013 actually stepped down shortly the elections. These included the governor of Shirak province, Ashot Giziryan, who resigned three days after his province voted for Hovhannisyan. He was replaced by Felix Tsolakyan, former deputy director of the National Security Service and former head of the State Tax Service.^[83] The Mayor of Armavir city, where Sargsyan also lost, handed in his resignation, but the government rejected it.

In May 2013, Yerevan elected its City Council via a proportional ballot, following which the winning party nominated the mayor. The candidates included incumbent mayor Taron Margaryan of the HHK, former Foreign Minister Vardan Oskanian of the Prosperous Armenia party, Armen Martirosyan of Heritage, and others. As such a large percentage of the national population lives in Yerevan and because the election for City Council was held soon after the presidential poll, the municipal election acquired nationwide importance. The election campaign was quite active, with the ruling party and the opposition employing very different strategies. The incumbent authorities emphasized the logistical and managerial aspects of municipal government, whereas the opposition treated the post of mayor of the capital city as a political office that would offer the winner an opportunity to initiate countrywide change.^[84]

The results of this election were very disappointing for the opposition and especially for Heritage, whose electoral bloc "Barev Yerevan" received only 8.5 percent of the vote. The incumbent HHK won with 56 percent, securing Mayor Margaryan's reelection, and Prosperous Armenia followed with 23.1 percent. Other parties did not make it past the threshold required to win seats in the Council of Elders (6 percent for parties, 8 percent for blocs). The opposition claimed that the election had not been fair and refused to acknowledge its results.^[85] However, unlike in previous years, all the parties accepted their mandates to the Council of Elders. The 6,595 domestic observers present at this election^[86] registered 417 violations, 80 percent more than the number of violations registered in Yerevan during the presidential elections.^[87]

Shortly after the elections, the governor of Syunik province, Suren Khachatryan, was forced to resign in connection with the fatal shooting of Avetik Budaghyan, who had run (unsuccessfully) for mayor of Goris, one of Syunik's largest cities. Budaghyan's brother and Governor Khachatryan's bodyguard were wounded in the shooting, which took place at the governor's home on 2 June.^[88] Khachatryan's son was arrested for the crime but soon released, prompting widespread media speculation and accusations of judicial foulplay from the political opposition.^[89] Commenting on Khachatryan's resignation, HHK spokesperson Eduard Sharmazanov said that the decision was the result of the party's "political evaluation" of the incident.^[90] A month after the shooting, a new governor was appointed – HHK member Vahe Hakobyan, the son of the director of the largest copper and molybdenum mine in Armenia. In October, the governor of Ararat province also resigned, reportedly under pressure from the central government, and was replaced by former minister of agriculture Aramais Grigoryan.^[91]

In the spirit of collaboration with civil society, the coordinator of the Association of Young Lawyers' Anti-Corruption Center in Aragatsotn, Mushegh Abgaryan, was appointed vice-governor of Aragatsotn province on 28 September.

Women's involvement in local government remains low and has been decreasing in the last four years. None of Armenia's 48 cities and only 20 of 866 rural communities have female mayors.^[92] In the 10 provinces, there are no female governors and just two female vice-governors.

Judicial Framework and Independence:

Armenian society has low trust in the judiciary, which is permeated with corruption and remains closely connected to executive authorities. The functioning of the justice system remains one of the weakest links of Armenian governance. Police make arbitrary arrests without warrants, beat detainees during arrest and interrogation, and use torture to extract confessions.

On 10 June 2013, 200 lawyers gathered in front of the Court of Cession in Yerevan to demonstrate against arbitrary decision-making and double standards in the judicial system.^[93] In December, Ombudsman Karen Andreasyan published a scathing report detailing corruption in the court system that included a judicial bribe "price list," ranging from \$500 to \$50,000.^[95] Judges, too, denied the accusations in the report.^[96]

In May, President Sargsyan dismissed the head of the Special Investigation Service, Andranik Mirzoyan, for failing to transform the organization into an efficient and independent body.^[97] In mid-June, the police began investigating the alleged misuse of procurement and tender procedures by the Office for Implementation of Judicial and Legal Programs.^[98]

On 13 September, Prosecutor General Aghvan Hovsepyan's six-year term ended. He was succeeded by former military prosecutor Gevorg Kostanyan, who promised to boost public trust in the judicial system.^[99] Shortly thereafter, President Sargsyan announced the establishment of a new centralized investigative body jointly affiliated with the Ministry of Defense, the police, and the Tax Service. Hovsepyan was appointed head of the commission in charge of establishing the new body, which was expected to begin operations in January 2014.^[100]

State penitentiaries and detention facilities are severely overcrowded in Armenia, where the acquittal rate was just 1.6 percent in 2012.^[101] Although the law prescribes a floor area of 4 square meters per prison inmate, prisoners in 2012 had an average of less than 1.5 square meters each, so that convicts in some facilities had to take turns sleeping. Overcrowding was reduced in late 2013 by a large-scale amnesty of 700 inmates.^[102] Among the prisoners granted an early release was Armenian National Congress activist Tigran Arakelyan, convicted in 2011 of disorderly conduct and disobeying the police in a conflict.^[103] Two police officers jailed for using torture were also amnestied despite the protests of human rights activists.^[104]

Prison conditions are dangerously unsanitary, and inmates have inadequate access to medical care. In 2012, 28 inmates died while incarcerated – the equivalent of 59 deaths per 10,000 inmates, a very high mortality rate by international standards.^[105] The rate has declined since its peak in 2010.^[106] Planned improvements involve shutting down all 12 existing penitentiaries and replacing them with 3 modern ones.^[107] However, the construction of the first new facility, a prison in the city of Armavir worth \$20 million and intended to house 1,240 inmates, had not yet been finalized at year's end.

In March 2013, the parliament's Standing Commission on State and Legal Matters approved the Armenian National Congress's proposal for a new parliamentary commission dedicated to

investigating the events of March 2008, when a postelection opposition rally ended in the deaths of 10 people, including 2 police officers. However, the ruling party's faction in the parliament voted down the bill down with 58 votes against 47.^[108]

At the end of 2012, 30 conscientious objectors remained in prison. They included Jehovah's Witnesses who had won a case against the Republic of Armenia at the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).^[109] Although a law on alternative military service was passed back in 2003, the service remained under military supervision and did not function as intended. In May 2013, the Law on Alternative Service was amended, leaving the alternative military service under the control of the military but also establishing an alternative civic service under government supervision.^[110] The duration of alternative service was also reduced from 35 to 30 months.

Corruption:

A high level of corruption has been one of the key challenges to Armenia's economic development and democratization since independence. Despite a number of improvements, corruption remains pervasive, and bribery and nepotism are reportedly common among government officials, who are rarely prosecuted or removed for abuse of office. In 2013, the National Statistical Office recorded 782 registered corruption crimes, compared to 561 in 2012.^[111]

In June, the Control Chamber of Armenia presented its annual report on state spending. The analysis described numerous cases of embezzlement in the spheres of procurement, urban planning, road construction, education, and protection of the environment.^[112] Control Chamber chair Ishkhan Azkaryan stated that the only part of the budget free from corruption risks was social welfare; the rest, or 70 percent of the budget, is prone to corruption. This statement was harshly criticized by President Sargsyan, who called the Control Chamber's conclusions incorrect and shortsighted.^[113]

Major industries, including foreign trade, remain dominated by monopolies, which also creates opportunities for corruption. The World Economic Forum strongly criticized Armenia's weak antimonopoly policies in 2013,^[114] and the World Bank's 2013 annual *Doing Business* report named foreign trade as the most problematic and corruption-prone business sector in the country.^[115]

While recorded corruption incidents increased in 2013, the number of people who reported having engaged directly in bribery declined. According to Transparency's 2013 Global Corruption Barometer, 18 percent of respondents in Armenia reported paying bribes between September 2012 and March 2013,^[116] compared to 23 percent in the previous reporting period. This improvement brings bribery levels in Armenia closer to those reported in other Central and Eastern European countries like Latvia (19 percent), Romania (17 percent), and the Czech Republic (15 percent).^[117]

Low tax collection, another symptom of weak and corrupt institutions, has been improving since 2009, when taxes and social payments accounted for just 19.9 percent of GDP.^[118] In the first half of 2013, taxes accounted for 29.5 percent of GDP. In 2013, the government launched a simplified system of tax forms, which may lead to further improvements in this area.^[119]

Two additional infrastructural changes have the potential to increase transparency. In 2013, the Special Investigative Service of Armenia set up a website that publishes information on traffic accidents and crimes committed by police officers, including corruption. A new modern building for the Department for Visas and Passports was opened in 2013;^[120] its digitized documentation

processing, along with new biometric passports to be introduced in 2014, is expected to reduce corruption risks.^[121]

There were no corruption charges brought against senior officials in 2013. The more significant lower-level arrests of the year included that of the deputy chief operative of the Nubarashen district penitentiary in Yerevan, who was arrested in July 2013 for accepting a bribe.^[122] In September, the deputy chief of the Department of Social Welfare of Army Personnel was arrested for soliciting a bribe from the parents of a soldier who had died in service in exchange for implementing their son's legally guaranteed death entitlements. In October, two officers of the Penitentiary Department of the Ministry of Justice were arrested for soliciting and receiving a bribe to add to the name of a particular inmate who was eligible for the amnesty to the official list.^[123]

The most scandalous corruption allegations of the year implicated Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan and the archbishop of the Ararat diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Navasard Kchoyan. Hetq published materials in May suggesting that the prime minister and the archbishop, in partnership with business operator Ashot Sukiasyan, had used aliases to register an offshore company in Cyprus worth several million dollars.^[124] Hetq also claimed that the company in question, Wlispera, was directly connected to a case involving the seizure of assets worth \$30 million from businessman Paylak Hayrapetyan. Prime Minister Sargsyan called the allegations "nonsense" and filed a claim to the Prosecutor General of Cyprus for an investigation. He received no written response to his inquiry from Prosecutor General Petros Klerides, who stated in an oral interview that no one could register a company in his country under an alias.^[125] In a public spat, Prime Minister Sargsyan countered that one could register a company in Cyprus in the name of anyone, even a dead person, and added that he himself had never been there.^[126] Information about the offshore company remains contested and contradictory.

Author:

Alexander Iskandaryan

Alexander Iskandaryan is the Director of the Caucasus Institute, a think tank and educational center in Yerevan, Armenia. He also lectures and publishes on politics, democracy, and transition.

Notes:

¹ The Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC), *Caucasus Barometer 2013* (Yerevan: CRRC, 2013). Survey data cited: Trust in the Parliament:

<http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2013am/TRUPARL/>; Trust in Prime Minister and Cabinet:

<http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2013am/TRUEXEC/>; and Trust in the President:

<http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2013am/TRUPRES/>.

² Central Electoral Commission (CEC) of the Republic of Armenia, *18 February 2013 RA Presidential Elections*, <http://www.elections.am/presidential/>.

³ CEC, *5 May 2013 Yerevan City Council Election*, <http://res.elections.am/images/doc/resulteng05.05.13n.xls>.

4 "Sarkisian Moves to Amend Armenian Constitution," Radio Azatutyun (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL)), 4 September 2013, <http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/25095800.html>.

5 "Poverty Rate in Armenia Nearly Doubles," Asbarez.com, 23 November 2013, <http://asbarez.com/116670/poverty-rate-in-armenia-nearly-doubles/>.

6 "Армения по международным стандартам больше не считается бедной страной. Заявление главы Минфина Д.Саркисяна" [Armenia No Longer Poor by International Standards. Statement of the Head of the Ministry of Finance D. Sarkisyan], Panorama.am, 3 October 2013, <http://www.panorama.am/ru/economy/2013/10/03/davit-sargsyan/>.

7 National Statistical Service of Armenia (ArmStat), *Հայաստանի Հանրապետության սոցիալ-տնտեսական վիճակը 2013 թվականի հունվար-նոյեմբերին* [Socioeconomic Situation of Armenia, January-November 2013] (Yerevan: ArmStat, 28 December 2013), 10, http://www.armstat.am/file/article/sv_11_13a_112.pdf.

8 "Protest against expected gas price rise in Armenia's capital," Tert.am, 16 May 2013, <http://www.tert.am/en/news/2013/05/16/rally-gov/>.

9 Trading Economics, "Armenia Inflation Rate," data for 2012 and 2013, <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/armenia/inflation-cpi>.

10 "Armenia Raises \$700 Million in Debut Eurobond Issue," Radio Azatutyun (RFE/RL), 20 September 2013, <http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/25112854.html>; and "Armenian Government To Use Proceeds from Sale of Eurobonds to Repay Russian Debt and Boost Small and Medium Businesses," Arka News Agency, 3 October 2013, http://arka.am/en/news/economy/armenian_government_to_use_proceeds_form_sale_of_eurobonds_to_repay_russian_debt_and_boost_small_and/#sthash.vOkHMwgq.dpuf.

11 The World Bank, "Annual Remittance Data," updated April 2014, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-12889907>

12 "Armenia, EU Complete Talks On Free-Trade Area," RFE/RL, 24 July 2013, <http://www.rferl.org/content/armenia-eu-trade-agreement/25055948.html>.

13 Zulfugar Agayev, "Azeri-Russian Arms Trade \$4 Billion Amid Tension With Armenia," Bloomberg, 13 August 2013, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-08-13/azeri-russian-arms-trade-4-billion-amid-tension-with-armenia.html>.

14 "No Armenia-EU deal to be inked in Vilnius: EU Commissioner rep," Panarmenian Network, 5 October 2013, <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/news/170893/>.

15 "Russia to expand military presence in Armenia: media," Panarmenian Network, 26 September 2013, <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/news/170483/>.

16 U.S. Department of State, "Appointment of U.S. Co-Chair of the OSCE Minsk Group," press statement, 5 August 2013, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2013/08/212707.htm>; Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, *Տեղեկանք 2013 թ. զինված ուժերում մահացության դեպքերի մասին*

[Report on death cases in Armenian Armed forces, 2013] (Vanadzor: Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, 10 January 2014), <http://hcav.am/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/%D5%8F%D5%A5%D5%B2%D5%A5%D5%AF%D5%A1%D5%B6%D6%84-20131.pdf>; and^[16] "Armenia Sends Second Open Letter to ICRC, UN, EU and OSCE MG with Requirements in Connection with H. Indzhigulyan Issue," Panorama.am, 24 August 2013, <http://www.panorama.am/en/law/2013/08/24/open-letter-injigulyan/>.

¹⁷ For a discussion of the traditional narrative of enmity and alternative views, see Thomas de Waal, "A New Narrative for the Karabakh Conflict," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 16 June 2013, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2013/06/19/new-narrative-for-karabakh-conflict/gb2e>.

¹⁸ "Turkey could reopen railway in parallel with Karabakh progress," *Hürriyet Daily News*, 8 November 2013, <http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/turkey-could-reopen-railway-in-parallel-with-karabakh-progress-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=57565&NewsCatID=355>.

¹⁹ President of the Republic of Armenia, *The Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, Chapter 3: The President of the Republic* (Yerevan, President of the Republic of Armenia), <http://www.president.am/en/chapter3/>.

²⁰ "ANC not to nominate presidential candidate," Panarmenian Network, 27 December 2012, <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/news/139637/>.

²¹ "Voter Turnout Data for Armenia," International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, <http://www.idea.int/vt/countryview.cfm?id=8>.

²² CEC, *The List of Domestic NGOs Carrying out Election Observation Mission of February 18, 2013 Elections of RA President* (Yerevan: CEC, 8 February 2013), http://res.elections.am/images/doc/dit18.02.13_en.pdf.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Yerevan Press Club, *Report on Monitoring of Armenian Broadcast Media Coverage of RA Presidential Elections in 2013* (Yerevan: Yerevan Press Club, January-February 2013), 16, http://ypc.am/upload/YPC%20Monitoring_RA%20Presidential%20Elections%202013_eng.pdf.

²⁵ Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), *Armenia, Presidential Election, 18 February 2013: Final Report* (Warsaw: OSCE, 8 May 2013), 21, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/101314>.

²⁶ OSCE/ODIHR, *Armenia, Presidential Election, 18 February 2013: Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions* (Yerevan: OSCE, 19 February 2013), <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/99675>.

²⁷ "Միազանգվածները 13/4/2013-ից մինչև 06/5/2013" [Alarms from 4/13/2013 to 5/6/2013], iDitord.org, <http://iditord.org/reports/>.

[28](#) "Anti-Corruption Group Urges Diasporans to Observe Yerevan Municipal Elections," *The Armenian Weekly*, 23 March 2013, <http://www.armenianweekly.com/2013/03/23/anti-corruption-group-urges-diasporans-to-observe-yerevan-municipal-elections/>.

[29](#) OSCE/ODIHR, *Armenia, Presidential Election, 18 February 2013: Final Report*.

[30](#) OSCE/ODIHR, *Armenia, Parliamentary Elections, 6 May 2012: Final Report* (Warsaw: OSCE, 26 June 2012), 21, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/91643>.

[31](#) "Paruyr Hayrikyan starts a 'three-day hunger strike' as a sign of solidarity for Andriad Ghukasyan," *Mediamax*, 25 January 2013, <http://www.mediamax.am/en/news/politics/6667/>.

[32](#) "Vardan Sedrakyan sentenced to 14 years of imprisonment," *Armenpress*, 23 September 2013, <http://armenpress.am/eng/news/733965/>.

[33](#) European Friends of Armenia (EuFoA), *Poll: Armenia on the Eve of Presidential Elections* (Yerevan: EuFoA, 9 February 2013), 10-12, <http://www.eufoa.org/uploads/POLL20130209EN.pdf>.

[34](#) "Hovshannisyan Campaign Alleges Electoral Fraud," *Asbarez*, 18 February 2013, <http://asbarez.com/108330/hovannisian-campaign-alleges-voter-fraud/>.

[35](#) Tatev Harutyunyan, "The Negligence of the Central Election Commission (CEC) and Raffi Hovhannisyan's Unsubstantiated Proofs," *Aravot.am*, 14 March 2013, <http://en.aravot.am/2013/03/14/152967/>.

[36](#) "Anti-Corruption Group Urges Diasporans to Observe Yerevan Municipal Elections," *The Armenian Weekly*.

[37](#) "Is Armenia on the Brink of a 'Barevolution'?" *RFE/RL*, 15 November 2013, <http://www.rferl.org/content/armenia-raffi-hovannisian/24915007.html>.

[38](#) "Serzh Sargsyan sworn in as president amid alternative inauguration," *European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity*, 10 April 2013, http://www.europeanforum.net/news/1655/serzh_sargsyan_sworn_in_as_presid....

[39](#) CEC, *5 May 2013 Yerevan City Council Election*.

[40](#) National Statistical Service, *Ամփոփ տվյալներ իրավաբանական անձանց պետական միասնական գրանցամատյանում իրավաբանական անձանց և անհատ ձեռնարկատերերի 2011 թվականի ապրիլ - դեկտեմբերի ընթացքում պետական գրանցումների վերաբերյալ*, [Summary data on state registration of legal entities and individual entrepreneurs and legal entities in the 2011 April-December period on public registers] (Yerevan: National Statistical Service, December 2011), 101, http://armstat.am/file/article/sv_12_11a_150.pdf.

[41](#) United States Agency for International Development (USAID), *The 2012 CSO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia – Armenia* (Washington, DC: USAID, June 2013), <http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1863/ARM.pdf>.

[42](#) CRRC, *Caucasus Barometer 2013 – Trust – NGOs*, <http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2013am/TRUNGOS/>.

[43](#) CEC, *The List of Domestic NGOs Carrying out Election Observation Mission of February 18, 2013*.

[44](#) "Armenian Elections Monitoring: Crowdsourcing + Public Journalism + Mapping," Internews: Center for Innovation and Learning, 28 August 2012, <https://innovation.internews.org/blogs/armenian-elections-monitoring-cro...>

[45](#) Elina Chilingaryan, "В Брюсселе отмечают повышение роли гражданского общества в Армении" [Brussels notes an increasing role of the civil society in Armenia], Radio Azatutyun (RFE/RL), 14 June 2013, <http://rus.azatutyun.am/content/article/25017035.html>.

[46](#) Christian Garbis, "Yerevan's Bus Fare Protests," Armenia Weekly, 29 July 2013, <http://www.armenianweekly.com/2013/07/29/yerevans-bus-fare-protests-a-ti...>

[47](#) Giorgi Lomsadze, "Armenia: Bus Protests Grind on with Carpools and Conspiracy Theories," EurasiaNet, 24 July 2013, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/67294>; and Anush Martirosyan and Hovannes Shoghikian, "Armenians Urged to Defy Higher Bus Fares," Radio Azatutyun (RFE/RL), 22 July 2013, <http://www.armenialiberty.org/content/article/25053773.html>.

[48](#) Hovannes Shoghikian and Narine Ghalechian, "Yerevan Fare Hikes 'Suspended,'" Radio Azatutyun (RFE/RL), 25 July 2013, <http://www.armenialiberty.org/content/article/25057070.html>.

[49](#) "In Yerevan, Participant of Sitting Strike at Mayoralty Beaten," Caucasian Knot, 6 September 2013, <http://eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/25700/>.

[50](#) "Tigran Sargsyan Considers Transport Fare Movement to be Social," Armenpress, 25 July 2013, <http://armenpress.am/eng/news/727245/tigran-sargsyan-considers-transport-fare-movement-to-be-social.html>.

[51](#) "Armenian Government Approves Draft Amendments to Law on Tuition Fees," Caucasian Knot, 29 August 2013, <http://eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/25625/>.

[52](#) "War Veteran Arrested After Anti-Government Protests," Massispost.com, 20 September 2013, <http://massispost.com/archives/9565>.

[53](#) U.S. Department of State, *Armenia 2012 International Religious Freedom Report* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2012), <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/208498.pdf>.

[54](#) Gohar Abrahamyan, "Armenian Women's Group Threatened," Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR), 20 September 2013, <http://iwpr.net/report-news/armenian-womens-group-threatened>.

55 Gohar Abrahamyan, "From April 9 to November 5: Armenian protest transforms from 'revolution of greetings' to 'revolution of Molotov cocktail,'" Armenianow.com, 7 November 2013, http://www.armenianow.com/commentary/opinion/49851/armenia_protest_shant_harutyunyan_arrests.

56 "Criminal Proceedings Instituted Upon Case of Civic Activists," Yerevan Press Club, 13-19 September 2013, <http://www.ypc.am/bulletin/ln/en/t/45748>.

57 "Putin Arrives in Armenia amid Protests against Customs Union, RFE/RL, 2 December 2013, <http://www.rferl.org/content/putin-yerevan/25186637.html>.

58 Lilit Arakelyan, "Armenia's Young Earners Fear Pension Reform," IWPR, 14 November 2013 <http://iwpr.net/report-news/armenias-young-earners-fear-pension-reform>.

59 Ibid.

60 EuFoA, *Poll: A Snapshot ahead of Armenia's Presidential Elections* (Yerevan: EuFoA, 25 January 2013), 8, <http://www.eufoa.org/uploads/POLL20130125EN.pdf>.

61 CRRC, *Alternative Resources in Media 2013* (Yerevan: CRRC, April-July 2013), <http://www.crrc.am/research-and-surveys/ongoing-projects/Alternative-Resources-in-Media?lang=en>.

62 Freedom House, *Freedom on the Net 2013* (New York: Freedom House, 2013), <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/freedom-net-2013>.

63 OSCE, *Facebook in Armenia: Users and Using* (Yerevan: OSCE, 2013), <http://www.osce.org/yerevan/108535?download=true>.

64 Yerevan Press Club, *YPC Monitoring: Media Coverage of 2012-2013 Electoral Cycle* (Yerevan: Yerevan Press Club, 5-11 April 2013), <http://ypc.am/bulletin/ln/en/t/45727>.

65 Yerevan Press Club, *Report on Monitoring of Armenian Broadcast Media Coverage of Elections of the Yerevan Council of Elders on May 5, 2013* (Yerevan: Yerevan Press Club, 7 April-3 May 2013), 18-19, http://www.ypc.am/upload/YPC%20Monitoring_First%20Stage_April%207%20-%20May%203,%202013_eng.pdf.

66 Reporters without Borders, *2013 World Press Freedom Index: Dashed Hopes after Spring* (Paris: Reporters without Borders, 2013), http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2013_1054.html.

67 "Court Finds in Favor of Blogger, but Limits Compensation," Hetq, 3 May 2013, <http://hetq.am/eng/news/26129/court-finds-in-favor-of-blogger-but-limits...>.

68 Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression (CPFE), *On the State of Freedom of Expression in Armenia and Violations of the Rights of Journalists and the Mass Media: the 2013 Annual Report of the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression* (Yerevan: CPFE, 2014), 8, <http://khosq.am/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/CPFE-Annual-Report-2013-Eng.doc>.

[69](#) "Protesters detained in Yerevan, beaten journalist taken to intensive care unit," Caucasian Knot, 24 April 2013, <http://eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/25578/>.

[70](#) "Վ. Ղուկասյանը (Դոգ) հրել եւ վիրավորել է 'Հետքի' լրագրողին" [V. He (DOG) pushed and insulted by Hetq journalist], Hetq, 27 April 2013, <http://hetq.am/arm/news/25965/v-xukasyany-dog-hrel-ev-viravorel-e-hetqi-lragroxin.html>.

[71](#) Irina Ovannisyan, "Журналистке издания 'Хетк' угрожают" [The journalist from Hetq is being threatened], Radio Azatutyun (RFE/RL), 9 May 2013, <http://rus.azatutyun.am/content/article/24981198.html>.

[72](#) "YPC Weekly Newsletter: February 22-28," Yerevan Press Club, 28 February 2013, <http://www.ypc.am/bulletin/y/2013/m/02/ln/en>.

[73](#) Tatev Harutyunyan, "Personal Opinion in the Neighborhood of Friends or a Note Negative Reflected on the Image of Media," Aravot, 14 June 2013, <http://en.aravot.am/2013/06/14/154863/>.

[74](#) "Լրագրությունը պոռնկություն է՝ գրող ոստիկան Կարեն Մովսիսյանին նկատողություն է հայտարարվել" [Author of "Reporting is Harlotry" Karen Movsisyan Reprimanded by the Police], News.am, 21 June 2013, <http://news.am/arm/news/159126.html>.

[75](#) European Commission (EC) of the European Union, *ENP Country Progress Report 2012: Armenia* (Brussels: EC, 20 March 2013), http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-242_en.htm.

[76](#) OSCE, "OSCE Media Freedom Representative Meets Armenian Foreign Minister," news release, 22 October 2013, <http://www.osce.org/fom/107338>.

[77](#) Հայտարարություն [Announcement], Azg Daily, 21 May 2013, <http://www.azg.am/AM/2013052212>.

[78](#) "Կայքերի խմբագիրների հայտարարությունը" [Web Editors' Statement], Aravot, 21 June 2013, <http://www.aravot.am/2013/06/21/257177/>.

[79](#) "Արփինե Հովհաննիսյան. 'Բոլոր ողջամիտ առաջարկներն ընդունել ենք" [Arpine Hovhannisyan. "We shall endorse all reasonable suggestions"], Aravot, 20 September 2013, <http://www.aravot.am/2013/09/20/387526>.

[80](#) ArmStat, "Доходы и расходы муниципальных бюджетов" [Income and spending of the municipal budgets] (Yerevan: ArmStat, July 2013), http://www.armstat.am/file/article/sv_07_13a_221.pdf.

[81](#) Calculations based on ArmStat data, <http://armstat.am/en/>.

[82](#) Armstat, "Доходы и расходы муниципальных бюджетов."

[83](#) "Felix Tsolakyan – new governor of Armenia's Shirak," Tert.am, 7 March 2013, <http://www.tert.am/en/news/2013/03/07/shirak-governor/>.

[84](#) Anoush Levonyan, "Выборы в Ереване: голосование за 'дворника' или за 'революцию'?" [Elections in Yerevan: voting for 'street sweeper' or for 'revolution'?], Regnum, 4 May 2013, <http://www.regnum.ru/news/1655493.html>.

[85](#) Nazik Armenakyan, "Yerevan Vote Reactions: Opposition parties decry municipal vote violations; ruling party takes landslide for granted," Armenianow.com, 6 May 2013, http://www.armenianow.com/news/politics/45891/armenia_yerevan_council_of_elders_elections_fallout.

[86](#) RA Central Electoral Committee, *The List of Domestic NGOs Carrying out Election Observation Mission of May 5, 2013*.

[87](#) "Ահազանգերի քարտեզ. Երևանի ավագանու ընտրություններ, Մայիսի 5, 2013" [Map of Alarms. City Council Elections], 5 May 2013, <http://iditord.org>.

[88](#) "Syunik Governor Quits over Shootings," Asbarez, 6 June 2013, <http://asbarez.com/110507/syunik-governor-quits-over-shootings/>.

[89](#) Ashot Safaryan, "'Pre-Parliament:' Release of Surik Khachatryan's Son and Bodyguard Has again Discredited Justice System in Armenia," Arminfo, 11 September 2013, <http://www.arminfo.info/index.cfm?objectid=702BADB0-1ACF-11E3-B88C0EB7C0D21663>.

[90](#) "Syunik Governor Quits Over Shootings," Radio Azatutyun (RFE/RL), 14 July 2013, <http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/25009502.html>.

[91](#) "Aramais Grigoryan Appointed Governor of Ararat Region of Armenia," Arka News Agency, 10 October 2013, http://arka.am/en/news/politics/aramais_grigoryan_appointed_governor_of_...

[92](#) ArmStat, *Women and Men in Armenia 2013* (Yerevan: ArmStat, 2013), 158, <http://www.armstat.am/file/article/gender.pdf>.

[93](#) Naira Bulghadarian, "Armenialiberty: Lawyers Again Protest against High Court," European Country of Origin Information Network, 10 June 2013, http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/249650/360117_en.html.

[94](#) "Armenia's Ombudsman Highlights Court Graft With Bribery 'Price List,'" Radio Azatutyun (RFE/RL), 11 December 2013. <http://www.rferl.org/content/armenia-judicial-corruption-price-list/2519...>

[95](#) Hovannes Shoghikian, "Ombudsman Criticized for Corruption Claims," Radio Azatutyun (RFE/RL), 20 December 2013, <http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/25207709.html>.

[96](#) Naira Bulghadarian, "Judges Deny Corruption Claims," Radio Azatutyun (RFE/RL), 11 December 2013, <http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/25197369.html>.

[97](#) "Serzh Sargsyan Explained Why Head of SIS Was Dismissed," Lragir.am, 6 May 2013, <http://www.lragir.am/index.php/eng/0/country/54688/29814#sthash.kg5XhZbI.dpuf>.

[98](#) "Возбуждено уголовное дело в связи с злоупотреблениями Офиса реализации судебно-правовых программ" [A Criminal Case Is Initiated in Connection with the Abuse of the Office of the Judicial and Legal Programs], Radio Azatutyun (RFE/RL), 14 June 2013, <http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/25017501.html>.

[99](#) "Gevorg Kostanyan promises to raise the confidence of society towards justice," Armenpress, 30 September 2013, <http://armenpress.am/eng/news/734913/>.

[100](#) Irina Hovhannisyan, "Աղվան Հովսեփյանը՝ Միասնական քննչական մարմնի և "իշխանական ազդեցությունների" մասին" [Aghvan Hovsepyan on the Centralized Investigative Body and 'Governmental Influences'], Radio Azatutyun (RFE/RL), 4 December 2014, <http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/25189708.html>.

[101](#) U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 – Armenia* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2013), <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2013&dliid=220251>.

[102](#) "Դեկտեմբերի 26-ի դրությամբ համաներմամբ ազատվածների վերաբերյալ տեղեկատվություն" [Information on amnesty of those released as of December 26], Ministry of Justice Information Service, 8 January 2014, <http://moj.am/article/859>.

[103](#) Lilit Ovanisyan, "In Armenia, ANC Activist Tigran Arakelyan Released in the Courtroom," Caucasian Knot, 14 October 2013, <http://eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/26066/>.

[104](#) [Naira Bulghadarian](#) "Yerevan Policemen Freed after Torture Conviction," Radio Azatutyun (RFE/RL), 16 October 2013, <http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/25139071.html>.

[105](#) U.S. Department of State, "Secretary's Preface" in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2012), <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2012humanrightsreport/index.htm>.

[106](#) "Increase in mortality rate at penal institutions reported in Armenia," Panarmenian Network, 2 June 2013, <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/society/news/71578/>.

[107](#) "В Армении планируется уменьшить число тюрем за счёт укрупнения• " [Armenia Plans to Decrease the Number of Prisons by Consolidation], Vestnik Kavkaza, 31 October, 2013, <http://www.vestikavkaza.ru/news/V-Armenii-planiruetsya-umenshit-chislo-tyurem-za-schyet-ukrupneniya.html>.

[108](#) "Republican Party Votes against Creation of March 1 Ad Hoc Commission," Tert.am, 20 May 2013, <http://www.tert.am/en/news/2013/05/20/march-1/>.

[109](#) Amnesty International (AI), *Annual Report 2013: Armenia* (London: AI, 2013), <http://amnesty.org/en/region/armenia/report-2013#section-6-5>.

110 "В Армении будет создана специальная призывная комиссия по альтернативной службе" [Armenia Will Create a Special Drafting Commission on Alternative Military Service], Caucasian Knot, 5 May 2013, <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/223762/>.

111 ArmStat, *Հայաստանի հանրապետության սոցիալ-տնտեսական վիճակը 2013թ. հունվար-դեկտեմբերին* [Socioeconomic Situation in Armenia, January-December 2013] (Yerevan: ArmStat, 2014), 1, http://armstat.am/file/article/sv_12_13a_550.pdf.

112 Control Chamber of the Republic of Armenia, *Հայաստանի Հանրապետության վերահսկիչ պալատի 2013 թվականի տարեկան հաշվետվություն* [2013 Annual Report of the Control Chamber of the Republic of Armenia] (Yerevan: Control Chamber of the Republic of Armenia, 2013), <http://www.coc.am/YearReportsArm.aspx?ReportYear=2013>.

113 "President Sargsyan chides Control Chamber chairman over 'wrong and shortsighted' statements," Armenianow.com, 30 June 2013, http://armenianow.com/news/politics/47309/armenia_president_serzh_sargsyan_control_chamber_corruption_ishkhan_zakaryan.

114 World Economic Forum, *The Global Competitiveness Report 2013-2014* (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2013), 109, http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GlobalCompetitivenessReport_2013-14.pdf.

115 "Economy Profile: Armenia," in the World Bank's *Doing Business 2014: Understanding Regulations for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises* (Washington, DC: The World Bank Group, 2013), <http://www.doingbusiness.org/data/exploreeconomies/armenia/media/giawb...>.

116 Transparency International (TI), *In Detail: Global Corruption Barometer 2013* (Berlin: TI, 2013), http://www.transparency.org/gcb2013/in_detail.

117 TI, *Global Corruption Barometer 2013* (Berlin: TI, 2014), http://files.transparency.org/content/download/615/2602/file/GCB2013_DataPack.zip.

118 Calculations based on data from National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia, <http://www.armstat.am/en/>.

119 The World Bank, *Doing Business 2014: Understanding Regulations for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises*, 68.

120 "New Building of Passport and Visa Department Opens in Yerevan," Public Radio of Armenia, 19 September 2014, <http://www.armradio.am/en/2013/09/19/new-building-of-passport-and-visa-d...>.

121 "Police: Transition to Biometric Passports to Start in 2014 all over Armenia," Arka News Agency, 28 September 2014, http://arka.am/en/news/society/police_transition_to_biometric_passports_to_start_in_2014_all_over_armenia.

[122](http://www.a1plus.am/en/social/2013/06/28/genproc) "Deputy Head of Nubarashen penitentiary accused of taking bribes," A1+, 28 June 2013, <http://www.a1plus.am/en/social/2013/06/28/genproc>.

[123](http://www.investigatory.am/en/News/item/383/) Special Investigation Service of the Republic of Armenia, "Penitentiary Department Officers Arrested for Extorting a Bribe," news release, 15 October 2013, <http://www.investigatory.am/en/News/item/383/>.

[124](http://hetq.am/eng/news/26891/ovqer-en-paylak-hayrapetyani-unezrkman-hexinaknery-ofshorayin-eryaky.html) Ararat Davtyan, Edik Baghdasaryan, Kristine Aghalaryan, "Cyprus Troika: Who 'Stripped' Businessman Paylak Hayrapetyan of His Assets?" Hetq, 29 May 2013, <http://hetq.am/eng/news/26891/ovqer-en-paylak-hayrapetyani-unezrkman-hexinaknery-ofshorayin-eryaky.html>.

[125](http://armenianow.com/news/47357/armenia_offshore_registration_tigran_sargsyan_petros_clerides) "Cypriot official rules out Armenian PM's explanation regarding offshore company registration," Armenianow.com, 2 July 2013, http://armenianow.com/news/47357/armenia_offshore_registration_tigran_sargsyan_petros_clerides.

[126](http://hetq.am/eng/news/30216/) Grisha Balasanyan, "Prime Minister Sargsyan: 'Even a dead person can register a company in Cyprus,'" Hetq, 23 October 2013, <http://hetq.am/eng/news/30216/>.

Copyright notice: © Freedom House, Inc. · All Rights Reserved