



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

# REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

**PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**  
**24 October 2021**

**ODIHR Election Observation Mission**  
**Final Report**



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**REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN  
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION  
24 October 2021**

**ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report<sup>1</sup>**

**I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Following an invitation from the Central Election Commission (CEC) of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) deployed an Election Observation Mission (EOM) for the 24 October 2021 presidential election. The ODIHR EOM assessed compliance of the electoral process with OSCE commitments, other international obligations and standards for democratic elections, as well as national legislation. For election day, the ODIHR EOM was joined by delegations of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament to form an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM).

The Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions issued by the IEOM on 25 October 2021 concluded that the election “demonstrated that recent reforms, which have gradually introduced welcome improvements, have not yet resulted in a genuinely pluralistic environment. Remaining restrictions on fundamental freedoms and the right to stand continue to run counter to OSCE commitments. While multiple candidates contested the election, there was no meaningful engagement with each other or with voters, and candidates refrained from challenging or criticizing the incumbent. The general lack of distinction between the incumbent’s campaign and official activities blurred the line between state and party. Despite some opening of the media environment, in particular online, the space for citizens to freely and fully express their opinion remains controlled. Election preparations were handled efficiently and professionally. However, while election day was peaceful, significant procedural irregularities were observed and important safeguards were often disregarded during voting, counting and tabulation”.

Fundamental human rights and freedoms are constitutionally guaranteed, but continue to be restricted by subordinate legislation and are not fully respected in practice. The electoral legal framework was subject to extensive reforms in recent years, including as recently as 2021, and amendments adopted positively addressed some previous ODIHR recommendations. Despite these improvements, the legal framework still contains a number of shortcomings and is not yet fully consistent with international standards and OSCE commitments for democratic elections, including with regards to suffrage rights and respect to freedoms of association, peaceful assembly and expression. Further, a consultative approach, required by OSCE commitments, was not fully followed in the process of amending the election-related legal framework.

The CEC conducted its work professionally and efficiently in line with the legal deadlines, notwithstanding challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. The CEC held open sessions and published its decisions in a timely manner, thus contributing to the transparency of the electoral process. At the same time, the CEC did not publish important electoral data of public interest, such as disaggregated figures of registered voters and election results, to enable independent scrutiny of the elections. The CEC organised a comprehensive and inclusive voter awareness campaign, including in minority languages, well in advance of election day. Several provisions facilitating access of persons with disabilities were put in place. The central role of the traditional community structures, *Mahalla* committees, in the organization of the electoral process negatively impacted the ability of lower-level election commissions to function independently.

Some 20.1 million voters were registered. Restrictions on the right to vote for those with intellectual

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<sup>1</sup> The English version of this report is the only official document. Unofficial translations are available in Uzbek and Russian.

and psychosocial disabilities remain, contrary to international standards. The centralized Single Electronic Voter Register introduced in 2019 was updated and improved for this election. Voter lists were available for public scrutiny. Contrary to international good practice, there was a large-scale practice of voters being added to the voter lists on election day at polling stations without judicial or administrative oversight. This common practice increased the potential for multiple voting and raised questions about the integrity of the voter register.

Five party-nominated candidates contested the election, including the incumbent; one candidate was a woman. Candidate registration entails strict rules, including undue requirements for residence and knowledge of state language as well as mandating competitors to be nominated only by a political party, contrary to international standards. This, along with party registration rules that are overly burdensome and open to arbitrary application, unduly limited the right to stand and affected the pluralistic environment of the election. In 2021, two parties were denied registration due to failure to comply with all technical requirements.

Constitutional guarantees of gender equality are in place and the number of female parliamentarians has recently increased significantly, yet women remain generally underrepresented in public and political life. Women constituted nearly half of the lower-level election commissioners, but were insufficiently engaged at the leadership level. Although gender issues were mentioned in a number of campaign speeches, they did not feature prominently in the campaign discourse, and men were given much more visibility as speakers during campaign events observed.

The campaign was low-key in all regions as well as online. It was not truly competitive as there was no direct meaningful or genuine engagement between the candidates or with citizens, which limited the possibility for voters to compare and contrast political options. No candidate strongly challenged or spoke critically about the President's policies. In line with a prior ODIHR recommendation, the previous system of authorization of public campaign events was positively altered to notification of local authorities three days in advance of holding a campaign event. Contrary to OSCE commitments, the distinction between the incumbent's role as president and as candidate was oftentimes blurred, and he enjoyed advantages of incumbency as a candidate. The campaign focused largely on socio-economic issues, and no single topic dominated in the campaign.

Election campaigns are financed from the state budget. All other sources of campaign funding are prohibited, diminishing individuals' rights to freely express political support, contrary to international good practice. Campaign finance reporting obligations include a recently introduced interim report, partially addressing a prior ODIHR recommendation, and a final report. The lack of dissuasive sanctions for financial violations and insufficient transparency of reporting undermine the effectiveness of campaign finance oversight.

Improvements in the media climate have allowed for an increase in critical reporting on social issues and local government officials, in particular online. However, the ODIHR EOM media monitoring noted a virtual absence of critical reporting about higher level public officials and candidates, and the media reports of campaign activities were largely devoid of analytical reporting. At the same time, the restrictive legal framework for media, cases of detention, intimidation and harassment of journalists and bloggers, and an established practice of blocking websites have contributed to wide-spread self-censorship among journalists and limited the scope of relevant political information available to the public. While the state television made an effort to dedicate similar amounts of coverage to the contestants, all private media monitored by the ODIHR EOM gave more coverage to the incumbent than to the other four candidates combined. All monitored media provided extensive additional coverage of the incumbent in his official capacity as President and often did not make a clear distinction between the President in his official capacity and as a candidate.

Uzbekistan is an ethnically diverse country, with ethnic minorities comprising up to 16.2 per cent of the population. There was no ethnic minority candidate for this election. None of the candidates focused on inter-ethnic relations in their campaigns. No cases of negative rhetoric or discrimination against national minorities during the campaign were reported or observed.

The election dispute resolution mechanism was improved, and, in line with a previous ODIHR recommendation, parallel dispute resolution avenues have been eliminated. Recent reforms were untested in this election due to lack of complaints submitted to the election commissions or the courts. Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors attributed this to remaining low public trust in the judiciary.

The law allows observation by party proxies, *Mahalla* committees and international observers. Contrary to international standards and OSCE commitments, election observation by civil society is not permitted, limiting transparency and independent public scrutiny of the electoral process.

Election day was peaceful and orderly, with a reported turnout of over 80 per cent. The rules related to the COVID-19 pandemic were generally enforced in polling stations observed. The overall opening process was assessed positively, but the IEOM negatively assessed the voting process in 11 per cent of the visited polling stations. The process was impacted by significant irregularities, such as ballot box stuffing and voting on behalf of other voters or without identification documents. The IEOM assessed counting negatively in one third of polling stations observed, reflecting, among other irregularities, indications of ballot box stuffing, failure to follow reconciliation procedures and presence of unauthorized people during the counts. The IEOM assessed the tabulation process negatively in nearly half of the cases observed, due to poor organization of the process, failure to comply with the procedures and lack of transparency. No disaggregated election results at a regional or local level were published, diminishing the transparency of the process.

This report offers a number of recommendations to support efforts to bring elections in Uzbekistan fully in line with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections. Priority recommendations relate to the need of better legal protection of freedoms of association, peaceful assembly, media and expression, including online, strengthening the independence of the election administration, bringing the rules for political party and candidate registration further in line with OSCE commitments, adherence to the principle of a clear separation between state and party during the campaigns, integrity of the voter registration on election day, and the possibility of citizen election observation. ODIHR stands ready to assist the authorities to further improve the electoral process and to address the recommendations contained in this and previous reports.

## II. INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Following an invitation from the Central Election Commission (CEC) of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and based on the recommendation of a Needs Assessment Mission conducted from 24 to 28 May 2021, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) established an Election Observation Mission (EOM) on 15 September. The EOM, headed by Eoghan Murphy, consisted of a 17-member core team based in Tashkent and 28 long-term observers deployed on 24 September throughout the country. The ODIHR EOM remained in Uzbekistan until 3 November.

The ODIHR EOM assessed compliance of the electoral process with OSCE commitments, other obligations and standards for democratic elections, and domestic legislation. This final report follows the Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions which was released on 25 October 2021.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See previous ODIHR election-related [reports](#) on Uzbekistan.

For election day, an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) was formed as a common endeavour of the ODIHR EOM and delegations from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) and the European Parliament (EP). The OSCE Chairperson-in-Office appointed Reinhold Lopatka as Special Co-ordinator and Leader of the OSCE short-term observer mission. Daniela De Ridder headed the OSCE PA delegation, and Heidi Hautala headed the delegation from the EP. The IEOM deployed 365 observers from 44 countries on election day. Women comprised 42 per cent of IEOM observers.

The ODIHR EOM wishes to thank the authorities for their invitation to observe the election, and the CEC and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) for their assistance. The ODIHR EOM wishes to also express its appreciation to other state institutions, political parties, candidates, civil society organizations, media and the international community representatives for their co-operation and for sharing their views.

### III. BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

On 23 July 2021, the CEC adopted a resolution to hold the presidential election on 24 October.<sup>3</sup> The election took place against the backdrop of reforms in the social, political and economic spheres initiated by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev under his 2017-2021 Development Strategy, referred to in the wider political discourse as “New Uzbekistan”.<sup>4</sup> The election was held during continuing COVID-19 pandemic measures and following recent instability in neighbouring Afghanistan.<sup>5</sup>

Uzbekistan has a strong presidential system, in which the head of state shares legislative powers with parliament through the issuing of binding decrees, resolutions and ordinances. Furthermore, the president plays a key role in the appointment of the prosecutor general, chairperson of the State Security Service and other high-ranking officials and judges. The *Oliy Majlis* (the lower chamber of the bi-cameral parliament) exercises legislative powers, appoints the prime minister upon the president’s nomination and, following the 2019 constitutional amendments, pre-approves all ministers before their appointment by the president.

The political landscape has been unchanged since January 2019 when the most recently established party, the Ecological Party of Uzbekistan (EPU), was registered by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). The 2019 parliamentary elections saw all five registered political parties elected to the parliament: the Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (LDPU) with 53 seats, Democratic Party of Uzbekistan - *Milliy Tiklanish* (DPU) – 36 seats, Social Democratic Party of Uzbekistan *Adolat* (SDPU) – 24 seats, People’s Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (PDPU) – 22 seats, and EPU – 15 seats.

In a speech at the United Nations Human Rights Council, which Uzbekistan had been elected to in October 2020, the President outlined intended reforms that would further enhance the democratic transformations in Uzbekistan, ensure fundamental human rights and freedoms and develop civil society institutions.<sup>6</sup> The speech was seen by different electoral stakeholders as a further move towards a more pluralistic and competitive political sphere.

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<sup>3</sup> In February 2021, the parliament rescheduled the election from December to October through a constitutional amendment. Constitutional amendments are adopted by votes of at least two thirds of members of each parliamentary chamber, or a referendum.

<sup>4</sup> President Mirziyoyev came to power in 2016 with 88.6 per cent of valid votes.

<sup>5</sup> In a [speech](#) at the 76<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2021, President Mirziyoyev underscored that Afghanistan is an integral part of Central Asia and informed about the opening of the Uzbek-Afghan border as well as the resumption of supplies, such as humanitarian aid and electricity.

<sup>6</sup> See President Mirziyoyev’s [speech](#) on 22 February 2021.

Nevertheless, none of the registered political parties have positioned themselves in opposition to the President's policies, and no party proposed an agenda distinct to his. In 2021, the MoJ denied registration of two aspiring parties, the Social Democratic Party Truth and Progress and the Peoples' Interests Party, due to not meeting the requirements for party registration (see *Candidate and Party Registration*). No new political party was registered ahead of this election. The lack of genuine competition, combined with burdensome requirements for party registration, challenged the pluralistic nature of the political environment, in which the election took place, in contravention to Paragraphs 3 and 7.6 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document.<sup>7</sup>

#### IV. ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The president is directly elected for a five-year term from a single nationwide constituency. Where there are more than two candidates, a candidate needs a majority of all votes cast to be elected; if this is not achieved, a second round is organised within one month among the two leading candidates, but no earlier than 15 days after the election day. A turnout requirement of 33 per cent of all registered voters applies only to the first round. The Constitution limits the term of office to two consecutive terms.

The election-related legal framework consists of the 1992 Constitution, the 2019 Election Code, the 1996 Law on Political Parties (LPP), the 2004 Law on Financing of Political Parties (LFPP), the 1995 Criminal Code and the 1995 Code of Administrative Responsibilities. The legal framework underwent a process of reform: all election-related laws, including the Constitution and the Election Code, were amended in 2021.<sup>8</sup> Uzbekistan is a party to the main international instruments related to the holding of democratic elections.<sup>9</sup>

Despite improvements, the legal framework maintains a number of shortcomings and is not fully consistent with international standards and OSCE commitments pertaining to democratic elections. Recent amendments addressed some prior ODIHR recommendations, including relaxation of procedures for organizing campaign events, prohibition of campaigning by some civil servants, introduction of interim campaign finance reporting, and elimination of alternative fora for election dispute resolution.<sup>10</sup> Some long-standing ODIHR recommendations remain unaddressed, including on limitations on suffrage rights, lack of provisions for independent candidacy and alternative sources of campaign financing. Further, some ambiguities and gaps remain in the legislation.<sup>11</sup>

*The ongoing efforts to review the electoral legal framework should continue to eliminate the remaining shortcomings identified in this and prior ODIHR reports through an inclusive consultative process.*

<sup>7</sup> In Paragraph 3 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#), the OSCE participating States recognized “the importance of pluralism with regard to political organizations”. Paragraph 7.6 refers to “the right of individuals and groups to establish, in full freedom, their own political parties or other political organizations”. See also Paragraphs 4 and 27 of the 1996 UN Human Rights Committee (HRC) [General Comment No. 25 to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (hereinafter General Comment 25 to the ICCPR).

<sup>8</sup> Besides the election-related legal framework, recent amendments concerned, *inter alia*, the anti-corruption system, the legislative process, the judiciary, public administration, and local self-governance.

<sup>9</sup> This includes the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the 2003 Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), the 2006 [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (CRPD), and the 2002 [Convention on the Standards of Democratic Elections, Electoral Rights and Freedoms in the Member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States](#) (the CIS Convention).

<sup>10</sup> Other changes relate to restructuring and enlarging lower-level election commissions, out-of-country voting, publication of election results and other technical aspects of the electoral process.

<sup>11</sup> The law does not detail or clearly regulate *inter alia* territorial requirement for candidate support signature collection, withdrawal of candidates and criminal and administrative sanctions for election related violations.

According to several ODIHR EOM interlocutors, the consultative approach required by OSCE commitments was not always fully followed while amending the election-related legal framework.<sup>12</sup> Despite some improvements created for facilitating a participatory legislative process, the interlocutors opined that access to the new instruments is controlled and focused on initiatives approved by the authorities, limiting civic influence.<sup>13</sup> Some interlocutors further stated that public discussions were not conducted prior to the adoption of the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, leading to the draft falling short from implementing international standards pertaining to political rights of people with disabilities.

Constitutionally guaranteed fundamental human rights and freedoms, including of speech, peaceful assembly and association, continue to be restricted by subordinate legislation.<sup>14</sup> Although campaign events are organised under simple notification procedure, assemblies not related to campaigning remain restricted by authorisation requirements.<sup>15</sup> Criminal and administrative laws prohibit and penalize unregistered associations and peaceful assemblies organised or conducted in violation of legally prescribed procedures.<sup>16</sup>

*To provide for a genuinely pluralistic environment, the legal framework on the freedom of political and civic association, peaceful assembly and expression should be reviewed, and lawmakers should ensure that any restrictions on the exercise of these rights be clearly prescribed by law and imposed only when necessary, in line with democratic principles. In line with international standards, the reform process should be inclusive, ensure public discussion and should be completed well in advance of the next elections.*

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<sup>12</sup> Paragraph 5.8 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document requires that legislation be “adopted at the end of a public procedure”.

<sup>13</sup> The government has launched an online platform, where legal proposals of at least five citizens can be posted for public discussion. In order to be posted on the platform, a proposal is examined by the moderator (the Institute for Legislative Problems and Parliamentary Studies of the *Oliy Majlis*). In case the proposal gains substantial public support (at least 10,000 supporters for applications addressed to the parliament, 5,000 for those addressed to regional assemblies, and 1,000 to local councils) within 90 days, it is forwarded to the respective assembly for discussion. The ODIHR EOM was informed that for a legal proposal to be posted on the platform it must be pre-approved by authorities, which have 60 days to decide on it. Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors stated that only drafts without significant social relevance or those politically neutral in nature are posted on the platform.

<sup>14</sup> See the [2020 UN HRC Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Uzbekistan](#), in particular Paragraphs 20, 44, 46, 48 and 50, for the assessment of legal restrictions on fundamental freedoms. Paragraph 25 of the UN HRC General Comment 25 to the ICCPR states that “[the] full enjoyment of rights protected by Article 25, [...] requires the full enjoyment and respect for the rights guaranteed in Articles 19, 21 and 22 of the Covenant, including freedom to engage in political activity individually or through political parties and other organizations, freedom to debate public affairs, to hold peaceful demonstrations and meetings, to criticize and oppose, to publish political material, to campaign for election and to advertise political ideas”. See also *Candidate and Party Registration and Media*.

<sup>15</sup> Paragraph 73 of UN HRC [General Comment No. 37 on Article 21](#) to the ICCPR states that “Where authorization regimes persist in domestic law, they must in practice function as a system of notification, with authorization being granted as a matter of course, in the absence of compelling reasons to do otherwise”. Public assemblies remain regulated by the Cabinet of Ministers’ Decree No. 205 “On measures for further improvement of the order of organizing and holding mass events” of 29 July 2014 (Decree No. 205). There is no law regulating public assemblies, and the current restrictive regulation is not in line with Article 33 of the Constitution that allows limitations on the right of assembly only by a statute. In 2019, a draft law on public assemblies was negatively [assessed by ODIHR](#).

<sup>16</sup> Decree No. 205 requires authorisation for organization of public assemblies. Criminal sanctions are applicable for repeated violations of the rules for organizing public assemblies that had entailed administrative liability, and are punishable with up to three years of imprisonment (Article 217 of the Criminal Code). Paragraph 36 of the 2020 ODIHR and Venice Commission [Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly](#) (3rd edition) states that “Offences such as the failure to provide advance notice of an assembly or the failure to comply with route, time and place restrictions imposed on an assembly should not be punishable with prison sentences, or heavy fines”.



## V. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The election was administered by the CEC, 14 District Election Commissions (DECs) and 10,761 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs).<sup>17</sup> The CEC is a permanent constitutional body whose members are appointed for indefinite terms by the *Oliy Majlis* on the recommendation of the regional assemblies.<sup>18</sup> The CEC, supported by ministries and other state agencies, has oversight of the uniform implementation of the law, coordinates voter registration, registers candidates and their proxies, considers electoral complaints, accredits international observers, as well as validates the election results. The wide regulatory powers of the CEC further include setting up expenditure limits for the campaign and allocating airtime to candidates.<sup>19</sup>

The current CEC has 21 members, 7 of whom are women. The chairperson of the CEC is elected from among CEC members on the recommendation of the president. The commission conducted its work professionally, efficiently and in line with the legal deadlines, notwithstanding challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. Election day preparations were also conducted in a timely manner.

The CEC held open sessions, published its decisions in a timely manner, and conducted regular live video conferences with the DECs, thus contributing to the transparency of the electoral process. At the same time, the CEC did not publish important electoral data of public interest to enable independent scrutiny of the elections, such as data on DEC and PEC composition, data on final voter lists, including the number of voters added to the voter lists on election day, disaggregated by regions and polling stations, as well as by age and gender, and detailed voting results disaggregated by DECs and PECs.<sup>20</sup>

By the legal deadline of 14 August, the CEC established the DECs that oversaw the electoral process and coordinated activities of the PECs at the regional level. The DECs had between 15 and 21 members who were, in line with the law, recommended by the regional assemblies. Out of 266 DEC members, 104 (39 per cent) were women, although there were no female DEC chairpersons.<sup>21</sup> According to the CEC, persons with disabilities represented 5 per cent of the DEC members. The ODIHR EOM observed that the DECs generally operated openly and were fully equipped and sufficiently staffed.

*Consideration should be given to enhancing the participation of women in decision-making roles within the election administration.*

The PECs organize and conduct voting and counting at polling stations and comprise between 5 and 19 members depending on the size of the polling station. PEC members may not be members of political parties nor be related to any of the candidates. The DECs set up the PECs by the legal deadline of 28 August from among the nominees of *Mahalla* committees, public associations, enterprises, institutions

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<sup>17</sup> One DEC was established for Tashkent city, for the Republic of Karakalpakstan, and for each of the 12 regions.

<sup>18</sup> These are elected representative bodies of regions, Tashkent city and of the Republic of Karakalpakstan.

<sup>19</sup> The CEC adopted some 17 resolutions for this election; some were adopted or amended as late as July-August.

<sup>20</sup> [UN General Assembly 2011 Resolution No. 66/163](#) reiterates that “transparency is a fundamental basis for free and fair elections, which contributes to the accountability of Governments to their citizens, which, in turn, is an underpinning of democratic societies”. In addition, according to Article 13.1(b) of the UNCAC, State parties ensure “that the public has effective access to information”. See also Article 10 of the UNCAC.

<sup>21</sup> The highest number of women was in the DEC Namangan (53 per cent). This was followed by the DEC of the Republic of Karakalpakstan (47 per cent) and the DECs of Andijan and Ferghana (43 per cent).

and organizations.<sup>22</sup> Some 54 per cent of the 142,044 PEC members were women, and 45 per cent of the PECs were chaired by a woman.

The law provides that no more than a half of the members of a PEC can be recommended by the same organization. In practice, this provision proved to be insufficient to safeguard the PECs' independence, and the ODIHR EOM observed that the DEC's appointed some PECs almost solely based on proposals of the *Mahalla* committees. The ODIHR EOM also noted that informal criteria at times were applied when nominating PEC members.<sup>23</sup>

The ODIHR EOM observed that *Mahalla* committees were also involved in pre-election door-to-door voter list verification and data compilation, setting up of the PEC premises, facilitation of candidate's campaigns and voter education. The IEOM also noted that *Mahalla* committee members were engaged in the polling process or queue control (see *Election Day*). The central role of the *Mahalla* committees in the organization of the electoral process negatively impacted the ability of lower-level election commissions to function independently from state structures.<sup>24</sup>

The CEC held cascade training sessions between May and August for over 144,000 polling staff, both in person and online. According to some ODIHR EOM interlocutors, the format, length and schedule of training sessions was not uniform, and some opined the training took place too far in advance of election day, thus reducing its impact.

*The procedures and criteria for the appointment of commissioners could be specified with the aim to strengthen the independence of the PECs, including from the Mahalla committees. To ensure consistent application of the election procedures, standardized training for all PEC members should be provided.*

The CEC organised a comprehensive and inclusive voter education campaign in a variety of formats, which was promoted throughout the country and well in advance of election day. The CEC put in place a telephone info-line as well as messenger and social network channels, allowing voters to ask questions which were answered in real-time. In cooperation with media outlets, the CEC launched an interactive online map of all polling stations, and a Ministry for Development of Information Technologies and Communications bot gave voters directions to their polling stations.

## VI. VOTER REGISTRATION

All citizens aged 18 years or more have the right to vote, with the exception of prisoners serving sentences for grave crimes as well as citizens incapacitated by a court ruling, including on the basis of

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<sup>22</sup> *Mahallas* are community structures involved in numerous aspects of citizens' everyday life. According to the 1999 Law on the Institutions of Self-Government (last amended in 2021), they, among others, provide financial assistance and advice on marriage, facilitate the timely collection of taxes, assist law enforcement agencies in maintaining public order and safety, and act as a guarantor for loans by business entities. Although remaining formally independent, in 2021, as a result of the local self-governance reform, *Mahallas* were *de facto* integrated into newly established central and local governmental structures composed of regional departments of *Mahallas*, subordinate to the new Ministry for the Support of *Mahallas* and Family.

<sup>23</sup> The criteria for selection included *inter alia* reputation, trustworthiness or "moral standards" of the nominees.

<sup>24</sup> Paragraph 20 of the UN HRC General Comment 25 to the ICCPR requires that "[a]n 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". The States parties to the 2002 CIS Convention committed themselves "to ensure establishment of independent, impartial electoral bodies to organise the conduct of democratic free and fair, authentic and periodical elections". Section II.3.1.b of the Venice Commission [2002 Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters](#) states: "Where there is no longstanding tradition of administrative authorities' independence from those holding political power, independent, impartial electoral commissions must be set up at all levels, from the national level to polling station level".

intellectual and psychosocial disability.<sup>25</sup> Limitations on the basis of intellectual and psychosocial disability are contrary to international standards.<sup>26</sup>

*Restrictions for voting on the basis of legal capacity should be reviewed in line with international obligations.*

Uzbekistan uses a passive system for registering voters based on permanent or temporary residence. Eligible citizens are automatically added to the voter register based on continuously updated data from the country's civil registry. The central Single Electronic Voter Register (SEVR) unifies data from the different databases of several government agencies.<sup>27</sup> Ahead of this election, a synchronization of data allowing for updates in real time further improved the register. Between March and May 2021, the SEVR was also updated based on data collected in a door-to-door verification conducted predominantly by *Mahalla* committees.

The SEVR was then disaggregated into voter lists for each PEC which, between 17 September and 9 October, conducted further door-to-door voter records verification.<sup>28</sup> The ODIHR EOM observed that *Mahalla* committees were also actively involved in this process throughout the country, compromising the perception of independence of the election officials from the *Mahallas*. The DEC's did not oversee this verification exercise, as specified in a CEC resolution.<sup>29</sup> The final number of registered voters was 20,158,907.

*The electoral process should be administered only by authorized bodies, and a clear distinction should be made between the roles and functions of election commission members and other officials, including the Mahallas.*

Voters also had the opportunity to check and update their data until 19 October, in person and online, as well as to verify the displayed voter list at their polling station. Voters could also indicate their intention to vote outside their designated polling station based on where they will be located on election day. Their record would then be automatically moved from their regular voting location to the new polling station of their choice.<sup>30</sup> Voters temporarily residing in locations where special polling stations are established were added to the respective voter list by the management of the facility.<sup>31</sup>

Changes to the voter lists are not permitted within five days of the election, but contrary to international good practice and prior ODIHR recommendations, voters could also be added to a voter list of a polling

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<sup>25</sup> The authorities informed the ODIHR EOM that 8,072 out of 12,522 prisoners countrywide were eligible to vote.

<sup>26</sup> In July 2021, Uzbekistan ratified the CRPD. Articles 12 and 29 of CRPD require that "State Parties shall recognize that persons with disabilities enjoy legal capacity on an equal basis with others in all aspects of life" and ensure their "right and opportunity [...] to vote and be elected". Paragraph 48 of [General Comment No. 1 to Article 12 of the CRPD](#) 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". In Paragraph 7.3 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document, OSCE participating States committed to "guarantee universal and equal suffrage to adult citizens".

<sup>27</sup> The CEC oversees the SEVR that was created ahead of the 2019 parliamentary elections. The SEVR is operated and maintained by the Ministry for Development of Information Technologies and Communications.

<sup>28</sup> The ODIHR EOM observed that during door-to-door verification, voters were repeatedly asked if they were going to vote on election day. One PEC in Andijan informed the ODIHR EOM that on election day they would contact voters who have not yet voted on an hourly basis.

<sup>29</sup> Many DEC's were unable to provide the ODIHR EOM with statistical information on the results of the door-to-door verification of the voter lists by their PEC's.

<sup>30</sup> The CEC informed the ODIHR EOM that some 4,300 such requests were received and processed.

<sup>31</sup> Special PEC's can be established up to a week before an election. For this election, 328 special PEC's were organized in medical facilities (165), military facilities (143), detention centres (12) and prisons (8). Additional 54 PEC's were set up for voting abroad.

station on election day without judicial or administrative oversight, provided that they were included in the SEVR.<sup>32</sup> On election day, in the vast majority of visited polling stations, the IEOM observed that numerous voters were added to the annex of the voter list, often without PEC members verifying their record in the SEVR, thus bypassing the only safeguard against ineligibility or multiple voting. Although ODIHR EOM interlocutors did not express major concerns regarding the accuracy of the voter register, large-scale practice of supplementing the voter lists on election day raised questions about the integrity of the voter register and of the polling process due to high potential for multiple voting.

*In order to strengthen the integrity of the voter registration and of the polling process, additions to the voter list on election day should only be permitted in accordance with clearly defined rules, subject to judicial or administrative control, with effective safeguards against multiple voting.*

## VII. CANDIDATE AND PARTY REGISTRATION

Citizens of at least 35 years of age with residence in the country for at least 10 years prior to election day and with full proficiency in the Uzbek language are eligible to stand for the presidency. The two latter requirements are at odds with international standards and commitments.<sup>33</sup> The right to stand also excludes individuals incapacitated by the court, convicted prisoners, those with an unexpunged criminal records for intentional crimes, and clergy. Contrary to Paragraph 7.5 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document, independent candidates are not allowed to run.<sup>34</sup>

*Restrictions on candidacy based on residency, language proficiency, disabilities and affiliation to a political party should be reviewed in line with international standards and commitments.*

Limitations of the freedom of association include cumbersome requirements for registering political parties and civil society organisations and state authorities are given wide discretionary powers for their denial of registration and deregistrations.<sup>35</sup> Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors stated that independent

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<sup>32</sup> Section I.1.1.2 (iv) of the 2002 Venice Commission Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters recommends: "There should be an administrative procedure subject to judicial control or a judicial procedure, allowing for the registration of a voter who was not registered; the registration should not take place at the polling station on election day".

<sup>33</sup> Paragraph 15 of the UN HRC General Comment 25 to the ICCPR confirms that the "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 25 further underlines: "No distinctions are permitted between citizens in the enjoyment of these rights on the grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status". See also Paragraph 24 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document that prohibits limitations of the human rights and fundamental freedoms "except those which are provided by law, [...] and [are] strictly proportionate to the aim of that law". See also Section I.1.1.1.d.iii. of the Venice Commission Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters.

<sup>34</sup> While non-party members may stand for the presidency, the campaign funds are allocated exclusively to political parties that also spend and report on campaign finance (see *Campaign Finance*). Paragraph 7.5 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document prescribes the participating States to "respect the right of citizens to seek political or public office, individually or as representatives of political parties or organizations, without discrimination".

<sup>35</sup> Paragraph 156 of the 2015 ODIHR and Venice Commission [Guidelines on Freedom of Association](#) states that "Legislation should make the process of notification or registration as simple as possible and, in any case, not more cumbersome than the process created for other entities, such as businesses". Paragraph 237 of the ODIHR and Venice Commission Guidelines on Freedom of Association states that "Any sanctions introduced must always be consistent with the principle of proportionality, that is, they must be the least intrusive means to achieve the desired objective. [...] When deciding whether to apply sanctions, authorities must take care to apply the measure that is the least disruptive and destructive to the right to freedom of association".

non-governmental organizations (NGOs) functioning in the country are subject to control by the state security services, including over the content of their reports and statements aimed at foreign readers.<sup>36</sup>

Only parties registered at least four months prior to election day are eligible to nominate a candidate.<sup>37</sup> The requirements for political party registration remain burdensome and open to arbitrary application.<sup>38</sup> To register a party, a 50-member interim board has to be established, and 20,000 signatures of citizens who express their wish to become party members need to be collected. Additionally, a regional quota is required as signatures must be from residents of at least 8 out of 14 regions.<sup>39</sup> The interim board then applies to the MoJ for registration. The MoJ has one month to decide on the application and may deny registration based on a broad set of reasons; the MoJ has a further month to consider an appeal, and that decision in turn is contestable at the Supreme Court. Combined, these factors challenge international standards protecting freedom of association.<sup>40</sup>

In 2021, the MoJ denied registration of the Social Democratic Party Truth and Progress due to insufficient support signatures.<sup>41</sup> The party informed the ODIHR EOM about incidents of pressure against party leaders and supporters. The MoJ informed the ODIHR EOM that it rejected the registration of the People's Interests Party in 2021, on the grounds that the party failed to notify the MoJ about the establishment of its interim board in charge of collecting the support signatures.

*The legislative and administrative requirements and procedures for the registration of political parties should be revised to respect and encourage pluralism and freedom of association. Registration of*

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<sup>36</sup> Paragraph 48 of the [2020 UN HRC Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Uzbekistan](#) states that “The Committee remains concerned that current legislation continues to impose restrictions on the right to freedom of association, including: (a) unreasonable and burdensome legal and administrative requirements for registering NGOs and political parties; (b) an extensive list of reasons to deny registration; (c) the requirement for NGOs to obtain *de facto* approval from the Ministry of Justice when travelling abroad or receiving funds from foreign sources; and (d) the prohibition of NGOs from participating in “political activities”. Paragraph 171 of the ODIHR and Venice Commission Guidelines on Freedom of Association states that “The internal functions of associations should, thus, generally be free from state interference. This fundamental premise is subject only to the requirement that associations be not-for-profit, respect the principle of non-discrimination and do not engage in activities characterized as unlawful in accordance with international human rights standards”.

<sup>37</sup> An aspiring political party had to register with the MoJ by 14 May.

<sup>38</sup> The LPP provides that registration may be denied if a party's charter, objectives or methods contradict the Constitution or [unspecified] legislative acts. As the legislative acts to which parties' charters must comply are not specified, registration can potentially be denied or withdrawn arbitrarily. Regarding freedom of association, Paragraph 48 of the 2020 UN HRC Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Uzbekistan notes concerns about “unreasonable and burdensome legal and administrative requirements for registering NGOs and political parties” as well as “an extensive list of reasons to deny registration”. Paragraph 87 of the 2020 ODIHR and Venice Commission [Joint Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) (hereinafter Guidelines on Political Party Regulation) recommends that “grounds for denying a party's registration must be clearly stated in law and based on objective criteria”. The MoJ informed the ODIHR EOM that since 2019, several NGOs were denied registration on technical grounds. In March 2021, the President signed the “Concept for the Development of Civil Society in 2021 – 2025”, aiming to facilitate development of civil society and strengthen public control.

<sup>39</sup> Paragraph 102 of the 2020 Guidelines on Political Party Regulation states that “Provisions regarding the limitation of political parties purely on the grounds that they represent a limited geographic area should generally be removed from relevant legislation. Requirements barring contestation for parties with only regional support potentially discriminate against parties that enjoy a strong public following only in a particular area of the country. Such provisions may also have discriminatory effects against small parties and parties representing national minorities”.

<sup>40</sup> In Paragraph 7.6 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document the participating States committed to “respect the right of individuals and groups to establish, in full freedom, their own political parties or other political organizations and provide such 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”. Paragraph 25 of the UN HRC General Comment 25 to the ICCPR refers to “freedom to engage in political activity individually or through political parties and other organizations”.

<sup>41</sup> According to the MoJ, the verification of the 9,879 submitted signatures established that 2,292 signatures had been revoked by citizens and 42 belonged to the deceased and were thus invalidated.

*political parties should be carried out strictly on the basis of objective and transparent criteria and be subject to judicial remedy.*

Registered political parties were required to notify the CEC of their intention to participate in the election and designate their nominee by 16 August. The nominees were required to have public endorsement from at least 1 per cent of the electorate, demonstrated via the collection of support signatures.<sup>42</sup> In line with international good practice voters could support more than one candidate. All candidates collected the requisite number of signatures. The CEC informed the ODIHR EOM that they established three expert groups for authentication of the submitted signatures composed *inter alia* of CEC members, forensic experts, *Mahallas* as well as academia and civil society representatives, which conducted sample checks within a five-day period from submission of the signatures.<sup>43</sup> Political parties' representatives were also invited to attend the verification exercise. None of the five candidates the ODIHR EOM met with raised concerns in relation to the nomination procedures or signature collection.

By 15 September, in line with the legal deadlines, the CEC registered all five candidates, four men and one woman: Bahrom Abduhalimov (SDPU), Alisher Kadirov (DPU), Shavkat Mirziyoyev (LDPU), Narzullo Oblomurodov (EPU) and Maksuda Varisova (PDPU).<sup>44</sup>

## VIII. ELECTION CAMPAIGN

The election campaign officially started on 20 September and ended on 22 October at midnight. The silence period the day before and on election day was generally respected by all contestants. The COVID-19 pandemic and related measures did not prevent campaigning.

In accordance with recent amendments to the Election Code, the DEC's no longer had to facilitate meetings of candidates with voters. In line with a prior ODIHR recommendation, the previous system of authorization of public campaign events was altered to notification of local authorities three days in advance of holding a campaign event.

The campaign was low-key in all regions and lacked a genuinely competitive nature. Its visibility did not increase towards the end of the campaign period. There was no direct meaningful engagement between the candidates or their campaigns, and the possibility of debates between the candidates, as provided for in law, was not utilized. Although candidates highlighted particular aspects of their own programmes, the incumbent did not face significant opposition from the other four contestants, and no candidate convincingly challenged or spoke critically about the President's policies.

Campaigning was conducted at the community and district level, via candidate proxies, regional and district party representatives as well as party youth activists. Each candidate nominated the maximum

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<sup>42</sup> Some 212,000 supporting signatures were required for each candidate. The law does not clearly prescribe an obligation to collect signatures from all regions, but sets a limit of 8 per cent of support signatures originating from any region. Signatures were collected at the places of work, service, study, or residence.

<sup>43</sup> The law requires that a minimum of 15 per cent of the submitted signatures are to be verified. If the verification of more than a quarter of signatures reveals these were collected in violation of the law, the signature sheets are returned to the political parties for rectification within two days. By law, the same number of signatures is selected for verification from all regions. Section I.1.3 (iv) of the 2002 Venice Commission Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters recommends that "The checking process must in principle cover all signatures; however, once it has been established beyond doubt that the requisite number of signatures has been collected, the remaining signatures need not be checked".

<sup>44</sup> Other aspiring candidates, Jahongir Otajonov (*Erk* Democratic Party) and Aleksey Garshin (Free Motherland), informed the ODIHR EOM that they decided not to seek to participate in the election due to intimidation.

number of 15 proxies who assisted with the campaign, represented the candidate's interests, and campaigned on behalf of the candidate in each region.

All candidates and party representatives met by the ODIHR EOM highlighted equal campaigning conditions, including for the production and distribution of campaign materials, organization of meetings with voters, and access to free airtime and print space in media. Each party distributed a variety of traditional campaign materials.<sup>45</sup> While there was no regulation for the type, form or method of campaigning, campaign materials were strikingly similar, possibly due to an overly strict interpretation by the CEC and the political parties of equal conditions for all candidates.

All five candidates held similar campaign events. The majority of meetings with voters were indoor, with often pre-selected audiences of their own supporters.<sup>46</sup> Political parties in general did not attempt to reach out to ordinary voters beyond their traditional support base. Based on observations of its long-term observers (LTOs) the ODIHR EOM noted that meetings with voters took place in an overall choreographed setting and included lengthy speeches and presentations of campaign videos.

Digital campaigning was used by all contestants.<sup>47</sup> Social network pages of candidates and political parties mostly promoted their candidate's manifestos and shared images of meetings with voters.<sup>48</sup> The response to the majority of posts was low-key, with almost no discussion between viewers. The general tone of both posts and comments was respectful and neutral.

Campaign platforms focused on the improvement of the socio-economic situation and poverty reduction, public services, healthcare, education, justice, the ecological system, food security, youth unemployment and job creation. No single issue dominated the campaign, and topical political issues covered in the media and discussed on social networks were not addressed by the candidates in their public appearances.<sup>49</sup>

The number of women in the *Oliy Majlis* doubled from 16 to 32 per cent as a result of the 2019 parliamentary elections. Although reforms aimed at increasing women's participation in public and political life have been underway within the framework of the "National strategy to achieve gender equality in 2020-2030", women remain underrepresented in public life.<sup>50</sup> Only 1 out of 30 ministers and 6 out of 170 district governors are women, with all regional governors (*Hokims*) being men.

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<sup>45</sup> Only some of the campaign material as observed by the ODIHR EOM, notably the EPU manifesto, the DPU party magazine, and the LDPU biography of Mr. Mirziyoyev, contained the required information about the number of copies printed and the name of the printing house.

<sup>46</sup> The ODIHR EOM observed 86 campaign events across the country; COVID-19 measures were not respected at 23 per cent of those events.

<sup>47</sup> Since the start of the campaign, the ODIHR EOM was following the online activities of candidates and their political parties on *Telegram* and the social networks *YouTube*, *Facebook* and *Instagram*. Of all party channels, the LDPU had the highest number of "likes" and viewers. Whilst Ms. Varisova was absent on *Instagram*, *Facebook*, *YouTube* and *Telegram*, Mr. Mirziyoyev and Mr. Abduhalimov were present on all of them. Mr. Mirziyoyev had by far the most followers (on *Instagram* 3.6 million) compared to the second highest number of Mr. Kadirov on *Telegram* 25,000). Mr. Oblomurodov (*Instagram* and *Telegram*) and Mr. Kadirov (*Instagram*, *Facebook* and *Telegram*) candidates used some social networks only.

<sup>48</sup> The majority of campaign clips shared on social network channels by political parties and candidates were reproduced TV videos.

<sup>49</sup> For example, despite almost daily news coverage of the government's activities in relation to Afghanistan, including on guarantees to prevent trans-border threats, the relationship with Afghanistan did not play a role in the campaign or in candidates' manifestos.

<sup>50</sup> The UN HRC, in its 2020 Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Uzbekistan (Paragraphs 12 and 13), remains "concerned by the persistent inequalities between women and men, including in employment, political and public life. In this respect, it is concerned at the continued low representation of women in the judiciary, the legislative and the executive bodies, especially in high-level decision-making positions".

This underrepresentation indicates the need of greater efforts to encourage women's participation in public and political life at all levels.<sup>51</sup> Attendance at campaign events observed across the country by the ODIHR EOM LTOs was generally balanced between men and women, while the vast majority of speakers at rallies were men.<sup>52</sup> Although gender issues were mentioned in a number of campaign speeches, they did not feature prominently in the campaign discourse.<sup>53</sup>

*Women's active participation in public and political life, especially at the senior and decision-making levels, should be facilitated by means of comprehensive legal, institutional, and educational initiatives. Political parties should be encouraged to facilitate women's political advancement, increase visibility of women during electoral campaigns, and integrate gender issues into their platforms. With this aim, consideration could be given to increases in state funding for parties that promote gender equality, and annual state subsidies to fund women's wings of political parties.*

Almost half of the campaign events observed by the ODIHR EOM were accessible for persons with disabilities. In a few of those meetings, sign language was provided, including via video link. Three candidates had provisions for improvements for persons with disabilities as part of their social protection programme.<sup>54</sup> The ODIHR EOM did not observe any campaign material in formats accessible to people with different needs.

Recent improvements to the legal framework prohibit the misuse of administrative resources, including involvement of state officials, in campaigning.<sup>55</sup> The law allows for the use of free-of-charge resources from public institutions, associations, enterprises and *Mahalla* committees by all candidates for campaign purposes, such as premises, equipment, and the public transport, available upon request and without limits. Although not problematic *per se* if applied equally to all contestants, this is potentially open to abuse in practice without proper safeguards.<sup>56</sup> The ODIHR EOM observed that President Mirziyoyev enjoyed a significant advantage of incumbency, with his visits to various regions merging both campaign and official duties and benefiting from extensive media coverage.<sup>57</sup> Prominent billboard

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<sup>51</sup> Paragraph 23 of the 1999 OSCE Istanbul Document commits participating States to “making equality between men and women an integral part of [their] policies”. See also Paragraph 3 of the OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 7/09, which calls participating States to “encourage all political actors to promote equal participation of women and men in political parties, with a view to achieving better gender-balanced representation in elected public offices at all levels of decision-making”.

<sup>52</sup> During campaign events observed by the ODIHR EOM, 47 per cent of attendees were women, whilst only 28 per cent of speakers at rallies were women. Only 14 out of the 75 registered proxies of all candidates were women.

<sup>53</sup> According to Paragraph 160 of Guidelines on Political Party Regulation, “Political parties can for instance introduce provisions in their statutes to promote gender equality. These could include, for example, a minimum representation of each sex or women's sections in decision-making structures, electoral lists, nominations and appointments. Moreover, gender equality could be mentioned as a basic value in party statutes, policies and programmes”. Article 191c of the [1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#) provides that political parties “shall consider incorporating gender issues in their political agenda, taking measures to ensure that women can participate in the leadership of political parties on an equal basis with men”.

<sup>54</sup> While Mr. Mirziyoyev suggested increasing the employment of persons with disabilities, Mr. Abduhalimov aimed to support women with disabilities, and Ms. Varisova highlighted need of support for persons with disabilities in the spheres of legislation, healthcare, social protection, housing, etc.

<sup>55</sup> Drafts of amendments to the Election Code included a more comprehensive set of measures against misuse of administrative resources, including a prohibition on the recruitment of subordinates for campaigning by public officials, which were not adopted.

<sup>56</sup> See Section B.1 of the ODIHR and Venice Commission 2016 [Joint Guidelines for Preventing and Responding to the Misuse of Administrative Resources during Electoral Processes](#) as well as Paragraphs 251-253 of the [Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#).

<sup>57</sup> The ODIHR EOM observed significant additional logistical support for events attended by the President, including security, transport, visibility and attendance of high-level officials. This was observed, among others, in Ferghana, Andijan, Tashkent, Syrdarya, Bukhara, and Jizzakh regions on 28 and 29 September, and 6, 7, 12 and 21 October, respectively. By law, candidates may use public transport for free. The incumbent used the plane and helicopter provided for him in his capacity as the president.



ads celebrating 30 years of independence of Uzbekistan further promoted the incumbent widely. All social network channels of Mr. Mirziyoyev were run by the presidential press service. Such practices blurred the line between state and party activities, contrary to Paragraph 5.4 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document.<sup>58</sup>

*Authorities should ensure a clear separation between state and party in practice. An effective sanctioning mechanism against the misuse of administrative resources should be established and implemented.*

## IX. CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Campaign finance is regulated by the Election Code and the LFPP, which contain basic rules on financing of election campaigns. The legal framework does not establish clear and effective sanctions for campaign finance violations, including for the failure to submit campaign finance reports or use of prohibited funding sources.<sup>59</sup> Such absence of sanctions for inaccurate reporting limits the effectiveness of campaign finance oversight. Some existing gaps and ambiguous provisions were partially addressed by CEC resolutions.<sup>60</sup>

All expenses related to the election campaigns of political parties are financed from the state budget in the amounts determined by the CEC. In 2021, a total of UZS 15.5 billion (EUR 1.25 million) was allocated for funding election campaigns, and each of the five political parties received some UZS 3.1 billion.<sup>61</sup> Unused campaign funds must be returned to the state budget after the election. Although the law allows private and party funding for statutory activities of political parties, it is prohibited to use these sources for election campaigns. This diminishes the individuals' rights to freely express political support, contrary to international good practice, and affects political pluralism.<sup>62</sup>

Notwithstanding the legal prohibitions, the ODIHR EOM was informed that local authorities requested private companies to provide free of charge services for the campaign, misusing the social advertisement provisions for circumventing campaign restrictions.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Paragraph 5.4 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document mandates “a clear separation between the State and political parties; in particular, political parties will not be merged with the State”. See also Paragraph 251 of the Guidelines on Political Party Regulation.

<sup>59</sup> Paragraph 272 of the Guidelines on Political Party Regulation prescribes that “Sanctions should be applied against political parties found to be in violation of relevant laws and regulations and should be dissuasive in nature. Moreover, in addition to being enforceable, sanctions must at all times be objective, effective, and proportionate to the specific violation”.

<sup>60</sup> The CEC determined reporting deadlines and templates, clarified how to return private campaign donations, and allowed parties to prepay their election expenditures from party funds subject to subsequent compensation from state funds.

<sup>61</sup> EUR 1 is equal to some UZS 12,180 (Uzbek Som).

<sup>62</sup> The prohibition concerns all alternative sources of financing, including funds of political parties and candidates, and private monetary or in-kind donations. See Paragraphs 204 and 209 of the Guidelines on Political Party Regulation which reiterate that “[f]unding of political parties is a form of political participation, and it is appropriate for parties to seek private financial contributions” and 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”. Paragraph 233 of the Guidelines on Political Party Regulation states that “subsidies [...] should not be the only source of income or create conditions for over-dependency on state support”.

<sup>63</sup> The ODIHR EOM was informed that advertising companies and owners of billboards and LED screens around the country were required to provide their equipment free-of-charge to display campaign ads and voter education materials. Such instances were observed in Bukhara, Khiva, Samarkand, Tashkent city and Tashkent region. In some instances, free campaign advertising was contracted as social advertising, under the Law on Advertisement.

*To further promote voters' political participation and pluralism, the campaign finance framework should be brought in line with international good practice. Individuals should be allowed to donate to political parties and candidates for the use of the funds for campaigning. The legislation could provide details on the amount, timeframe and method of contribution, as well as safeguards for accountability of these funds through disclosure and audit requirements for donations from private sources.*

Partially addressing a prior ODIHR recommendation, political parties must now submit an interim report to the CEC due 5 days prior to election day and a final report within 20 days after the announcement of the election results. Both reports must contain information about expenditure of funds for campaign purposes. Nevertheless, neither the CEC nor the political parties published the interim campaign reports, diminishing transparency and undermining the purpose of the new disclosure obligation.<sup>64</sup> In line with the Election Code and a CEC resolution, political parties must publish the campaign finance related information on their websites and in print media within a month following the announcement of election results.

*To enhance transparency and accountability in election campaigns, all campaign finance reports, including interim reports, should be published in a timely manner. Consideration should be given to establishing effective and proportionate sanctions for violations related to campaign finance.*

Parties must also submit annual financial reports to the *Oliy Majlis*, the MoJ, the Ministry of Finance and the Tax Committee. The Chamber of Accounts conducts an *ex post* financial audit due in the beginning of the next calendar year. In line with a previous ODIHR recommendation, the results of the audit are to be published.<sup>65</sup>

## **X. MEDIA**

### **A. MEDIA ENVIRONMENT**

The media environment is characterized by a large number of state-owned media outlets competing with private media in a small, yet developing advertising market.<sup>66</sup> Television (TV) is the main source of information, especially in the regions. The State National Television and Radio Company (NTRC) operates 12 national TV channels and 13 regional broadcasters. It is mainly funded from the state budget and receives more funds annually than the entire TV advertising market.<sup>67</sup> The general director of the

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<sup>64</sup> Article 7(3) of the [UNCAC](#) reads “Each State Party shall also consider taking appropriate legislative and administrative measures ... to enhance transparency in the funding of candidatures for elected public office and where applicable, the funding of political parties”. See also Paragraphs 247 and 259 of the Guidelines on Political Party Regulation and Sections II.A1.1.1 and II.A1.1.3. of the 2016 Venice Commission and ODIHR [Joint Guidelines for preventing and responding to the misuse of administrative resources during electoral processes](#).

<sup>65</sup> The Chamber of Accounts informed the ODIHR EOM that the audit methodology is currently under review due to the accession of the country to the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions.

<sup>66</sup> According to the media regulator, a total of 736 state and 1,180 private media outlets operate in Uzbekistan. The International Media Service [estimated](#) (in Russian) the total advertising market for 2020 at some EUR 42 million, while the entire TV market in Uzbekistan for 2020 was estimated at EUR 28.7 million.

<sup>67</sup> The state budget for 2021 allotted the NTRC some EUR 35.5 million. Paragraph 16 of the UN HRC General Comment No 34 to the ICCPR requires that “State parties should ensure that public broadcasting services operate in the independent manner. In this regard, State parties should guarantee independence and editorial freedom. They should provide funding in the manner that does not undermine their independence”.

NTRC is appointed by the government in coordination with the president. So far, there have been no efforts to initiate the transformation of the NTRC into a public broadcaster.<sup>68</sup>

*In order to enhance the scope of the information available and to promote a plurality of views, it is recommended to transform the state television into a genuine public broadcaster, with independent appointment of management, multi-sourced funding and a clearly defined public mandate. Such broadcaster should be required to provide balanced and impartial reporting in the news and current affairs programmes, including during election coverage.*

The recent improvements in the media climate have paved the way for more critical reporting on local government and social issues, especially in online media and on social networks. However, the increased judicial and physical pressure on both bloggers and journalists contributes to wide-spread self-censorship within the society.<sup>69</sup> Only few media outlets attempt to provide news beyond ceremonial coverage of events, and analytical or investigative reporting is virtually absent. Many ODIHR EOM interlocutors noted an overall low level of education and professionalism of journalists. Several ODIHR EOM interlocutors explained that limitations on the activities of international media support institutions in Uzbekistan and strict requirements for NGOs to obtain MoJ approval for foreign financial support have contributed to this.<sup>70</sup>

A number of ODIHR EOM interlocutors referred to systematic improvements in communications by national and local governments through the development of press-services and regular press conferences. Although the right to receive and impart information without interference by the authorities is guaranteed by the constitution and supplementary legal framework, the absence of practical implementation mechanisms resulted, according to many ODIHR EOM interlocutors, in a selective approach by public institutions in providing information. Many ODIHR EOM interlocutors welcomed the creation of online databases of documents of public interest, but noted their limited accessibility and virtual absence of detailed information, among others, on the disaggregated number of registered voters prior to and after the elections, election results at district and local levels, as well as court decisions, contrary to international standards.<sup>71</sup>

*To effectively respond to the right of access to information and facilitate voters' informed choice, authorities should proactively publish institutional information of public interest in the public domain. Access to such information should be provided in an easy, prompt, effective and practical manner, facilitating a wide-range of inquiries.*

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<sup>68</sup> Paragraph 2.c.i of the 2021 [Joint Declaration](#) “on Politicians, Public Officials and Freedom of Expression” (hereinafter 2021 Joint Declaration) by the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression (SRFO) and the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM), the Organization of American States Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression (OAS SRFE) and the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information (ACHPR SRFE) recommends the states to “Ensure the presence of independent, adequately funded public service broadcasters”.

<sup>69</sup> In May 2021, blogger Otabek Sattoriy, who was reporting on alleged illegal construction, was sentenced to 6.5 years in prison for extortion and libel. In March 2021, blogger Miraziz Bazarov, who was advocating for LGBTI rights, was severely beaten by unknown attackers; police investigations were still ongoing at the time of this report. Blogger Dadakhon Khaidarov, who was critical of a regional governor, was detained by the police in August 2020 for 10 days for organizing civil disorder, yet was released without formally facing charges, according to media [reports](#).

<sup>70</sup> On 3 March 2021, the president signed a [decree](#) (in Russian), which increased the annual maximum limit of foreign funds that NGOs may receive with a mandatory notification of the MoJ from EUR 400 to EUR 2,000.

<sup>71</sup> For example, in order to request information on spending of public institutions, it is necessary to provide the tax number of the organization in question, which is usually not available in the public domain. Paragraph 19 of the UN HRC [General Comment No 34](#) to the ICCPR calls the states to “proactively put in the public domain Government information of public interest” and to “make every effort to ensure easy, prompt, effective and practical access to such information”.

Foreign journalists are subject to mandatory accreditation by the MFA.<sup>72</sup> The MFA has broad discretion to revoke or not prolong the accreditation, for instance in cases if a journalist “interferes in the internal affairs of the country” or “damages the honour and the dignity of Uzbek citizens”.<sup>73</sup> To receive specific election related short-term accreditation, international media outlets needed to obtain accreditation also from the CEC.<sup>74</sup> However, some media outlets informed the ODIHR EOM about unclear information with respect to submission deadlines provided by some Uzbek embassies abroad, and arbitrary requirements to submit a plan for travel within the country together with a list of scheduled interlocutors as a part of the application; the latter was denied by the MFA.<sup>75</sup>

## B. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Constitution provides for freedom of speech and prohibits censorship, yet, contrary to international good practice, media are held legally accountable for third party content and user-generated comments.<sup>76</sup>

*The legal framework should be amended so that intermediaries are not held liable for any third-party content as such liability could unduly limit the scope of the public debate during the campaign. Exceptions could be provided only if such intermediaries specifically intervene in that content or refuse to obey a removal order, with relevant restrictions imposed in accordance with due process guarantees by an independent, impartial oversight body.*

Positively, the December 2020 amendments to the Criminal Code removed imprisonment as a penalty for defamation and insult; however, they still remain a criminal offence, punishable with fines, corrective labour or limitation of freedom, contrary to international standards.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, criminal prosecution for defamation and insult of the president, which is punishable with up to five years of

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<sup>72</sup> According to the [MFA](#) (in Russian), as of 29 September, 49 long-term foreign correspondents were accredited.

<sup>73</sup> Several media outlets informed the ODIHR EOM that they did not receive any reply to long-term accreditation applications. In the case of the Uzbek edition of *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, the MFA informed the ODIHR EOM that the accreditation was not provided due to unprofessionalism displayed by the media outlet. The accreditation of Polish journalist Agnieszka Pikulicka was not prolonged by the MFA, with no official information on alleged violations provided to the journalist. The MFA informed the ODIHR EOM that the monitoring conducted by the AIMC concluded that her professional activities were not in line with the legal requirements for accredited journalists and media legislation. On 7 November, Ms. Pikulicka was also barred from entering Uzbekistan as a tourist without a formal explanation. Previously, Ms. Pikulicka reported on the beating of blogger Miraziz Bazarov. The [Communiqué No.4/2016](#) by the OSCE RFoM highlights that “Accreditation should not serve as a tool to control content, restrict the flow of information across borders, or as a sanction in response to alien propaganda”. See also the OSCE RFoM 2016 [report](#) “Accreditation of Foreign Journalists in the OSCE region”.

<sup>74</sup> According to the CEC, a total of 233 foreign journalists received election-related short-term accreditation.

<sup>75</sup> For example, the Swiss Public Television *SRF* informed the ODIHR EOM that their accreditation request submitted to the Uzbek Embassy in Russia on 7 October was not processed in a timely manner, although the embassy acknowledged that the application was submitted before the deadline. The MFA explained to the ODIHR EOM that a deadline of 10 days before election day was established by the CEC in addition to the 14 days deadline established by the MFA, and thus media interested in covering the election had to apply no later than 24 days before election day.

<sup>76</sup> The 2017 [Joint Declaration](#) on Freedom of Expression, and “Fake News”, Disinformation and Propaganda by the UN SRFO, OSCE RFoM, OAS SRFE and ACHPR SRFE reads “Intermediaries should never be liable for any third party content relating to those services unless they specifically intervene in that content [...]. Consideration should be given to protecting individuals against liability for merely redistributing or promoting, through intermediaries, content of which they are not the author and which they have not modified”.

<sup>77</sup> Paragraph 47 of the UN HRC General Comment No 34 to the ICCPR notes that “States parties should consider the decriminalization of defamation and, in any case, the application of the criminal law should only be countenanced in the most serious of cases and imprisonment is never an appropriate penalty”.

imprisonment, was expanded to relevant information in online media and social networks.<sup>78</sup> Journalists and bloggers also face criminal penalties for “insulting the dignity of citizens”, for dissemination of false information, materials that are aimed at spreading panic, false information about the spread of dangerous infectious diseases and for disseminating information that threatens public order.<sup>79</sup> Such a restrictive legal framework significantly limits the space for independent reporting and results in widespread self-censorship among journalists. Any restrictions on the freedom of expression are permissible only in accordance with the tripartite test for such restrictions under international law, namely that they should be provided for by law, serve one of the legitimate interests recognised under international law, and be necessary and proportionate to protect that interest.

*Defamation and libel should be clearly defined in the law. To comply with international standards, criminal provisions for defamation should be repealed in favour of civil remedies designed to restore the reputation harmed. Any fines imposed should be proportionate and should not infringe on freedom of speech and the freedom to express an opinion. The legal framework should not provide public officials with greater protection nor establish high penalties for statements directed at them.*

Although access to a number of previously blocked websites of local and international media outlets and human rights organizations was restored in 2019, many still remain inaccessible throughout the country,<sup>80</sup> contrary to international standards.<sup>81</sup> The Agency of Information and Mass Communications (AIMC) is tasked with creating and maintaining a register of blocked websites; however, this register is not publicly available and was not provided to the ODIHR EOM upon official request.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, Uzbekistan has officially been limiting access to the social networks *Twitter*, *TikTok* and *Vkontakte* and instant messengers *Skype* and *WeChat* since 2 July 2021.<sup>83</sup> On 3 November, the communication

<sup>78</sup> On 19 April 2021, the State Security Service [initiated](#) (in Russian) a criminal case against blogger Validjon Kalanov for insulting the President. Paragraph 38 of the UN HRC General Comment No. 34 to the ICCPR voices concerns of the committee “regarding laws that prosecute defamation of the head of state and provide for the protection of the honour of public officials”, and concludes that “laws should not provide for more severe penalties solely on the basis of the identity of the person that may have been impugned”. Paragraph 2.b.ii-iii of the 2021 [Joint Declaration](#) calls the states to “Abolish any criminal defamation laws and replace them, where necessary, with appropriate civil defamation laws. Repeal any defamation or *lèse-majesté* laws which provide special protection to or provide for greater penalties for statements directed at heads of State or government, politicians or officials”.

<sup>79</sup> The Criminal Code does not provide a clear definition of “insulting the dignity”. Therefore, this is usually determined by a linguistic analysis. Blogger Miraziz Bazarov, under house arrest since April 2021 and prohibited from communicating online or in person, is facing libel charges for calling teachers of his former school “losers, who can only teach losers”.

<sup>80</sup> The ODIHR EOM identified over 60 websites of local and international media outlets, services and human rights organizations that were inaccessible throughout the campaign. Some of these websites’ managers informed the ODIHR EOM that they were not formally notified by Uzbek authorities of any access limitations.

<sup>81</sup> Paragraph 43 of the UN HRC General Comment 34 to the ICCPR notes that any restrictions of any internet websites should not violate freedom of expression, and that “permissible restrictions generally should be content-specific” while “generic bans on the operation of certain sites and systems” are not compatible with the principle of freedom of expression. Paragraph 1.a.iii.1 of the 2020 [Joint Declaration](#) on Freedom of Expression and Elections in the Digital Age by the UN SRFO, OSCE RFoM and OAS SRFE reads that “there should be no prior censorship of the media, including through means such as the administrative blocking of media websites or Internet shutdowns”.

<sup>82</sup> The AIMC explained that data is provided only to public institutions, legal entities and individuals solely in relation to the websites that belong to them. Paragraph 70 of the 2011 [report](#) of the UN SRFO calls upon States that block websites “to provide lists of blocked websites and full details regarding the necessity and justification for blocking each individual website. An explanation should also be provided on the affected websites as to why they have been blocked. Any determination on what content should be blocked must be undertaken by a competent judicial authority or a body which is independent of any political, commercial, or other unwarranted influences”.

<sup>83</sup> The January 2021 amendments to the Law on Protection of Personal Data (LPPD) required Internet services to store data on Uzbek users on servers within the country, while the 29 October amendments to the Criminal Code introduced up to three years imprisonment for violation of such provisions. On 2 July, the communication supervisory body *UzKomNazorat* [announced](#) (in Russian) speed limitations, effectively making five networks that did not [comply](#) with the LPPD, inaccessible. The head of *UzKomNazorat* was unable to explain to the ODIHR EOM why the access was only limited to five networks, while others remained unhindered.

supervisory body *UzKomNazorat* limited access to *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *Odnoklassniki*, *Telegram* and *Youtube* for non-compliance with the LPPD.<sup>84</sup>

*In line with international standards, the blocking of websites should not serve as a tool to control content, restrict the flow of information across borders, or as a sanction in response to critical coverage. Websites should only be blocked, based on objective and transparent criteria defined in law. Possible limitations should be content-specific, while general bans of whole websites should be avoided. The websites in question and the general public should be informed when such blockings are in place and provided with an opportunity to appeal.*

The Election Code provides a general framework for media conduct during the campaign. In April 2021, the CEC further clarified media-related rules in its Resolution No. 1068. The relevant media complied with their duties to provide each contestant with complimentary 3.5 hours on each of five NTRC's TV channels and weekly space in national print media.<sup>85</sup> The CEC also allotted extensive time and space to the contestants on 13 regional TV stations of NTRC and in 26 regional newspapers.



### C. MEDIA MONITORING FINDINGS [Click Here to Read Media Monitoring Results](#)

According to the ODIHR EOM media monitoring results, the news coverage of the campaign focused on the formal campaign activities of the contestants and their proxies.<sup>86</sup> The contestants were predominantly covered in a positive manner, while analytical programmes and critical reporting about high-level public officials and candidates were virtually absent.<sup>87</sup>

Two channels, *O'zbekiston* and *O'zbekiston 24*, made an effort to provide all five political parties and their nominated candidates with similar shares of politically relevant coverage in their prime-time newscasts, between 11 and 14 per cent. Contrary to legal requirements, private *MY5*, *Sevimli* and *UzReport* allotted to Mr. Mirziyoyev in his capacity as candidate more coverage (34, 39 and 93 minutes, respectively), than the other four contestants received combined (23, 15 and 70 minutes, respectively).<sup>88</sup> Another private TV station, *ZO'R TV*, chose to refrain from any coverage of the contestants during the entire campaign. All broadcasters provided extensive additional coverage of the activities of the President, including of his regional trips, and often did not make a clear distinction between the President in his official capacity and as a candidate. The CEC Resolution No. 1068 established that the coverage of a candidate performing official duties is not considered as campaigning.

The CEC required the five national state TV stations to reserve time for debates among the contestants on every Saturday during the campaign period; however, such debates did not take place. This was a missed opportunity for the voters to see contestants involved in a live discussion. In the week before election day, candidates' representatives participated in two pre-recorded debates, answering questions from the TV host, with very limited engagement between each other. These programmes were

<sup>84</sup> The access to these newly blocked networks was restored several hours later, and the head of *UzKomNazorat* was [dismissed](#) (in Russian) on the same day by order of the President for "erroneous and uncoordinated activities".

<sup>85</sup> The NTRC also aired 30 second advertisement spots of every contestant on five TV channels, four times per each day of the campaign.

<sup>86</sup> During the official campaign period, the ODIHR EOM monitored the prime time coverage of six TV stations: *O'zbekiston* (state-owned), *O'zbekiston 24* (state-owned), *MY5*, *Sevimli*, *UzReport*, *ZO'R TV* and six websites: *Daryo.uz*, *Gazeta.uz*, *Kun.uz*, *Podrobno.uz*, *Qalampir.uz*, *Repost.uz*.

<sup>87</sup> One of the few notable exceptions was the coverage of Mr. Kadirov's suggestion to introduce additional taxes on Uzbek migrant workers, which drew notable criticism from other candidates, media and bloggers.

<sup>88</sup> Paragraph 31 of the CEC Resolution No. 1068 required all media to create equal conditions for all contestants, including equal terms for the duration and scope of the programmes.

announced only a day in advance and were aired outside of prime-time, which further limited their potential viewership.<sup>89</sup>

Similar to the broadcast media, all online outlets monitored by the ODIHR EOM devoted more coverage to Mr. Mirziyoyev as a candidate than to the other four contestants combined. This was supplemented by extensive coverage of Mr. Mirziyoyev in his role as president, including of his regional trips.

The AIMC, media regulator, is overseen by the presidential administration and has broad authority over broadcast, print, online media and social networks that operate in Uzbekistan. The legal framework does not ensure the independence of AIMC, contrary to international good practice.<sup>90</sup>

The CEC tasked the AIMC with monitoring of media campaign coverage and submission of daily reports to the CEC that were not publicly available. While the CEC intended to publish the final summary of the campaign coverage monitoring at its website, the monitoring results have not yet been published at the time of finalizing this report. The CEC did not identify any violations based on the AIMC media monitoring.

*Consideration should be given to transforming the Agency of Information and Mass Communications into an independent, impartial and collegial oversight body with a clear mandate, adhering to criteria of transparency and public accountability. The system of appointment of its members should ensure diversity of representation and prevent conflict of interests.*

## **XI. PARTICIPATION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES**

Uzbekistan is a multi-ethnic country. According to official statistics, ethnic Uzbeks constitute 83.8 per cent of the population, while the other large ethnic communities are Karakalpaks, Kazakhs, Russians and Tajiks.<sup>91</sup> The former group predominantly resides in Karakalpakstan which has the status of a sovereign republic.

The Constitution provides for equal rights and freedoms, without discrimination based on ethnicity. There was no ethnic minority candidate for this election, and none of the candidates featured inter-ethnic issues in their campaign platforms. Most campaign events observed by the ODIHR EOM were held in Uzbek, while some included messages in minority languages. In addition to Uzbek, Russian and Karakalpak, the ODIHR EOM noted some campaign materials in Kazakh, Tajik and Turkmen. No cases of discriminatory language or actions directed towards minority populations were reported or observed during the campaign.

The Election Code provides that ballots are printed in the official language as well as in the languages spoken by the majority of the population of the respective district, upon the DEC's decision. According to the CEC, 94.6 per cent of ballot papers were printed in Uzbek (in Latin and Cyrillic alphabets) and, in some constituencies, in Karakalpak (2.5 per cent) and Russian (2.9 per cent). No DEC's requested

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<sup>89</sup> Both debates were aired between 17:00 and 18:20.

<sup>90</sup> The director of the AIMC is appointed directly by the president, while deputies are appointed by the presidential administration upon coordination with the president. Paragraph 19 of the UN HRC General Comment No 34 to the ICCPR calls on the States to "establish an independent and public broadcasting licensing authority, with the power to examine broadcasting applications and to grant licenses". Paragraph 2.a.iii of the 2021 [Joint Declaration](#) recommends the states to "Ensure that all bodies which have regulatory powers over the media and all public bodies which facilitate freedom of expression are independent of politicians, public officials and commercial players, are accountable to the public and operate transparently".

<sup>91</sup> The population has not been counted in over 30 years. A new census, planned for November 2020, was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic and postponed until 2023.

ballots in other minority languages for districts with sizable ethnic communities.<sup>92</sup> No concerns by minority communities on this issue were reported to the ODIHR EOM.

ODIHR EOM media monitoring noted that a get-out-to-vote-campaign was conducted in nine languages. Election material, including related to legislation and CEC regulations, was published in Uzbek, Russian and Karakalpak, and also distributed online in Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik, and Turkmen.

## XII. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

The 2021 amendments to the Election Code improved the system of dispute resolution, as parallel avenues for election-related disputes were eliminated, and the procedural deadlines were shortened, in line with prior ODIHR recommendations. Since April 2021, following the adoption of the new Law on the Constitutional Court, individuals and legal entities have the right to directly request the Constitutional Court to examine the constitutionality of laws that allegedly violate their constitutional rights, after all other legal remedies have been exhausted.

While some ODIHR EOM interlocutors highlighted improvements in the organization and functioning of the judiciary, others expressed concerns that a lack of transparency, particularly in judicial employment, the inaccessibility of courts and a limited institutional independence continue to diminish public trust in the judiciary. Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors underlined particular problems with lack of judicial independence in politically charged cases.<sup>93</sup>

The Election Code allows all stakeholders to file election related complaints. Nevertheless, recent reforms were untested in this election, as no complaints were filed at any stage of the electoral process with any levels of the election administration or with the judiciary. This was attributed by some ODIHR EOM interlocutors to the low level of confidence in the dispute resolution mechanism and the lack of genuine competition in the election. The CEC received only voters' requests for information.

Election commissions, including the CEC, review complaints about violations of the Election Code in the first instance, with their decisions subject to judicial review. Such complaints may be filed up to election day, and election commissions have to decide on complaints within three days.<sup>94</sup> Complaints against actions or decisions of the election administration must be submitted to the administrative courts within five days, and decided upon within three days. The Supreme Court has jurisdiction over complaints against the CEC.

The Election Code does not limit the right to challenge election results or recount requests. Article 96 of the Election Code allows for the voting or election results to be invalidated in case of violations but does not define such violations. Further, the Election Code provides that the overall election result may

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<sup>92</sup> For example, Tajik is broadly used in the Bukhara and Samarkand regions. Paragraph 32.5 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document states that “persons belonging to national minorities have the right [...] to disseminate, have access to and exchange information in their mother tongue”. Paragraph 12 of the UN HRC General Comment 25 to the ICCPR states that “information about voting should be available in minority languages”.

<sup>93</sup> The president maintains extensive influence on the formation of the judiciary, including the powers to appoint 20 of the 21-member Supreme Judicial Council, to appoint and dismiss the presidents and vice-presidents of the regional and Tashkent city courts, and nominate justices of the Supreme and Constitutional courts. The influence of the court presidents and vice-presidents remains high, as their functions are broadly defined in the law. See Paragraph 5.12 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document and Paragraphs 1, 4, 6, 7, 10, 13 of the [UN Basic Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary](#).

<sup>94</sup> Exceptions include all complaints submitted within six days prior to as well as on election day, which must be decided immediately. The latter rule also applies to complaints submitted to administrative courts.



be recognized valid, despite some invalidated voting results on the PEC and DEC levels. However, the law does not specify the scope of acceptable invalidations.<sup>95</sup>

*To ensure effective legal remedy and prevent arbitrary application of the law, the provisions of the Election Code on challenging and invalidating election results should be clearly elaborated.*

The election-related provisions of the Code of Administrative Responsibilities and the Criminal Code are overly broad and, in a number of instances lack the necessary clarity needed to establish an offense hampering legal certainty and consistent implementation.<sup>96</sup> The sanctions prescribed for election-related misdemeanours are not proportionate to the seriousness of the offences and do not bear dissuasive character.<sup>97</sup>

*To ensure legal certainty, the system establishing sanctions for election-related violations should be reviewed, with dissuasive sanctions set for all potential perpetrators and for all violations affecting the electoral process.*

### XIII. ELECTION OBSERVATION

The Election Code provides for the presence of international observers, party agents, and members of *Mahalla* committees in meetings of all levels of election administration as well as in polling stations on election day. The 2021 amendments to the Election Code extended the period for interested entities to apply for registration of their nominated observers from 15 to 10 days before election day. International observers are accredited by the CEC, while others are subject to accreditation at the DEC. <sup>98</sup> Media representatives must also seek accreditation to enter polling stations.

By law, since 2019, *Mahalla* committees may observe elections. Nevertheless, the multiplicity of electoral activities that *Mahalla* committees were involved in represents a potential conflict when *Mahalla* committee members also serve as election observers.<sup>99</sup> Independent NGOs and private organizations are not entitled to observe, contrary to OSCE commitments and international standards,

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<sup>95</sup> Paragraph 5.10 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document states that “everyone will have an effective means of redress against administrative decisions”. See also paragraph 18.2 of the [1991 OSCE Moscow Document](#).

<sup>96</sup> Articles 51.2 – 51.9 of the Code of Administrative Responsibilities penalise interventions into the work of election commissions, violation of campaign rules, dissemination of false information about candidates, and breaking financial rules but do not provide sufficient clarity to determine what actions may or may not be classified as violations and factors influencing the amount of the penalty. It is unclear whether Article 51.8 applies to violations of financing of campaigns or only to financing the organisation of elections. Articles 146 and 147 of the Criminal Code criminalizes, in very broad terms, actions such as violation of secrecy of vote, forgery of electoral documents, unlawful marking of the ballots, manipulative count of votes, hampering electoral rights by threats, violence and bribe, and hampering election campaigns of candidates. The law does not prescribe penalties for ballot box stuffing and unlawful proxy voting, despite a recurring record of such violations.

<sup>97</sup> The majority of administrative offences entail fines up to UZS 1,225,000 (EUR 100) for individuals and up to UZS 2,450,000 for officials; most serious misdemeanours are violations of financing elections and of the rules on publication of exit and opinion polls which entail maximum fines of UZS 2,450,000 for individuals, and UZS 5,000,000 for officials. Criminal sanctions range from fines to five-year imprisonment. The laws do not define aggravating circumstances or other indications for calibrating sanctions.

<sup>98</sup> The CEC granted accreditation to 966 international observers and 1,672 journalists.

<sup>99</sup> Paragraph 8 of the [Declaration of Global Principles for Non-partisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations](#) states that “no one should be allowed to be a non-partisan citizen election observer or monitor unless she or he is free from any political, economic or other conflict of interest that would hinder that person from conducting her or his election observation and monitoring activities in a non-discriminatory, impartial, accurate and timely manner”.

thus limiting transparency and public scrutiny of the electoral process.<sup>100</sup> Further, some ODIHR EOM interlocutors stated that independent non-governmental organizations functioning in the country are subject to control by the state security services, including over the content of their reports and statements aimed at foreign readers.<sup>101</sup>

*The relevant legislation should be amended to allow for citizen election observation by independent non-governmental civil society organizations.*

#### XIV. ELECTION DAY

Early voting was available between 14 and 20 October for all voters.<sup>102</sup> Voters were allowed to cast their ballot into an envelope which was sealed and stored in a safe until mixed with all other ballots on election day. In accordance with a previous ODIHR recommendation to protect the secrecy of the vote, the requirement of signing the envelope containing the ballot that early voters cast had been lifted. In addition, several provisions for out-of-county voting were introduced.<sup>103</sup>

Election day was peaceful and orderly, and the CEC shared updates about the voting process and turnout via press conferences throughout the day, contributing to transparency.

For election day, the CEC prepared a detailed COVID-19 protocol, including a provision that voters with elevated body temperature were not allowed into the polling premises and instead provided the opportunity to vote with a mobile ballot box.<sup>104</sup> COVID-19 regulations were generally enforced in polling stations visited by the IEOM.

##### A. OPENING AND VOTING

The IEOM observed the opening in 128 polling stations which opened on time or with slight delays. The overall opening process was assessed positively in almost all visited polling stations. The PECs mostly followed opening procedures, but often did not announce basic statistics as provided for by the CEC regulation, including the number of registered voters (in 18 observed polling stations) or the number of received ballots (in 26 polling stations).

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<sup>100</sup> 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 in which elections are taking place. They therefore invite observers from any other [OSCE] participating States and any appropriate private institutions and organizations who may wish to do so to observe the course of their national election proceedings, to the extent permitted by law”. Paragraph 20 of UN HRC General Comment 25 to the ICCPR stipulates that “there should be independent scrutiny of the voting and counting process [...] so that electors have confidence in the security of the ballot and the counting of the votes”.

<sup>101</sup> Paragraph 48 of the [2020 UN HRC Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Uzbekistan](#) states that “The Committee remains concerned that current legislation continues to impose restrictions on the right to freedom of association, including: (a) unreasonable and burdensome legal and administrative requirements for registering NGOs and political parties; (b) an extensive list of reasons to deny registration; (c) the requirement for NGOs to obtain *de facto* approval from the Ministry of Justice when travelling abroad or receiving funds from foreign sources; and (d) the prohibition of NGOs from participating in “political activities”. Paragraph 171 of the ODIHR and Venice Commission Guidelines on Freedom of Association states that “The internal functions of associations should, thus, generally be free from state interference. This fundamental premise is subject only to the requirement that associations be not-for-profit, respect the principle of non-discrimination and do not engage in activities characterized as unlawful in accordance with international human rights standards”.

<sup>102</sup> According to the CEC, 301,094 voters voted early in Uzbekistan as well as 120,524 in diplomatic representations abroad. Voters received a ballot for early voting on the basis of an application indicating their reason for absence on election day (vacation, business trip, travel abroad, etc.).

<sup>103</sup> Out-of-country voting also included the possibility of early voting, mobile voting and early mobile voting.

<sup>104</sup> Each PEC had a delegated health worker for election day. Voters, PEC members and observers were required to follow COVID-19 prevention protocols, including temperature checks and wearing of masks.

The IEOM observed voting in 1,267 polling stations. Overcrowding was observed in 7 per cent of all polling stations visited, mostly due to inefficient queue management and poor organization of the COVID-19 prevention protocols in place.

By law, all polling stations must be accessible to voters with mobility impairments, and the CEC put in place measures to facilitate access of persons with different types of disabilities to voting in all polling stations, including the possibility of assisted voting by a person of choice and provision of access ramps, voting booths adapted for wheelchairs, Braille ballot sleeves and magnifying glasses. The IEOM evaluated that 80 per cent of the visited polling stations were independently accessible.

The polling station layout was overall assessed as adequate to facilitate voting and preserve the secrecy of vote. Nevertheless, incidents compromising the secrecy of the ballot were observed; voters voting together in one booth were noted in 5 per cent, and voters showing their marked ballot in 3 per cent of polling stations visited.

Significant irregularities included ballot box stuffing (in 4 per cent), proxy voting (in 6 per cent) and voters receiving multiple ballots (in 5 per cent of observed polling stations). The IEOM also noted seemingly identical signatures on the voter lists (in 17 per cent) and indications of voters being compelled to vote (in 5 per cent of polling stations observed). Voter identification procedures were not uniformly applied; for instance, in 6 per cent of observations, PEC members did not always check voters' IDs, and voters without valid ID were allowed to vote in 5 per cent of the stations visited. As a result, voting was negatively assessed in 11 per cent of polling stations observed.

Party agents as well as accredited representatives of *Mahalla* committees were present in almost all polling stations visited. The IEOM also noted unauthorized people in 11 per cent of observed polling stations as well as incidents of party agents, *Mahalla* committee representatives and other unauthorized people unduly interfering in the voting process. According to international standards, states are under obligation to take effective measures to protect the voters' rights to vote freely.<sup>105</sup>

*Effective measures should be taken to prevent and prosecute any undue interference with the electoral process in polling stations.*

The IEOM observed no complaints filed to lower-level election commissions or courts, and the Ministry of Interior and the Prosecutor General reported no violations on election day.

## **B. COUNTING AND TABULATION**

Closing and counting was assessed negatively in 33 out of 105 polling stations observed by the IEOM, highlighting further significant procedural errors and omissions. During the count, unauthorized people were present in 15 observed polling stations. The safeguard procedures before opening ballot boxes were not followed in many cases.<sup>106</sup> During counting, the IEOM observed indications of ballot box stuffing, including bundles of ballots folded together, in 20 polling stations. The PECs often did not follow ballot reconciliation procedures; in 41 cases, the validity of contested ballots was not decided by a vote, and in 20 cases, the number of ballots cast did not match the number of voters' signatures on the

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<sup>105</sup> According to Article 20 of the UH HRC General Comment 25 to the ICCPR “[...] States should take measures to guarantee the requirement of the secrecy of the vote during elections [...]. This implies that voters should be protected from any form of coercion or compulsion to disclose how they intend to vote or how they voted, and from any unlawful or arbitrary interference with the voting process [...]”.

<sup>106</sup> For example, the number of unused and spoiled ballots were not counted in 20 cases, and not cancelled in 20 cases, as well as the total number of ballots issued was not determined in 32 cases observed.

voter list. The PECs also had difficulties filling in the protocols (21 cases observed). Most IEOM observers were granted full co-operation from the PECs during the voting and counting.

The tabulation was assessed negatively in 6 out of the 14 DEC observed, mostly due to issues with the organization and transparency of the process, which resulted in overcrowding and tension or unrest in some DECs.<sup>107</sup> The IEOM observed that some PECs were completing their protocols at the DEC premises or correcting them without formal decision of the DEC. In three DECs, the IEOM did not have a clear view of the procedures or could not observe without restrictions. Shortly after the polls closed, the CEC announced a preliminary voter turnout of 80.8 per cent. The CEC announced the preliminary election results and declared the percentage of votes allotted to each candidate the day after the election. On 29 October, Mr. Mirziyoyev was officially declared president. No disaggregated election results at the regional or local level were published, diminishing the transparency of the process.

*To enhance transparency and safeguard the integrity of election results, the CEC should publish on its website preliminary and final election results disaggregated by constituency and polling station as soon as possible after the conclusion of the count and tabulation.*

## **XV. RECOMMENDATIONS**

These recommendations as contained throughout the text are offered with a view to further enhance the conduct of elections in Uzbekistan and to support efforts to bring them fully in line with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections. These recommendations should be read in conjunction with past ODIHR recommendations that have not yet been addressed. ODIHR stands ready to assist the authorities of Uzbekistan to further improve the electoral process and to address the recommendations contained in this and previous reports.<sup>108</sup>

### **A. PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. To provide for a genuinely pluralistic environment, the legal framework on the freedom of political and civic association, peaceful assembly and expression should be reviewed, and lawmakers should ensure that any restrictions on the exercise of these rights be clearly prescribed by law and imposed only when necessary, in line with democratic principles. In line with international standards, the reform process should be inclusive, ensure public discussion and should be completed well in advance of the next elections.
2. The legislative and administrative requirements and procedures for the registration of political parties should be revised to respect and encourage pluralism and freedom of association. Registration of political parties should be carried out strictly on the basis of objective and transparent criteria and be subject to judicial remedy.

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<sup>107</sup> For example, arithmetical mistakes in many of the PEC results protocols led to long lines and eventually chaotic operations at the DEC in Tashkent.

<sup>108</sup> In Paragraph 25 of the [1999 OSCE Istanbul Document](#), OSCE participating States committed themselves “to follow up promptly the ODIHR’s election assessment and recommendations”. The follow-up of prior recommendations is assessed by the ODIHR EOM as follows: recommendations number 17, 25, 31 and 32 from the [final report on the 2019 parliamentary elections](#) (2019 Final Report) and number 12 from the [final report on the 2016 presidential election](#) (2016 Final Report) are fully implemented. The recommendations 15, 21, 23, 30 and 31 from the 2019 Final Report as well as 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 21, 22 and 23 from the 2016 Final Report are mostly implemented. The recommendations 2, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 26 and 28 from the 2019 Final Report as well as 1, 3, 10, 13 and 19 from the 2016 Final Report are partially implemented. See also the ODIHR [electoral recommendations database](#).

3. Authorities should ensure a clear separation between state and party in practice. An effective sanctioning mechanism against the misuse of administrative resources should be established and implemented.
4. Defamation and libel should be clearly defined in the law. To comply with international standards, criminal provisions for defamation should be repealed in favour of civil remedies designed to restore the reputation harmed. Any fines imposed should be proportionate and should not infringe on freedom of speech and the freedom to express an opinion. The legal framework should not provide public officials with greater protection nor establish high penalties for statements directed at them.
5. Restrictions on candidacy based on residency, language proficiency, disabilities and affiliation to a political party should be reviewed in line with international standards and commitments.
6. In order to strengthen the integrity of the voter registration and of the polling process, additions to the voter list on election day should only be permitted in accordance with clearly defined rules, subject to judicial or administrative control, with effective safeguards against multiple voting.
7. In line with international standards, the blocking of websites should not serve as a tool to control content, restrict the flow of information across borders, or as a sanction in response to critical coverage. Websites should only be blocked, based on objective and transparent criteria defined in law. Possible limitations should be content-specific, while general bans of whole websites should be avoided. The websites in question and the general public should be informed when such blockings are in place and provided with an opportunity to appeal.
8. The relevant legislation should be amended to allow for citizen election observation by independent non-governmental civil society organizations.
9. The procedures and criteria for the appointment of commissioners could be specified with the aim to strengthen the independence of the PECs, including from the Mahalla committees. To ensure consistent application of the election procedures, standardized training for all PEC members should be provided.

## **B. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Electoral System and Legal Framework**

10. The ongoing efforts to review the electoral legal framework should continue to eliminate the remaining shortcomings identified in this and prior ODIHR reports through an inclusive consultative process.

### **Election Administration**

11. Consideration should be given to enhancing the participation of women in decision-making roles within the election administration.

### **Voter Registration**

12. Restrictions for voting on the basis of legal capacity should be reviewed in line with international obligations.
13. The electoral process should be administered only by authorized bodies, and a clear distinction should be made between the roles and functions of election commission members and other officials.

## Campaign

14. Women's active participation in public and political life, especially at the senior and decision-making levels, should be facilitated by means of comprehensive legal, institutional, and educational initiatives. Political parties should be encouraged to facilitate women's political advancement, increase visibility of women during electoral campaigns, and integrate gender issues into their platforms. With this aim, consideration could be given to increases in state funding for parties that promote gender equality, and annual state subsidies to fund women's wings of political parties.

## Campaign Finance

15. To further promote voters' political participation and pluralism, the campaign finance framework should be brought in line with international good practice. Individuals should be allowed to donate to political parties and candidates for the use of the funds for campaigning. The legislation could provide details on the amount, timeframe and method of contribution, as well as safeguards for accountability of these funds through disclosure and audit requirements for donations from private sources.
16. To enhance transparency and accountability in election campaigns, all campaign finance reports, including interim reports, should be published in a timely manner. Consideration should be given to establishing effective and proportionate sanctions for violations related to campaign finance.

## Media

17. In order to enhance the scope of the information available and to promote a plurality of views, it is recommended to transform the state television into a genuine public broadcaster, with independent appointment of management, multi-sourced funding and a clearly defined public mandate. Such broadcaster should be required to provide balanced and impartial reporting in the news and current affairs programmes, including during election coverage.
18. To effectively respond to the right of access to information and facilitate voters' informed choice, authorities should proactively publish institutional information of public interest in the public domain. Access to such information should be provided in an easy, prompt, effective and practical manner, facilitating a wide-range of inquiries.
19. The legal framework should be amended so that intermediaries are not held liable for any third-party content as such liability could unduly limit the scope of the public debate during the campaign. Exceptions could be provided only if such intermediaries specifically intervene in that content or refuse to obey a removal order, with relevant restrictions imposed in accordance with due process guarantees by an independent, impartial oversight body.
20. Consideration should be given to transforming the Agency of Information and Mass Communications into an independent, impartial and collegial oversight body with a clear mandate, adhering to criteria of transparency and public accountability. The system of appointment of its members should ensure diversity of representation and prevent conflict of interests.

## Complaints and Appeals

21. To ensure effective legal remedy and prevent arbitrary application of the law, the provisions of the Election Code on challenging and invalidating election results should be clearly elaborated.

22. To ensure legal certainty, the system establishing sanctions for election-related violations should be reviewed, with dissuasive sanctions set for all potential perpetrators and for all violations affecting the electoral process.

### **Election Day**

23. Effective measures should be taken to prevent and prosecute any undue interference with the electoral process in polling stations.

24. To enhance transparency and safeguard the integrity of election results, the CEC should publish on its website preliminary and final election results disaggregated by constituency and polling station as soon as possible after the conclusion of the count and tabulation.

**ANNEX I: FINAL ELECTION RESULTS<sup>109</sup>**

	<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Votes</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Bahrom Abduhalimov (SDPU)	549,766	3.4
2	Alisher Kadirov (DPU)	888,513	5.5
3	Shavkat Mirziyoyev (LDPU)	12,988,964	80.1
4	Narzullo Oblomurodov (EPU)	670,641	4.1
5	Maksuda Varisova (PDPU)	1,075,016	6.6

Total number of voters on voter lists	20,158,907
Number of voters who voted	16,212,343 (80.42%)
Number of valid votes	16,172,900
Number of invalid votes	39,443 (0.24 %)

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<sup>109</sup> [Statement](#) by the CEC chairperson.



## ANNEX II: LIST OF OBSERVERS IN THE INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION

### OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Reinhold	Lopatka	Special Co-ordinator	Austria
Daniela	De Ridder	Head of Delegation	Germany
Ferran	Costa	MP	Andorra
Axel	Kassegger	MP	Austria
Nikolaus	Scherak	MP	Austria
Harald Josef	Troch	MP	Austria
Davor	Bernardic	MP	Croatia
Jan	Hornik	MP	Czech Republic
Ladislav	Vaclavec	MP	Czech Republic
Jan	Zaloudik	MP	Czech Republic
Raidma	Mati	MP	Estonia
Eeva-Johanna	Eloranta	MP	Finland
Pia	Kauma	MP	Finland
Joonas	Kontta	MP	Finland
Johannes	Koskinen	MP	Finland
Aude	Bono-Vandorme	MP	France
Valerie	Boyer	MP	France
Francois	Jolivet	MP	France
Jean-Yves	Leconte	MP	France
Didier	Paris	MP	France
Andrei	Hunko	MP	Germany
Christoph	Neumann	MP	Germany
Viktor Paul	Podolay	MP	Germany
Anastasia	Gkara	MP	Greece
Dimitrios	Markapoulos	MP	Greece
Georgios	Varemenos	MP	Greece
Csenger	Csenger-Zalan	MP	Hungary
Michael	Creed	MP	Ireland
Mauro	Del Barba	MP	Italy
Gianluca	Ferrara	MP	Italy
Emmanuele	Scagliusi	MP	Italy
Vito	Vattuone	MP	Italy
Akmaral	Alnazarova	MP	Kazakhstan
Bakyt	Torobayev	MP	Kyrgyzstan
Rada	Tumanbayeva	MP	Kyrgyzstan
Gustave	Graas	MP	Luxembourg
Claude	Haagen	MP	Luxembourg
Josee	Lorsche	MP	Luxembourg
Lydia	Mutsch	MP	Luxembourg
Arda	Gerken	MP	Netherlands
Farah	Karimi	MP	Netherlands
Barbara	Bartus	MP	Poland
Radoslaw	Fogiel	MP	Poland
Kazimierz	Kleina	MP	Poland

Robert	Kwiatkowski	MP	Poland
Joanna	Lichoeka	MP	Poland
Dariusz	Rosati	MP	Poland
Agnieszka	Soin	MP	Poland
Jacek	Wlosowisz	MP	Poland
Costel Neculai	Dunava	MP	Romania
Catalin Daniel	Fenechiu	MP	Romania
Gabor	Hajdu	MP	Romania
Csaba	Konczei	MP	Romania
Christine	Thellmann	MP	Romania
Bogdan-Andrei	Toader	MP	Romania
Michele	Muratori	MP	San Marino
Paolo	Rondelli	MP	San Marino
Peter	Osusky	MP	Slovakia
Johan	Buser	MP	Sweden
Margareta	Cederfelt	MP	Sweden
Jasenko	Omanovic	MP	Sweden
Yasmine	Posio	MP	Sweden
Lars	Thomsson	MP	Sweden
Selami	Altinok	MP	Turkey
Yusuf	Baser	MP	Turkey
Mehmet Said	Kirazoglu	MP	Turkey
Hisyar	Ozsoy	MP	Turkey
Artur	Gerasymov	MP	Ukraine
Vadym	Halaichuk	MP	Ukraine
Yevheniia	Kravchuk	MP	Ukraine
Mykyta	Poturaiev	MP	Ukraine
Sergii	Rakhmanin	MP	Ukraine
Lukas	Mussi	Delegation Staff	Austria
Jean-Luc	Blouet	Delegation Staff	France
Thomas	Grimm	Delegation Staff	Germany
Georgios	Chempouris	Delegation Staff	Greece
Temirlan	Marishov	Delegation Staff	Kyrgyzstan
Nurlan	Myrzayarov	Delegation Staff	Kyrgyzstan
Marcin	Mykietynsky	Delegation Staff	Poland
Anca	Constantin	Delegation Staff	Romania
Jonathan	Demner	Delegation Staff	Sweden
Frederik	Svensson	Delegation Staff	Sweden
Ecem	Danik Gokce	Delegation Staff	Turkey
Alla	Glushchenko	Delegation Staff	Ukraine
William	Connor	Delegation Staff	United States of America
Janice	Helwig	Delegation Staff	United States of America
Farimah	Daftary	OSCE PA Secretariat	France
Stephanie	Koltchanov	OSCE PA Secretariat	France
Loic	Poulain	OSCE PA Secretariat	France
Nina	Henke	OSCE PA Secretariat	Germany
Freyja	Koci	OSCE PA Secretariat	Germany
Roberto	Montella	OSCE PA Secretariat	Italy

Guido	Almerigogna	OSCE PA Secretariat	Italy
Anna	Di Domenico	OSCE PA Secretariat	Italy
Daria	Boyarskaya	OSCE PA Secretariat	Russian Federation
Dimitrije	Todoric	OSCE PA Secretariat	Serbia
Manuchekhr	Salokhudinov	OSCE PA Secretariat	Tajikistan

### European Parliament

Heidi	Hautala	Head of Delegation	Finland
Atidzhe	Alieva-Veli	MP	Bulgaria
Riho	Terras	MP	Estonia
Maximilian	Krah	MP	Germany
Andris	Ameriks	MP	Latvia
Ryszard	Czarnecki	MP	Poland
Jakop	G. Dalunde	MP	Sweden
Olinka	Harmegnies	Delegation Staff	Belgium
Juliane	Schmidt	Delegation Staff	Germany
Joanna	Rejdych	Delegation Staff	Poland
Caroline	Costello	EP Secretariat	Ireland
Cristina	Castagnoli	EP Secretariat	Italy
Elena	Franceschinis	EP Secretariat	Italy

### ODIHR EOM Short-term Observers

Lianna	Mkrtchyan	Armenia
Ani	Mnatsakanyan	Armenia
Anna	Poghosyan	Armenia
Tigran	Sayadyan	Armenia
Shahin	Asadli	Azerbaijan
Ravan	Gurbanov	Azerbaijan
Karel	Cappelle	Belgium
Guillaume	Choquet	Belgium
Helena	Saelman	Belgium
An	Van de Kauter	Belgium
Eliska	Flidrova	Czech Republic
Filip	Kanda	Czech Republic
Veronika	Mítková	Czech Republic
Alena	Obrusnikova	Czech Republic
Josef	Pánek	Czech Republic
Michaela	Pospíšilová	Czech Republic
Jan	Sir	Czech Republic
Grethe	Bille	Denmark
Sanne	Houlind	Denmark
Jonas	Jepsen	Denmark
Michael	Strand	Denmark
Sulev	Laane	Estonia
Nadine	Achoui-Lesage	France
Christian	Barthlen	France
Alexandre	Billaud-Curvale	France
Philippine	Brygo	France

Zoé	De Nadai	France
Melissa	Diagne	France
Jocelyn	Guitton	France
Pascale	Le Hel	France
Mathieu	Lemoine	France
Rémi	Pellerin	France
Malkhaz	Chkadua	Georgia
Giorgi	Ezugbaia	Georgia
Nino	Rizhamadze	Georgia
Kristina	Tolordava	Georgia
Rebecca	Alt	Germany
Peter	Besselmann	Germany
Helmar	Böhnlein	Germany
Daniel	Bronkal	Germany
Edgar	Brueser	Germany
Jan	Busch	Germany
Ulrike	Dässler	Germany
Thomas	Doehne	Germany
Christoph	Essert	Germany
Michael	Hehn	Germany
Joachim	Kaetzler	Germany
Stefan	Koeppe	Germany
Annelie	Koschella	Germany
Daniel	Kuehnhenrich	Germany
Rebecca	Meier	Germany
Heiko	Meinhardt	Germany
Anja	Mihr	Germany
Petra	Ruth	Germany
Johannes	Schlichte	Germany
Lynn	Schweisfurth	Germany
Christian	Seiler	Germany
Florian	Seitz	Germany
Anca	Stan	Germany
Christoph	Veith	Germany
Michael	Wahlen	Germany
Krisztina	Katona	Hungary
Julia	Popelics	Hungary
Emese	Tóth	Hungary
Rosella	Bonarrigo	Italy
Enrica	Brancaleoni	Italy
Cesira	Damiani	Italy
Massimiliano	Macri	Italy
Andrea	Manta	Italy
Federico	Orsi	Italy
Francesco	Paletti	Italy
Daniele	Sferra	Italy
Renata	Tardioli	Italy
Ilyas	Kurmanov	Kazakhstan
Meerim	Kubanychbek	Kyrgyz Republic
Rustam	Tokoev	Kyrgyz Republic

Azizbek	Usmanov	Kyrgyz Republic
Nida	Dalmantaitė	Lithuania
Liana	Vazbiene	Lithuania
Ion	Manole	Moldova
Elena	Prohntichi	Moldova
Maarten	Horeman	Netherlands
Pauline	Michgelsen	Netherlands
Lodewijk	Van Banning	Netherlands
Maria Ida	Vrijens	Netherlands
Hanne	Hanson	Norway
Marcia Andrea	Haugedal	Norway
Maren Sagvaag	Retland	Norway
Nina	Wessel	Norway
Przemysław	Dąlek	Poland
Andrzej	Fąfara	Poland
Jarosław	Godun	Poland
Mateusz	Kamionka	Poland
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Mariusz	Marszewski	Poland
Marek	Matusiak	Poland
Maciej	Mielnik	Poland
Magdalena	Opałka	Poland
Beata	Pęksa	Poland
Radosław	Peterman	Poland
Magdalena	Polak-Żołądkiewicz	Poland
Michał	Sarnicki	Poland
Adam	Sauer	Poland
Elzbieta	Swidrowska	Poland
Paula	Machado	Portugal
Maria	Marquilhas	Portugal
German	Abdullaev	Russian Federation
Diana	Ainetdinova	Russian Federation
Ruslan	Arsanukaev	Russian Federation
Sergey	Baburkin	Russian Federation
Dmitry	Bagdulin	Russian Federation
Karina	Bagieva	Russian Federation
Andrei	Borodin	Russian Federation
Boris	Diakonov	Russian Federation
Dmitrii	Driuchin	Russian Federation
Kamilia	Dzhabbarova	Russian Federation
Ivan	Fetisov	Russian Federation
Oleg	Frantsev	Russian Federation
Denis	Gnedin	Russian Federation
Anna	Gozhina	Russian Federation
Olga	Karsanova	Russian Federation
Maria	Kataeva	Russian Federation
Alesya	Khalyapina	Russian Federation
Pavel	Kopchenkov	Russian Federation
Alexander	Lankevich	Russian Federation
Anna	Lysenina	Russian Federation

Anna	Makarenkova	Russian Federation
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Omar	Bartos	United States of America
Christopher	Beck	United States of America
Peter	Bejger	United States of America
Joseph	Brossart	United States of America
Barbara	Cates	United States of America
Cecilia	Ciepiela-Kaelin	United States of America
Kathyrne	Harper	United States of America

Barbara	Jacksonmcintosh	United States of America
Junie	Joseph	United States of America
Mary	Judy	United States of America
Lesia	Lozowy	United States of America
Eda	Matchak	United States of America
Nicholas	Mazik	United States of America
James	McHugh	United States of America
Kristina	Mitchell	United States of America
Kelly	Paisley	United States of America
Kathy	Parkison	United States of America
Urania	Petit	United States of America
Sebastien	Peyrouse	United States of America
Tristan	Pierce	United States of America
Ginette	Prophete	United States of America
Raleigh	Quesenberry	United States of America
Matthew	Reger	United States of America
Philip	Richter	United States of America
Gregory	Slotta	United States of America
Robert	Sorenson	United States of America
Mary	Stegmaier	United States of America
Shapari	Taxell	United States of America
Megan	Tingley	United States of America
Lauren	Weiner	United States of America
Roxanne	Weiss	United States of America
Degee	Wilhelm	United States of America
Shari	Wilson	United States of America
Kyle	Wood	United States of America
Ethan	Yake	United States of America

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Mikheil	Golijashvili		Georgia
Silke	Tittel		Germany
Ahmad	Rasuli		Kyrgyz Republic
Roman	Railean		Moldova
Max	Bader		Netherlands
Jane	Kareski		North Macedonia
Michał	Gałkowski		Poland
Bartosz	Lech		Poland
Maria	Krause		Romania
Ivana	Stanojev		Serbia
Egor	Tilpunov		Ukraine
Yevheniia	Zamrii		Ukraine
Chris	Taylor		United Kingdom

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Adnan	Habul	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Pavlina	Öhman	Czech Republic
Martin	Ocknecht	Czech Republic
Poul	Svane	Denmark
Jaana	Karhilo	Finland
Benedicte	Contamin	France
Alexandre	Billette	France
Lela	Taliuri	Georgia
Heike	Baddenhausen	Germany
Kirsten	Müller	Germany
Balázs	Rados	Hungary
Daniela	Bottigelli	Italy
Fabrizio	Vielmini	Italy
Raushan	Bolotalieva	Kyrgyz Republic
Ricardas	Ramoska	Lithuania
Ineke	Appel	Netherlands
Thomas	Hug	Norway
Trond	Husby	Norway
Jakub	Herold	Poland
Wojciech	Ponikiewski	Poland
Evgeny	Loginov	Russian Federation
Alessandro	Bartolini	Sweden
Johanna	Lindén	Sweden
Thomas	Holzer	Switzerland
Martin	Minder	Switzerland
Mark	Waller	United Kingdom
Helen	Kornblum	United States of America
Jessica	Nash	United States of America



## ABOUT ODIHR

The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is OSCE's principal institution to assist participating States "to ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, to abide by the rule of law, to promote principles of democracy and (...) to build, strengthen and protect democratic institutions, as well as promote tolerance throughout society" (1992 Helsinki Summit Document). This is referred to as the OSCE human dimension.

ODIHR, based in Warsaw (Poland) was created as the Office for Free Elections at the 1990 Paris Summit and started operating in May 1991. One year later, the name of the Office was changed to reflect an expanded mandate to include human rights and democratization. Today it employs over 150 staff.

ODIHR is the lead agency in Europe in the field of **election observation**. Every year, it co-ordinates and organizes the deployment of thousands of observers to assess whether elections in the OSCE region are conducted in line with OSCE commitments, other international obligations and standards for democratic elections and with national legislation. Its unique methodology provides an in-depth insight into the electoral process in its entirety. Through assistance projects, ODIHR helps participating States to improve their electoral framework.

The Office's **democratization** activities include: rule of law, legislative support, democratic governance, migration and freedom of movement, and gender equality. ODIHR implements a number of targeted assistance programmes annually, seeking to develop democratic structures.

ODIHR also assists participating States' in fulfilling their obligations to promote and protect **human rights and fundamental freedoms** consistent with OSCE human dimension commitments. This is achieved by working with a variety of partners to foster collaboration, build capacity and provide expertise in thematic areas, including human rights in the fight against terrorism, enhancing the human rights protection of trafficked people, human rights education and training, human rights monitoring and reporting, and women's human rights and security.

Within the field of **tolerance and non-discrimination**, ODIHR provides support to the participating States in strengthening their response to hate crimes and incidents of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance. ODIHR's activities related to tolerance and non-discrimination are focused on the following areas: legislation; law enforcement training; monitoring, reporting on, and following up on responses to hate-motivated crimes and incidents; as well as educational activities to promote tolerance, respect, and mutual understanding.

ODIHR provides advice to participating States on their policies on **Roma and Sinti**. It promotes capacity-building and networking among Roma and Sinti communities, and encourages the participation of Roma and Sinti representatives in policy-making bodies.

All ODIHR activities are carried out in close co-ordination and co-operation with OSCE participating States, OSCE institutions and field operations, as well as with other international organizations.

More information is available on the ODIHR website ([www.osce.org/odihr](http://www.osce.org/odihr)).