

INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION

Republic of Kazakhstan – Early Parliamentary Elections, 23 August 2026

STATEMENT OF PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

The 23 August early parliamentary elections, while technically well prepared, took place in an environment lacking political pluralism. Political choice was reduced by the lack of distinct political alternatives, with all contesting parties supporting the incumbent President's policies. The campaign was orderly and the contesting parties were provided with equal campaign conditions, but the new *Adilet* party had an undue advantage. The election administration enjoyed the confidence of the contesting parties, although the transparency of its decision-making process was limited. The legal framework, substantially revised close to the elections with limited public consultation, contains a number of provisions that do not align with international standards for democratic elections, including with respect to fundamental rights related to political participation. Women remain significantly under-represented. While voters had access to a number of media outlets, media pluralism remained limited, with concerns regarding restrictions on the media and pressure on journalists. The media monitored by the observers provided scarce editorial and analytical coverage of the elections, diminishing voters' ability to make an informed choice. While International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) observers assessed the opening and voting as overwhelmingly in line with procedures, significant differences between voter activity observed and the official turnout data, as well as serious procedural violations during the vote count, raised questions about the integrity of the voter turnout reporting and the counting process.

Following the adoption of the new Constitution, the electoral legal framework was reviewed to reflect the institutional and electoral changes it introduced. Despite numerous revisions, the legal framework remains inconsistent with a number of international standards and OSCE commitments for democratic elections, including some undue restrictions on voting rights and on the legal standing to challenge the election results, as well as the lack of sufficient safeguards for accountability and integrity of campaign finance. The amendments were adopted close to the elections following a process that provided limited opportunities for public consultations, deviating from international good practice, and left most prior ODIHR recommendations unaddressed. Broad and vague rules, including those on foreign financing of electoral activities and admissible critical campaign coverage by the media, prompted requests for interpretation during the electoral process, to which the authorities did not respond with sufficient legal certainty.

The new 145-member unicameral *Kurultai* was elected under a closed-list proportional representation system, in a single nationwide constituency with a 5-per cent electoral threshold. There is no longer a provision for independent candidacies, contrary to international standards and prior ODIHR recommendations. The law mandates a cumulative 30-per cent candidate quota for women, youth, and persons with disabilities, which must also be respected when mandates are distributed, but its design does not comply with relevant international standards and prior ODIHR recommendations. The legal framework gives political parties broad discretion and control in the allocation and implementation of mandates, contrary to OSCE commitments and international standards.

Election commissions at all levels administered the technical preparations professionally and within legal deadlines, and enjoyed confidence of the contesting parties. The Central Election Commission (CEC) held regular live-streamed sessions attended by most stakeholders and media; in most sessions

observed by the ODIHR Election Observation Mission (EOM), decisions were adopted unanimously without substantive deliberations, limiting the transparency of the decision-making process. ODIHR EOM observers positively assessed the nationwide cascade trainings for election commissioners that they attended. The election administration also carried out an extensive voter information campaign and made considerable efforts to ensure accessibility of polling stations and facilitate the participation of persons with disabilities. ODIHR EOM observers in most regions reported that Territorial Election Commissions (TECs) convened their sessions on an *ad-hoc* basis, without consistent prior announcements, which formed a barrier for the observation of TECs' work.

The National Voter Register maintained by the CEC includes almost 12.6 million voters. Most IEOM interlocutors expressed confidence in the accuracy of the voter register. Citizens deprived of legal capacity by a court on grounds of intellectual or psychosocial disability or serving a prison sentence, regardless of the gravity of the crime, are not eligible to vote, contrary to international standards. Voter lists were available for scrutiny and voters could request corrections. Voters who were not included in the voter list but could prove their residence within a precinct could be added to the voter list by the relevant PEC on election day, at odds with international good practice.

Eligible voters aged 25 or older resident in Kazakhstan for at least 10 years prior to elections may stand as candidates; the residency requirement is contrary to international standards and previous ODIHR recommendations. Those found guilty of a corruption offence and with unexpunged criminal records, regardless of the crime, are ineligible. After the 2026 legal reform, candidates may only be nominated by registered political parties from among their members, while independent candidacy was rescinded, contrary to international standards and ODIHR recommendations. Candidate registration was conducted efficiently, with virtually all nominees registered. The seven registered lists comprised 545 candidates, of which 43.9 per cent belonged to at least one of the cumulative quota groups.

The election campaign was generally calm and orderly, gaining momentum closer to election day. In line with the law, all contestants were provided with equal conditions for organizing campaign activities, with no substantiated reports of unduly refused or restricted campaign events. However, as noted by some IEOM interlocutors, the absence of parties representing genuine political opposition and the elimination of the right to stand independently for parliamentary elections limited political participation, pluralism, and electoral competitiveness. Party platforms and messages addressed a wide range of social and economic issues but all contesting parties supported the incumbent President's policies. Although parties were generally able to reach voters freely, significant disparities in resources affected the equality of campaign opportunities. The newly registered *Adilet* party that merged with the former ruling *Amanat* party dominated the campaign with the most extensive and visible campaign activities, benefiting from the organizational structures, networks and resources inherited from *Amanat*. The ODIHR EOM received credible reports of instances of misuse of administrative resources, including public sector employees' involvement in mobilization to attend campaign events and municipal administrations' links to campaign events of several political parties. Some of *Adilet*'s large-scale events coincided with free public events organized by municipalities or other public entities. Taken together, these factors gave an undue advantage to *Adilet* and blurred the line between state and party, contrary to OSCE commitments.

Social networks played an important role in the campaign. ODIHR EOM social media monitoring showed that online communication by parties and candidates was predominantly positive and policy-oriented, with limited instances of confrontational discourse. Some IEOM interlocutors expressed concerns that broadly formulated restrictions on online content and their enforcement, including content removals, persisting during the campaign, could lead to suppression of political expression and critical voices. The lack of public information about the mechanisms for countering disinformation and foreign interference, largely centralized within governmental and national security agencies, rendered an assessment of their efficiency impossible. The Ministry of Culture and Information (MCI) monitored

the online space, including for potential electoral violations. The Center for Combating Disinformation under the Presidential Administration, mandated to combat false information, reported and debunked several instances of campaign-related false information.

Women remain significantly under-represented in political and public life, with 18 out of 98 seats in the lower chamber of the previous parliament (18 per cent), 10 out of 50 seats in the indirectly elected Senate (20 per cent), and 3 out of 25 government posts (12 per cent); none of the 20 regional governors is a woman. All political parties have women's organizations, however, only one party is led by a woman. Women accounted for 172 of the 545 candidates (31.5 per cent) while their participation in the campaign remained limited and uneven across regions. Women comprised over two-thirds of all election commission members but remained under-represented in managerial and senior positions.

The 2026 changes of campaign finance rules, *inter alia*, increased contributions and expenditure limits, introduced sanctions for campaign financing outside electoral funds, and prohibited in-kind donations. Prior ODIHR and the Council of Europe's Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO) recommendations on campaign finance reporting and oversight remain unaddressed. The Election Law does not provide for interim or final campaign finance reports from contestants, which limits transparency and accountability, contrary to international standards and good practice. The CEC is mandated with oversight, which is limited to formal bank operations, without an independent verification or fact-finding mechanism, which limits the scope and effectiveness of oversight. Positively, a CEC resolution stipulated publication of each party's campaign finance information twice prior to election day, which was implemented, but the limited scope of information provided did not ensure meaningful public scrutiny. The CEC resolution envisages final reports from contestants after the elections.

The media market is state-dominated through direct ownership and non-transparent budgetary subsidies. These factors along with stated concerns of state influence on editorial content limit media pluralism, despite the large number of registered outlets. Long-standing concerns about arrests and pressure on independent journalists generate pervasive self-censorship. The constitutional guarantees for freedom of expression are constrained by criminal sanctions for "deliberate dissemination of false information" and some other criminal and administrative provisions and their implementation. Contrary to international standards and prior ODIHR recommendations, there is no genuine public service broadcasting, while the media regulation mechanism (performed by the MCI) does not comply with international requirements for institutional independence. ODIHR EOM media monitoring showed that in general, broadcasters covered all contestants, mostly in a neutral tone, but the combined coverage of contestants was less than that of public authorities. The monitored broadcasters and online media provided limited reporting on campaign activities, which lacked analytical news or in-depth editorial coverage, diminishing voters' ability to make an informed choice.

Citizens, political parties, and other electoral stakeholders may seek legal redress before election commissions, courts, or prosecutorial authorities. The law stipulates expedited deadlines for electoral disputes. The election dispute resolution system remained largely untested with no complaints filed with the CEC and few reported complaints to the TECs, and few election-related cases at the courts. Some IEOM interlocutors voiced concerns regarding the impartiality of the judiciary in cases of a political nature, criticizing restrictive judicial interpretation of laws affecting participation in public affairs, freedom of expression, and media activities.

The law provides for domestic and international election observation. The 2026 Election Law amendments expanding the foreign funding prohibition to any election-related activities are broadly and vaguely formulated, and were interpreted by the authorities in conflicting ways. This created undue impediments for citizen observers to conduct their work, contrary to OSCE commitments, and rendered

some CSOs reluctant to engage in election observation. Nevertheless, several organizations observed on election day.

Election day was orderly and calm, and IEOM observers assessed opening and voting overwhelmingly positively, despite some procedural problems and issues with transparency. However, IEOM observers reported concerning indications of pressure on voters. Throughout the day, observers noted marked differences between the number of voters observed casting their ballots and the officially announced turnout figures. Over one-third of the vote counts observed was assessed negatively, due to significant procedural violations and omissions during both reconciliation and the vote count. Tabulation was assessed generally positively, although some procedural issues, problems with transparency and restrictions on IEOM observers' ability to observe were noted. Transparency was further reduced as preliminary results were not published on election night. Overall, the significant discrepancies between voter activity and official turnout data, together with the problems observed during the count raise serious concerns about the integrity of these parts of the process and whether ballots were counted and reported honestly, as required by paragraph 7.4 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Background and Political Context

The 23 August 2026 early parliamentary elections followed the 15 March referendum on the new Constitution which entered into force on 1 July, leading to the dissolution of the parliament and to the President calling early parliamentary elections.

The constitutional revision was initiated by President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev in September 2025 to modernize and optimize governance.¹ The Constitution substantially changed the institutional framework, replacing the bicameral parliament with a unicameral *Kurultai*, removing the possibility for independent candidates to stand for parliamentary contest, establishing a presidentially-appointed 126-member consultative People's Council (*Halyk Kenesi*) with legislative initiative, reintroducing the vice-presidency, and significantly expanding presidential powers.² After the referendum, the Constitutional Court issued an interpretation on the applicability of constitutional mandate limitations to the office holders who had served under the previous Constitution.³ Some International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) interlocutors noted that the Constitution was adopted in an expedited manner, with limited opportunities for public consultations.⁴ Some IEOM interlocutors from political parties considered that a new unicameral parliament with strong political party mandates will improve the legislative process, while others criticized it for a lack of genuine political participation and grassroots representation.

¹ The constitutional revision was presented as a continuation of the 2022 reform, which also entailed a constitutional referendum and an early presidential election (both in 2022) and early parliamentary elections (in 2023).

² The president appoints, with the *Kurultai*'s consent, and may dismiss the vice president, and determines the officeholder's mandate; the decree on the mandate was not issued prior to elections. The president's mandate includes expanded powers over institutional appointments, parliamentary dissolution following repeated dissent, including on the candidacy of the *Kurultai*'s chairperson, temporary unilateral legislative powers in the absence of the parliament, stronger powers over the state apparatus.

³ The [Constitutional Court Regulatory Resolution No 89 of 7 July 2026](#) interpreted Articles 43.1, 72.2–3, 83.1 and 84.3 of the Constitution that the restrictions on election or appointment to the offices, including the president, chairperson and judges of the Constitutional Court, chairperson of the Supreme Court, and prosecutor general, apply only to the appointments initiated under the 2026 Constitution; accordingly, the terms served under the 1995 Constitution do not fall within the scope of the re-appointment limits, and individuals who held such offices before the 2026 Constitution entered into force may be elected or appointed again.

⁴ The [President](#), [several politicians](#) and [members of the Working Group](#) formed to draft the new Constitution argued that broad grassroots demand for vast changes resulted in a *de facto* new Constitution, reportedly based on some 2,000 public requests and submissions.

The political landscape continues to be characterized by the dominant role of the incumbent President. The pre-election environment has been shaped by the registration of the new political party *Adilet*, whose stated aim is to facilitate the President's policies, and its swift merger with the then-ruling *Amanat* party.⁵ This rendered *Adilet* the major contestant for these elections. Another significant development was the change of leadership in three political parties shortly before the elections were called.⁶

Six parties entered the *Mazhilis* following the last early parliamentary elections held on 19 March 2023. *Amanat* won 62 seats, *Auyl* 8 seats, *Ak Zhol* and *Respublika* 6 seats each, the People's Party of Kazakhstan (PPK) 5 seats, and the Nationwide Social Democratic Party (NSPD) 4 seats. Seven seats were won by independent candidates running in single-mandate constituencies.

Women remain significantly under-represented in political and public life, with 18 of 98 seats in the former *Mazhilis* (18 per cent), 10 out of 50 seats in the indirectly elected Senate (20 per cent), and 3 of 25 government posts (12 per cent) held by women; none of the 20 *oblast akims* (regional governors) is a woman. All political parties created women's organizations, however, only one party, *Ak Zhol*, is led by a woman. The United Nations (UN) bodies has expressed concern about the low representation of women in decision-making positions as well as discriminatory gender stereotypes hindering the participation of women in political and public life.⁷

The Constitution guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms, but citizens' ability to participate in political life through the freedoms of association, peaceful assembly, and expression, remains constrained, with most previous ODIHR recommendations in these areas unaddressed.⁸ Many IEOM interlocutors stated that respect for fundamental freedoms and the rule of law have deteriorated considerably since 2023. They described the registered parties as loyal to the President or politically restrained, while opposition initiatives seeking to register political parties have remained unsuccessful.⁹ IEOM interlocutors raised concerns that independent civil society organizations (CSOs), in particular those receiving foreign funding, face pressure, stigmatization, and difficulties with accessing their funds.¹⁰

⁵ The initiative to register *Adilet* was announced after the 15 March referendum to consolidate support for the President's 'Just Kazakhstan' programme and the constitutional reform. Following a smooth and speedy process, *Adilet* was registered on 1 June. It is led by Aibek Dadebai, who had headed the Presidential Administration until 5 May, and has many drafters of the new Constitution as party members. On 12 June, *Amanat* announced its intention to merge with *Adilet*, which the latter supported on 14 June.

⁶ *Ak Zhol*, *Auyl* and the People's Party of Kazakhstan (PPK) announced changes of their leaderships on 13, 23, 26 June, respectively.

⁷ See UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women [2019 Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Kazakhstan](#), paragraphs 29 and 30, and the 2024 UNDP and UN Women "[Public Perception of Gender Equality and Expansion of Women's Rights and Opportunities in Kazakhstan](#)".

⁸ In 2025, the [UNHRC Universal Periodic Review for Kazakhstan](#) raised concerns, *inter alia*, that the country's laws and their implementation continue to permit excessive official control over the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, while also restricting freedom of association, expression, and the media. In a [joint communication in 2025](#), UN Special Rapporteurs and experts expressed serious concern over the criminal prosecution and sentencing of activists and the related pattern of criminalization, detention, surveillance, and other sanctions. See all election-related ODIHR [recommendations](#) to Kazakhstan. Previous ODIHR recommendations that were addressed in 2023 include the reduction of the parliamentary electoral threshold from 7 to 5 per cent, the lowering of the required minimum of political party members and initiative groups for the registration of a new political party.

⁹ On 14 March 2024, the Vice Minister of Justice, Botagoz Zhakseleкова, was [reported](#) stating that "in 2023–2024, 17 applications for the registration of political parties were received". No data are available on the Ministry of Justice website regarding the status of applications for political party registration.

¹⁰ In June 2026, *Amanat* and PPK MPs [called](#) for greater scrutiny of foreign-funded non-governmental organizations (NGOs), portraying some funding as "soft power", and questioning the NGOs' independence. See also the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law and the International Partnership for Human Rights [statement](#) on, *inter alia*, stigmatization of civil society organizations (CSOs), and persecution of activists.

Kazakhstan is a multi-ethnic country with more than 120 ethnic groups. Ethnic Kazakhs constitute the majority of the population, while ethnic Russians are the largest minority.¹¹ Other minority groups include Uzbeks, Ukrainians, Uyghurs, Germans, and Tatars. The legislation does not provide for affirmative measures to facilitate minority representation, not in line with OSCE commitments and international good practice, and prohibits political parties based on ethnicity or religion.¹²

Legal Framework and Electoral System

Parliamentary elections are primarily regulated by the 2026 Constitution, the 1995 Constitutional Law on Elections (last amended in June 2026, hereinafter the Election Law), and the 2026 Law on the *Kurultai*.¹³ The legal framework is supplemented by resolutions and decisions of the Central Election Commission (CEC).¹⁴ Kazakhstan is a party to major international and regional instruments related to democratic elections.¹⁵

Following the adoption of the new Constitution, the electoral legal framework underwent extensive amendments, to reflect the institutional and electoral changes. The amendments to the Election Law, *inter alia*, incorporated a proportional electoral system for parliamentary elections and adjusted legal provisions for constituting the new unicameral legislature, revised candidate nomination procedures and certain campaign regulations, broadened eligibility requirements for election commission members, prohibited in-kind contributions, raised campaign financing limits, and expanded the ban on foreign funding.

Despite numerous revisions, the legal framework remains inconsistent with a number of international standards and OSCE commitments for democratic elections. These include some undue restrictions on voting rights, on the legal standing of voters to contest the election results, and the lack of sufficient safeguards for accountability and integrity of campaign finance. Broad and vaguely drafted rules, including those on foreign financing of electoral activities and admissible critical campaign coverage by the media, prompted requests for interpretation in the course of the electoral preparations, with ambiguous responses by the authorities that did not ensure legal certainty.¹⁶ Most prior ODIHR

¹¹ According to the [Bureau of National Statistics of Kazakhstan](#), these amount to 71.3 and 14.6 per cent, respectively.

¹² Paragraph 35 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) calls on participating States to “respect the right of persons belonging to national minorities to effective participation in public affairs”, and paragraph 32.6 protects their right to “establish and maintain organizations or associations”. The 2012 OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities’ [Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies](#) and Explanatory Note states that “adequate representation ensures direct participation [...]. In order to be adequate, the representation [...] should aim to reflect the composition of society”.

¹³ Other election-related legislation includes, *inter alia*, the 2002 Law on Political Parties, the 2020 Law on Peaceful Assemblies, the 2014 Criminal Code, the 2014 Code on Administrative Offences, the 2020 Code on Administrative Procedures, the 2024 Law on Mass Media, the 2023 Law on Online Platforms, and other media-related laws.

¹⁴ The [CEC Regulations, Rules and Decisions](#) were harmonized with the recent legal changes in June 2026.

¹⁵ Including the [1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights \(ICCPR\)](#), [1979 Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women \(CEDAW\)](#), [1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination \(CERD\)](#), [2003 Convention against Corruption \(UNCAC\)](#), [2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#), and the [2002 Commonwealth of Independent States Convention on Standards of Democratic Elections, Electoral Rights and Freedoms](#) (CIS Convention). Kazakhstan is a member of the [Council of Europe’s European Commission for Democracy through Law \(Venice Commission\)](#) and the [Group of States against Corruption \(GRECO\)](#). The new Constitution no longer recognises the priority of international law, and prescribes that decisions of international organizations shall not be implemented if the Constitutional Court considers them unconstitutional.

¹⁶ See [Article 25\(a\) of the 1966 ICCPR](#) and the UN [CCPR General Comment 25](#), as well as paragraph 35 of the 2003 ODIHR [Guidelines on Democratic Lawmaking for Better Laws](#). See paragraph 47 and 49 of the [2025 Venice Commission Updated Rule of Law Checklist](#). See also *Election Observation* section.

recommendations on independence of election administration, candidacy requirements and the media, remain unaddressed.¹⁷

The constitutional laws developing and integrating the constitutional provisions as well as the legal amendments to the electoral legal framework were adopted shortly prior to the elections, deviating from international good practice.¹⁸ The parliament processed the vast package of key constitutional laws and amendments within two weeks.¹⁹ Some IEOM interlocutors considered that the constitutional laws and amendments were developed in an expedited manner, with limited transparency or public consultations.²⁰ Positively, the enacted legislation, including the most recent amendments and subsidiary acts, is published online, including subsidiary acts.²¹ Amendments to the Code on Administrative Offences of June 2026, expanding sanctions for election-related offences for individuals and political parties, only entered into force in the middle of the official campaign period, which, in conjunction with their vague formulations, undermined stability and legal certainty.²²

Under the Constitution, the *Kurultai's* 145 deputies are directly elected for a five-year term, under a proportional representation system in a single nationwide constituency from closed lists, with a 5 per cent valid-votes threshold. Following the constitutional change, the parliamentary electoral system no longer has a majoritarian component. Also, the provision for independent candidates was not retained. In line with international standards and prior ODIHR recommendations, candidates should have the opportunity to run independently.²³

The Election Law stipulates a cumulative 30-per cent quota for women, youth and persons with disabilities in candidate lists without any candidate placement requirements, which has to be respected during candidate nomination and the distribution of mandates. The combined quota does not sufficiently safeguard the effective participation of each respective group as required by international standards and does not address prior ODIHR recommendations for additional affirmative measures to increase

¹⁷ In paragraph 25 of the [1999 OSCE Istanbul Document](#), all OSCE participating States committed themselves to follow-up promptly the ODIHR's election assessments and recommendations.

¹⁸ The package of six constitutional laws, including the Laws '[On the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan](#)', '[On the Kurultai and the Status of its Members](#)', '[On the People's Council of Kazakhstan \(Halyk Kenesi\)](#)', '[On the Status of the Capital of the Republic of Kazakhstan](#)' and '[On the Administrative-Territorial Structure of the Republic of Kazakhstan](#)' and amendments to the Law on Elections ([Law No 305-VIII](#)), was adopted at a joint session of both parliamentary chambers on 20 May and promulgated on 5 June. Paragraph II.2.b of the [2002 Venice Commission Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters](#) (Code of Good Practice) states that "[t]he fundamental elements of electoral law, in particular the electoral system proper [and] membership of electoral commissions [...], should not be open to amendment less than one year before an election". See also the 2024 Venice Commission [Revised Interpretative Declaration](#) on the Stability of the Electoral Law.

¹⁹ The concept of the draft constitutional bills was [approved](#) at a joint session of the parliament on 8 May, and [joint parliamentary commissions](#) were created to prepare the bills for the second reading, on 20 May. The parliamentary working groups did not include members of the expert community or independent civil society, even though this is allowed by the Rules of Procedure.

²⁰ Paragraph 5.8 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) states that the legislation should be "adopted at the end of a public procedure". Section II.A.6 of the Venice Commission [Updated Rule of Law Checklist](#), paragraph 34, states that "the quality of law depends to a large extent on the quality of the legislative process. This procedure needs to be efficient, transparent, inclusive and democratic".

²¹ The legislation is published on the information and legal system [Adilet](#), the e-portal of the Ministry of Justice.

²² These amendments entered into force on 12 August. They include, *inter alia*, the liabilities for individual users of social networks for failing to inform the CEC on paid campaign-related content, for failure to ensure equal conditions and access for campaign to all contestants, for publication of opinion polls and for financing election campaigns outside of electoral funds. The 2024 Venice Commission [Revised Interpretative Declaration](#) on the Stability of the Electoral Law states that, as a rule, election law should not be amended after the call of elections, and "any reform of electoral legislation to be applied during an election should occur early enough" to ensure awareness and understanding by voters, contestants and the election administration.

²³ See Article 25 of the 1966 [ICCPR](#) and paragraph 7.5 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#).

women's political representation and participation, including an effective gender quota.²⁴ The law does not provide additional affirmative measures to facilitate the representation of underrepresented groups. Apart from this quota, the legal framework provides political parties with broad discretion over candidate nomination, as well as allocation and implementation of parliamentary mandates in the *Kurultai*.²⁵ Some IEOM interlocutors criticized this discretion as impacting genuine political participation, at odds with OSCE commitments and international standards.²⁶ The legal framework also ties the exercise of parliamentary mandates to political party membership, limiting the individual parliamentary mandate.²⁷

Election Administration

The early parliamentary elections were administered hierarchically by the CEC, 20 regional (*oblast*) Territorial Election Commissions (TECs), 227 district (*rayon*) and city TECs, and 10,423 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs), including some 643 special polling stations, 79 of them abroad. The CEC and TECs are composed of seven members, PEC membership ranged from five to nine, depending on the number of registered voters in the precinct. As of 18 August, the election administration comprised 71,270 commission members, all of whom are appointed for five-year terms.

The CEC members were appointed by the President and both chambers of the previous parliament. The appointment procedure will change after the *Kurultai* elections, with the president appointing the entire CEC composition, subject to the *Kurultai*'s approval, except for the CEC chairperson to be appointed and dismissed by the president unilaterally, with the term of office not defined by law. The new appointment system is not in line with international standards, as a primarily unilateral appointment of all members of an electoral authority by one authority could undermine the independence of the election administration.²⁸

²⁴ See Articles 3, 4 and 7 of the CEDAW and paragraph 18 of [CEDAW General Recommendation No. 23](#), CEDAW General Recommendation No. 40 defines "equal and inclusive representation" as a parity between women and men in all their diversity in terms of equal access to and equal power within decision-making systems. See paragraph 22 of the CEDAW Committee [General Recommendation No. 25](#), on Article 4 on temporary special measures. See also the [2016 OSCE Compendium of Good Practices for Advancing Women's Political Participation](#) in the OSCE Region states.

²⁵ There are no rules for the distribution of mandates among the candidates from the candidate list; political parties may choose candidates at their discretion without consideration to the candidates' placement on the list or other criteria, but have to ensure compliance with the 30-per cent quota for women, persons with disabilities and youth. See the [2009 Venice Commission Report on Imperative Mandate and Similar Practices](#).

²⁶ Paragraph 6 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) provides that "the will of the people, freely and fairly expressed through periodic and genuine elections, is the basis of the authority and legitimacy of all government. The participating States will accordingly respect the right of their citizens to take part in the governing of their country, either directly or through representatives freely chosen by them through fair electoral processes". Article 25 of the [1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR) states that "Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions: (b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors [...]".

²⁷ The legal framework maintains the "integrity of mandate" rule: members of the *Kurultai* automatically forfeit their seat if they cease membership in the political party from which they were elected. Paragraph 7.9 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) provides that "candidates who obtain the necessary number of votes required by law are duly installed in office and are permitted to remain in office until their term expires or is otherwise brought to an end in a manner that is regulated by law in conformity with democratic parliamentary and constitutional procedures". Paragraphs 131–132 of the 2023 ODIHR and Venice Commission Revised Joint [Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) state that such provisions limit the transparency of the system and give political parties a disproportionately strong position vis-à-vis the candidates.

²⁸ Paragraph 20 of the [UN Human Rights Committee \(CCPR\) General Comment 25](#) requires that "an independent electoral authority should be established to supervise the electoral process and to ensure that it is conducted fairly, impartially and in accordance with established laws which are compatible with the Covenant". In Article 19.2 of the [2002 CIS Convention](#) States Parties committed themselves "to ensure establishment of independent, impartial

TEC and PEC members were elected by the respective *maslikhats*, based on nominations from registered political parties, with each nominating one member per commission. In the absence of such nominations, the *maslikhats* appointed members on proposals from public organizations or higher-level election commissions.²⁹ The 2026 Election Law amendments rendered individuals found guilty of corruption-related crimes or offences ineligible for election administration. Some IEOM interlocutors expressed concern about the impartiality and independence of lower-level commissions due to the lack of transparency in nominations.³⁰

Women constitute over two-thirds of all commission members but are under-represented in managerial and senior positions: only two out of seven CEC members and 38 per cent of regional TEC management are women. The electoral legal framework does not provide for the rules to facilitate representation of persons with disabilities or national minorities in the election administration, and no such data was publicly available.³¹

The CEC administered the technical preparations for the elections professionally and within legally established deadlines. The CEC held regular sessions, live-streamed in Kazakh and Russian with simultaneous Kazakh-Russian sign-language interpretation, without closed captioning.³² Sessions were announced online at short notice and attended by media and most stakeholders; some were followed by a press briefing. In the sessions observed by the ODIHR EOM decisions were adopted unanimously without debate or any substantive deliberation, limiting the transparency of the CEC's decision-making process. Decisions were promptly published on the CEC website.

Lower-level commissions carried out their work professionally and within the legal deadlines. However, ODIHR EOM observers in most regions reported that TECs convened their sessions on an *ad-hoc* basis, without consistent prior announcements, which formed a barrier for the observation of TECs' work.

CEC, TECs, and PECs conducted a nationwide cascade training of election commissioners on the updated legal framework, with a test, supplemented by a video course on interactions with voters with disabilities. ODIHR EOM long-term observers (LTOs) assessed the trainings generally positively, highlighting their professional conduct and interactive nature, despite some difficulty in obtaining information about the time and location of trainings. The CEC and TECs also organized seminars for other electoral stakeholders, including political parties, accredited observers, and media.

Election commissions at all levels, together with local government representatives and the media, carried out an extensive voter information campaign, in Kazakh and Russian, about the election date

electoral bodies to organize the conduct of democratic free and fair, authentic and periodical elections". See Section II.3.1. the [2002 Venice Commission Code of Good Practice](#), *inter alia*, II.3.1(f) states that "[t]he bodies appointing members of electoral commissions must not be free to dismiss them at will"; see also its Explanatory report, *inter alia*, paras. 68-70 and 77.

²⁹ Nominated individuals do not have to be members of the nominating entities, and *maslikhats* may vote to accept or reject individual nominations. According to the CEC, as of July 2026, 65.3 per cent of lower-level commission members were nominated by political parties, 32.2 per cent by public associations, and 2.5 per cent by higher-level election commissions.

³⁰ The composition of regional and district TECs was published on the websites of the respective *akimats*, but the appointment decisions and information on nominating entities was not published consistently. Paragraph 19 of the [UN CCPR General Comment 34](#) provides: "To give effect to the right of access to information, States parties should proactively put in the public domain Government information of public interest".

³¹ Paragraph 31 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) prohibits discrimination and commits participating States to take measures to ensure the full and effective exercise of rights by persons belonging to national minorities, and Paragraph 35 provides for their effective participation in public affairs; see also paragraph 41.2 of the [1991 OSCE Moscow Document](#). See also paragraph II.3.1.d.iv of the [2002 Venice Commission Code of Good Practice](#) and paragraph 76 of its Explanatory Report, which state that "the electoral commission may include... representatives of national minorities".

³² Since 1 July, the CEC has held 11 sessions, 10 of which were observed by the ODIHR EOM, and adopted 32 decisions, including on candidate registration, procedural issues, and key templates.

and electoral process. Information targeting first-time voters was disseminated mostly on social media, or in-person during youth-focused events organized, *inter alia*, by the regional Young Voters' Clubs.³³ Several initiatives to enhance the accessibility of voting for persons with disabilities were implemented, and working groups on the electoral rights of persons with disabilities, affiliated with the respective higher-level election commissions conducted independent monitoring of polling-station accessibility.³⁴ No outreach activities specific for national minorities or in minority languages were implemented, at odds with international good practice.³⁵

Voter Registration

Citizens of at least 18 years of age have the right to vote. Those deprived of legal capacity by a court on intellectual or psychological disability grounds and those serving a prison sentence, regardless of the gravity of the crime, are disenfranchised, contrary to international standards, OSCE commitments, and prior ODIHR recommendations.³⁶

Voter registration is passive and based on permanent residency. *Akimats* submit voter data, in paper and electronically to the corresponding TECs twice a year; the data is then reconciled before being transmitted to higher-level commissions for inclusion in the National Voter Register, maintained by the CEC. As of 2 August, the voter register contained the records of 12,605,788 voters. Gender-disaggregated data on voters is not publicly available.³⁷ Most IEOM interlocutors expressed confidence in the accuracy of the voter register.

Voter lists are compiled by the relevant *akimats* (local executive authorities) on the basis of the state population database. *Akimats* submitted updated voters lists to PECs on 2 August. Voter lists were available for scrutiny from 7 August, when voters could verify their data at polling stations and online and request corrections up to and on election day, which must be decided by the PEC on the day of submission, subject to immediate judicial review.³⁸

Until 24 July, voters who were away from their place of residence on election day could request to be added to the relevant voter list in their place of temporary residence. From 15 days until 1 day before election day, voters could request an Absentee Voting Certificate (AVC), which gave them the right to vote in any polling station outside their locality of residence. Mobile voting provisions for voters with health-related issues, those caring for family members, or those located in remote areas were in place,

³³ The Young Voters' Clubs (YVCs) are a CEC-led initiative established in 2022 aimed at fostering youth electoral participation. As of 2026, 248 YVCs operate at the national, regional and district levels, bringing together over 3,000 members.

³⁴ The working groups involve representatives of specialized CSOs; of the 23 members of the CEC working group, 17 represent specialized CSOs from across the country. Polling stations were equipped with magnifying glasses, Braille ballot sleeves, accessible voting booths, as well as audio recording of the content of the ballot.

³⁵ Paragraph I.3.1.b of the [2002 Venice Commission Code of Good Practice](#) on the positive obligations by the public authorities, *inter alia*, to provide some electoral information in the languages of the national minorities.

³⁶ Paragraph 7.3 of the 1990 [OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) states that the participating States will "guarantee universal and equal suffrage to adult citizens". See also Article 25 in conjunction with Article 2 of the 1966 [ICCPR](#). See also Articles 12 and 29 of the [CRPD](#), and paragraph 48 of the [General Comment 1](#) to Article 12 of the CRPD, which states that "a person's decision-making ability cannot be a justification for any exclusion of persons with disabilities from exercising [...] the right to vote [and] the right to stand for election". Article 14 of the [UN CCPR General Comment 25](#) states that "If conviction for an offence is a basis for suspending the right to vote, the period of such suspension should be proportionate to the offence and the sentence" and that grounds for deprivation of voting rights should be "objective and reasonable".

³⁷ See Article 7 of the [CEDAW](#). Paragraph 48(d) of the [CEDAW General Recommendation No. 23](#) states that "State parties should include statistical data, disaggregated by sex, showing the percentage of women relative to men who enjoy those rights".

³⁸ In accordance with the Law on Personal Data and Its Protection, voters can only ask to verify their own data in the voter list; on election day, PEC members must use data protection stencils to cover the personal data of other voters.

conditional to a written application to be submitted to the relevant PEC no later than 12:00 on election day. Special polling stations were set up in accordance with the law.³⁹

By law, PECs can add voters who were not included in the voter list but can prove their residence within a precinct to the voter list on election day, which is at odds with international good practice.⁴⁰ Same-day temporary residency and voter registration for citizens without a registered address was enabled through an online system at 221 polling stations across the country. Some IEOM interlocutors raised concerns about the insufficient oversight over the same-day registration process at PEC level and the effectiveness of the legal remedy in case of possible violations.

Party and Candidate Registration

Eligible voters aged 25 or older have the right to stand in parliamentary elections. The Constitution requires a minimum 10-year residency in Kazakhstan prior to election day, contrary to international standards and previous ODIHR recommendations.⁴¹ Those found guilty of a corruption offence and those with unexpunged criminal records, regardless of the crime, are ineligible. Under the 2026 Election Law amendments, candidates may only be nominated by registered political parties from among their own members, while independent candidacy was rescinded, contrary to international standards and prior ODIHR recommendations.⁴²

IEOM interlocutors among the political parties stated that all candidate lists were approved by party congresses, as required by the Election Law.⁴³ Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors from local party branches raised concerns about the lack of transparency in how party headquarters compile candidate lists and subsequently decide which candidates take seats in the *Kurultai*, describing neither process as subject to clear criteria or adequate scrutiny. Candidate registration requires a deposit, with full or partial exemption, providing refunds to parties that pass the 5-per cent electoral threshold.⁴⁴

The candidate registration process was conducted efficiently. The CEC registered candidate lists by the 23 July legal deadline. All but one candidate, who withdrew before the end of the registration period, were registered. The seven registered lists included a total of 545 candidates, including 172 women (31.5 per cent). All lists complied with the cumulative 30 per cent quota for women, youth and persons

³⁹ Special polling stations are set up in hospitals, medical centres, remote areas, seasonal livestock sites, continuously operating enterprises, rotational work sites, detention facilities, diplomatic missions abroad, and Kazakhstani vessels at sea.

⁴⁰ Paragraph 1.2.iv of the [2002 Venice Commission Code of Good Practice](#) recommends that “polling stations should not be permitted to register voters on election day itself”.

⁴¹ See Article 25 in conjunction with Article 2 of the 1966 [ICCPR](#). Paragraph 15 of [UN CCPR General Comment 25](#) states: “persons who are otherwise eligible to stand for election should not be excluded by unreasonable or discriminatory requirements such as education, residence or descent, or by reason of political affiliation”. Paragraph I.1.1c.(iii), (iv) of the [2002 Venice Commission Code of Good Practice](#) states that “a length of residence requirement may be imposed on nationals solely for local or regional elections” and “the requisite period of residence should not exceed six months; a longer period may be required only to protect national minorities”.

⁴² In paragraph 7.5 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#), OSCE participating States committed to “respect the right of citizens to seek political or public office, individually or as representatives of political parties or organizations, without discrimination”. See also Article 25 in conjunction of Article 2 of the 1966 [ICCPR](#). Paragraph 17 of the [UN CCPR General Comment 25](#) states that “the right of persons to stand for election should not be limited unreasonably by requiring candidates to be members of parties”. Article 3.4 of the [2002 CIS Convention](#) states that “every citizen should have equal legal possibilities to propose him/herself as a candidate in elections”.

⁴³ The case by two members of the *Baytaq* party challenging the validity of the party congress which nominated the candidate list, was dismissed by the Astana Inter-district Court (see *Election Dispute Resolution* section).

⁴⁴ The deposit amounts to 1,275,000 Kazakhstani Tenge (KZT) per candidate, (EUR 1 is approximately KZT 540). By law, political parties that received 5 per cent or more of the votes in the last parliamentary elections are exempt from paying the deposit, those with 3 to 5 per cent of the votes have to pay half, while those with 1 to 3 per cent must pay 70 per cent. Five parties were fully exempt, *Baytaq* - partially, and *Adilet* paid the full amount.

with disabilities, with 43.9 per cent of all registered candidates belonging to at least one of the quota groups. *Ak Zhol* fielded 63 candidates, *Auyl* – 69, *Adilet* – 186, *Baytaq* – 47, NSDP – 33, PPK – 72, and *Respublica* – 75.

The Election Law provides several grounds for the deregistration of candidates and party lists, including early campaigning, misuse of office, and inaccurate asset declarations, which may be verified up to two weeks into the campaign period, creating uncertainty over the candidates' continued participation in the contest. Contrary to international standards and good practice, the legislation does not provide sufficient safeguards to prevent disproportionate sanctions, or possibilities to rectify deficiencies in registration documents.⁴⁵ The Supreme Court decides on appeals against CEC decisions on registration or deregistration of party lists. There were no such cases in these elections.

Campaign Environment

The election campaign lasted from 23 July to 21 August.⁴⁶ The campaign was generally calm and orderly, gaining momentum closer to election day, although its intensity and visibility varied considerably across regions and contestants. Party platforms and messages addressed a wide range of social and economic issues but all contesting political parties supported the incumbent President's policies. Although parties were generally able to reach voters freely, significant disparities in their resources limited their ability to compete on an equal basis. Some IEOM interlocutors noted that the absence of genuine opposition parties and the elimination of the right to stand independently for parliamentary elections limited political participation, pluralism, and electoral competitiveness.⁴⁷

The campaign across the country was dominated by *Adilet*. It was the first political party registered since 2023, while attempts to register other parties had been unsuccessful. The merger with *Amanat* provided the party with broad organizational capacity, enabling it to draw on established infrastructure, party staff, institutional experience, and extensive political networks and resources incomparable to those of other contestants.⁴⁸

The IEOM observed that all contestants actively used traditional campaign methods, including gatherings, door-to-door canvassing, distribution of campaign materials, and meetings with voters, employees, and workplace collectives.⁴⁹ ODIHR EOM LTOs reported varied public engagement at campaign events; while some events attracted substantial attendance or a positive reception, others were largely formal with limited engagement of participants.

The campaign is extensively regulated, with strict rules for all stakeholders and sanctions for non-compliance. The legal framework stipulates equality of campaign opportunities, and contestants were

⁴⁵ See Article 25 of the 1966 [ICCPR](#), paragraph 24 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#), paragraph 273 of the 2023 ODIHR and Venice Commission Revised Joint [Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#), and section 9.2 of the [ODIHR Guidelines for Reviewing a Legal Framework for Elections](#).

⁴⁶ On election day and the day before, all campaigning is prohibited, including online. Previously posted printed or online materials may remain in place. The law prohibits early campaigning, subject to administrative fines, or cancellation of a candidate's or candidate list's registration.

⁴⁷ On 27 July, the [11M Movement](#), a new socio-political movement, was launched in Almaty, with the aim to represent non-partisan citizens who do not feel represented by the existing political parties. The movement's key political strategy was to encourage voters to cast ballots "against all", thereby demonstrating the existence of a sizable group of voters unrepresented by the current political system.

⁴⁸ The reorganization did not entail an automatic transfer of party membership, and *Amanat* members have to apply to join *Adilet*; *Adilet* is benefiting from *Amanat*'s regional branch network and the party headquarter in Astana.

⁴⁹ The ODIHR EOM observed 49 campaign events, of which 19 featured at least one woman speaker, 1 speakers with disabilities, and 2 youth speakers; 20 campaign activities addressed women, persons with disabilities, and youth; 25 were accessible to persons with disabilities, and one included sign-language interpretation. Twenty-two events were held both in Kazakh and Russian. The average attendance was 61 per cent for women, and 42 per cent for youth.

able to campaign without administrative impediments. The ODIHR EOM observed that *akimats* and election commissions provided equal conditions for campaigning, in line with the law, with no substantiated reports of unduly refused or restricted campaign events.

The legal framework bans misuse of office and administrative resources in election campaigns.⁵⁰ The ODIHR EOM received credible reports of instances of misuse of administrative resources, including the involvement of public sector employees in mobilization to attend campaign events, and municipal administrations' links to campaign events of several political parties.⁵¹ Benefitting from *Amanat*'s organizational structures and resources, *Adilet*'s campaign was the most extensive and visible nationwide, with large-scale campaign events,⁵² some of which coincided with free public events organized by municipalities or other public entities.⁵³ Taken together, these factors gave an undue advantage to *Adilet* and blurred the line between state and party, contrary to OSCE commitments.⁵⁴

All parties focused their campaigns on socio-economic issues, agriculture, healthcare, education, the environment, and greater political accountability. Campaign messages were tailored to local contexts, audience, and specific groups. Parties' headquarters determined campaign strategies and key messages, organized campaign activities, and produced materials centrally.

Most parties addressed the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities, youth, and women in their electoral programmes and activities, albeit none focused on them.⁵⁵ The accessibility of the campaign

⁵⁰ The prohibitions extend to campaigning by military personnel, employees of national security and law enforcement agencies, judges, members of election commissions, religious associations, state and local government bodies, and their officials, public officials, while performing their official duties, and to candidates holding public office to use their official or service position in election campaigns.

⁵¹ Misuse of administrative resources and blurred boundaries between state institutions and political parties were reported in Aktobe, Almaty, Astana, Atyrau, Karaganda, Kyzylorda, Öskemen, Petropavl, Shymkent, Taraz, and Zhezkazgan, including *akims*' involvement in organizing and conducting election campaigns, the conduct of campaign events in municipal healthcare and educational institutions and publicly-owned enterprises in participation of their employees during working hours by most parties, including *Adilet*, *Ak Zhol*, *Auyl*, *NSDP*, and *PPK*. See paragraph 253 of the 2023 ODIHR and Venice Commission Updated [Joint Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) that states "[t]he abuse of state resources often includes the use of public premises, office equipment, or public employees for the promotion of the programme and actions of the governing party before and during elections [...] Another well-known form of abuse of state resources is the manipulation or intimidation of public employees. [...] a government to require employees working in state institutions to attend a pro-government rally or otherwise to campaign for governing parties, including during office hours. Such practices should be expressly and universally banned by law". See also paragraph II.B.1.1.1. of the 2016 ODIHR and Venice Commission [Joint Guidelines for Preventing and Responding to the Misuse of Administrative Resources during Electoral Processes](#).

⁵² On 27 and 28 July, *Adilet* launched its campaign in Aktau and Atyrau with large outdoor events attracting thousands of participants and featuring open-air concerts, hot air balloons, and drone shows, and presentations of the party's programme. *Adilet* also organized concerts and drone shows in Aktobe on 3 August, in Oral on 4 August, and in Shymkent on 9 August. The ODIHR EOM also observed *Adilet* campaign materials on the premises of the local administration in Almaty. On 19 August, *Adilet* organized a concert and a drone show in Astana at a location not designated for peaceful assemblies.

⁵³ On 24 July, the Turkistan Municipality [announced](#) an open-air concert and a drone show, which was later [reported](#) to be an *Adilet* campaign event. On July 30, the Karaganda City Municipal Parks Administration [invited](#) citizens to visit Central Park for a free open-air concert. The following day, *Adilet*'s Karaganda branch Instagram account [posted](#) a video of the event showing the party's logo on the stage, on materials held by the hosts, and in the drone show that followed the concert. On 4 August, an Oral media outlet [reported](#) that a free concert followed by a drone show would take place in the city. The following day, *Adilet* [posted](#) a video of the event in which the party's logo was prominently displayed throughout.

⁵⁴ Paragraph 5.4 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) provides for "a clear separation between the State and political parties". Paragraph 7.6 commits to "provide [...] political parties and organizations with the necessary legal guarantees to enable them to compete with each other on a basis of equal treatment before the law and by the authorities". The 2016 ODIHR and Venice Commission [Joint Guidelines for Preventing and Responding to the Misuse of Administrative Resources during Electoral Processes](#) require the legal framework to "provide for a clear separation between the exercise of politically sensitive public positions [...] and candidacy".

⁵⁵ See also Article 7 of the [CEDAW](#) and paragraphs 31, 32 and 35 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#).

venues differed, and targeted outreach and accessible campaign information were limited. ODIHR EOM LTOs observed low participation of persons with disabilities in campaign events. Young people participated actively as party activists and volunteers, including through youth wings; some parties directed activities or promoted messages specifically at youth. Women's participation in the campaign remained limited and varied across regions, with women appearing primarily as candidates.⁵⁶ Women-specific messages and outreach intensified later in the campaign through dedicated meetings and events. Minority rights did not feature in the campaign and no discriminatory campaign rhetoric targeting specific groups was observed. Kazakh and Russian were used in campaign events and materials.

The 2026 amendments further extended campaign regulations to social networking platforms, however some provisions are not specifically tailored to social media specificities but only extend established rules for traditional media to the online environment, leaving its implementation to the competent authorities. Most IEOM interlocutors from political parties stated that social networks were their primary means of voter outreach.⁵⁷ *Instagram* and *Facebook* were the most popular platforms for political outreach and voter engagement, *TikTok* was used primarily for blogger- and influencer-led political content, and *Threads* used for broader political discussion.⁵⁸

The ODIHR EOM monitoring of the campaign on social networks established that the online campaign featured limited paid advertising on *Meta* platforms.⁵⁹ AI-generated visual content was explicitly labelled in only few instances. Online communication by parties and candidates was predominantly positive and policy-oriented, with limited instances of more confrontational discourse.⁶⁰ Posts by political analysts, some journalists and human-rights defenders were more critical, focusing principally on media freedom and freedom of expression, pressure on journalists and activists, reported blocking of their social media accounts, judicial proceedings perceived as politically motivated, restrictions on civic space, and the competitiveness of the electoral environment.

The lack of public information about the mechanisms for countering disinformation and foreign interference, which are largely centralized within governmental and national security agencies, rendered an assessment of their efficiency impossible. The Ministry of Culture and Information (MCI) monitored the online space, including for potential electoral violations. The Center for Combating Disinformation under the Presidential Administration, mandated to combat false information, reported and debunked

⁵⁶ ODIHR EOM interlocutors attributed these limitations to traditional gender roles, disproportionate family responsibilities, and unequal political influence, rather than to legal or formal barriers.

⁵⁷ *Adilet* and PPK had dedicated *Instagram* accounts, [Adilet_quryltai](#) and [Halykpartiyasy_media](#), to disseminate campaign information and election-related updates and to promote candidates. Other parties used the existing social media accounts of their regional and local branches.

⁵⁸ On 17 July, the ODIHR EOM started monitoring some 50 *Facebook* and *Instagram* accounts of political parties and their chairpersons, candidates, influencers, journalists, human rights activists, and local administrations. Similar content on *Instagram* generally attracted larger audiences than *Facebook*. Personalized posts by candidates and party leaders generally resulted in a greater engagement than those published on official party accounts.

⁵⁹ As of 20 August, a review of the *Meta* Ad Library identified paid political advertising from *Adilet* (EUR 14,095 for 277 paid posts), *Ak Zhol* (EUR 2,165 for 39 paid posts with disclaimer and EUR 87 for six paid posts without disclaimer), *Baytaq* (EUR 261 for 19 paid posts), NSDP (EUR 87 for three paid posts without disclaimer), and NSDP Pavlodar (EUR 87 for two paid posts without a disclaimer), and *Respublica* (EUR 174 for four paid posts without a disclaimer). *Baytaq* Chairperson Azamatkhan Amirkhanov's [Instagram](#) account published 34 paid ads with disclaimer (EUR 174) and one paid post without disclaimer (EUR 87). *Respublica* Chairperson Aidarbek Khodzhanazarov's [Instagram](#) account published for two paid advertisements without a disclaimer (EUR 87).

⁶⁰ When PPK Deputy Chairperson Beybit Kusainov [accused](#) NSDP of misreading the Constitution, NSDP Chairperson Askhat Rakimzhanov [responded](#) by questioning his opponent's legislative competence. A PPK candidate [warned](#) that *Baytaq*'s corporate liability proposal could cause legal chaos, [prompting](#) *Baytaq* Chairperson Azamatkhan Amirkhanov to accuse PPK of defending large-business interests. In addition, *Respublica* [characterized](#) an *Ak Zhol* price-deregulation proposal as a dangerous experiment and later [questioned](#) the party's record after more than two decades in politics. *Ak Zhol*, in turn, [described](#) *Respublica*'s programme as populist and questioned the competence of some of its candidates. PPK also [criticized](#) NSDP's approach to trade unions as radical and potentially damaging to the trade-union movement.

several instances of campaign-related false information.⁶¹ The authorities informed about efforts to optimize legislation and expand co-operation with major online platforms to protect national security and electoral integrity, but did not report on the results of the co-operation. During the campaign, the monitoring findings were used to substantiate several cases of alleged violation of public order.⁶² Some IEOM interlocutors expressed concerns that broadly formulated restrictions on online content and their enforcement, including widespread content removal, could lead to suppression of political expression and critical voices.⁶³

Campaign Finance

The recent legal amendments increased contribution and expenditure limits, sanctions for campaign financing outside electoral funds, and prohibited in-kind donations. Prior ODIHR and the GRECO recommendations, including on comprehensive transparency of campaign finance information with disclosure of sources, itemized expenditures and audit reports, and enhancement of the oversight and auditing mechanisms, as well as ODIHR recommendations for contestants' interim financial reports and third-party campaigning, remain unaddressed.⁶⁴ Campaign finance violations may result in monetary fines, and can lead to the deregistration of a candidate list, or the invalidation of election results, which raises questions as to the sanctions' proportionality.⁶⁵ The effectiveness of the framework remains difficult to assess due to the limited transparency of controlling activities and the absence of detailed campaign finance data disclosure before election day. The lack of disclosure undermines the accountability of campaign finance, limiting voters' opportunity to make an informed choice.⁶⁶

Political parties represented in the parliament receive annual state funding, proportional to the previous election results; these can be used for their statutory activities but not for campaign purposes.⁶⁷ Political parties must report on their financing to the state revenue agencies and publish annual accounts in the media, but the information from the regular or campaign accounts is not accessible to the public, contrary to GRECO recommendations.

⁶¹ In August 2025, new Center for Combating Disinformation was [established](#) within the Central Communications Service under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan to “identify and refute false information; provide objective and verified data, and develop a culture of responsible consumption of information”. During the campaign, the Center was [reported](#) to have identified instances of deep-fake campaign materials, featuring images and statements of public figures promising financial rewards for supporting a contestant and calls for campaign events. The Center warned about sanctions for such content and participation in unauthorized gatherings.

⁶² Such cases mostly concerned use of profanities and other types of behavior qualified as offensive on social networks.

⁶³ Including posts on *Meta* platform (*Instagram*, *Facebook*, and *WhatsApp*). During the campaign, ODIHR EOM interlocutors reported a trend of election-related posts, including content critical of the authorities, becoming unavailable shortly after publication, while the mechanism of their removal remained unclear. On 6 August, the Ministry of Internal Affairs [stated](#) that police regularly monitor social media for illegal content and that, in the preceding 24 hours alone, [two](#) Kazakhstani [citizens](#) had been held accountable for posting such content.

⁶⁴ See paragraphs 86, 88, 89, 97 of the 2025 GRECO [Third Evaluation Round Evaluation Report on Kazakhstan](#) “Transparency of party funding”.

⁶⁵ See Articles 115–117 of the [Code on Administrative Offences](#). For instance, financing a campaign outside the electoral fund entails a fine of KZT 108.125–216.250, depending on the donor. Article 34(10) of the Election Law refers to invalidation of results in a territory or district for violations related to electoral funds. Paragraph 272 of the 2023 ODIHR and Venice Commission Revised Joint [Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) states that “Sanctions [...] should be dissuasive in nature. [...], in addition to being enforceable, sanctions must at all times be objective, effective, and proportionate to the specific violation”; paragraph 282 states that “all sanctions must be flexible and proportionate in nature. [For] finance violations, this should include a consideration of the amount of money involved, [...] attempts to hide the violation, and whether the violation is of a recurring nature”.

⁶⁶ Paragraphs 260–263 of the 2023 ODIHR and Venice Commission Revised Joint [Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#).

⁶⁷ The [Law on the Republican Budget for 2026–2028](#) No. 239-VIII of 8 December 2025 allocates a total of KZT 19.525 billion for 2026. [As per CEC Resolution No 166/314 of 3 September 2009, as amended](#), the funds are paid monthly, calculated at the rate of 0.65 monthly calculation index for each vote cast.

Parliamentary election campaigns must be financed exclusively through the political parties' electoral funds; candidates' individual electoral funds are prohibited. Electoral funds can be formed from the political parties' resources and monetary contributions from citizens, including candidates, and domestic legal entities. The law explicitly prohibits donations from charitable and religious organizations, state-funded entities, state and local self-government bodies, as well as foreign and anonymous donations. The law allows citizens to conduct campaign activities that do not require financing. Rules on organizing campaign event by third parties lack clarity and are not subject to reporting obligations.⁶⁸ The prohibition on in-kind donations is at odds with international good practice.⁶⁹

The 2026 amendments considerably increased limits on donations and expenditures.⁷⁰ Political parties may contribute up to KZT 1.275 billion, while individuals and legal entities may donate up to KZT 25.5 million and KZT 127.5 million, respectively; the total amount of donations may not exceed KZT 2.55 billion. Electoral funds may reach up to KZT 3.8 billion.⁷¹ All campaign income and expenditures must be channeled through a dedicated account in a bank designated by the CEC.⁷²

Political parties informed the ODIHR EOM that they planned their campaign finances in consultation with their regional branches, with centralized management of funds.⁷³ According to the data published by the CEC, the contestants financed their campaign primarily from their own funds (2 contestants), citizens donations (3 contestants) and legal entities donations (2 contestants). One party (*Auyl*) reported not to have used party funding. *Adilet* received the highest contributions, exceeding KZT 3.6 billion, and led the most expensive campaign, amounting to approximately KZT 820 million.⁷⁴

The Election Law does not provide for interim or final campaign finance reports from the contestants, which limits transparency and accountability, contrary to international standards and good practice.⁷⁵ While the political parties' obligation to submit final reports was eliminated from the law in 2023, it is maintained in a CEC resolution. Positively, the CEC resolution stipulated publication of information on each party's contributions, donations from citizens and legal entities, as well as campaign-related

⁶⁸ Article 27(9) of the Election Law.

⁶⁹ Paragraph 209 of the 2023 ODIHR and Venice Commission Revised Joint [Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) states that "all individuals should have the right to freely express their support for a political party of their choice through financial and in-kind contributions.", while paragraph 216 states that "In addition to regulating financial donations, legislation should regulate in-kind support by private donors, both by individuals and by legal persons. In-kind donations may be defined as, "all gifts, services, or property provided free of charge or accounted for at a price below market value."

⁷⁰ Paragraph 19 of the [UN CCPR General Comment 25](#), "reasonable limitations on campaign expenditure may be justified where this is necessary to ensure that the free choice of voters is not undermined, or the democratic process distorted by the disproportionate expenditure on behalf of any candidate or party."

⁷¹ Amounting to 15,000 (increased from 5,000), 30,000 (increased from 10,000), 300 and 1,500 minimum salaries, respectively..

⁷² [CEC Decision N° 28/57 of 1 July 2026](#) designated "*Halyk Bank* of Kazakhstan" as the banking institution in which special temporary accounts of the electoral funds were to be opened and maintained.

⁷³ *Ak Zhol* estimated the total cost of their campaign at KZT 1–1.2 billion, *Baytaq* at KZT 2 billion, NSDP at KZT 600–650, PPK KZT 400 million, and *Respublica* at KZT 1 billion. *Adilet* and *Auyl* did not provide an estimate.

⁷⁴ Paragraph 23 of [CEC Regulation No 19/222 of 7 August 1999](#), as amended in 2026. The CEC published information on election-fund donations and expenditures on its website. According to the campaign finance information published by the CEC as of [16 August](#), *Adilet* had the highest income and expenditure (approx. KZT 3.6 billion and KZT 820 million, respectively), followed by *Ak Zhol* (approx. KZT 549 million and KZT 548 million respectively) and NSDP (approx. KZT 542 million and KZT 501 million respectively).

⁷⁵ Paragraph 261 of the 2023 ODIHR and Venice Commission Revised Joint [Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) provides for interim reporting. Paragraph 94 of the 2025 GRECO [Third Evaluation Round Evaluation Report on Kazakhstan](#) recommends ensuring that more meaningful information from the accounts of political parties (regular activities and election campaigns), including on individual private donations above a certain threshold and the identity of the donors, is published with easy and timely access by the public.

expenditures twice prior to election day, which was implemented, however, in a limited aggregated format that did not ensure meaningful transparency and public scrutiny.⁷⁶

The law provides for campaign finance information to be published by the CEC within 10 days after publication of the results. However, the differing deadlines for submission and publication of campaign finance information established in the subsidiary legislation are not aligned with the legally determined publication deadlines, which does not ensure sufficient legal certainty.⁷⁷ The templates the CEC elaborated for such reports require general information on income and expenditures from the contestants, without a detailed breakdown, and there is no obligation for and external audit or to publish the reports in their entirety.⁷⁸

The CEC is mandated to oversee campaign finance, but is limited to data supplied by the banks, and the enforcement generally relies on the bank's controls of compliance with the legal requirements to the sources, recipients, and amounts of electoral fund transfers.⁷⁹ There is no independent verification or fact-finding mechanism, which limits the scope and effectiveness of oversight and diminishes the possibility for the voters to hold the contestants accountable.

Media

The media market is state-dominated through direct ownership and untransparent budgetary subsidies, which, compounded by limited funding for local media and reported state influence on editorial content, limit media pluralism, despite the large number of registered outlets.⁸⁰ Television remains the main source of information, but the popularity of social networks has increased significantly.⁸¹ A number of long-standing concerns about media freedom persist, including Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs) targeting journalists, delays in journalists' accreditation,⁸² frequent online content removals, and website blockings, which limit independent critical reporting.⁸³ IEOM

⁷⁶ The CEC published campaign finance information as of 2 August on 8 August, and as of 16 August on 20 August. Article 7(3) of the 2003 [UNCAC](#) obliges states to make good-faith efforts to improve transparency in election and political party financing. Paragraph 247 of the 2023 ODIHR and Venice Commission Revised Joint [Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) states that: "Voters must have relevant information as to the financial support given to political parties in order to hold parties accountable".

⁷⁷ [Article 34 \(4\) of Election Law](#), [CEC Resolution No 19/222 of 7 August 1999 \(amended\)](#) requires the political parties to submit their financial reports to the CEC within 10 days of the establishment of the results, while the [CEC Resolution No 12/201 of 25 August 2018 \(amended\)](#) requires the CEC to submit this information to periodicals for publication within five days of the publication of the results.

⁷⁸ [Article 34\(4\) of the Election Law](#) and [CEC Resolution No 12/201 of 25 August 2018](#), as amended, and [CEC Resolution No 23/37 of 30 June 2026](#) amending paragraph 20 of CEC Resolution N° 19/222 of 7 August 1999, "On approval of the Rules for opening a special temporary account and spending funds of the election fund".

⁷⁹ The bank provides information on all electoral fund transactions to the CEC on a weekly basis and upon request.

⁸⁰ [As of August 2026](#), there are 4,869 registered media in Kazakhstan. The 2026 [state budget](#) allocated KZT 67 billion for "implementation of state information policy". State subsidies for the media are exempt from disclosure, [as confirmed by the court on 15 July](#). In 2025, [local media reported constraints](#) due to limited funding, staff shortages, and pressure from the government.

⁸¹ In a [September 2025 survey](#), 59 per cent of respondents listed television as the most trusted source of information, and 34.7 per cent trusted social networks. In [October 2025](#), there were 16.9 million active social networks users.

⁸² On 16 July, representatives of *Radio Azattyq* (the Kazakh-language Service of *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*) [announced](#) that 11 of their journalists were left without accreditation for this electoral campaign, following the decision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) to postpone their accreditation review until mid-September, as permitted by law. Foreign media could apply by 16 August for a [temporary accreditation](#) to cover the elections.

⁸³ On 19–20 July, *KazTag*'s website faced [DDoS attacks](#) and was temporarily inactive. Since the campaign started, *Otkir Kurek* appealed to the authorities to investigate its numerous content removals; on 29 July, [the entire account was blocked](#). On 27 July, the [Legal Media Center](#) announced an attack on its website, qualifying the online blockings and content removals as "yet another alarming sign of increasing pressure on independent journalists and CSOs during the electoral campaign". On 1 August, [Orda.kz](#) reported phishing attempts and blocking of their Facebook page. In the last week of campaign, the Minister of Culture and Information [stressed](#) that the MCI does

interlocutors among the media stated that arrests and pressure on independent media generate pervasive self-censorship, and many journalists informed IEOM that repeated and diverse intimidation attempts discouraged them from covering the elections.⁸⁴ Public calls from national and international organizations regarding prosecution of journalists remained unaddressed by the relevant authorities during the campaign period.⁸⁵

Contrary to international standards and prior ODIHR recommendations, there is no public service broadcasting with independent appointment of management and funding.⁸⁶ The MCI functions as the media regulator, which does not comply with internationally recommended guarantees of the regulator's independence.⁸⁷ The MCI monitored media and online media during the electoral campaign in a procedure that lacked transparency, with no publicized methodology. The results presented two days before election day identified 21 violations, which were referred to the prosecutor.⁸⁸ Complaints regarding media electoral coverage are within the competence of the prosecution and the courts, but no such cases were reported.

The Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and prohibits censorship. However, these guarantees are constrained by criminal sanctions for “deliberate dissemination of false information”, infringement on honor and dignity targeting the president and other public officials, and disproportionate

not block social media accounts, at the same time appealing to the platforms to “intensify efforts in removing illegal content” while “clearly distinguishing between illegal materials and legitimate expression of opinion”.

⁸⁴ Many journalists told the IEOM that the recent increase in the number of prison sentences, intimidation attempts against them or their family members (including threats of loss of employment), and constant co-ordinated online content removals have generated a chilling effect; some declared that their coverage would focus on official CEC information, in a formalistic approach, or exclusively on paid content. The 2026 OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media [Regular Report to the OSCE Permanent Council](#), for November 2025 - April 2026 states that “criminal proceedings under broadly framed provisions have affected journalists reporting on matters of public interest” (p. 11).

⁸⁵ On 5 August, the [Committee to Protect Journalists](#) (CPJ) called on Kazakhstan “to overturn travel ban and to end harassment of journalist Lukpan Akhmedyarov”. On 6 August, the [Adil Soz Foundation](#) called on the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the General Prosecutor’s Office to conduct an open investigation and legal assessment of organized disinformation campaigns against the journalist Dinara Egeubaeva. On 10 August, the [Legal Media Center](#) called on the authorities “to stop the practice of persecuting journalists and ensure impartial and independent consideration of court cases”. On 14 August, [Freedom for Eurasia](#) made a similar public call. On 20 August, CPJ published [a second statement](#), warning “journalists are being silenced” ahead of the elections, and [Reporters Without Borders](#) highlighted “the mounting pressure on journalists in Kazakhstan”.

⁸⁶ [The 2023 Joint Declaration on Media Freedom and Democracy](#) underlined that “all government or state media should be transformed into public service media without further delay”, and paragraph 16 of the [UN CCPR General Comment 34](#) notes that states parties should provide funding in a manner that does not undermine the independence of public media.

⁸⁷ Paragraph 39 of the [UN CCPR General Comment 34](#) states that “it is recommended that State Parties that have not already done so should establish an independent and public broadcasting licencing authority”.

⁸⁸ On 21 August, during a CEC session, MCI’s representative presented the monitoring results for the campaign period, without mentioning the sampling frame or methodology. The violations identified concerned the illegal publication of public opinion polls and incorrect or missing labelling of paid content. No examples were provided.

administrative arrests for libel, as well as the related case law, including protracted litigations over SLAPPs against journalists,⁸⁹ which inhibit media freedom.⁹⁰

The regulation of media coverage of election campaign as currently implemented is rigid and lacks clarity as to the safeguards to freedom of speech, including critical coverage of the campaign. The lack of clarity in the law entailed requests for clarifications, to which the authorities responded framing the “permissible objective criticism”.⁹¹ During the campaign, media outlets were required to ensure objective and equal coverage of all contestants, and prohibited from publishing information damaging the honour, dignity or business reputation of a candidate or political party.⁹²

ODIHR EOM media monitoring showed that in general, broadcasters and online media provided limited reporting on campaign activities and no analytical news or editorial coverage; analytical or investigative reporting about the elections was largely absent.⁹³ The media reported extensively on officials, and the combined coverage by broadcast media of all seven contestants was less than the combined coverage of the government, President, and other public authorities, with some 35 and 65 per cent of coverage, respectively.⁹⁴ ODIHR EOM media monitoring noted predominately descriptive coverage of campaign events, in which party logos or materials were often blurred in the news coverage.

ODIHR EOM monitoring of broadcast media showed that *Adilet* received a slightly higher share of politically relevant news coverage than other parties, with 6.48 per cent, while the other parties received between 4.38 and 5.07 percent. Contestants were largely covered in a neutral way.⁹⁵ The online media monitoring identified extensive coverage of the government, President and public officials, with 86 per cent of the content in a neutral or positive tone, while all contestants combined received some 14 per

⁸⁹ See Article 274 of the [Criminal Code](#) and Article 73.3 of the [Code on Administrative Offences](#). During the pre-campaign period there were four ongoing criminal cases, targeting [the blogger Adiletkhan Moldakhan](#), journalist [Aizhan Mameshova](#), former editor-in-chief of *Orda.kz* [Gulnar Bazhkenova](#), and [YouTube blogger Azamat Omarov](#), on charges of deliberate dissemination of false information and incitement to hatred. On 31 July, editor-in-chief of *KazTag* [Amir Kasenov](#) was sentenced to 15 months restriction of liberty and a 5-year ban on journalistic activities, based on charges of deliberate dissemination of false information. On 4 August, [journalist Alexandra Alekhova](#) was sentenced to three years in prison for dissemination of personal data; the Almaty Prosecutor’s Office [filed a motion](#) to reduce the sentence. On 5 August, [journalist Dinara Yegeubayeva](#) announced that she is under criminal investigation, and the target of a large disinformation campaign, following a traffic incident she considers having been “fabricated”. On 12 August, Astana police confirmed that a criminal case was opened against journalist [Lukpan Akhmedyarov](#), for deliberate dissemination of false information. On 18 August, [Gulnar Bazhkenova](#) was sentenced to an 8-year imprisonment with a 5-year ban for journalistic activities, on charges of deliberate dissemination of false information and embezzlement.

⁹⁰ Paragraph 30 of the [UN CCPR General Comment 34](#) states that “laws should not provide for more severe penalties solely on the basis of the identity of the person that may have been impugned”.

⁹¹ By the middle of the campaign period, the [CEC explained](#) that “objective criticism of political parties and candidates is not prohibited” and that it is up to the journalist to determine the line between such criticism and information that damages honour and dignity. Previously responding to journalists’ concerns regarding the difference between campaign and informative materials, the CEC clarified that “informative means publishing neutral factual information about election events and reporting on the election campaign within news and analytical pieces, provided that coverage remains objective and does not contain elements of campaigning”.

⁹² On 23 July, the Prosecutor General’s Office posted [guidance for media and online users](#) on electoral coverage, which IEOM interlocutors considered as discouraging critical reporting during the campaign.

⁹³ The ODIHR EOM monitored the TV channels *Qazaqstan TV*, *KTK*, *Astana TV*, *Channel 31*, *24KZ*, and *First Channel Eurasia*, and the online media *kursiv.kz*, *kaztag.kz*, *orda.kz*, *tengrinews.kz*, *vlast.kz*, *zakon.kz*, *inform.kz*.

⁹⁴ In news and current affairs programmes, of the 34.85 per cent received by contestants, some 31 per cent was in neutral tone, 1.8 in positive tone, and 1.8 per cent in negative tone, of the total monitored coverage.

⁹⁵ In news and current affairs programmes, *Adilet* received 0.04 per cent of coverage in a negative tone and 0.69 per cent in a positive tone. NSDP received 0.17 per cent negative and 0.19 per cent positive coverage. *Auy!* received 0.84 per cent negative and 0.09 per cent positive coverage. *Baytaq* received 0.04 per cent in a negative tone and 0.25 per cent in a positive tone. *Ak Zhol*’s coverage was 0.39 per cent negative and 0.06 per cent positive in tone. *Respublika* received 0.09 per cent negative and 0.29 per cent positive coverage. PPK received 0.23 per cent negative and 0.23 per cent positive coverage.

cent, mostly in a neutral tone. Women candidates were represented in 34 per cent of the monitored broadcast coverage, and in some 7 per cent in the online media outlets.

A total of 757 media outlets and online users had notified the CEC about their coverage plans and advertisement fees and were thus allowed to offer paid airtime or content space, at equal rates for all contestants as required by law.⁹⁶ ODIHR EOM media monitoring noted that *Adilet* purchased the highest amount of advertising, followed by the NSDP and *AkZhol*. Although paid coverage was subject to labeling regulations, ODIHR EOM media monitoring showed that the label, while present, was usually not readily recognizable, at odds with international good practice.⁹⁷

Four televised electoral debates were organized, most of which on a contractual basis, and one by the CEC free of charge. The paid thematic debates focused mainly on social issues such as employment, education and rule of law; all contestants attended.⁹⁸ Positively, women candidates participated in all debates. The formats and moderation approaches of the debates raised questions of genuine coverage, while the free debate featured no questions from journalists.

Overall, the limited editorial coverage of the campaign in news programmes, the lack of analytical content and of substantive media narratives about the campaign platforms, diminishes voters' ability to make an informed choice.

Election Dispute Resolution

Citizens, political parties, and other electoral stakeholders have legal standing in electoral disputes before election commissions, courts or prosecutorial authorities, depending on the nature of the complaint. Decisions, actions, and inactions of election commissions may be challenged either at higher-level election commissions or at courts.⁹⁹ Administrative courts are the first instance for appeals against lower-level election commissions, while the Supreme Court is the competent venue for challenges against the CEC. The dispute resolution mechanism pertaining to election campaign or procedures remains largely untested.¹⁰⁰

The legislation establishes expedited deadlines for the adjudication of election disputes, allowing for prompt adjudication.¹⁰¹ Election commissions and the MCI may refer cases involving potential

⁹⁶ All media outlets and online users that notified the CEC by 18 July about their coverage plans and advertisement fees were allowed to sign such contracts.

⁹⁷ ODIHR EOM media monitoring showed that the label was displayed briefly at the end of paid spots or paid debates, sometimes with transparent, barely legible lettering. See [Council of Europe's Recommendation CM/Rec \(2007\)15](#), "if the media accept paid political advertising, regulatory or self-regulatory frameworks should ensure that such advertising is readily recognizable as such".

⁹⁸ The debates allocated time for questions sent by the audience through social networks.

⁹⁹ If complaints are submitted simultaneously to an election commission and a court, the commission suspends consideration of the matter.

¹⁰⁰ See Article 14 of the 1966 [ICCPR](#), Article 2(3) of the [UN CCPR General Comment 25](#), paragraph 19 of the [UN CCPR General Comment 34](#).

¹⁰¹ The courts decide within five days, or immediately, if submitted on or less than five days prior to election day as well as voter registration complaints, while the election commissions decide on election-related violations within five days and review the decisions, actions, inactions of lower-level election commissions within three days.

violations to the competent law-enforcement agencies.¹⁰² Positively, complaints and appeals may be submitted to commissions and courts electronically.¹⁰³

At its session on 21 August, the CEC informed that until then, no complaints had been received by the CEC. As of 21 August, ODIHR EOM long-term observers reported that two complaints were received by the TECs.¹⁰⁴

Until election day, the ODIHR EOM was made aware of five election-related cases at regional courts, mainly related to intra-party disputes and candidate nomination, and none on election-related administrative offenses.¹⁰⁵ The law provides for both judicial and out-of-court procedures for considering such cases directly by the prosecution.¹⁰⁶ Fines were imposed on seven citizens and a private media outlet for early campaigning and for posting opinion polls on social media.¹⁰⁷ IEOM interlocutors commented on a significant decrease in electoral litigation, which they attributed to the fact that independent candidates can no longer contest parliamentary elections. Interlocutors also reported that campaign-related disputes were often resolved informally amongst contestants. During the campaign period, the president appointed new chairpersons to courts in several regions, including to specialized inter-district administrative, criminal, and district courts.¹⁰⁸

Some IEOM interlocutors voiced concerns regarding the impartiality of the judiciary in cases of a political nature, criticizing restrictive judicial interpretation of laws affecting participation in public affairs, freedom of expression, and media activities.¹⁰⁹ Several publicly reported cases involving journalists, bloggers and civil activists have contributed to a wider discussion concerning the potential arbitrary implementation of these provisions and their potential impact on the exercise of fundamental freedoms during the electoral period.¹¹⁰

¹⁰² Election-related criminal offenses include obstructing voting, falsifying election documents or results, violating ballot secrecy, vote buying and administrative or other legal liability for, amongst other, unlawful campaigning, spreading false information, campaign-finance breaches, media and observer interference, or voter registration irregularities. Candidates or political parties that violate the law may receive a warning, while repeated violations can result in cancellation of their registration.

¹⁰³ [E-Otinish](#) is the official unified platform designed for submitting appeals, official inquiries, and complaints to various public institutions and government agencies. However, access to such information is only available to the interested parties.

¹⁰⁴ In two cases reported, one inquiry was advised to be submitted to a different authority, and one refusal to register an independent candidate was appealed to the court.

¹⁰⁵ Three cases were filed in Astana, one by two party members challenging the validity of the nomination of candidates at the congress of *Baytaq* party, which was rejected on the merits, and a second by an individual challenging the legality of *Adilet*'s candidate list, which was returned due to lack of jurisdiction. The same individual challenged the MoJ's decision to register *Adilet*, the case was returned without consideration due to lack of legal standing. One case in Kyzylorda initiated by an individual against the chairperson of the *Auyyl* regional branch, was returned due to lack of jurisdiction, eventually resubmitted to the competent court, and subsequently withdrawn. In Zhetisu, a claim by an aspiring independent candidate was dismissed, further appealed, and ultimately returned without consideration to the applicant due to lack of jurisdiction.

¹⁰⁶ Pursuant to Articles 682, 683, 760, 805 and 811 of the [Code on Administrative Offenses](#), the prosecutor's office may independently consider a case and impose a fine for election-related violations.

¹⁰⁷ As reported on 21 August by the [Office of the Prosecutor General](#) fines of KZT 64,875 were imposed on citizens, and a fine of KZT 129,750 on a private media outlet; the fines were reduced by half due to admission of guilt.

¹⁰⁸ See [Presidential Decree N° 1382 of 29 July 2026](#).

¹⁰⁹ They referred to the Criminal Code Articles 158, 174 (inciting hatred), 274 (dissemination of false information), 375 (interfering with the legal professional activity of a journalist), 376 (infringement of the honour and dignity of the president and parliamentary deputies) and 378 (insult of a representative of authority); Article 120 and recent amendments to the Code on Administrative Offences concerning campaign coverage. See also *Media* section.

¹¹⁰ On 21 July, civil activist Nurzhan Sembayev was sentenced to six years in prison on charges under Articles 405 and 258 of the Criminal Code. (see also *Media*). The IEOM interlocutors considered that two cases against journalists – an administrative case against Murat Nurgalimov, head of the *MSU.CITY* media outlet, sanctioned for an alleged disobedience to the law enforcement, and a criminal case against journalist Dinara Yegeubayeva

The CEC may invalidate election results in individual polling stations or administrative-territorial units upon appeal. Under the 2026 amendments to the Election Law, a repeat vote may be held in the respective polling stations or administrative-territorial units only if the violations affected at least one quarter of all polling stations or administrative-territorial units. While the Election Law does not specifically provide for challenges after the publication of the election results, the Code on Administrative Procedures stipulates that complaints on violations of electoral rights filed within one month after the elections must be adjudicated within five days, which does not ensure that all available avenues of appeal can be exhausted before the CEC officially announces the election results, thereby undermining the right to effective remedy, contrary to international standards.¹¹¹

Final election results may be challenged before the Constitutional Court within 10 days of their announcement. This right is limited to the president, the prime minister, the chairperson of the *Kurultai*, or at least one fifth of the members of the *Kurultai*. In the context of the 2026 parliamentary elections, this right is limited to the President and the Prime Minister since there is no sitting parliament. Restricting standing for challenges to final election results by excluding citizens and contestants is at odds with international standards and OSCE commitments.¹¹²

Election Observation

The Election Law provides for domestic and international election observation. The CEC accredits international observers, if invited by the MFA or the CEC. The CEC accredited 777 international observers from 13 international organizations and 42 countries. Domestic observers may be fielded by political parties, other public associations and non-profit organizations. Only organizations for which election observation is a statutory activity are eligible. By law, accredited organizations may observe all electoral cycles for one year within the area of responsibility of the accrediting commission.

Kazakhstan's domestic observation landscape is diverse. As of 20 August, 265 observer organizations were accredited, of which 13 were accredited by the CEC and 252 by TECs. Several IEOM interlocutors raised concerns about the independence of a number of accredited observer organizations and questioned their impartiality and professionalism.¹¹³

Several IEOM interlocutors noted a significant narrowing of space for independent election observation, citing restrictions on freedom of association, limited financing for CSOs, pressure from the authorities, and uncertainty over the eligibility of organizations.¹¹⁴ The broad and vague formulation of the 2026 Election Law amendments expanding the foreign funding prohibition to any election-related activities

following a traffic incident (See *Media* section), indicated a concerted effort to interfere with media activities during elections.

¹¹¹ Chapter 25 of the Code on Administrative Procedures. Article 2.3.(a) of the 1966 [ICCPR](#) states that “any person whose rights or freedoms as herein recognized are violated shall have an effective remedy...”.

¹¹² Article 2.3.(a) of the 1966 [ICCPR](#) states that “any person whose rights or freedoms as herein recognized are violated shall have an effective remedy...”. See also paragraph 20 of the [UN CCPR General Comment 25](#). Paragraph 5.10 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) states that “everyone will have an effective means of redress against administrative decisions, so as to guarantee respect for fundamental rights and ensure legal integrity”. Paragraph 3.2 (f) of the [2002 Venice Commission Code of Good Practice](#) provides that “All candidates and all voters registered in the constituency concerned must be entitled to appeal”.

¹¹³ Out of the 265 organizations currently accredited to observe the elections, only two – “Wings of Liberty” (*Erkindik Qanaty*) and the “Youth Information Service of Kazakhstan” – have endorsed the [Declaration of Global Principles for Non-Partisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations](#).

¹¹⁴ Following the amendments to the Election Law, the CEC, MoJ and MCI initially interpreted them as excluding all organizations receiving foreign funding from observation. In the course of the campaign, the CEC clarified that the restrictions would not apply retroactively and that foreign funding does not, in itself, constitute grounds for annulment of observers' accreditation, with each case considered individually. The ODIHR EOM was informed about two cases of accredited observer organizations requested to amend their statutes with a different Kazakh term, allegedly better reflecting the meaning of “to observe”. One of the amended statutes awaits TEC's decision.

and their conflicting interpretations by the authorities created undue impediments to the ability of observers to conduct their work, contrary to OSCE commitments.¹¹⁵ Some CSOs informed the IEOM that the uncertainty around implementation of these rules rendered them reluctant to engage in election observation. The IEOM interlocutors informed that, out of 13 organizations accredited by the CEC, only 5 aimed to monitor these elections, focusing mostly on election day, with planned deployments ranging from a few dozen to several thousand observers.

Election Day

Election day was orderly and calm, with no breaches of campaign silence observed. The CEC published information about polling throughout the day, including on voter turnout. According to the CEC, preliminary turnout reached a high 74.19 per cent, with significant regional differences, including in Almaty (43.23 per cent) and Astana (51.67 per cent). Throughout the day, IEOM observers noted significant differences between the number of voters observed casting their ballots and the officially announced turnout figures.¹¹⁶ The CEC did not post preliminary election results on election night, reducing transparency.

The IEOM observed the opening in 127 polling stations and assessed the process positively in all but two of them. Voting was observed in 1,327 polling stations and assessed positively in 98 per cent, with IEOM observers describing the process as calm and well organized. Women were well represented among polling staff, accounting for 74 per cent of PEC members and 68 per cent of chairpersons.

Despite centrally co-ordinated efforts to facilitate the participation of persons with disabilities, some 17 per cent of polling station observed did not ensure independent access for voters with disabilities, 5 per cent had a layout unsuitable for these voters, and 3 per cent lacked specific equipment.

Party proxies or observers were present in 85 per cent of polling stations observed, and citizen observers in 79 per cent. Some of these observers were not able to indicate what organization they represented. The presence of unauthorized persons was reported in 5 per cent of polling stations observed, but there were very few reports of interference in the work of PECs.

Voter identification procedures were largely adhered to. IEOM observers reported in 11 per cent of polling station observed that one or more voters were turned away, often because they had come to the wrong polling station. IEOM observers reported some serious procedural shortcomings, including series of seemingly identical signatures on the voter list (3 per cent), group voting (1 per cent), and voters without proper ID being allowed to vote (1 per cent). In 5 per cent of polling stations observed, not all voters marked their ballots in secrecy.

IEOM observers reported concerning indications of pressure on voters. In 6 per cent of polling stations observed, voters were seen photographing their ballot, and IEOM observers heard some voters saying that the pictures would serve as proof to their employers of how they had voted.¹¹⁷ IEOM observers also reported instances of non-PEC members systematically keeping track of voters coming to vote.

¹¹⁵ Paragraph 8 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) states that “the participating States consider that the presence of observers, both foreign and domestic, can enhance the electoral process for States”.

¹¹⁶ Throughout election day, IEOM observers collected, from all observed polling stations, data on the number of voters registered on the voter list or added on election day, the number of voters that had voted at the time of their arrival, as well as the number of voters that had voted at the time of their departure. A statistical analysis of this data suggests that the number of voters who cast their ballots was significantly lower than officially reported.

¹¹⁷ Independent observers also reported cases of workers, students and residents of apartment buildings being pressured to vote.

Problems with transparency during voting were reported in considerable 8 per cent of polling stations observed, including observers not having clear view of the procedures. A significant number of IEOM observers were refused access to the voter list. In polling stations where a visual inspection of the voter list was possible, the number of voters that polling staff reported as having voted was often higher than the number of signatures observed on the voter list. Many IEOM observers were denied information about the number of voters who had already voted.

The vote count was assessed negatively in 40 of the 119 polling station observed, due to significant procedural violations and omissions. Critical reconciliation procedures were frequently not followed, challenging the integrity of the counting process. PECs failed to determine and announce the total number of voters on the voter list (64 cases), the number of voters' signatures on the voter list (66 cases), the number of unused ballots (32 cases), or the number of voters who used AVC or the mobile ballot box (29 and 20 cases, respectively). Procedural violations were also observed after the ballot box had been opened. In 15 cases, the total number of ballots found in all ballot boxes was not established, and in 8 cases, that number exceeded the number of voters who voted. In 76 cases, the PEC did not announce who each ballot had been cast for. IEOM observers reported that the determination of ballot validity was not based on criteria provided by law in 12 counts and was not consistent in 13 counts. In 45 counts observed, the PEC did not use the prescribed control formular to check for mathematical consistency of the results.

The results protocols were not filled in completely and in pen in 25 counts; in 50 counts, the figures were not announced aloud before they were entered into the protocol. Four protocols had been pre-signed by PEC members. In 37 counts, the protocol was not posted for public familiarization, and in 32 counts, IEOM observers did not receive a copy even though they are entitled to it. Party proxies and observers and citizen observers were present during 70 and 72 of the observed counts, respectively. Many IEOM observers reported problems with transparency during the count, assessing it negatively in 29 cases and reporting that not all observers had a clear view of the count in 28 cases.

Overall, the problems observed during the count raise serious concerns about the integrity of these parts of the process and whether ballots were counted and reported honestly, as required by paragraph 7.4 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document.

Tabulation was assessed positively in 72 of the 91 TECs where it was observed, with negative assessments mainly due to a lack of transparency. In 25 TECs, IEOM observers were restricted in their observation, and in 26 TECs, not everybody present had a clear view of the tabulation process. IEOM observers reported inadequate premises and overcrowding in 10 and 8 TECs, respectively. They also reported a number of procedural problems, such as PECs modifying their results protocols without a former TEC decision (in 7 TECs), PECs completing their protocols only after arriving at the TEC (in 12 TECs), as well as 2 cases of deliberate falsification of results or protocols. Party proxies and observers and citizen observers were present in only 3 and 4 TECs, respectively. Transparency of the tabulation process is further reduced by the absence of legal provisions requiring the publication of TEC protocols, or election results disaggregated by polling station.

The Prosecutor General's Office announced that it had received no complaints related to election day and that no complaints had been filed with the courts. Prosecutors imposed fines for illegal campaigning on seven citizens who had posted photos of their marked ballots.

***The English version of this report is the only official document.
Unofficial translations are available in Kazakh and Russian.***

MISSION INFORMATION & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Astana, 24 August 2026 – This Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions is the result of a common endeavour involving the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). The assessment was made to determine whether the elections complied with OSCE commitments, Council of Europe standards, other international obligations and standards for democratic elections, and with national legislation. Each of the institutions involved in this International Election Observation Mission has endorsed the 2005 Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation.

Gábor Hajdu was appointed by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office as Special Co-ordinator and Leader of the OSCE short-term observer mission. Lucija Tacer Perlin headed the OSCE PA delegation, and Sevilay Çelenk headed the PACE delegation. Ambassador Vincent Piket is the Head of the ODIHR EOM, deployed from 10 July.

This Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions is delivered prior to the completion of the electoral process. The final assessment of the election will depend, in part, on the conduct of the remaining stages of the electoral process, including the count, tabulation and announcement of results, and the handling of possible post-election day complaints or appeals. ODIHR will issue a comprehensive final report, including recommendations for potential improvements, some months after the completion of the electoral process. The OSCE PA will present its report at its next statutory meeting. The PACE will present its report at a next part-session of the Parliamentary Assembly.

The ODIHR EOM includes 15 experts in the capital and 22 long-term observers deployed throughout the country. On election day, 339 observers from 43 countries were deployed, including 206 observers deployed by ODIHR, as well as a 68-member delegation from the OSCE PA, and a 23-member delegation from the PACE. There were 57 per cent of women among the observers. Opening was observed in 127 polling stations and voting was observed in 1,327 polling stations across the country. Counting was observed in 119 polling stations, and the tabulation in 91 TECs.

The IEOM wishes to thank the authorities of Kazakhstan for the invitation to observe the elections, and the Central Election Commission and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their assistance. The IEOM wishes to also express their appreciation to other state institutions, political parties, candidates, media, civil society organizations, and international community representatives for their co-operation.

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