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# Armenia

**35**  
/100

TRANSITIONAL OR HYBRID REGIME

Democracy Percentage	<b>35.12</b> /100
Democracy Score	<b>3.11</b> /7

## LAST YEAR'S DEMOCRACY PERCENTAGE & STATUS

**34 /100**      **Transitional or Hybrid Regime**

The ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 1 the lowest. The Democracy Score is an average of ratings for the categories tracked in a given year. The Democracy Percentage, introduced in 2020, is a translation of the Democracy Score to the 0-100 scale, where 0 equals least democratic and 100 equals most democratic. See the methodology.



## Authors

- Nerses Kopalyan

## Score changes in 2023

- Civil Society rating improved from 4.50 to 4.75 due to the incremental improvements in investigative journalism leading to criminal probes and political change, success by media outlets in court over freedom of information cases, and the Government’s decriminalization of the “grave insults” law.
- Independent Media rating improved from 2.75 to 3.00 due to the increased involvement of civil society organizations in state decision and policy making processes, the influence civil society has demonstrated in effecting changes to state policies, and the institutionalized relationship between civil society organizations and branches of government.
- As a result, Armenia’s Democracy Score improved from 3.04 to 3.11.

## Executive Summary

While Armenia’s democratization was impeded by the ongoing conflict with Azerbaijan—the dominant subject of public discourse in 2022 <sup>1</sup> —and domestic factors, the country maintained a somewhat positive trajectory as the year progressed. Anticorruption efforts gained momentum with the November opening of a specialized court, <sup>2</sup> independent outlets made a meaningful impact in an otherwise polarized media environment, and local elections proved largely competitive. In December, the International Monetary Fund offered a guarded but positive economic outlook when it finalized a financial support package for the country. <sup>3</sup> Armenian civil society was also active and influential. However, governing institutions displayed continued shortcomings, the judiciary was not fully independent, and the national electoral environment lacked pluralism.

Armenia’s security situation remained precarious, with Azerbaijani forces making an incursion into Armenia proper in September. <sup>4</sup> The Armenian government’s understanding of Russia as a security ally shifted, primarily due to Moscow’s war against Ukraine; as the Russian-led regional security architecture collapsed, Yerevan moved to break out of Moscow’s orbit <sup>5</sup> and pivot towards the United States. <sup>6</sup> Then US House of Representatives speaker Nancy Pelosi <sup>7</sup> visited in

September and a US congressional delegation visited in October, <sup>8</sup> with the delegation's leader making generally supportive statements regarding Yerevan's position on the conflict. <sup>9</sup> The Armenian government, lacking its own military deterrence capabilities, has relied more on its diplomatic coordination with the United States, <sup>10</sup> European Union (EU), <sup>11</sup> and France. <sup>12</sup> The government has additionally sought military cooperation and support from France, <sup>13</sup> the United States, <sup>14</sup> and India. <sup>15</sup>

As Armenia faced continued security challenges, the political opposition sought to advance a security-versus-stability narrative, contending that the country's relatively new political arrangement has undermined its security. <sup>16</sup> In May, the opposition—composed of the Armenia Alliance of former president Robert Kocharyan and the I Have Honor faction of former president Serzh Sargsyan (not related to Armen)—staged demonstrations that lasted five weeks. They aimed to push the government of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to resign and make way for an opposition coalition. Their efforts to portray bilateral negotiations with the Azerbaijani government as an act of disloyalty ultimately did not gain public acceptance, with organizers clearing out of a major Yerevan intersection in mid-June. <sup>17</sup>

The Pashinyan government continued to enact reforms in 2022, primarily concentrating on the military, judiciary, anticorruption efforts, and the economy. The government dismissed several key officers and their deputies during the year as it sought to replace the armed forces' Soviet-era bureaucratic structure with a model meant to be more meritocratic. <sup>18</sup> With that goal in mind, Yerevan sought closer ties with military officials and institutions <sup>19</sup> in the United States <sup>20</sup> and France. <sup>21</sup> In September, local media reported that a draft of the 2023 budget included a 47 percent increase in military spending. <sup>22</sup>

The government continued to pursue its judicial reforms in 2022, with an eye to bolstering anticorruption efforts. The judiciary has historically suffered from the influence of the pre-2018 regime and its constitutional, structural, and legislative decisions. Despite the country's recent democratization, complex obstacles, legal barriers, and pockets of resistance make reform exceedingly difficult. The struggle at the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC), which disciplines and sanctions judges, is a case in point. SJC chairman Ruben Vartazaryan, who is affiliated with the pre-2018 regime, was formally and controversially dismissed in June 2022. His replacement

with Gagik Jhangiryan led to a major scandal with the revelation that Jhangiryan had intimated criminal risks for Vartazaryan should he remain chairman. **23** That scandal ended with Jhangiryan's own resignation in July. The greater issue was resolved with the October election of Justice Minister Karen Andreasyan, **24** who is considered a reformist, to the chair. A similar process played out in 2020 with the restructuring of the Constitutional Court. **25**

In April 2021, the National Assembly adopted legislation on the creation of the Anti-Corruption Court, which is meant to root out systemic corruption and hold current and former public officials to account. Judges were vetted and appointed between July and August 2022.

Armenia's local politics and media sector both showed improvement in 2022. While the media market still bears the consequences of polarization, independent outlets and investigative journalists exerted more influence and Armenian media consumers benefited from a relatively open online environment. Investigative journalists played a role in the January resignation of President Armen Sargsyan, **26** demonstrating the growing influence of Armenia's burgeoning independent media. The number of lawsuits against media outlets and journalists fell by half from 2021 to 2022, **27** while the removal of the "grave insults" criminal-code provision enhanced media freedom.

Local elections held in 2022 were pluralistic and competitive, with a large number of political parties participating and winning representation. Civil Contract, the ruling party, won 8 of the 18 municipal elections held in September, **28** and its conduct during the polls was largely constructive and in line with democratic norms. Notably, four municipal elections did not produce majorities for a single group, leading to coalition-building efforts **29** —a positive indicator for democratic governance. That said, the arrest of several opposition candidates on corruption charges continued to reverberate in 2022, impeding democratic progress.

Armenia's security situation, which weighed heavily on the country in 2022, has been affected by several powerful factors: Azerbaijan's aggression; the weakening of Moscow's regional pull; the influx of Ukrainian refugees and Russian citizens; and the more active involvement of the United States, France, and the EU. While the security dilemma has impeded institutional reform and democratization,

Moscow’s relative marginalization and the growing role of American and European partners have in turn supported Armenia’s democratic trajectory. As military, judicial, and structural reforms continue, the country can still traverse a successful path towards democratic consolidation, though its acute security dilemma and the dangers of democratic backsliding lurk in the woods.

## At-A-Glance

Armenian governance was somewhat more democratic in 2022 but was also affected by opposition protests, Azerbaijani forces’ incursion in September, and political polarization at the national level. Local elections were generally free, fair, competitive, and pluralistic. While civil society organizations (CSOs) struggled to solidify sustainable financial support, civil society continued to enhance its relevance, collaborating with the government on democratic reform and criticizing the government for its shortcomings. The media landscape suffers from polarization with political interests owning many outlets, but Armenian media consumers also benefited from the growth of independent outlets, investigative journalism, and a relatively free online environment. European and American actors continued to support decentralization projects, while the national government invested in projects that have contributed to regional economic growth and the quality of the physical infrastructure. Judicial reform is also continuing, albeit slowly; judicial independence remained a work in progress as the Pashinyan government continued to pursue major and controversial reform. Anticorruption initiatives were implemented in 2022, with the authorities pursuing cases against public officials.

### National Democratic Governance 1.00-7.00 pts

**Considers the democratic character of the governmental system; and the independence, effectiveness, and accountability of the legislative and executive branches.**

**2.50**  
/7.00

- Armenia’s transitional democracy continued on a trajectory towards consolidation, even amid a security crisis and protests by opposition parties. Azerbaijani forces’ September incursion into Armenia proper **30** and Yerevan’s continued participation in peace negotiations **31** triggered wide-scale protests. **32** The opposition, which includes the Armenia Alliance and I

Have Honor, sought the resignation of the Pashinyan government, but the May–June protests failed to garner major public support. **33** The authorities were relatively hands-off when managing demonstrations **34** as they ran their course, **35** though evidence of authorities engaging in excessive force also surfaced. **36** Armenians who answered a poll conducted by the International Republican Institute (IRI) in June viewed Pashinyan more favorably than other nationally known politicians. **37** Civil Contract, meanwhile, maintained a notable polling lead over parliamentary groups who are affiliated with the pre-2018 regime. **38** The IRI results suggest that pluralism remains limited at the national level, as the Armenian public sides with the prodemocracy incumbent and a democratic opposition force remains absent.

- Civil Contract, which enjoys a parliamentary supermajority, continued to implement an ambitious reform agenda that touched on the military, **39** judiciary, **40** and constitution. Public discourse on constitutional reform continued in 2022, with a council of experts and civil society representatives participating in a working group. **41** The work of the Constitutional Reform Council (CRC) continued, with a new body being seated in January. **42** The opposition, in turn, rejected any planned constitutional changes and boycotted the CRC seats allotted to them. **43** Similarly, the opposition boycotted most of the year’s parliamentary sessions, refraining from introducing substantive legislation or voting on government-proposed bills. Per Armenian law, parliamentarians may lose their seats if they miss at least half of the votes held in a single semiannual session. This prompted calls by Civil Contract lawmakers to remove absentee members of the opposition, **44** which the government did not heed. **45** On November 15, however, the opposition announced an end to their boycott. **46**
- President Sargsyan resigned in January after investigative journalists at *Hetq* **47** revealed that the president held dual passports, a violation of Armenian law. **48** Sargsyan’s resignation, which was prompted by media reporting, was a demonstration of accountability and transparency within government. National Assembly president Alen Simonyan temporarily assumed the ceremonial position until lawmakers elected former minister Vahagn Khachaturyan president on March 3. **49**
- Parliamentarians voted women into two visible and important government posts during the year. Kristine Grigoryan was made human rights



ombudsman in January, **50** while Anna Vardapetyan was named prosecutor general in June. **51** Grigoryan and Vardapetyan were the first women to hold these posts; each selection represented a positive step in closing the gender gap in Armenian politics.

**Electoral Process** 1.00-7.00 pts

**Examines national executive and legislative elections, the electoral framework, the functioning of multiparty systems, and popular participation in the political process.**

**3.50**  
/7.00

- No nationwide elections were held in 2022, but voters participated in several sets of local and municipal contests. The elections were generally considered free and fair and, in comparison to recent nationwide elections, demonstrated more pluralism and diversity. These elections were conducted in electoral districts drawn in 2021. **52** As part of territorial administrative reforms, a municipal amalgamation process was initiated whereby numerous villages were placed within single municipal districts.
- On March 27, the Vedi municipal elections were held in the region of Ararat, south of Yerevan. Three parties initially competed: Civil Contract, the My Powerful Community Party (MYCP), and the Republic Party. The Republic Party, generally aligned with the national incumbent, dropped out. Civil Contract won 58 percent of the vote and 16 seats on the local council, while the MYCP won 42 percent and 11 seats. **53** The results were considered free and fair, while observers said the polls were conducted in line with the electoral code. **54** That said, the polls in Vedi—which were a rerun of a December 2021 contest that ended in a stalemate—were marred by accusations of vote buying. In addition, Civil Contract supporters allegedly assaulted an MYCP supporter near a polling station during the election. **55**
- On September 26, 18 municipal elections were held throughout Armenia. A diverse group of political parties contested these polls, and 16 of them proved competitive. Opposition groups performed robustly. Civil Contract won in eight areas: Talin, Tsaghkahovit, Yeghegis, Jrvezh, Skunk, Gyulagarak, Lori Berd, and Areni. **56** A variety of other groups prevailed in the remaining 10. In Charentsavan and Tashir, for example, the United Community bloc won with 51 percent and 71 percent of the vote, respectively, while an independent in the village of Alagyaz defeated the Civil Contract candidate



and took 64 percent of the vote there. <sup>57</sup> Elections in four municipalities yielded no single-party majority, requiring the formation of coalitions.

- The results of the year’s local polls demonstrated growing pluralism at the local level and affirmed the success of electoral changes enacted in 2021. The local results in 2021 were not as diverse as those observed in 2022. <sup>58</sup>
- The parliament passed legislation in 2021 to amend the electoral code’s provisions on local council elections, requiring the appointment of mayors via open ballot. In mid-2022, the government introduced a new legislative amendment that would reintroduce a secret ballot, arguing that secret balloting would facilitate power-sharing and coalition-building. Civil society activists expressed disapproval, arguing that the change would make the mayoral election process susceptible to overt influence by the ruling party. <sup>59</sup>
- In early October, the parliament elected Vahagn Hovakimyan, a senior Civil Contract lawmaker, chairman of the Central Election Commission (CEC). CSOs objected, <sup>60</sup> noting Hovakimyan’s close relationship with Civil Contract and voicing conflict-of-interest concerns. <sup>61</sup> The opposition appealed to the Constitutional Court, citing the same concerns and noting that Hovakimyan voted for his own appointment as a lawmaker. <sup>62</sup>

### **Civil Society** 1.00-7.00 pts

**Assesses the organizational capacity and financial sustainability of the civic sector; the legal and political environment in which it operates; the functioning of trade unions; interest group participation in the policy process; and the threat posed by antidemocratic extremist groups.**

**4.75**  
/7.00

- Armenia’s civil society remains an important and growing force for transparency and accountability, with CSOs challenging the government on some issues while also working with it to consolidate democratization. Civil society representatives were notably influential in the workings of the CRC <sup>63</sup> and in the formation of the Anti-Corruption Court. <sup>64</sup> Civil society was also active in consulting Pashinyan’s office, <sup>65</sup> the Ministry of Justice, and the Corruption Prevention Commission.
- CSOs were vocal in objecting to the October elevation of Vahagn Hovakimyan to the CEC. <sup>66</sup> Civil society was equally rigorous in its criticism

of the “grave insults” criminal-code provision, **67** aligning with the EU **68** in articulating its concerns and proving instrumental in securing decriminalization. **69**

- Civil society did not participate in the opposition protests and rallies that took place intermittently throughout the year. Opposition groups, which are connected to the pre-2018 regime, have displayed hostility toward CSOs.
- Civil society actively contributed to the conversation on war and security in 2022. In February, Armenian CSOs denounced the Russian invasion of Ukraine and called on Yerevan to condemn Moscow’s actions. **70** In July, several CSOs provided a report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination that focused on hate speech on the part of Azerbaijani leaders; acts of torture, executions, and other violence committed by Azerbaijani forces; and the destruction of culturally significant objects in Nagorno-Karabakh. **71** In October, CSOs called on the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to intervene a month after Azerbaijani forces made an incursion into Armenia proper. **72**
- Civil society engaged, organized, and collaborated with large number of partners **73** to advance and promote democratic norms and values. A consensus for democratic consolidation, the working relationship between state institutions and CSOs, and the deep nature of these relations signified the strength of Armenia’s civil society. **74**
- Additionally, civil society representatives continued to develop a more institutionalized relationship with government bodies, making for one of the more important developments of 2022. Civil society’s active and consultative role on judicial reform, **75** police reform, election observation, and minority rights **76** was integral to government decision-making. Civil society representatives also maintained a formal role on the CRC **77** and participated in integrity interviews for Anti-Corruption Court judges.

**Independent Media** 1.00-7.00 pts

**Examines the current state of press freedom, including libel laws, harassment of journalists, and editorial independence; the operation of a financially viable and independent private press; and the functioning of the public media.**

**3.00**  
/7.00

- Armenia’s media landscape was somewhat freer and more accessible to consumers in 2022, with a growing number of independent outlets making inroads in the media market and with independent online outlets becoming more plentiful. However, the landscape is still shaped by the inherited problems of polarization, misinformation, political groups’ ownership of media outlets, **78** and a lack of public trust in the media. That distrust is largely prompted by the presence of hate speech and excessive polarization of outlets. **79** Nonetheless, Armenia showed improvement in the 2022 edition of Reporters Without Borders’ World Press Freedom Index, ranking 51st in the world and climbing 12 places from 2021. **80**
- Some 33 percent of Armenian respondents who answered a June 2022 IRI poll said that media freedom had improved, 19 percent said it had stayed the same, and 37 percent said it worsened. Some 83 percent of respondents said that media disinformation was at least “somewhat problematic,” with 85 percent supporting government action to address the problem. **81**
- Independent media outlets were crucial in holding powerful officials to account in 2022, as exemplified by the president’s resignation in January; **82** *Hetq* revealed that the president had violated the law by possessing dual citizenship. Subsequently, investigations conducted by *Hetq* led to the launch of criminal proceedings against Artak Sargsyan, owner of SAS Supermarket; **83** senior Civil Contract lawmaker and former health minister Arsen Torosyan; **84** and Vayk mayor Mkhitar Matevosyan, who is also affiliated with Civil Contract. **85** Collectively, the media’s growing role in advancing accountability and transparency is contributing to anticorruption efforts, while independent outlets may potentially become a bona fide fourth estate.
- In July, the CivilNet outlet and the Armenia chapter of Transparency International successfully sued the government to obtain information on compliance violations in the country’s mines. The Administrative Court upheld the two organizations’ information requests from the Environmental Protection and Mining Inspection Agency. **86** In November, the two groups won another case at the Administrative Court, which ruled that the prime minister’s office had to provide information related to the sale of the Zangezur Copper Molybdenum Combine. **87**
- In 2021, the parliament amended the criminal code to criminalize “grave insults” leveled against individuals for their “public activities,” which were

defined as “journalistic activities, public or political activities, with the performance of official duties, public service and holding a public position.” Some 51 people were subsequently charged by April 2022. **88** Rigorous criticism from civil society, **89** international organizations, **90** and the EU amplified the pressure on Yerevan to remove the amendment. The legality of the provision was appealed to the Constitutional Court, which upheld it in April. **91** But in June, with the government facing continued opposition, then justice minister Andreasyan announced that the criminal code would not include the controversial provision. **92**

**Local Democratic Governance** 1.00-7.00 pts

<p><b>Considers the decentralization of power; the responsibilities, election, and capacity of local governmental bodies; and the transparency and accountability of local authorities.</b></p>	<p><b>2.25</b> /7.00</p>
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- The government has undertaken expansive economic development projects to improve regions outside of the capital, working with international financial institutions, the EU, **93** and the United States. **94** Such economic development packages have been supported by an emerging democratic culture as demonstrated by the highly competitive, pluralistic nature of local elections (see “Electoral Process”), which have contributed to the growth of democratic culture in the relatively traditional, rural areas of Armenia. The government has also exerted efforts to bridge the urban-rural divide.
- In October, representatives from the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure met with local authorities, civil society members, and international bodies to discuss a coming local-governance law at an event facilitated by the Council of Europe (CoE). The CoE was still fulfilling a 2019–22 action plan for the country and was specifically supporting local decentralization efforts. **95**
- The general success of recent local elections was marred by the arrests of opposition candidates on corruption charges. In January 2022, a top opposition-party member criticized the government over arrests made after the 2021 local polls. Also in January 2022, the newly elected head of the council in Vartenis was prohibited from assuming that post after Civil Contract sued. **96**

- In July, the government said it would spend \$26.8 million to improve roadways throughout the country. **97**
- Armenians are largely satisfied with the performance of local government according to an IRI survey conducted in December 2021 and released in January 2022. Some 63 percent of respondents nationwide voiced satisfaction with local bodies. Approval in urban areas outside Yerevan stood at 67 percent, while approval from rural respondents stood at 70 percent. A clear majority of respondents also agreed they could influence government decisions. **98**

### **Judicial Framework and Independence** 1.00-7.00 pts

<p><b>Assesses constitutional and human rights protections, judicial independence, the status of ethnic minority rights, guarantees of equality before the law, treatment of suspects and prisoners, and compliance with judicial decisions.</b></p>	<p><b>2.75</b> /7.00</p>
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- Armenia’s government proceeded to enact a rigorous judicial reform agenda, especially under Karen Andreasyan, who served as justice minister for much of 2022. The US-trained lawyer has been an advocate of vetting and integrity investigations, as well as streamlining the judiciary. **99**  
Legislation passed in 2021 empowered the Ministry of Justice to request the initiation of punitive action by the SJC, which can sanction and discipline judges. In 2022, the ministry and the SJC worked to investigate judges suspected of corruption. Judges reputed to be aligned with the pre-2018 regime joined opposition lawmakers and appealed to the Constitutional Court to declare the practice unconstitutional, **100** but the court allowed the 2021 law to stand. The Venice Commission of the CoE generally voiced support for the government’s judicial reform effort in a March 2022 report but voiced reservations on how judges are disciplined. **101** In its response to the Venice Commission, the Ministry of Justice noted the limitations of existing legal instruments to enable judicial streamlining (the government was instead relying on an existing constitutional article to introduce a vetting mechanism for judges), and noted pressure from civil society to reform the judiciary. **102**
- In February, the National Assembly amended the law guiding the operational structure of the SJC, allowing the investigation and sanctioning of judges to

be initiated by 5 of the SJC's 10 members (the previous threshold was 7). **103** An Armenia Alliance lawmaker criticized the lower threshold, noting that Civil Contract-appointed SJC members could meet it on their own. From the government's perspective, the new threshold will limit institutional protections for SJC members installed by the pre-2018 regime and advance structural reforms.

- In January, a group of judges criticized the government's reforms, saying it was disciplining judges in a politicized manner at a parliamentary committee meeting held by opposition lawmakers. **104** In February, lawyers for judge Boris Bakhshiyani accused the SJC of authorizing his arrest for political reasons, thereby infringing on judicial independence; Bakhshiyani had granted bail for an opposition supporter in a case. **105** Bakhshiyani was freed from custody in May. **106** In February, then justice minister Andreyan criticized judges who accused the government of weakening judicial independence, while reiterating claims that a large number of judges were corrupt. **107**
- In June, Ruben Vartazaryan, who was suspended as SJC chairman in 2021, accused acting successor Gagik Jhangiryan of blackmail by releasing a recording of a conversation between the two. In it, Jhangiryan apparently said Vartazaryan could avoid criminal prosecution by resigning from the body. **108** Vartazaryan was dismissed later in June 2022. **109** Jhangiryan himself resigned in July after receiving significant criticism from civil society. **110 111**
- According to the judicial code, the Anti-Corruption Court shall have at least 15 judges; at least 10 must be specialized in criminal corruption and at least 5 must have civil specialization. **112** The Anti-Corruption Committee conducts the bulk of corruption investigations in conjunction with prosecutors and the National Security Service, and will refer completed cases and charges to the Anti-Corruption Court. In September 2022, the Ministry of Justice presented a draft bill that would create an Anti-Corruption Court of Appeal for public discussion. **113**
- The Prosecutor General's Office clashed with the Anti-Corruption Committee over the case of Vladimir Gasparyan, a former chief of police who faces accusations of enrichment, embezzlement, and fraud. **114** Prosecutors refused to proceed with the case against Gasparyan on two occasions in 2022, citing insufficient evidence. The Anti-Corruption

Committee accused prosecutors of engaging in “illegal and unfounded” behavior. **115** Similarly, the Prosecutor General’s Office refused to proceed on a case against Aram Harutyunyan, a fugitive former environment minister who was charged by the Anti-Corruption Committee, in January. **116**

- Judges displayed independence through their rulings on two significant cases that were made or took effect in 2022. The Constitutional Court ruled in December 2021 that the government’s vaccination requirements for state employees was unconstitutional; the ruling took effect in 2022. Further, the court ruled that the Ministry of Health’s authority to enforce such requirements superseded its institutional powers. **117** In 2020, Hrayr Tovmasyan, then a senior judge in the Constitutional Court, filed a lawsuit against Prime Minister Pashinyan for defamation. In June 2022, a Yerevan court ordered Pashinyan to rescind the claim that Tovmasyan “offered his services,” though it did not find another statement made by Pashinyan to be slander. **118**

**Corruption** 1.00-7.00 pts

<p><b>Looks at public perceptions of corruption, the business interests of top policymakers, laws on financial disclosure and conflict of interest, and the efficacy of anticorruption initiatives.</b></p>	<p><b>3.00</b> /7.00</p>
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- The government in Yerevan proceeded in 2022 with an aggressive anticorruption drive, implementing an overall anticorruption strategy, **119** operationalizing **120** the Anti-Corruption Committee, **121** and finalizing the Anti-Corruption Court. This is being undertaken through collaboration with the CoE **122** and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. **123** The Anti-Corruption Committee has undertaken high-profile investigations since becoming operationalized (see “Judicial Framework and Independence”). In June, the committee signed a memorandum of understanding with the US Federal Bureau of Investigation. **124**
- Corruption cases were initiated against current and former officials in 2022. Trials against former defense minister Davit Tonoyan, General Artak Davtyan, and arms dealer Davit Galstyan, who were charged with fraud and embezzlement for arms-procurement dealings, proceeded in January. **125** Prosecutions against Tonoyan and Davtyan proceeded despite the defendants’ close political ties to Prime Minister Pashinyan. Similarly, in



March, Minister of Emergency Situations Andranik Piloyan was arrested in the course of an investigation initiated by the Anti-Corruption Committee. Piloyan and 12 other individuals were formally charged in September. **126** Pashinyan commended law enforcement agencies and vowed “zero tolerance for corruption” after Piloyan’s arrest. **127** Former prosecutor general Aghvan Hovsepyan, a powerful figure in the pre-2018 regime, was charged by the Anti-Corruption Committee in 2021 and remained in custody as of mid-2022.” **128**

- Local opposition leader Aharon Khachatrian was arrested for corruption after the December 2021 elections in Vardenis, as was Mamikon Aslanyan in Vanadzor. **129** Both remained under custody in 2022 pending investigation. In July, Aslanyan was transferred to a hospital due to a deterioration in his condition; his lawyer blamed his treatment in custody for his declining health. **130** Goris mayor-elect Arush Arushanian was similarly arrested on several charges, receiving a suspended sentence in March 2022 on some charges but being acquitted of vote buying. **131**
- Public support for anticorruption efforts remained robust according to a USAID-supported public opinion study published in October 2022. Some 85.6 percent of respondents supported judicial integrity investigations, 83.8 percent approved the confiscation of illegally obtained property, 77.5 percent approved widespread declaration of income, 77.5 percent approved the creation of specialized anticorruption courts, and 79.6 percent approved the formation of the Anti-Corruption Committee. Some 57.5 percent noted that corruption had diminished to a large extent, while 21 percent said it had completely been diminished. **132**
- That same month, however, CivilNet reported on a Caucasus Research Resource Center poll in which a majority of respondents viewed political parties, media outlets, and the judiciary as corrupt. A majority of respondents also said that bribery, money laundering, kickbacks, and nepotism were “common manifestations” of corruption. **133**

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## *Footnotes*

- 1 EVN Security Report: September 2022 - EVN Report
- 2 Armenia's New Anti-Corruption Court - EVN Report
- 3 IMF Staff Reaches a Staff-Level Agreement with Armenia on a Precautionary Stand-By Arrangement; Republic of Armenia: Request for a Stand-By Arrangement-Press Release; Staff Report; and Statement by the Alternate Executive Director.
- 4 Azerbaijan Launches Large-Scale Attack Against Armenia - EVN Report
- 5 EVN Security Report: October 2022 - EVN Report

More footnotes



### **On Armenia**

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### *Country Facts*

Global Freedom Score

**54/100** Partly Free

Internet Freedom Score

**72/100** Free

### *In Other Reports*

Freedom in the World 2023  
Freedom on the Net 2023

*Other Years*

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