

INTERIM REPORT
10 July –3 August 2026

7 August 2026

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The new Constitution, adopted by referendum on 15 March 2026, entered into force on 1 July, altering the state institutional structure, *inter alia*, with a new unicameral parliament, the *Kurultai*, and leading to broad institutional changes. The Constitution retained a single, non-renewable seven-year presidential mandate. After the referendum the Constitutional Court issued an interpretation that the incumbent may compete for re-election. The pre-election environment is strongly influenced by the registration of a new political party, *Adilet*, consolidating pro-presidential forces, and its swift merger with the ruling *Amanat*, rendering the new party the major contestant for the upcoming elections.
- Voters will elect the 145 members of the new unicameral *Kurultai* under a closed-list proportional representation system in a single nationwide constituency with a 5-per cent electoral threshold. The law mandates a cumulative 30-per cent candidate quota for women, youth, and persons with disabilities, also respected when mandates are distributed. The legal framework provides political parties with broad discretion over candidate nomination, allocation and implementation of parliamentary mandates in the *Kurultai*. Some ODIHR Election Observation Mission (EOM) interlocutors raised concerns that this discretion may impact genuine political participation.
- The electoral legal framework was amended to harmonize with the new Constitution. The amendments *inter alia* extended candidate eligibility requirements, changed candidate nomination, some campaign and campaign financing rules, formation of election commissions and eligibility criteria for their members, and expanded the prohibition of foreign financing. Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors stated that the constitutional laws and amendments were developed in an expedited manner, with limited or no transparency or public discussion, shortly before the elections.
- Parliamentary elections are administered hierarchically by the CEC, Territorial Election Commissions (TECs), and Precinct Election Commissions (PECs). Technical preparations are on schedule, with nationwide training of lower-level commissions and an extensive voter-education campaign underway. The CEC harmonized its resolutions with the legal changes, holds regular public sessions attended by the stakeholders and some observers, and has so far promptly published its decisions. To date, the CEC approved its decisions unanimously without debate in the sessions observed by the ODIHR EOM. Working groups on the electoral rights of persons with disabilities operate at national and regional levels. Most ODIHR EOM interlocutors expressed confidence in the technical capacity of the election administration, while some expressed concern about the impartiality and independence of lower-level commissions due to the appointment rules and the untransparent nomination process.
- Citizens over 18 years old are eligible to vote, except those declared incompetent by a court on grounds of intellectual or psychosocial disability or serving a prison sentence irrespective of the gravity of the crime. Voter registration is passive and based on permanent residency, the data is regularly updated by the local administration. The National Voter Register is maintained by the CEC and to date includes almost 12.6 million voters. Most ODIHR EOM interlocutors expressed overall confidence in the accuracy of the voter register and voter lists. Voters can be added to a supplementary voter list on the election day without judicial or administrative oversight, provided they prove their residence within the precinct, despite previous ODIHR recommendations to curb the practice.

- Eligible voters aged 25 or older resident in Kazakhstan for at least 10 years prior to elections may stand as candidates; those with unexpunged criminal record, regardless of the crime, are ineligible. Following the 2026 amendments, candidates may only be nominated by registered political parties from their members. Candidates are no longer able to run independently, a change ODIHR EOM interlocutors from registered parties saw as positive, while most other interlocutors criticized it. The CEC registered the candidate lists of all seven functional parties with 545 candidates, including 172 women (31.5 per cent), and 43.9 per cent within the cumulative quota for women, youth and persons with disabilities.
- The campaign is rigidly regulated with strictly delineated rules for all stakeholders and sanctions for misconduct. The campaign lasts from 23 July to 21 August. It intensified by its second week, with active engagement in-person and online. The campaign is dominated by the newly formed *Adilet* party. All parties support the President's policies, and some ODIHR EOM interlocutors have noted that the absence of genuine opposition parties and of independent candidates reduces political participation and pluralism. ODIHR EOM interlocutors stated that pressure on dissenters led to self-censorship.
- Social networks are used extensively for political debate, outreach, and voter engagement. The Ministry of Culture (MCI) monitors the online space, including for potential electoral violations. Kazakhstan has developed a cybersecurity architecture, in which mechanisms for countering disinformation and foreign interference remain largely centralized. The authorities have expanded co-operation with major online platforms to protect national security and electoral integrity. Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors expressed concerns that broadly formulated restrictions on online content and their enforcement, including widespread content removals, could facilitate suppression of political expression and critical voices. Critical online content removals persisted during the election campaign. The ODIHR EOM is monitoring the online campaign.
- Women remain significantly under-represented in political and public life, with 18 out of 98 seats in the lower chamber of the previous parliament (18 per cent) and 3 out of 25 government posts (12 per cent); none of the 20 regional governors is a woman. All political parties formed women's wings but only one of the seven functional political parties is led by a woman.
- Campaign finance rules were amended in 2026, *inter alia* increasing contributions and expenditure ceilings. Campaign activities may only be financed from political parties' electoral funds with the parties' own resources, monetary contributions from candidates, citizens and legal entities. Foreign funding and in-kind contributions are prohibited. The CEC is responsible for campaign finance oversight and will publish campaign finance overviews twice during the campaign, and after the elections.
- The media market is state-dominated through direct ownership and untransparent subsidies, limiting pluralism, despite the large number of outlets. There is no genuine public service broadcasting; the MCI serves as the media regulator. The legal framework, including arrest for libel, criminalization of insult to public officials and the deliberate dissemination of false information, and its implementation, limits freedom of expression, despite constitutional guarantees. Long-standing concerns regarding media freedom, raised repeatedly by several international organizations, persist, including specific noted concerns about state influence over editorial content, arrests and pressure on independent journalists, strategic litigations (SLAPPs), online content removals, and delays in the accreditation of journalists. During the campaign, media outlets must ensure objective and equal coverage of all contestants. There is no free airtime or print space, but political parties can purchase them from the 757 media outlets and users of online platforms that notified the CEC about their coverage plans and advertisement fees.
- Citizens, political parties, and other electoral stakeholders may seek legal redress before election commissions, courts, or prosecutorial authorities. The law stipulates expedited deadlines for electoral

disputes. The CEC informed that there were no complaints or appeals to the CEC or TECs. One of the two civil lawsuits filed to local courts on intra-party disputes was dismissed, the other is pending adjudication. The prosecution reported several fines for campaign violations. Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors voiced concerns about the impartiality of the judiciary in cases of political nature.

- The law provides for domestic and international election observation. Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors expressed concerns about the shrinking space for independent citizen election observation, citing restrictions on the freedom of association, limited financing, administrative pressure, and legal uncertainty around the 2026 amendments, which discouraged some CSOs from election observation. Nevertheless, several organizations have been accredited and are planning to observe election day.

II. INTRODUCTION

Following an invitation to observe the 23 August 2026 early parliamentary elections, and in accordance with its mandate, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) deployed an Election Observation Mission (EOM) to Kazakhstan on 10 July.¹ The mission, led by Ambassador Vincent Pilet, consists of a 12-member core team based in Astana and 22 long-term observers (LTOs) deployed since 18 July to 11 locations around the country. Mission members are drawn from 19 OSCE participating States, and 47 per cent of mission members are women.

III. BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

The 23 August 2026 early parliamentary elections follow the 15 March referendum on the new Constitution which entered into force on 1 July, leading to the dissolution of the previous bicameral parliament and to the President calling early parliamentary elections.²

The constitutional revision was initiated by President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev in 2025 to modernize and optimize governance.³ The Constitution substantially changed the institutional framework, replacing the bicameral parliament with a unicameral *Kurultai*, abolishing independent parliamentary candidacies, establishing a new consultative People's Council (*Halyk Kenesi*),⁴ reintroducing the vice-presidency,⁵ while broadening the president's powers.⁶ The Constitution retained the single, non-renewable seven-year presidential mandate. After the referendum the Constitutional Court issued an interpretation that the incumbent may compete for re-election.⁷ Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors critically assessed the process for adoption of the Constitution noting it was conducted as in an expedited manner, with limited

¹ See previous [ODIHR election reports on Kazakhstan](#).

² The CEC announced that the 15 March referendum was [supported](#) by over 87 per cent of the some 73 per cent of voters who participated in the referendum.

³ The constitutional revision was presented to continue the 2022 reform, which also entailed a constitutional referendum and an early presidential election (both in 2022) and early parliamentary elections (in 2023).

⁴ The People's Council is a consultative body with legislative initiative comprising 126 members appointed by the president with 42 members each representing ethnocultural associations, public associations and other non-profit organizations, and local representative bodies (*Maslikhats*) and public councils.

⁵ The president appoints (with the *Kurultai*'s consent) and dismisses the vice president, determines the officeholder's mandate, who represents the presidency at state institutions and is first in line of presidential succession.

⁶ These include expanded powers over institutional appointments, parliamentary dissolution following repeated dissent, including on the candidacy of the *Kurultai*'s chairperson, temporary unilateral legislative powers between the dissolution of parliament and election of a new one, stronger powers over the state apparatus. The Constitution also revised succession rules and appointments to senior constitutional offices.

⁷ The [Constitutional Court Regulatory Resolution No 89 of 7 July 2026](#), issued upon the President's request, interpreted Articles 43.1, 72.2–3, 83.1 and 84.3 of the Constitution that the restrictions on election or appointment to the offices apply only to those initiated under the 2026 Constitution; accordingly, the terms served under the 1995 Constitution do not fall within the scope of the re-appointment limits, and individuals who held such offices before the 2026 Constitution entered into force may be elected or appointed again. On 15 March 2026, the president [stated](#) that the next presidential election would take place in 2029, as provided for by the 1995 Constitution.

opportunities for public participation.⁸ Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors from political parties considered that a new unicameral parliament with strong party mandates will improve the legislative process, while others criticized it for lack of genuine political participation and grassroots representation.

The political landscape is strongly dominated by the incumbent President. The pre-election environment has been shaped by the registration of the new political party *Adilet*, with the stated aim to facilitate the President's policies, and its swift merger with the then-ruling *Amanat* party. This rendered the new party the major contestant for the upcoming elections and consolidated its central position in the political landscape, while *Amanat* is undergoing liquidation.⁹ Another significant development was the unexpected leadership changes in three political parties, shortly before the announcement of the elections.¹⁰

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

Women remain significantly under-represented in political and public life, with 18 of 98 seats in the former *Mazhilis* (18 per cent) and 3 of 25 government posts (12 per cent) held by women; none of the 20 *oblast akims* (regional governors) is a woman. All political parties created women's structures, however, only one party, *Ak Zhol*, is led by a woman. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has expressed concern about the low representation of women in decision-making positions as well as discriminatory gender stereotypes hindering the participation of women in political and public life.¹¹

The ability of citizens to participate in political life, including through the fundamental freedoms of association, peaceful assembly, and expression, remains constrained, and most previous ODIHR recommendations in these areas remain to be addressed.¹² Many ODIHR EOM interlocutors stated that respect for fundamental freedoms and the rule of law has deteriorated considerably since 2023, as no genuine opposition parties are registered, independent civil society organizations, particularly those with foreign funding, face pressure, stigmatization, and issues with accessing their funds.

Kazakhstan is a multi-ethnic country with more than 120 ethnic groups. Ethnic Kazakhs constitute the majority of the population, while ethnic Russians are the largest national minority.¹³ Other minority groups include Uzbeks, Ukrainians, Uyghurs, Germans, and Tatars. The legislation does not provide for affirmative measures to facilitate minority representation, and prohibits political parties based on ethnicity.

⁸ The [president](#), [several politicians](#) and [members of the Working Group](#) [formed to draft the new Constitution] argued that broad grassroots demand for vast changes resulted in a *de facto* new Constitution, reportedly based on some 2,000 public requests and submissions. While the Constitution does not stipulate a citizens' direct initiative for constitutional review (Article 91), the 1999 Law on the Republican Referendum allows such an initiative if supported by at least 200,000 voters across all administrative units of the country, subject to a complex registration, signature collection and submission procedures (Articles 11 – 17 of the Law), which shall be transferred to referendum by the president.

⁹ *Adilet* is led by the Aibek Dadebai, until 5 May the Head of the Presidential Administration; many of its members participated in drafting the new Constitution.

¹⁰ *Ak Zhol*, *Auyl* and the People's Party announced the changes of their leaderships on 13, 23, 26 June, respectively.

¹¹ See UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women [2025 Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Kazakhstan](#), paragraphs 29 and 30.

¹² In 2025, the [UNHRC Universal Periodic Review for Kazakhstan](#) raised concerns regarding the freedoms of association, peaceful assembly, expression and the media. In a [joint communication in 2025](#), UN Special Rapporteurs and experts expressed serious concern over the criminal prosecution and sentencing of activists and the related pattern of criminalization, detention, surveillance and other sanctions. See also the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law and the International Partnership for Human Rights [statement](#) on stigmatization of civil society organizations, restrictions on free speech, peaceful assemblies, and persecution of activists and journalists. See all ODIHR election-related [recommendations](#) to Kazakhstan.

¹³ According to the [Bureau of National Statistics of Kazakhstan](#), these amount to 71.3 and 14.6 per cent, respectively.

IV. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND ELECTORAL SYSTEM

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

A package of six constitutional laws developing and integrating the new constitutional provisions, including amendments to the Election Law, was adopted in late May,¹⁶ and a set of legal amendments harmonising other laws, including election-related ones, followed on 11 June.¹⁷ During the election campaign, on 12 August, amendments to the Code on Administrative Offences of June 2026, expanding sanctions for election-related offences for individuals and political parties, will enter into force.¹⁸ According to some ODIHR EOM interlocutors, the constitutional laws and amendments were developed in an expedited manner, with limited or no transparency or public discussions.¹⁹ The parliament processed the vast package of key constitutional laws and amendments within two weeks.²⁰ Wide formulations of some of the provisions, including those on foreign financing, prompted public requests for interpretation, with the interpretative approaches of the respective authorities changing in the course of the electoral preparations.²¹

The amendments to the Election Law, *inter alia*, introduced a proportional electoral system for parliamentary elections and adjusted legal provisions for constituting the new unicameral legislature, expanded candidate eligibility requirements, revised candidate nomination procedures and certain campaign regulations, established new appointment mechanisms for election commissions and eligibility requirements for their members, prohibited in-kind donations, raised campaign expenditure limits, and expanded the ban on foreign financing.

Under the Constitution, the *Kurultai*'s 145 deputies are directly elected for a five-year term under a proportional representation system in a single nationwide electoral constituency from closed lists, with a 5-per cent valid-votes threshold. The legal framework provides political parties with broad discretion over candidate nomination, allocation and implementation of parliamentary mandates in the *Kurultai*. Some

¹⁴ Election-related legislation includes, *inter alia*, the 2002 Law on Political Parties, the 2020 Law on Peaceful Assemblies, the 2014 Criminal Code, the 2014 Code on Administrative Offences, the 2020 Code on Administrative Procedures, the 2024 Law on Mass Media and other media-related laws.

¹⁵ The [CEC Regulations, Rules and Decisions](#) were last amended in 2026 to harmonize with the legal changes.

¹⁶ The package of six constitutional laws, including the Laws '[On the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan](#)', '[On the Kurultai and the Status of its Members](#)', '[On the People's Council of Kazakhstan \(Halyk Kenesi\)](#)', '[On the Status of the Capital of the Republic of Kazakhstan](#)' and '[On the Administrative-Territorial Structure of the Republic of Kazakhstan](#)', and amendments to the Law on Elections ([Law No 305-VIII](#)) was adopted at a joint session of both parliamentary chambers on 20 May and promulgated on 5 June.

¹⁷ See Paragraph II.2.(b). of the Council of Europe's European Commission on Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) [2002 Code of Good Practice](#) in Electoral Matters (Code of Good Practice) and the 2024 Venice Commission [Revised Interpretative Declaration](#) on the Stability of the Electoral Law.

¹⁸ These include, *inter alia*, the liabilities for individual users of social networks for the failure to provide to the CEC the information on paid campaign-related content, for the failure to ensure equal conditions and access for campaign for all electoral contestants, and for publication of opinion polls; as well as liability of political parties for financing election campaigns outside of the electoral funds.

¹⁹ The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) informed that governmental draft laws are published online for public consultation and only few comments were received on the relevant drafts, while the legislation initiated by the president is not subject to mandatory public consultation, hence those were not conducted. The CEC informed that the amendments to the Election Law were planned in the Government's 2025 legislative plan (Resolution No. 1132 of 27 December), were drafted by the Ministry of National Economy, and published for consultation from 15 January to 5 February 2025.

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

²¹ See *Election Observation* section.

ODIHR EOM interlocutors raised concerns that this discretion may impact genuine political participation.²² Following the constitutional review the parliamentary electoral system no longer has a majoritarian component. Also, no provision for independent candidates was re-introduced. In line with international standards and prior ODIHR recommendations candidates should have the opportunity to run independently.²³

V. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

Parliamentary elections are administered hierarchically by the CEC, 20 regional (*oblast*) Territorial Election Commissions (TECs), 227 district (*rayon*) and city TECs and 10,424 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs), including some 644 special polling stations, of which 79 abroad. The CEC and TECs are composed of seven members, PECs membership varies from five to nine.²⁴ As of 22 July, the lower-level election administration comprised 71,275 members, of whom 69.4 per cent are women.²⁵ All election commission members are appointed for five-year terms.

The seven-member CEC was appointed by the President and both chambers of the previous parliament and includes two women. The appointment procedure will change after the *Kurultai* elections: the president will appoint the entire CEC composition, subject to the *Kurultai*'s approval, except for the candidacy of the Chairperson to be appointed and dismissed by the president, with no legally stipulated mandate duration.

TEC and PEC members are elected by the respective local representative bodies (*Maslikhats*), based on nominations from registered political parties, each nominating one member per commission, otherwise the *Maslikhats* appoint on proposals from public organizations or higher-level election commissions.²⁶ All regional TEC members and the management of district and city TECs serve on a professional, full-time basis.²⁷ Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors expressed concern about the impartiality and independence of lower-level commissions due to the appointment rules and the lack of transparency in nominations.

The CEC has regulatory, oversight and dispute-resolution functions, registers candidates, and determines and publishes the final election results. Technical preparations for the elections are on schedule. Most ODIHR EOM interlocutors expressed confidence in the technical capacity of the election administration. The CEC holds regular sessions, livestreamed in the Kazakh and Russian languages and simultaneously translated into sign language, without closed captioning. The CEC sessions, announced online at short notice, are attended by most stakeholders, media, and some observers; some sessions are followed by a press briefing.

Since 1 July, the CEC has adopted 32 decisions, including on candidate registration, procedural issues, including those aimed at enhancing participation of persons with disabilities, and key templates.²⁸ To date,

²² The legal framework maintains the “integrity of mandate” rule: the members of the *Kurultai* automatically forfeit their seats if they cease membership in the political party from which they were elected. There are no rules for the distribution of mandates among the candidates from the candidate list; political parties may choose candidates at their discretion without consideration to the candidates’ placement on the list or other criteria but have to ensure compliance with the 30-per cent quota for women, persons with disabilities and youth.

²³ See Article 25 of the [1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR) and paragraph 7.5 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#).

²⁴ PECs comprise 5 to 7 members in polling stations with up to 2,000 voters, and 7 to 9 members larger polling stations.

²⁵ Currently, 1,729 persons serve as TEC members and 69,546 as PEC members. There is no data available regarding the representation of persons with disabilities or members of national minorities in the election administration.

²⁶ According to the CEC, 65.3 per cent of commission members were nominated by political parties, 32.2 per cent by public associations, and 2.5 per cent by higher-level election commissions.

²⁷ Other members of district and city TECs work part-time with pro rata compensation.

²⁸ [CEC Resolution No. 33/62](#) of 14 July 2026 recommended that political parties consider the needs of persons with disabilities in campaign activities, and tasked local executive bodies with ensuring polling station accessibility (per

CEC members have approved all decisions unanimously, no debates were held in the sessions the ODIHR EOM attended. CEC has so far published its decisions on its website in a timely manner.

TECs organize elections within their areas, supervise PECs and consider complaints against them, register party proxies, and tabulate and transmit territorial-level results. ODIHR EOM long-term observers (LTOs) reported that both regional and district TECs are on track with their activities. The TECs are currently engaged in registration of party proxies and the training of lower-level commissions. Some ODIHR EOM observers noted that TECs convened sessions on an *ad-hoc* basis without consistent prior announcements.

PECs are responsible for voter-list scrutiny, voter information, the administration of polling and mobile voting, the vote count, the completion of results protocols, and the adjudication of election-day complaints at first instance. Since precinct boundaries and locations were published on 16 July, PEC members have been conducting preparations for election day. On 2 August, when *akimats* transferred voter lists, PECs began conducting a voter information campaign, distributing personalized invitations to vote.

The CEC, TECs, and PECs are conducting a nationwide cascade training and testing on new rules for over 71,000 election commissioners, including a video course on interactions with voters with disabilities, and for political parties, accredited observers, and the media.²⁹ An extensive voter information campaign is ongoing, *inter alia*, on the elections date, voter registration, targeting first-time voters, and on rules for Absentee Voting Certificates (AVCs) and home-bound voting. The information campaign is conducted in Kazakh and in Russian, via the CEC's website and *Telegram*, all types of national and regional media, outdoor advertising, and youth-focused events with national and local Young Voters Clubs.

The CEC and regional TECs operate working groups on electoral rights of persons with disabilities, involving specialized civil-society organizations (CSOs), which will monitor accessibility from 3 August.³⁰ The CEC informed that 98 per cent of polling stations are accessible to voters with disabilities, and local authorities will offer voters with disabilities transportation to polling stations, upon request.³¹

VI. VOTER REGISTRATION

Citizens of at least 18 years old on election day have the right to vote, those deprived of legal capacity by a court, including on grounds of intellectual or psychosocial disability, and those serving a prison sentence, regardless of the gravity of the crime, are disenfranchised, contrary to international standards, OSCE commitments, and prior ODIHR recommendations.³²

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

[CEC Instruction No. 21/183](#) of 2012 and [Recommendations No. 24/217](#) of 2018) and monitoring it jointly with TECs and disability-rights organizations.

²⁹ ODIHR EOM observed the trainings, which combine theoretical presentations with scenario-based exercises and a knowledge test.

³⁰ Of the 23 members of the CEC working group, 17 represent specialized CSOs from across the country.

³¹ Polling stations will be equipped with magnifying glasses, Braille ballot sleeves, accessible voting booths, as well as recording of the content of the ballot.

³² Paragraph 7.3 of the 1990 [OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) states that the participating States will “guarantee universal and equal suffrage to adult citizens”. See also Article 25 in conjunction with Article 2 of the [1966 ICCPR](#). See also Articles 12 and 29 of the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#), and paragraph 48 of [General Comment No. 1](#) to Article 12 of the CRPD, which states that “a person’s decision-making ability cannot be a justification for any exclusion of persons with disabilities from exercising [...] the right to vote [and] the right to stand for election”.

available. Most ODIHR EOM interlocutors expressed confidence in the accuracy of the voter register and voter lists.

Voter lists are compiled by the relevant *akimats* based on the central state population database and were submitted to PECs by 2 August; public scrutiny starts on 7 August at PECs and online.³³ Requests for corrections can be submitted up to and on election day and must be decided by the respective PEC on the day of submission, subject to immediate judicial review. Voters can be added to a supplementary voter list on the election day without judicial or administrative oversight, provided they prove their residence within the precinct, despite previous ODIHR recommendations to curb such practice.

Voters unable to vote at their polling station of permanent residence on election day may request inclusion in the voter list of the place of their temporary residence, up to 30 days before election day. Within 15 days before elections, voters may request an AVCs, to vote at any polling station outside their locality of permanent registration. Mobile voting is provided for health-related issues and in remote areas.³⁴

VII. PARTY AND CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

The right to stand in parliamentary elections is granted to voters aged 25 or older, resident in Kazakhstan for at least 10 years prior to election day. Residency requirement is contrary to international standards and prior ODIHR recommendations.³⁵ Those found guilty of a corruption offence and those with unexpunged criminal record, regardless of the crime, are ineligible.

Under the 2026 Election Law amendments, candidates may only be nominated by registered political parties from among their members. In line with international standards and prior ODIHR recommendations candidates should have the opportunity to run independently.³⁶ While ODIHR EOM interlocutors from the majority of political parties positively assessed this change, most other interlocutors criticized it as a limitation on political participation. All political parties met by the ODIHR EOM informed about party congresses to approve their candidate lists, involving regional branches in the candidates' selection.³⁷ Candidate registration is conditional on a deposit of KZT 1,275,000 per candidate, with full or partial exemption based on previous election results, and refunds to those above the 5-per cent electoral threshold.³⁸

The CEC registered candidate lists from 2 to 23 July. The lists of all seven active political parties were registered, fielding 545 candidates, including 172 women (31.5 per cent).³⁹ All lists complied with the Election Law quota, as 43.9 per cent of all registered candidates belong to at least one of the quota groups:

³³ Voter lists are transferred to PECs 20 days before election day and published for public scrutiny 5 days later.

³⁴ It is conditional to a written application to be submitted to the relevant PEC no later than 12:00 on election day.

³⁵ See Article 25 in conjunction with Article 2 of the [1966 ICCPR](#). Paragraph 15 of the [UN CCPR General Comment No. 25](#) states: “persons who are otherwise eligible to stand for election should not be excluded by unreasonable or discriminatory requirements such as education, residence or descent, or by reason of political affiliation”.

³⁶ In paragraph 7.5 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#), OSCE participating States commented themselves to “respect the right of citizens to seek political or public office, individually or as representatives of political parties or organizations, without discrimination”. Article 3.4 of the [2002 Convention on Standards of Democratic Elections, the Voting Rights and Freedoms in the State Parties of the Commonwealth of Independent States](#) (CIS Convention) states that “every citizen should have equal legal possibilities to propose him/herself as a candidate in elections”. Paragraph 17 of the [UN CCPR General Comment No. 25](#) states that “the right of persons to stand for election should not be limited unreasonably by requiring candidates to be members of parties or of specific parties”.

³⁷ *Baytaq* had to hold a second congress to vote on a new list, after four candidates withdrew.

³⁸ Equal to approximately EUR 2,340; EUR 1 is approximately KZT 540. Political parties that received at least 5 per cent of the votes in the last parliamentary elections are exempt from paying the deposit, those with 3 to 5 per cent of the votes pay half, while those with 1 to 3 per cent pay 70 per cent. Of seven contesting political parties, five got full exemption, one, *Baytaq*, was partially exempt, and one, *Adilet*, had to pay the full amount.

³⁹ Under the Election Law candidate registration lasts from 60 to 30 days before the elections, but was shortened to last from 53 to 30 days before these elections, as they are held early.

women, youth, or persons with disabilities.⁴⁰ The number of candidates on parties' lists ranges from 33 to 186.⁴¹ The Election Law provides for denials of registration or de-registration of candidates and candidates lists, which are subject to judicial review.⁴²

VIII. CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT

Election campaigning is regulated by the Election Law, the Code on Administrative Offenses with liability for violations of campaign rules, and the Criminal Code with sanctions for more serious electoral offences. The law prohibits early campaigning, subject to administrative fines, or cancellation of a candidate's or candidates list's registration.⁴³ Political programmes and campaign messages with discriminatory or false information, and calls for a violent change of the constitutional and public order, and war are prohibited.⁴⁴ Vote buying, misuse of office and administrative resources are not permitted.⁴⁵ During the campaign period, the Office of the Prosecutor General warned about the consequences of campaign violations.⁴⁶

Citizens and political parties may campaign using meetings, rallies, gatherings, and media content, including online, with the 2026 amendments extending campaign regulations to social networks. By law, *akimats* and election commissions designate locations for campaign materials and provide equal conditions for campaigning, and *akimats* provide campaign facilities and resources on uniform and equal contractual terms. Campaign locations were determined by 23 July. Contestants must notify local authorities five days before holding outdoor campaign events, which are limited to specifically designated locations.⁴⁷ Demonstrations and processions require prior approval.⁴⁸ ODIHR EOM observed that designated venues were generally provided on equal terms. There were no substantiated reports of refused or restricted campaign events, or of notification- or authorization-related violations.

The election campaign lasts from 23 July to 21 August and gained momentum across the country by its second week.⁴⁹ All parties support the President's political agenda, and focus their campaigns on socio-economic issues, agriculture, healthcare, education, the environment, greater political accountability, and Kazakhstan's role on the international stage.

The campaign across the country is dominated by *Adilet*, while campaigns by the other political parties are smaller-scale and more targeted. Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors characterized *Adilet*'s merger with

⁴⁰ The Election Law stipulates a cumulative minimal 30-per cent quota for women, youth and persons with disabilities in candidate list, and does not provide any candidates placement requirements. In total, 19 candidates with disabilities are included in the party lists. Youth is qualified as those under the age of 35; there is a total of 74 young candidates.

⁴¹ By law, the maximum number of candidates per candidate list is 188. The party list of *Ak Zhol* fielded 63 candidates, *Auyl* – 69, *Adilet* – 186, *Baytaq* – 47, NSDP – 33, PPK – 72, *Respublica* – 75.

⁴² Candidates may be deregistered for, *inter alia*, early campaigning, misuse of office, and inaccurate asset declarations. There have been no such cases in these elections.

⁴³ *Adilet* and *Baytaq* billboards featuring a slogan and a QR code inviting to join the party were observed in Astana, Balkash, and Talgar before the start of the official campaign. The CEC informed the ODIHR EOM that these billboards constitute information materials rather than campaign materials.

⁴⁴ The law prohibits election programmes to “proclaim the ideas of forcible change of the foundations of the constitutional system, encroachment on the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan, violation of public order, undermining national security, war, armed conflicts, social, racial, national, ethnic, religious superiority or discord, the cult of cruelty and violence, as well as calls to commit such actions”.

⁴⁵ The prohibitions extend to campaigning by military personnel, employees of national security and law enforcement agencies, judges, members of election commissions, religious associations, state and local government bodies, and their officials, public officials, while performing their official duties, and to candidates holding public office to use their official or service position in election campaigns.

⁴⁶ The Prosecutor General's Office [called](#) for compliance with the election rules on 8 July.

⁴⁷ In the absence of *akimats*' response within three working days, the event may proceed. The local authorities may approve or refuse events based on a broad range of grounds or propose an alternative venue and time.

⁴⁸ Applications shall be submitted at least 10 working days in advance and decisions communicated by the local executive body within 7 working days.

⁴⁹ Campaigning is prohibited the day before and on election day.

Amanat as unexpected and as an effort to reshape and consolidate the political landscape and elites, adding that *Adilet* is the first political party registered since 2023, other registration attempts were unsuccessful.⁵⁰

While most ODIHR interlocutors among political parties informed that their main voter outreach strategy is on social networks, the ODIHR EOM observed that traditional campaign activities were actively used by all contestants, although the frequency and scale of such activities varied among contestants and across regions.⁵¹ Campaign activities are largely managed by party headquarters, which determine overall strategies and key messages and produce campaign materials. Campaign messages are tailored to local contexts, audience, and specific groups.⁵² Most parties addressed the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities in their electoral programmes and campaign activities.

Social networks play an important role in campaigning, with *Instagram* and *Facebook* being the most popular platforms for political outreach and voter engagement, *TikTok* is used primarily for blogger- and influencer-led political content, and *Threads* for broader political discussion. The ODIHR EOM monitoring of the campaign on social networks established that parties frequently published identical or similar campaign content on *Facebook* and *Instagram*, with *Instagram* generally attracting larger audiences. Personalized posts by candidates and party leaders generally resulted in a greater engagement than those published by official party accounts.⁵³ While the tone of traditional campaigning has remained generally positive, instances of more confrontational discourse have been observed online.⁵⁴

Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors noted that the absence of genuine opposition and the elimination of the right to stand for parliamentary elections independently limit political participation, pluralism and the electoral competitiveness.⁵⁵ Some interlocutors cited pressure, administrative hurdles, and stigmatization of independent civil society organizations, as well as arrests, cyberattacks and restrictions targeting journalists, bloggers, and YouTubers as factors contributing to self-censorship and reduced civic participation among civil society, with some abstaining to avoid legitimizing the process.⁵⁶

The mechanisms for countering disinformation and foreign interference remain largely centralized within governmental and national security institutions in charge of the country's cybersecurity architecture. The authorities have expanded co-operation with major online platforms to protect national security and

⁵⁰ The reorganization does not entail an automatic transfer of party membership, and *Amanat* members have to apply to join *Adilet*. Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors stated that *Adilet* was the first to recruit members via the government's online portal, which they regarded as an advantage. One party informed being denied access to the government's online portal, one was offered access but did not use it due to suspension of membership applications during the campaign, one stated that membership applications must legally be handwritten, and three expressed no interest.

⁵¹ The ODIHR EOM has observed 17 campaign events, of which 7 featured a woman speaker, no speakers with disabilities, and 1 a young speaker; 7 campaign activities addressed women, persons with disabilities, and youth; 6 were accessible to persons with disabilities, and one included sign-language interpretation. Five events were held both in Kazakh and Russian. The average attendance was 44 per cent for women, and 28 per cent for youth.

⁵² Political parties' campaign activities target specific groups, including farmers, teachers, healthcare professionals, women, youth, and persons with disabilities. A number of contestants held campaign events in state and public institutions, engaging public and civil servants.

⁵³ On 17 July, the ODIHR EOM began monitoring some 50 Facebook and Instagram accounts of political parties and chairpersons, candidates, influencers, journalists, human rights activists, and local administrations.

⁵⁴ When PPK Deputy Chairperson Beybit Kusainov [accused](#) the NSDP of misreading the Constitution, [NSDP Chairperson](#) Askhat Rakimzhanov responded by questioning his opponent's legislative competence. A [PPK candidate](#) warned that *Baytaq's* corporate-liability proposal could cause legal chaos, prompting [Baytaq Chairperson](#) Azamatkhan Amirkhanov to accuse the PPK of defending large-business interests.

⁵⁵ On 27 July 2026, the [11M Movement](#), a new socio-political movement, was launched in Almaty, with the aim to represent non-partisan citizens of Kazakhstan who do not feel represented by existing political parties.

⁵⁶ Paragraph 4 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) states that the participating States "will ensure that their laws, regulations, practices and policies conform with their obligations under international law and are brought into harmony with the provisions of the Declaration on Principles and other CSCE commitments". The 2025 [UNHRC Universal Periodic Review for Kazakhstan](#) raised concerns, *inter alia*, about the right to freedom of association, peaceful assembly, expression, and freedom of media.

electoral integrity. The Ministry of Culture and Information (MCI)’s Centre of Monitoring and Analysis monitors the online space, including for potential electoral violations. Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors expressed concerns that broadly formulated restrictions on online content and their enforcement, including widespread content removals, could facilitate suppression of political expression and critical voices.⁵⁷

IX. CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Campaign financing is primarily regulated by the Election Law and the Law on Political Parties, supplemented by CEC Regulations.⁵⁸ Recent amendments to the Election Law (in 2023 and 2026) changed some campaign finance rules, prohibiting in-kind donations, and increasing contribution and expenditure limits. The recent amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences introduced sanctions for campaign financing outside electoral funds.

Political parties represented in the parliament receive annual funding from the state budget proportionally to the valid votes received in the previous parliamentary elections, which are earmarked for their statutory activities and may not be used for campaign purposes.⁵⁹

Parliamentary election campaigns must be financed exclusively through the political parties’ electoral funds; candidates’ individual electoral funds are prohibited. Electoral funds can be formed from the political parties’ resources and monetary contributions from candidates, citizens and legal entities. The law explicitly prohibits donations from charitable and religious organizations, state-funded entities, state and local self-government bodies, foreign funding and anonymous donations.

Political parties may contribute up to KZT 1.275 billion, total donations may not exceed KZT 2.55 billion, while individuals and legal entities may donate up to KZT 25.5 million and KZT 127.5 million, respectively, electoral funds may reach up to KZT 3.8 billion.⁶⁰ All campaign income and expenditures must be channeled through a dedicated account in a bank designated by the CEC.⁶¹ All campaign-related financial transactions must be completed by 18:00 on 22 August.

Political parties met by the ODIHR EOM informed that they planned the campaign financing in consultation with their regional branches, but its management is centralized. The election campaigns are primarily financed from political parties’ funds, personal contributions of their members and legal entities.⁶²

The CEC is mandated with campaign-finance oversight. The bank controls that all transactions into and from the electoral fund accounts comply with the legal requirements on the origin, purpose and amounts of transfers, and provide information on all electoral fund transactions to the CEC weekly and upon request. The legal framework provides sanctions for campaign finance violations.⁶³ The CEC may deregister the

⁵⁷ Including *Meta*, which operates *Instagram*, *Facebook*, and *WhatsApp*. During the campaign, ODIHR EOM interlocutors reported a trend of election-related posts, including content critical of the authorities, becoming unavailable shortly after publication, while the mechanism of their removal remained unclear.

⁵⁸ [CEC Regulation No 166/314 of 3 September 2009](#); [CEC Regulation No 19/222 of 7 August 1999](#), amended in 2026.

⁵⁹ The funds are paid monthly, calculated at the rate of 0.65 monthly calculation index for each vote cast.

⁶⁰ Amounting to 15,000 (increased from 5,000), 30,000 (increased from 10,000) minimum salaries, and 300 and 1,500 minimum salaries, or EUR 2.35 million and EUR 4.7 million, EUR 46,875 and EUR 234,375, respectively. The election campaign expenditures may not exceed EUR 7 million.

⁶¹ By [CEC Decision N° 28/57 of 1 July 2026](#) “*Halyk Bank* of Kazakhstan” was designated as the banking institution in which special temporary accounts of the electoral funds are to be opened and maintained.

⁶² *Ak Zhol* estimates the total cost of their campaign at KZT 1–1.2 billion (EUR 1.8–2.2 million), *Baytaq* at KZT 2 billion (EUR 3.6 million), NSDP at KZT 600–650 (EUR 1.1–1.2 million), PPK KZT 400 million (EUR 735,000), and *Respublika* at KZT 1 billion (EUR 1.8 million).

⁶³ See Articles 115–117 of the Code of Administrative Offences. For instance, financing a campaign outside the electoral fund entails a fine of 25–50 monthly calculation indexes (for 2026, KZT 4,325, or around EUR 8), depending on whether contribution came from an individual, or a medium-sized or large enterprise.

candidate list or invalidate the election results for campaign finance violations and refer the case to the prosecutorial authority for violations of administrative or criminal nature.⁶⁴

The CEC shall publish campaign finance overviews twice during the campaign period, expected during the first week of August and prior to election day. The data on the total amount of campaign funds, sources of financing and campaign expenditures based on the parties' final reports submitted after the elections will be published within 10 working days after the publication of the final election results.

X. MEDIA

The media market is state-dominated through direct ownership and untransparent budgetary subsidies, which limits media pluralism, despite the large number of registered outlets.⁶⁵ Television remains the main source of information, but the popularity of social networks has increased significantly.⁶⁶ A number of long-standing concerns about media freedom persist, including specific noted concerns about state influence on editorial content, arrests and pressure on independent journalists and their families, Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs), online content removals, and problems with delays in accreditation of journalists, resulting in litigations.⁶⁷

There is no genuine public service broadcasting, despite prior ODIHR recommendation to create one with a clearly defined public service mandate and independent appointment of management. The MCI performs the functions of the media regulator, registers national media outlets, implements the state media policy, including on bloggers and influencers, and conducts media monitoring, to ensure compliance with legal requirements, including online media and social networks.⁶⁸ On 16 June, the MCI subjugated the Center for Analysis and Information to the MCI Committee of Information, consolidating the Committee's mandate.⁶⁹

The media legal framework includes the Constitution, the Law on Mass Media, the Election Law, the Criminal Code, the Code of Administrative Offences.⁷⁰ The Constitution guarantees freedom of expression,

⁶⁴ Article 34(10) of the Election Law refers to invalidation of results in a territory or district.

⁶⁵ As of [June 2026](#), there are 5,303 registered media outlets in the country, including 3,181 periodicals, 253 TV channels, 97 radio stations, as well as 1,457 news agencies and network publications. State-owned media include the *Qazaqstan Radio and TV Corporation*, which operates four TV and four radio channels, *Agency Khabar* which operates two televisions (*Khabar* and *24KZ*), and *TV and Radio Complex of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan*, with four outlets (including the news agency *Kazinform*). The 2026 [state budget](#) allocated KZT 67 billion (approximately EUR 123 million) for "implementation of state information policy". On 15 July, the Inter-district Administrative Court of Astana dismissed the [appeal](#) of the public foundation Legal Media Center against the MCI on access to information about state subsidies to media, stating that the allocation of public funds for the media is exempt from disclosure.

⁶⁶ [In September 2025](#), 59 per cent of respondents listed television as the most trusted source of information, and 34.7 per cent trusted social networks and messengers. [In October 2025](#), there were 19.5 million Internet users and 16.9 million active users of social networks.

⁶⁷ In April, six international human rights and press freedom organizations signed [a joint letter](#) expressing concerns regarding journalists being arrested and increased harassment of independent media through website blocking, denial of accreditation, and other forms of pressure; similar issues were raised by [the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media](#), noting that "criminal proceedings under broadly framed provisions have affected journalists reporting on matters of public interest". On 16 July, representatives of *Radio Azattyq* (the Kazakh-language Service of *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*) [announced](#) that 11 journalists from their staff are left without accreditation for this electoral campaign, following the decision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) to postpone their accreditation review with two additional months permitted by law for further analysis, until mid-September. From 1 to 31 November 2025, the MCI [limited](#) circulation of 6,707 online resources and links due to violations of prohibited content; no content-related limitations were prescribed by courts in that period. During 2024, the Ministry [limited](#) dissemination of 26,500 online resources and links; no content related limitations were imposed by the court in that period.

⁶⁸ The MFA accredits foreign media.

⁶⁹ See the [Order](#) № 292-HK of the Deputy Prime Minister of 16 June 2026. The Center's monitoring methodology or reports are not public. Its mandate encompasses foreign online platforms and instant messaging services.

⁷⁰ Media-related framework also includes the Law on Online Platforms and Online Advertising, and the new Digital Code, adopted in January 2026, in force from 12 July.

media freedoms, and the right of access to information; however, libel may entail a month-long administrative arrest, and insult of the president and other public officials, and the deliberate dissemination of false information remain criminalized and are implemented restrictively, despite prior ODIHR recommendations, which ODIHR EOM interlocutors assessed as considerably affecting the exercise of freedom of expression.⁷¹

During the campaign, media outlets should ensure objective and equal coverage of all contestants and refrain from publishing information damaging honour, dignity or business reputation of a candidate or political party. Broadcasters are prohibited from disseminating campaign materials in the news and analytical programmes. The law does not provide for free airtime, and political parties may purchase them but only from the media outlets and users of online platforms that have notified the CEC about their coverage plans and advertisement fees. A total of 757 media entities did so by the 18 July deadline.⁷² On election day, the law limits the simultaneous presence of media in a polling station to one journalist per media outlet and three representatives per television channel. Complaints regarding electoral coverage by the media are within the competence of the prosecution and the courts.⁷³

The CEC informed the ODIHR EOM that it will organize one free-of-charge electoral debate by mid-August, which will be broadcast on a national television; other debates can be organized and paid by the political parties who wish to participate in them. On 29 July, state-owned *Qazaqstan TV* conducted the first electoral debates, where all contesting parties participated.⁷⁴

Media outlets and online platforms publishing opinion polls are required to disclose comprehensive methodological information.⁷⁵ To clarify a long-standing issue when journalistic *vox populi* and sociological opinion polls were conflated in implementation practice and case law, the MCI explained during the CEC's training on electoral coverage that media are allowed to use the reporting method of 'blitz polls', which is not subject to sanctions.⁷⁶ Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors raised concerns that the law does not sufficiently protect journalists and that the established case law, especially from the 2026 referendum campaign, sanctioned journalists for campaign-related interviews or online questionnaires.

ODIHR EOM interlocutors stated that independent media were forced to move their primary operation to the Internet, due to increased editorial control exercised by the state on traditional media, and that their work is affected by intimidation, judicial proceeding on deliberate dissemination of false information

⁷¹ Including through the Criminal Code, the Code of Administrative Offences, the Law on Mass Media, and the Law on Online Platforms and Online Advertising. Legal provisions provide protections for journalists who reproduce information from official sources or quote statements *verbatim*. Insult of public officials and dissemination of false information remain criminalized, see Articles 375, 376 and 378, and 274 of [the Criminal Code](#).

⁷² Advertising fees reach up to approximately KZT 300,000/minute (EUR 550/minute). Paid content must be marked and contain information about the organization that produced it, the place of printing and circulation, the contractors, and the source of funding.

⁷³ On 23 July, the Prosecutor General's Office posted [guidance for media and online users](#) regarding electoral coverage, which ODIHR EOM interlocutors considered as discouraging critical reporting during the campaign.

⁷⁴ The debate was live-streamed on social networks, including *Instagram* and *YouTube*. The debates did not feature a paid-content label. The format included two questions from the host on improving the human capital of the country, and eight questions from the public on the economy, unemployment, and corruption, with two minutes allocated for answers. A CEC-authorized live poll on the public's party preferences was conducted within the debate.

⁷⁵ Only domestic legal entities with at least five years of experience in sociological research are permitted to carry out opinion polls, upon notification of the CEC; as of 22 July, [six organizations did so](#). Publication of opinion polls is prohibited five days preceding election day and on election day; conducting exit polls on election day is prohibited.

⁷⁶ On 22 July, [UlysMedia](#) reported that the prosecutor's office of the Yesil city district of Astana initiated administrative proceedings for a street video interview about the new Constitution and upcoming elections which it qualified in breach of Article 28 of the Election Law. On the same day, the [MCI defined 'blitz polls'](#) as "querying the opinion of citizens without conclusions on the final result".

charges, co-ordinated user requests to social networking platforms to remove their content, and cyberattacks, which discourages critical reporting and contributes to the growth of self-censorship.⁷⁷

On 23 July, the ODIHR EOM started its quantitative and qualitative monitoring of six television channels and seven online media outlets.⁷⁸

XI. ELECTION DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Citizens, political parties, and other electoral stakeholders have legal standing in electoral disputes before election commissions, administrative and civil courts or prosecutorial authorities, depending on the nature of the complaint. Decisions, actions, and inactions of election commissions may be challenged either at a higher-level election commission or at courts.⁷⁹ Administrative courts are the first instance for complaints against lower-level election commissions, while the Supreme Court decides on appeals against the CEC.

The legislation establishes expedited deadlines for the adjudication of election disputes.⁸⁰ Voters may seek correction of inaccurate voter register entries or omissions through expedited administrative and judicial procedures, decided on the day of submission. Election commissions and MCI may refer cases involving potential violations to competent law-enforcement bodies.⁸¹

The CEC may invalidate the results in polling stations or the administrative-territorial unit upon appeal; the 2026 amendments to the Election Law clarified that such violations must affect at least one quarter of all PECs or administrative-territorial units. In addition, the Constitutional Court may, upon request by designated state authorities, examine the legality of the elections.⁸²

From 1 to 23 July, the CEC and TECs reported no complaints or appeals, but handled 96 and 35 requests of information.⁸³ The local civil courts dismissed one of the two intra-party disputes, the other remains pending.⁸⁴ ODIHR EOM interlocutors expected a decrease in electoral litigation due to the removal of the

⁷⁷ During the pre-campaign period, there were four ongoing criminal cases against journalists: [the blogger Adiletkhan Moldakhan](#) was sentenced to a 2.5-year imprisonment; journalist [Aizhan Mameshova](#) was sentenced to a 5-year prohibition on public activities; a court in Almaty continued the hearings in [the case against the former editor-in-chief of orda.kz](#), all the cases on charges of dissemination of false information; on 18 July, the Inter-district Investigative Court of Astana applied [a two-month pre-trial detention for YouTube blogger Azamat Omarov](#), on charges of incitement to hatred under Article 174 of the Criminal Code, following a broadcast of his online satirical programme. On 19–20 July, *KazTag*'s website faced [DDoS attacks](#) and was temporarily inactive. Since the campaign started, *Otkir Kurek* appealed to the authorities to investigate its numerous content removals. On 29 July, [the entire account was blocked](#). On 31 July, the editor-in-chief of *KazTag*, Amir Kasenov, was [sentenced](#) to 15 months restriction of liberty and a 5-year ban on journalistic activities, based on charges of dissemination of false information. On the same day, following a complaint on the same charges, Astana police detained journalist [Lukpan Akhmedyarov](#) for several hours.

⁷⁸ The ODIHR EOM is monitoring *Qazaqstan TV*, *KTK*, *Astana TV*, *Channel 31*, *24KZ*, and *First Channel Eurasia*, as well as the online media *kursiv.kz*, *kaztag.kz*, *orda.kz*, *tengrinews.kz*, *vlast.kz*, *zakon.kz*, and *inform.kz*.

⁷⁹ In case complaints are submitted simultaneously to an election commission and a court, the election commission suspends consideration of the matter.

⁸⁰ The courts decide within five days, or immediately, if submitted within four days prior to or on the election day, while the election commissions decide on election-related violations within five days and review the decisions, actions, inactions of lower-level election commissions within three days.

⁸¹ Election-related crimes include interference with election commissions' work, obstructing voting, falsifying election documents or results, violating ballot secrecy, and using violence, fraud, threats, or vote buying and administrative or other legal liability for violations including unlawful campaigning, spreading false information, campaign-finance breaches, media and observer interference, or voter registration irregularities. Candidates or political parties that violate the law may receive a warning, while repeated violations can result in cancellation of their registration.

⁸² Article 100 of the Election Law grants the legal standing for such requests to the president, the chairperson of the *Kurultai*, at least one-fifth of all *Kurultai* deputies, or the prime minister.

⁸³ At the TEC level, such requests originated mainly from the cities of Astana and Almaty.

⁸⁴ These were initiated in the Astana Inter-district court of civil cases and the Kyzylorda region Inter-district administrative court, involving *Baytaq* and *Auyl*, respectively. The *Baytaq* case, in which the plaintiffs challenged the political party decision on the candidate list, was dismissed.

majoritarian component. The Office of the Prosecutor General informed the ODIHR EOM that fines were imposed on three citizens and one political party for early campaigning and opinion polls on social media.⁸⁵

Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors voiced concerns regarding the impartiality of the judiciary in cases of a political nature, criticizing restrictive judicial interpretation of laws affecting participation in public affairs, freedom of expression, and media activities.⁸⁶ Several publicly reported cases involving journalists, bloggers and civil activists have contributed to a wider discussion concerning the implementation of these provisions and their potential impact on the exercise of fundamental freedoms during the electoral period.⁸⁷

XII. ELECTION OBSERVATION

The Election Law provides for domestic and international election observation. Domestic observers may be fielded by political parties and civil society organizations (CSOs). The CEC accredits organizations operating nationwide, while TECs accredit those registered locally. Only organizations with election observation as a statutory activity are eligible. By law, accredited organizations may observe all types of elections for one year within the area of responsibility of the accrediting commission. Political parties contesting an election are entitled to deploy up to three proxies per polling station. As of 3 August, 13 organizations were accredited at CEC level, and 247 at TEC level.

Several ODIHR EOM interlocutors noted a significant narrowing of the space for independent citizen election observation, citing restrictions on the freedom of association, limited financing, pressure from the authorities, and uncertainty over the eligibility of organizations with foreign funding to observe under the 2026 legal amendments, subject to conflicting interpretation of the rules by the authorities prior and during the campaign.⁸⁸ Some CSOs informed the ODIHR EOM that the uncertainty around implementation of the rules rendered them reluctant to engage in election observation. Nevertheless, several organizations have been accredited to observe and are planning to conduct election day observation, with some deploying several dozen observers and others planning to cover all polling stations within the country. As of 2 August, the CEC had accredited 251 international observers from 22 countries and 6 international organizations.

XIII. ODIHR EOM ACTIVITIES

The ODIHR EOM opened in Astana on 10 July. The mission has met and established regular contacts with the CEC, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other high-level state officials, as well as candidates and other representatives of political parties, the media, civil society, and members of the diplomatic and international community. ODIHR EOM LTOs have been meeting stakeholders at the regional and local level since their deployment on 18 July.

⁸⁵ Fines of KZT 64,875 (approximately EUR 120) were imposed on three citizens, and a fine of KZT 129,750 (approximately EUR 238) on a public association; the fines were reduced by half due to admission of guilt.

⁸⁶ They referred to the Criminal Code Articles 158, 174 (inciting hatred), 274 (dissemination of false information), 375 (interfering with the legal professional activity of a journalist), 376 (infringement of the honour and dignity of the president and parliamentary deputies) and 378 (insult of a representative of authority); Article 120 and recent amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences concerning campaign coverage. See also *Media*. The authorities informed the ODIHR EOM that Kazakhstan is undergoing a judicial reform, including of administrative justice, which according to the authorities has demonstrated a high level of effectiveness in resolving disputes between the State and individuals or legal entities.

⁸⁷ On 21 July, the civil activist Nurzhan Sembayev was sentenced to six years in prison on charges under Articles 405 and 258 of the Criminal Code. See also the *Media* section regarding cases of *ulyssmedia.kz* and YouTuber Omarov.

⁸⁸ Upon the enactment of the amendments, several institutions, including the CEC, MoJ and MCI, interpreted the provisions as excluding all organizations with foreign funding, even if funded activities did not concern election observation. In the course of the campaign, the interpretation recognized that the restrictive rules would not be applied retroactively and thus the accredited organizations with foreign funding may observe. After the election campaign started, following requests from the observer organizations “Youth Information Service of Kazakhstan” and “Wings of Liberty”, the CEC provided a formal interpretation, that foreign funding does not, in itself, constitute grounds for annulment of observers’ accreditation, while each case will be treated for its individual merit.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe have announced their intention to deploy observer delegations and form an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) for the election day, together with the ODIHR EOM.

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