

INTERIM REPORT
17 February – 6 March 2016

11 March 2016

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, on 20 January 2016 called early parliamentary elections for 20 March. The elections will be held under a proportional representation system under which 98 out of the 107-member lower house of parliament are elected from party lists in one nationwide constituency with a seven per cent threshold. The remaining 9 members are indirectly elected by the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan, an advisory body appointed by the President.
- The laws regulating elections stipulate that fundamental civil and political rights are guaranteed. The OSCE/ODIHR has previously recommended that restrictive provisions, including those related to suffrage rights and restrictions on freedoms of assembly and expression should be brought in line with OSCE commitments.
- The Central Election Commission (CEC) registered candidate lists of six political parties. Of the 234 registered candidates, 47 are women. Independent candidates cannot stand for election and political parties are not allowed to form electoral blocs.
- The elections are administered by the CEC, 16 Regional Election Commissions (RECs), 208 Territorial Election Commissions (TECs) and 9,840 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs). The CEC is holding regular, open sessions attended by political party representatives, citizen and international observers and the media. The election law does not ensure overall equitable representation of political parties in commissions.
- The campaign began on 20 February and is low key. Campaign tools include door-to-door canvassing, spontaneous gatherings, indoor meetings with voters and the use of social media. Following an amendment in August 2015 to a CEC resolution, the CEC is required to publish the total amounts of funds received and spent by each party twice a month during the campaign period.
- Some 9.7 million voters are registered. Voter registration is passive and all citizens over 18 years of age are eligible to vote, except those declared incompetent by a court or serving prison sentences irrespective of the gravity of the crime. Voters can register at polling stations on election day provided they can prove their residence in the respective precinct. Public scrutiny of voter lists commenced on 4 March when they were to be posted in polling stations.
- While the Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and prohibits censorship, the Criminal Code contains provisions on defamation and insult as well as special protection of officials. The Election Law requires unbiased media coverage of the campaign and guarantees equal conditions for contestants. A lack of independent media outlets characterizes the media environment, with mostly social networks providing a platform for alternative viewpoints. The OSCE Representative on the Freedom of Media has expressed concerns that recent developments in the media environment further limit pluralism of opinion.

- Election-related complaints and appeals can be filed with election commissions, the courts and prosecutor offices. Recent amendments to the election law clarify that the Supreme Court has jurisdiction over all appeals of CEC decisions. To date, one appeal was filed with the Supreme Court related to the upcoming elections.
- The OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission opened in Astana on 17 February, with an 11-member core team and 28 long-term-observers deployed throughout the country.

II. INTRODUCTION

Following an invitation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) established an Election Observation Mission (EOM) on 17 February.¹ The EOM, headed by Ambassador Boris Frlec, consists of an 11-member core team based in Astana and 28 long-term observers who were deployed on 23 February to 14 locations around the country. Mission members are drawn from 18 OSCE participating States. Participating States have been requested to second 400 short-term observers to observe election day procedures.

III. BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

On 13 January, deputies of the *Majilis* voted unanimously to request President Nazarbayev to dissolve parliament as the legislative programme had been fulfilled and to reaffirm the government's mandate in the face of economic challenges.² One week later, President Nazarbayev set 20 March as the date for the early parliamentary elections to be held concurrently with elections to *Maslikhats* (local councils).³ These elections will be the third consecutive parliamentary elections to be called early. The authorities have proclaimed their commitment to conduct elections in line with national legislation and international standards.⁴

There are seven registered political parties in Kazakhstan, five of which took part in the early parliamentary elections in 2012 that resulted in the second successive victory for *Nur Otan*, led by President Nazarbayev. Then, *Nur Otan* won 83 out of the 98 directly-elected seats (81.0 per cent), The Democratic Party of Kazakhstan *Ak Zhol* and the Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan (CPPK) won 8 (7.5 per cent) and 7 (7.2 per cent) seats respectively. The non-parliamentary parties are the People's Democratic Patriotic Party *Auyl*, *Birlik* Party, Nationwide Social-Democratic Party (NSDP) and the Democratic Party of Kazakhstan *Azat*. Six out of seven registered parties are contesting these elections.⁵ In its final report on 2012 early parliamentary elections, the OSCE/ODIHR EOM stated that "the preparations were technically well administered and certain legal changes were passed, aimed at introducing at least a second party into the parliament; yet, the necessary conditions for the conduct of genuinely pluralistic elections, which are a prerequisite for functioning democratic institutions, were not provided for by the authorities."

¹ See [previous OSCE/ODIHR election reports](#) on the Republic of Kazakhstan.

² On 18 January 2016 the *Majilis* Chairperson stated that "the main reason [for early parliamentary elections] was the need for the parties to receive a renewed vote of confidence from the electorate, social cohesion as well as synchronizing *Majilis* and *Maslikhats* actions for the implementation of reforms at all levels." See also [the statement by the deputies with an initiative to hold early elections](#).

³ The OSCE/ODIHR will observe elections to the *Maslikhats* only to the extent that they affect the conduct of the *Majilis* elections.

⁴ On 26 February, at the Winter Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, [the Senate Chairperson stated](#) that "the parliamentary elections will be open and in compliance with national legislation and international standards."

⁵ The Democratic Party of Kazakhstan *Azat* decided not to participate, stating it is unrealistic to hope that representatives of the social forces opposing the central authorities would get into the *Majilis*.

The party landscape has changed since the last parliamentary elections. In 2013, *Birlik* Party was formed while *Auyl* and the Party of Patriots of Kazakhstan merged in 2015.⁶ Furthermore, on 3 August 2015 at the request of the Ministry of Justice, the Specialized Inter-district Economic Court of Almaty decided on the dissolution of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan (CPK) on the grounds that it no longer meets party registration requirements. The court action followed a suspension of the party during the 2015 presidential election when the party was given three months to rectify registration deficiencies identified by the Ministry of Justice.⁷ Despite having seven registered political parties and three parties in the parliament, activities of the President and his party *Nur Otan* dominate national political life.

In December 2015, Kazakhstan adopted amendments to a number of laws regulating the activities of non-governmental organizations. Organizations involved in citizen observation for the parliamentary elections raised concerns to the OSCE/ODIHR EOM over the increased administrative requirements and the introduction of a new sanctioning mechanism, stating that this may impact the ability of civil society to function in an effective manner.

IV. ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Kazakhstan has a bi-cameral parliament consisting of a 107-member lower house (*Majilis*) and an indirectly-elected 47-member upper house (Senate).⁸ Ninety-eight *Majilis* deputies are elected in a nationwide constituency on the basis of proportional representation. The remaining nine members are elected by the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK), an advisory body appointed by the President.⁹ The OSCE/ODIHR has previously recommended that this provision should be brought in line with OSCE commitments, which maintain that all seats in at least one chamber of the national legislature be directly elected.

Parties that obtain at least seven per cent of the total number of votes are allocated seats in the *Majilis*. If only one party passes the threshold, the political party receiving the second highest number of votes will also be given at least two seats. The allocation of seats to candidates on the party lists is determined by the political party after the election and political parties are not bound by any list order.¹⁰

The legal framework for elections consists primarily of the Constitution, the Constitutional Law on Elections (Election Law), the Law on Political Parties and Central Election Commission (CEC) regulations.¹¹ Kazakhstan has committed to upholding standards for democratic elections by being a

⁶ *Birlik* was formed on the basis of the merger of *Rukhaniyat* Party and Democratic Party *Adilet*.

⁷ The deficiencies identified were: the addresses of the party's actual headquarters and its 13 branches differ from those in the registration documents; number of party members fell below the required 40,000; number of party members per branch fell below the required 600 in a few branches; party did not maintain electronic lists of party members in all branches; non-compliance with tax laws and failure to submit tax declarations.

⁸ The representative bodies of each of the 14 regions of the country, as well as the cities of Astana and Almaty, elect two senators each. In addition, the president appoints 15 senators.

⁹ The APK is made up of 446 representatives of ethnic and cultural associations; its primary role is to ensure inter-ethnic consent in the process of forming the Kazakhstani identity.

¹⁰ The Constitution stipulates an imperative mandate: deputies lose their mandate if they leave or are excluded from the party from which they were elected or the party ceases its activity (Article 52.3).

¹¹ Other applicable laws include the Law on Peaceful Assemblies, the Law on Mass Media, the Law on Communications, and the Law on Broadcasting, as well as relevant provisions of the Criminal Code, the Administrative Offenses Code and the Civil and Civil Procedures Code.

party to a number of major international and regional instruments.¹² The laws regulating elections stipulate that fundamental civil and political rights are guaranteed. The OSCE/ODIHR has previously recommended that restrictive provisions, including those related to voting rights, candidate eligibility and restrictions on freedoms of assembly and expression should be brought in line with OSCE commitments.

The Election Law has been amended twice since the 2015 presidential election to align it with changes in legislation on the court system and as part of a legislative initiative for institutional reform.¹³ The CEC stated that it is preparing a comprehensive proposal for amending the Election Law to be considered in 2017, that intends to take into account OSCE/ODIHR recommendations, almost all of which remain unaddressed, despite recent amendments.

V. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The elections are administered by the CEC, 16 Regional Election Commissions (RECs), 208 Territorial Election Commissions (TECs) and 9,840 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs).¹⁴ Commissions at all levels have seven members appointed for five-year terms. The Election Law sets incompatibility criteria for the membership of election commissions, by which deputies, candidates, judges as well as some other civil servants cannot serve in commissions.¹⁵ State and local institutions provide logistical and operational support to lower-level election commissions and technical preparations are under way.¹⁶

The CEC is a permanent body responsible for the implementation of election legislation and its uniform application. The CEC Chairperson and two members are appointed by the president, and the Senate and *Majilis* each appoint two members. The current CEC has six members, two of whom are women; one position is vacant.

All lower-level election commissions are composed of members elected by *Maslikhats* based on political party nominations.¹⁷ However, *Maslikhats* are not bound by nominations of political parties and the law does not guarantee party representation when commissioners are replaced. Furthermore, *Maslikhats* are entitled to solicit proposals from public associations or higher level election commissions if the number of nominations submitted by parties is not sufficient.¹⁸ In some mid-level

¹² Including the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1979 Convention for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 2003 Convention against Corruption, 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the 2002 Convention on the Standards of Democratic Elections, Electoral Rights and Freedoms in the Member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Since 2012, Kazakhstan is also a member of the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission).

¹³ See the Law “On Amending Constitutional Laws To Improve Civil Procedure Legislation” from 31 July 2015 and the Law “On Amending the Constitutional Law On Elections in the Republic of Kazakhstan” from 18 November 2015.

¹⁴ Including 65 out-of-country polling stations established in 51 diplomatic missions. RECs are formed at the *oblast* (region) administrative level: one in each of the 14 *oblasts*, and one in each of the cities of Astana and Almaty. TECs are formed at the level of *rayon* (district), city and city-district.

¹⁵ Secretary of the Stepnogorsk city TEC is running as a candidate for local elections, which is prohibited by Article 20.12.2 of the Election Law.

¹⁶ Almost all election commissions visited by the OSCE/ODIHR EOM were well equipped. Out of 72 visited RECs and TECs, some 40 were located in local government buildings.

¹⁷ Each party registered with the Ministry of Justice is eligible to nominate one candidate to each election commission. The nominee is not required to be a member of the nominating party. As per CEC data, 34 per cent of REC members and 25 per cent of chairpersons are women; 27 per cent of TEC members and chairpersons are women.

¹⁸ According to data provided by the CEC, dated 19 February, 62 per cent of members represent different parties, while the remaining 38 per cent were nominated either by public associations or higher-level election commissions. The parties have the following representation in the mid-level commissions: *Nur Otan* (214 members), CPPK (193), *Ak Zhol* (193), *Birlik* (191), *Auyl* (189), NSDP (26).

and lower-level commissions visited by the OSCE/ODIHR EOM, all members affiliated themselves with *Nur Otan*.¹⁹ In several other instances some commissioners were unaware of the organizations they represented.²⁰

Some OSCE/ODIHR EOM interlocutors expressed their concern that the formation of election commissions lacked transparency.²¹ OSCE/ODIHR EOM Long-Term Observers reported that in some cases, even though the NSDP submitted nominations for membership of RECs and TECs, none of its nominees were elected by the respective *Maslikhats*.²² Consequently, NSDP on several occasions questioned the impartiality of election commissions.

The CEC held sessions that were open to and attended by political party representatives, citizen and international observers, and media representatives. Since the announcement of elections, the CEC adopted and posted on its website a number of decisions necessary for the organization of the elections. In addition to its sessions, the CEC held briefings on the progress of its preparations that were attended by the media and observers. Training of lower-level election commissions is on-going, using printed and video materials produced by the CEC. The CEC has also produced several voter education videos which are regularly aired on various TV channels.

VI. VOTER REGISTRATION

Voter registration is passive and is based on the state population register. The nationwide electronic voter register is maintained by the CEC and includes eligible voters; those who are at least 18 years old, have not been declared incompetent or sentenced by a court decision. Voters serving a sentence are not eligible to vote irrespective of the gravity of the crime. The total number of voters as of 1 January 2016 was 9,791,165.

Voter lists are compiled and updated bi-annually by the *Akimats* (local administration), based on the data provided by institutions contributing to the population register and the information collected through door-to-door visits.²³ Updates are verified by the CEC and information on duplicates and other errors is sent to the respective *Akimats* for further clarification.

Voters are included in voter lists based on their place of residence. Voters who wish to vote in a different location than their place of permanent residence can request a temporary change of registration up to 30 days prior to election day. Public scrutiny of voter lists started on 4 March when they were to be posted in polling stations. Voters can request corrections of any discrepancies in their records.²⁴ In addition, as of two weeks before election day, voters can apply for an Absentee Voting Certificate (AVC), which allows them to vote in any polling station outside the city, town or village

¹⁹ The OSCE/ODIHR EOM was informed in various commissions that commissioners were members of *Nur Otan*, while being nominated by other organizations. For instance: Mamlyut TECs in North Kazakhstan, Karakiya TEC, Ridder and Semey city TECs in East Kazakhstan.

²⁰ Astana city TEC, Astana city district TEC, Glubokoe and Oskemen TECs in East Kazakhstan, Ertis, Kashir and Pavlodar TECs in Pavlodar Oblast.

²¹ Commission members inconsistently described the procedure for the appointment of election commissions and some of them could not state what criteria were used by the *Maslikhats* when electing commissioners or replacing them.

²² Such cases were reported to the OSCE/ODIHR EOM in Aktobe, Almaty, Karaganda, Mangystau and Zhambyl.

²³ These institutions include: branches of the Ministry of Interior, Justice and Prosecutor Office, heads of health and medical centers, detention centers, housing and communal services, heads of educational institutions and captains of ships.

²⁴ Voter lists established in special polling stations in rest-homes, various medical centres, hard-to-reach places, distant pastures, detention centres, representative offices of the Republic of Kazakhstan abroad, and on ships sailing on election day as well as in military units are posted five days before election day.

where they are registered. PECs can also register voters on election day if they are able to provide a certificate of residence issued by the Citizen Service Centre.

VII. CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

Registered voters who are at least 25 years old and have permanently resided in Kazakhstan for the last ten years can stand for election, except those with an unexpunged criminal record and those found guilty of a corruption offence. Self-nominated independent candidates and the formation of electoral blocs are not permitted.²⁵

Candidates are nominated by registered political parties through nationwide party lists. Parties are required to submit a variety of registration documents including the biographies and statement of consent of the candidates, as well as their income and property declarations.²⁶ Registration documents must be accompanied by a monetary deposit of 15 times the minimum salary (some EUR 850) for each candidate in the party list.²⁷ Following a review of submitted registration documents and a verification of eligibility criteria for candidates, the CEC registered all 234 nominated candidates from six political parties by the legal deadline of 19 February. Of the 234 registered candidates 47 (20 per cent) are women. The Election Law does not contain gender quota or other temporary special measures to enhance participation of women in the elections.²⁸

Following the lottery held by the CEC on 16 February, the order of the parties on the ballot was determined as follows: *Nur Otan* (127 candidates), CPPK (22 candidates), *Ak Zhol* (35 candidates), *Birlik* (8 candidates), NSDP (23 candidates), *Auyl* (19 candidates).

VIII. CAMPAIGN AND CAMPAIGN FINANCE

The Election Law provides that political parties have equal rights and conditions for participation in the elections. The misuse of state resources, charitable actions and the promising of goods, services, money or economic gains to voters are prohibited. Candidates and political parties are also prohibited from accepting goods or services free of charge. Campaigning of state and local government bodies and their officials while on duty is illegal. Furthermore, candidates in state positions are prohibited from using their official position to their advantage in the campaign. Violations of campaign rules can lead to the de-registration of an individual candidate or the entire party list.

While freedom of assembly is guaranteed by the Constitution, all outdoor campaign events are subject to prior approval by the local government.²⁹ On 28 February, the NSDP's request to hold a campaign procession in Astana was rejected in writing by the local administration on the grounds that it could disrupt public transport and safety.

The official campaign started on 20 February and to date is low-key.³⁰ The parties' campaign platforms differ little in tone and substance and have centered around themes of social stability, long-term plans to tackle the economic crisis, as well as the maintenance of national unity and values; all of

²⁵ The CEC received two requests from citizens wishing to be registered as independent candidates.

²⁶ Parties also need to submit documents confirming payment of the electoral deposit, the extract from the minutes of the party's supreme body confirming its decision to nominate the candidate, accompanied by the political party's registration certificate and a certificate confirming the candidates' party membership.

²⁷ Parties that reached the 7 per cent threshold in previous elections are exempt from the electoral deposit while parties that received 3 to 5 and 5 to 7 per cent of votes, are entitled to 30 and 50 per cent reduction of the deposit respectively. Electoral deposits are refunded to political parties that pass the seven per cent threshold.

²⁸ There are 28 (26.2 per cent) women deputies in the outgoing *Majilis* and 3 (6.4 per cent) women in the Senate.

²⁹ The Law on Peaceful Assemblies requires organizers to submit a request to hold a public event, including information about the nature and organizers of the event, to the relevant local authorities ten days in advance.

³⁰ The campaign ends on 18 March at 24:00 hrs.

which are aligned with the President's long-term strategies.³¹ The NSDP has distinguished itself as a critic of the ruling party and institutions and has expressed concerns about the integrity of the electoral process.

Campaign tools used by most contestants range from door-to-door canvassing and leafleting, spontaneous gatherings, indoor meetings and the use of party-reception centers where citizens are provided with advice on how to resolve their daily problems and are informed of the party activities. Most parties have organized meetings with voters in state-run and private enterprises, in educational institutions, libraries and cultural centers. The campaign of *Nur Otan* is by far the most resourced in terms of campaign staff, methods used and visibility. Billboards, posters, and leaflets for *Ak Zhol*, *Auyl*, *Birlik* and CPPK are present throughout the country to a much lesser extent. Due to financial constraints, the use of social media is the dominant tool employed by the NSDP to reach out to voters.

There is no public funding of the campaign for parliamentary elections. Political parties can use their own funds and can receive private campaign contributions.³² The total amount that can be spent on a party's campaign is KZT 342,885,000 (approximately EUR 888,000). Political parties are obliged to open a dedicated bank account to manage campaign contributions and expenditures.

The bank reports to the CEC on a weekly basis on account activities. Political parties are required to submit a report on campaign finances within five days of the announcement of election results. On the basis of these reports the CEC is obliged to publish an overview of the total amount received by each party and the sources of those funds. Further, following August 2015 amendments to a CEC resolution, the CEC publishes the total amounts received and spent per party twice a month during the campaign period. The first overview was published on 3 March 2016, providing the amounts of parties' own funds, private contributions and amounts spent up to date per party.³³

IX. MEDIA

Although a large number of media outlets exist in the country, several OSCE/ODIHR EOM interlocutors expressed concern that the state exercises its influence through a widespread system of public tenders (*gos-zakazy*), including for private media. A lack of alternative sources in the broadcast sector characterizes the media environment, and television, including state-owned *Khabar TV*, is the main source of political information, especially outside the capital. At the same time, *First Eurasian Channel*, a joint-venture of state-owned *Kazakhstan TV* and the *First Channel* of the Russian Federation, continues to enjoy the highest popularity. Access to the Internet, including to social networks, that serve as alternative sources of political information is gradually growing, mainly amongst the younger and urban population.

While the Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and prohibits censorship, the Criminal Code contains provisions on defamation and insult as well as special protection of officials. Furthermore, the incitement of social, national and religious discord is prohibited, with a penalty of up to 20 years of imprisonment, while the spreading false information is prohibited, with a penalty of up to 10 years of imprisonment. The Law on Communications allows the prosecutor to temporarily shut down websites that distribute information 'harmful' to individuals, society and the state, or contain calls for 'extremist' activities. In 2015, the Tax Code was amended, obliging a complainant to pay a submission fee based on the amount to be claimed as compensation in civil defamation cases. The

³¹ ["100 Concrete Steps to Implement Five Institutional Reforms"](#) and [Nurly Zhol \(Bright Path\)](#).

³² Citizens and Kazakhstani organizations can contribute to a political party's campaign fund with the exception of state bodies or organizations, local self-government bodies, charitable organizations, religious associations, and Kazakhstani legal entities with foreign stock in their charter capital. Anonymous donations are also forbidden.

³³ First overview is available at <http://www.election.kz/rus/news/news/index.php?ID=3076>.

Law on Access to Information was adopted in 2015, which was welcomed by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RfOM). The OSCE RfOM has recently, however, expressed concerns about media freedom developments in the country, including disproportionate and excessive penalties for administrative violations as well as prosecutions of journalists and independent voices, all of which has led to further limiting pluralism of opinion.³⁴

The Election Law obliges media to present objective campaign coverage and guarantees political parties equal access. The law provides for debates to be organized by the CEC among political parties that nominated candidates. According to the CEC, any airtime given to a contesting party outside the news format is considered to be campaigning and should be paid for from the party's campaign fund. The law does not provide for a limit on paid advertising, which is only constrained by the general campaign spending ceiling. As interpreted by the CEC, social network posts aimed to reflect the campaign of the contestants should be considered as personal views and, as such, do not constitute campaigning.

The CEC is responsible for overseeing media compliance with the Election Law and is performing this task in co-operation with the Committee on Communication, Informatization and Information under the Ministry of Investment (Media Committee). The Media Committee analyzes the quantitative coverage of candidates (but not the tone) across numerous outlets (47 TV channels, 12 radio stations, 237 newspapers and 162 online media) and provides its findings to the CEC on a daily basis.³⁵

On 22 February, the owner of private news agency KazTAG and the Board Chairman of the Union of Journalists of Kazakhstan was detained based on accusations of tax-fraud and embezzlement of state funds. More than 400 journalists supported the statement of *Adil Soz*, an Almaty-based foundation for freedom of speech, requesting the General Prosecutor to ensure transparency of the investigation.³⁶

On 20 February, the OSCE/ODIHR EOM commenced qualitative and quantitative monitoring of seven TV channels, one radio station, and six newspapers.³⁷

X. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

The Election Law provides the opportunity for complaints about the decisions, actions or inactions of the election commission or local authorities, as well as violations of the election law. The law, however, limits the right to appeal the election results, leaving the parties participating in the elections without the opportunity to challenge the validity of the results.³⁸

Complaints may be filed by all electoral participants with election commissions or the courts within ten days of the decision, action or inaction.³⁹ Recent amendments to the election law clarify that the Supreme Court has jurisdiction over all appeals of CEC decisions.⁴⁰ Commissions and courts must generally review matters within five days or immediately if the complaint is submitted less than five

³⁴ See OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, statements from [26 January 2016](#), [26 December 2015](#), [27 October 2015](#) and [25 September 2015](#).

³⁵ On 3 March, the CEC publicly presented the [first results of media monitoring for the period 20 February to 2 March](#).

³⁶ See [the statement of Adil Soz](#).

³⁷ *Kazakhstan TV*, *Khabar TV*, *KZ24* (state-funded broadcasters), *First Eurasian Channel* (state-funded joint-venture company), *Astana TV*, *Channel 31* and *KTK* (private channels), *Kazakh Radio* (state-funded), *Egemen Kazakhstan*, *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda* (state-funded newspapers), *Karavan*, *Liter*, *Vremya* and *Zhas Alash* (private newspapers). OSCE/ODIHR EOM also observes election-related coverage in the online media, such as [www.informburo.kz](#), [www.nur.kz](#), [www.tengrinews.kz](#), [www.zakon.kz](#), [www.365.kz](#).

³⁸ The right to appeal final results is granted to the president, one fifth of the members of parliament, speakers of both houses of parliament, and the prime minister.

³⁹ Complaints on election-related violations can also be filed with prosecutor offices.

⁴⁰ Supreme Court judges are nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate.

days before the election.⁴¹ To date, the CEC received 23 official letters regarding the *Majilis* elections, none of which were assessed by the CEC to be of a complaint nature. The OSCE/ODIHR EOM has learned of one case filed with the Supreme Court by a citizen wishing to be registered as an independent candidate, the case was dismissed for not meeting the deadline for appeal and was not considered on the merits.⁴²

XI. CITIZEN AND INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS

The Election Law provides for citizen and international observation of elections. Citizen observers may be nominated by public associations and non-profit organizations. Political parties are entitled to have observers and proxies who enjoy similar rights, while the proxies can also request recounts. International observers are accredited by the CEC. As of 4 March, the CEC accredited 308 observers from the OSCE/ODIHR, the CIS the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and several foreign countries. The OSCE/ODIHR EOM has learned of a number of civil society organizations planning to observe the parliamentary elections both nationwide and on a regional basis.

XII. OSCE/ODIHR EOM ACTIVITIES

The OSCE/ODIHR EOM opened in Astana with a press conference on 17 February. The OSCE/ODIHR EOM has met with the government authorities, the CEC, representatives of political parties, media, civil society, the OSCE Programme Office in Astana and the international community.⁴³

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe have announced that they will deploy observer delegations for election day observation. The OSCE Chairperson-in-Office has appointed Marietta Tidei as Special Co-ordinator and leader of the short-term OSCE observer mission for these elections.

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

⁴¹ The law gives superior election commissions three days to review complaints about the decisions, actions or inactions of lower-level commissions.

⁴² See Supreme Court Decision from 18 February, 2016.

⁴³ The OSCE/ODIHR EOM and the OSCE Programme Office in Astana operate separately under their specific mandates.