

# Caucasus ELECTIONSWATCH

A weekly review of elections related processes in the Caucasus Region

Volume 2 Issue 10 | 9 April 2013

## Glamour, pomp, blood and scuffles on the streets of Yerevan as Serzh Sargsyan is sworn in for his second term as President.

**Serzh Sargsyan was sworn in as President of Armenia for his second term at a ceremony held on the 9th April, despite protests by opposition activists who claim that the 18 February elections were flawed and that there should have been a run-off between him and the runner-up.**

As opposition supporters clashed with police outside the Presidential Palace in Yerevan the President was telling an audience of 2000 VIP guests at the City's Sport and Concert complex of how he proposed to deal with Armenia's challenging problems in the next five years.

Without making a direct reference to the elections controversy Sargsyan said that "Elections do not mark a destination; they signify a new phase. This is the phase for unrelenting and persistent work. The time has come to move from words to work, to reinforce words with work." The President highlighted three main areas of priorities in domestic politics, namely economic development, rule of law and what he called "the deepening of democracy".



**Catholicos of All Armenia Garagin II blesses Serzh Sargsyan after he was sworn in as president for his second term.**

Picture courtesy of the press office of the Armenian President.

Observers consider that Sargsyan will need to implement serious changes, particularly in personnel, in order to be able to cope with the serious political and economic problems that his country faces. However he is a conservative person by nature and will not find this easy.

In the meantime outside the Presidential Palace there were chaotic scenes as opposition activists clashed with police. The leader of the protest movement, Raffi Hovannesian tried to keep demonstrators away from the Presidential Palace but many protestors insisted on moving towards the palace irrespectively. There were clashes with police during which several demonstrators were arrested or injured. The anti government protests had so far been peaceful with police showing restraint. ■

Source: CEW Editorial Team.



**The Deputy Chairman of the Heritage Party, Armen Martirosian with blood on his face being arrested by police in Yerevan on 9 April during opposition demonstrations. Picture courtesy of tert.am**

# Three by-elections in Georgia on 27th April will be the first electoral test for Ivanishvili's government.

Caucasus Elections Watch is a specialised weekly publication focusing on elections related processes in the Caucasus, with news and analysis compiled by experts with long experience of the region.

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**Georgia will hold three by-elections on 27 April to fill posts that were vacated by Georgian Dream MPs when they took Ministerial positions in the new Government last October. This will be the first test of the popularity of the Georgian Dream government that was swept to power in the Parliamentary Elections held on 1 October. Both the Georgian Dream (GD) and Mikheil Saakashvili's United National Movement (UNM) are fielding candidates for the elections. The elections are held in the single seat constituencies of Nadzaladevi (a district of Tbilisi), Samtredia and Baghdati.**

Papuna Davitaia, former state minister for diaspora issues in Saakashvili's government, is a candidate in Tbilisi's Nadzaladevi district, a seat which became empty when Tea Tsulukiani, who won the district in the October 1 parliamentary election, was appointed as justice minister.

Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili presented Tamar Kordzaia as his Georgian Dream coalition's candidates in Nadzaladevi. She is a well-known civil society activist who mainly used to work with media issues. In all, eleven candidates are competing for the Nadzaladevi seat.

Giorgi Kakhiani, a lawyer, will be Georgian Dream's candidate in Samtredia. The National Movement will be represented there by Emzar Shubladze, deputy chairman of the Samtredia town council. Samtredia is the hometown of former AC Milan player Kakhi Kaladze, who won the seat last October but gave it up when he was appointed as energy minister. There will be five candidates in all in Samtredia.



**Civil society activist Tamar Kordzaia is the Georgian Dream candidate in the by election to be held in the Nadzaladevi District of Tbilisi on 27 April.**

Picture courtesy of Georgian Dream.

UNM will be represented in Baghdati, close to Samtredia, by the deputy chairman of the local council Vladimer Tsikoridze. Chief Prosecutor Archil Kbilashvili won the district in 2012. The Georgian Dream coalition will be represented in Baghdati by Paata Kiknavelidze, also a lawyer. Eight candidates will participate in that by-election.

The Georgian Dream coalition won the parliamentary election on October 1, 2012, with 54.97 percent of the votes. The National Movement Party received 40.34 percent. ■

Source: CEW with [dfwatch.org](http://dfwatch.org)

# Has Raffi been cornered?

**Raffi Hovannesian may be learning the hard way the lesson that once you take people out on the streets they may have ideas of their own as to where they want to go. The Armenian politician who has been trying to introduce a new style of Armenian politics, and who has promised to bring about change without violence has been learning the hard way the difficulties of crowd politics.**

There were chaotic scenes during the protests that took place in Yerevan during the inauguration of President Sertzh Sargsyan for a second term.

They were partly due to the tactics used by Armenian police. The opposition leaders also say that the crowd was infiltrated by provocateurs. But in reality the biggest problem seems to have been that amongst the crowd where people who were not happy with the softly-softly approach of Raffi and wanted a more direct confrontation.

Hovannesian has been criticized with not having a plan and with taking decisions on the spur of the moment. Whilst this may not be quite true, it is clear that Hovannesian has since the results of the 18 February election been announced tried to seize the initiative that the opportunity of his much better than expected result in that poll presented him with. The Armenian government wobbled a little bit in the first few days after the poll, but then emboldened by what looked like a nod and wink by the international community, became much less accommodating.



**President Serzh Sargsyan with Raffi Hovannesian shortly after the 18 February Presidential election. The ruling elite were taken aback by Hovannesian strong showing in the poll but have now regained their confidence.**

As long as the Armenian opposition remains divided there is little hope that the ruling elite in Yerevan will have much to worry about. In a few weeks Armenians will be called to vote again in Municipal elections in Yerevan. This will be an opportunity for the opposition to nibble away at the government's power, if, and only if, it plays its cards right.

Source: CEW Staff Team

## COMMENTARY

# WHY SIZE MATTERS!

**The Armenian opposition activists that rallied around defeated presidential candidate Raffi Hovannesian in the aftermath of the 18 February Presidential elections have been faced with a common dilemma - their protests are large, but not as yet large enough to force the government's hand. In political events in the South Caucasus this has proved a critical factor before.**



**An opposition activist being restrained by police during protests outside the Presidential Palace in Yerevan on 9 April 2013.**

Picture courtesy of of news.am

In October and November 2003 protests against President Shevardnadze in Tbilisi were a nuisance rather than a threat, until the opposition put in a last-minute effort and was able to mobilise around 100,000 people. That marked the end of Shevardnadze and his government. Similarly last year many did not take Bidzina Ivanishvili seriously as a challenger to President Saakashvili until his public gatherings started attracting tens of thousands.

Mobilising these tens of thousands is not easy in societies which are not known for their tolerance and where participating in an opposition event may seriously harm your career.

In Armenia the matter is further complicated by the fact that the opposition is not united. The support of the opposition parties, including the Dashnak ARF and the Prosperous Armenia has been at best tepid. It is clear that on his own Raffi Hovannesian does not have the critical mass of support to unseat the President government. Which is why he has been trying to reach out to the other opposition forces and why he has tried to de-personalise the protest movement and turn it from a movement of support to his candidacy into a national movement, but with only limited success.

Size matters when it comes to public protests. In Armenia the size of the protests of the last weeks has not been large enough to force the government's hand and the opposition now risks losing the momentum. ■

This commentary was prepared by the editorial team of CEW

# Azerbaijani authorities continue to tighten the noose around the neck of opposition political parties and civil society.

**The Azerbaijani government is continuing with pressure on civil society organizations and opposition political parties. A terse statement issued this week by the Press Service of the Ministry of Finance, reminded that under article 29.4 of the Law on Non-Governmental Organizations (Public Unions and Funds) and the article 21.2 of Law on Political Parties, annual financial statements of NGOs and political parties must be submitted to the Ministry of Finance prior to April 1, 2013. The statement said that rules on form, content and submission of annual financial statements of Non-governmental Organizations was confirmed by the order of the Cabinet of Ministers dated to December 25, 2009 and normative legal act was posted on the internet page of Ministry of Finance. According to article 31.6 of abovementioned law, the statements must be submitted to the Ministry of Finance within 30 days.**

Observers consider the statement as a sign that the Azerbaijani government is preparing another crackdown on civil society organizations and opposition political parties, ahead of Presidential elections.

Over the last few weeks several members of a youth organization called NIDA have been arrested and charged with various accusations. A leading opposition activist, who had also declared that he would be a candidate in the presidential elections, remains in prison after he was arrested and accused of inciting trouble in the region of Ismaili in January.

The government of Azerbaijan has also been putting pressure on international organizations. Several government spokespersons have accused the American National Democratic Institute of trying to incite turmoil in the country, whilst in the meantime the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry has asked that the Office of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe be downgraded.



**Activists of the Azerbaijani youth group NIDA have been arrested over the last weeks and accused with a range of crimes, including possession of weapons and inciting violence.**

A group of Ambassadors from the member states of the Council of Europe this week are visiting Baku to familiarize themselves with the political situation. This comes as concern increases in Europe that Azerbaijan may be putting itself in a position whereby its membership of European institutions such as the Council of Europe, becomes increasingly under question. An embarrassing situation is likely to develop next year when Azerbaijan takes over the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe if the October Presidential elections are deemed to have been flawed. ■

Source: CEW