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Elections in the Republic of Azerbaijan

2018 Early Presidential Election

Frequently Asked Questions

Europe and Eurasia

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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Frequently Asked Questions

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Disclosure:
These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Azerbaijani elections authorities as of April 10, 2018 to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.

When is Election Day?

An early presidential election in the Republic of Azerbaijan will be held on April 11, 2018, according to [a decree of the president](#) dated February 5, 2018. The election had originally been scheduled for October 17, 2018. According to presidential adviser, Ali Hasanov, the date was changed to ensure it wouldn't collide with "important domestic and international events" in 2018.¹ According to [the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights 2018 Need Assessment Mission report](#)², Azerbaijani authorities explained to ODIHR this decision as "a need to avoid an overlap of presidential and parliamentary elections in 2025".³

The most recent presidential election was held on October 9, 2013. Based on the 2009 constitutional amendments, which removed the limitation on a candidate serving a maximum of two consecutive terms, incumbent President Ilham Aliyev was deemed eligible to run for a third term.⁴ In the 2018 early presidential election, he is thus running for his [fourth term in office](#).

Additional constitutional changes, which were confirmed by a constitutional referendum held in September 2016, extended the presidential term from five to seven years.⁵ The changes also removed the minimum age requirement for presidential candidates, established the positions of the first vice president and vice presidents, and granted the president the right to call an early presidential election. Azerbaijan's first vice president is Aliyev's wife Mehriban Aliyeva, who was appointed on February 21, 2017.

Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?

Citizens will be electing the president of the country for a seven-year term in office. The president is directly elected by an absolute majority vote through a two-round system. If no candidate secures a majority of the votes after the first round of voting, a run-off will be held between the top two contenders on the second Sunday after the first round.

Any eligible citizen legally residing in the country on a permanent basis for at least ten years is eligible to run for office. As part of their eligibility candidates must possess a university degree and are not allowed to have dual citizenship. Registered political parties, coalitions of political parties, and groups of voters (if a candidate runs independently) can nominate candidates. Additionally, a candidate running for the office of president may be self-nominated.

¹ For more information, see "[Azerbaijan Schedules Snap Presidential Election in April](#)".

² OSCE/ODIHR conducted a Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) from 21 to 22 February 2018.

³ [The OSCE/ODIHR EOM 2018 interim report](#) repeats the OSCE/ODIHR NAM 2018 findings on the change of Election Day.

⁴ [OSCE/ODIHR EOM 2013 final report](#), page 1-2 and 5.

⁵ See [Article 101 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan](#) and [the OSCE/ODIHR NAM 2018 report](#) and [the OSCE/ODIHR EOM 2018 interim report](#).

To be nominated as a presidential candidate, candidates must submit a set of documents to the Central Election Commission (CEC) and collect [40,000 signatures](#) of registered voters (with a minimum of 50 signatures coming from at least 60 out of 125 constituencies).⁶

The CEC registered [eight candidates to stand in the April 11 election](#), all of whom are men: incumbent President Ilham Aliyev (New Azerbaijan Party), Araz Alizadeh (Social Democratic Party), Faraj Guliyev (National Revival Movement Party), Hafiz Hajiyev (Modern Equality Party), Gudrat Hasanguliyev (Whole Popular Front Party), Sardar Jalaloglu Mammadov (Democratic Party), Razi Nurullayev (Frontiers' Initiative Group), and Zahid Oruj (self-nominated).

The 2018 presidential campaign officially began on March 19, 2018, and will end 24 hours before Election Day. The CEC has designated venues where candidates can post campaign materials. This short campaigning period drew street protests from some opposition parties, including an opposition rally which took place in Baku on March 10. Another opposition rally took place on March 31 in Baku's Yasamal stadium, drawing approximately [1,200 people](#) according to police figures.⁷

What is the political system?

Azerbaijan is a presidential republic. The constitution, last revised in 2016, states that state power is exercised through three branches: executive power by the president of the Republic of Azerbaijan; legislative power by the unicameral *Milli Majlis* (Parliament); and judicial power by the courts.

The incumbent president is the leader of the ruling New Azerbaijan Party (YAP) which holds [72 out of 125 seats](#) in the parliament. Other members of the parliament, who also support YAP, are composed of 11 political parties with one or two seats each. Independent candidates hold 40 seats. Women hold [21 seats out of 125 seats](#) in the Parliament, and none of them hold a ministerial position.

How is campaign financing regulated?

Before collecting signatures, candidates must open a bank account for their campaign activities and financing. The [campaign expenditure limit](#) (as per [article 191 of the Election Code](#)) is AZN 10 million (approximately \$5,865,100 USD).

Who is eligible to vote?

Citizens over 18 years of age by Election Day are eligible to vote in the Republic of Azerbaijan. Citizens deemed incapable by a court are ineligible to vote.

⁶ After the submission of the documents, the CEC had five days to approve them. When the signatures were submitted to the CEC, the CEC's working group had seven days to decide on candidacy and verify the signature.

⁷ [AzerNews](#) reported the information about the rally based on police figures.

How many registered voters are there?

According to the Central Election Commission (CEC), 5,192,063 out of 9.8 million people are registered to vote.⁸ This number includes 13,828 registered voters abroad and 119,827 who will be voting in military units, prisons, hospitals and detention centers. The CEC also [reported](#) that 50.78 percent of registered voters are women and 49.22 percent are men.

What is the election management body?

The election will be administered by three levels of election commissions led by the Central Election Commission (CEC), 125 Constituency Election Commissions (ConEcs) comprising 1,125 members, and 5,641 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs) consisting of 33,846 election officers. Further, 41 out-of-country polling stations will be arranged abroad for voting by Azerbaijani citizens and diplomats residing outside of the country. The election commissions are permanent bodies, each appointed for a five-year term, and were established in April 2016. The CEC has 18 elected by the Parliament, three of whom are women. ConEcs have nine members appointed by the CEC, 17 percent of whom are women. PECs consist of six members appointed by the relevant ConEc; 36 percent of whom are women. There is no established gender quota for the composition of election commissions. In addition, political parties have the right to nominate candidates as members of election commissions at any level.

Registered candidates and political parties/party blocs who have a candidate registered to run for president may additionally appoint one private citizen having voting rights as a member of the commission to serve as a commission representative. There will be 5,149 election commission members with such voting rights on Election Day.

The CEC is responsible for compiling the voter list based on information provided by the PECs, which update the voter list annually on May 30.

Where and how will voters cast their ballots on Election Day?

Polling stations must be equipped with booths, tables, stationery and other materials necessary for voting.

Voters who are not able to vote in the polling station where they are registered may obtain a voting card (de-registration card) in the relevant Constituency Election Commission (ConEc) 25 to 45 days prior to Election Day, or in the Precinct Election Commission (PEC) three to 24 days prior to Election Day.

Voting outside the voting premises is conducted with a mobile ballot box only on Election Day, based on a voter's oral or written application submitted to the PECs at least 24 hours prior to Election Day.

⁸ Based on the ODIHR interlocutors and data from the State Statistics Committee, [the OSCE/ODIHR NAM 2018](#) and [the OSCE/ODIHR EOM 2018](#) reported on the “concerns about the accuracy of the voter lists”, since the number of voters in the lists is “substantially lower than the number of citizens of voting age”.

Early voting can be conducted on ships sailing under the state flag of the Republic of Azerbaijan and in remote places no more than 10 days prior to Election Day. In such cases, the ConEcs must grant special permission.

How will voters with disabilities cast their ballots?

A voter who cannot independently sign or fill out a ballot paper due to a disability or health condition may be assisted by another voter who is not a member of a Precinct Election Commission or an observer. The Central Election Commission has prepared braille ballot papers for visually impaired voters and installed ramps at 1,455 polling stations. Persons with disabilities will be able to vote at home via the mobile ballot box.

How many polling stations are set up on Election Day?

According to the Central Election Commission (CEC), 5,641 polling stations will open across the country at 8:00 a.m. and close at 7:00 p.m. Polling stations can accommodate between 15 and 1,500 voters. The CEC established 510 polling stations out of 5,641 in 10 Constituency Election Commissions for [335,000 internally displaced persons](#). These Precinct Election Commissions were moved from territories seized and occupied by forces from the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh and set up in cities across the country (for instance, in Baku and Ganja). There will be also [215 polling stations out of 5,641](#) in military units, prisons, hospitals and detention centers. [In addition, 41 stations](#) will be set up abroad in embassies and consulates.

What technology will be used?

The Central Election Commission (CEC) has decided to install web cameras at 1,000 polling stations (approximately 20%) in 119 Constituency Election Commissions (ConEcs) (out of 125 ConEcs).⁹ The CEC will not install web cameras in six ConEcs located near the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh.¹⁰ As a means of safeguarding the integrity of the election, voters' thumbs will be marked with invisible ink upon voting. The Precinct Election Commissions will use ultraviolet lamps to determine if voters' thumbs were previously marked with invisible ink.

A state computerized information system may be used for obtaining or transferring information during the election. The system provides information about voter registration, the voter list, and election results. The ConEc will use computers with installed software to transmit election results collected from PEC protocols directly to the CEC. The ConEc must still send hard copies of protocols to the CEC; these

⁹ Based on the CEC regulation, [the OSCE/ODIHR 2018 EOM](#) reported that "CEC issued a regulation to install web cameras in some 1,000 polling stations in order to stream and record voting and the vote count, with the stated aim to increase transparency".

¹⁰ Jabrayil-Gubadli ConEc #120, Lachin ConEc #121, Khankandi ConEc #122, Kalbajar ConEc #123, Shusha-Aghdam-Khojali-Khojav ConEc #124, Zangilan-Gubadli ConEc #125.

will be used to establish final results. To ensure a smooth process on Election Day, the CEC has organized trainings for ConEcs on the software system to be used.

How will voters be ensured access to information about the election?

The Central Election Commission (CEC) is responsible for providing election information to voters and has prepared informational posters, TV spots, and radio advertisements. According to [the Election Code](#), public television and radio companies as well as print newspapers and periodicals funded out of the state budget are obligated to provide free airtime consisting of 15-minute segments weekly to the CEC. The airtime is to be used as part of an effort to educate voters by informing them of the electoral processes and answering specific voter questions.

Citizens can check their registration through the CEC's website, [information center](#), [hotline number](#), or by visiting Precinct Election Commissions.

In general, political advertisement can be done through public or private broadcasters. Also, the media (public or private) must create equal conditions for registered candidates. The private media are not obliged to provide candidates with free coverage. Electoral campaigning is prohibited on state-owned broadcasters.¹¹

Who is managing security on Election Day?

[The Azerbaijani Ministry of Interior](#) will deploy 12,000 police officers to ensure security at the district and Precinct Election Commissions.

Where will vote counting and tabulation be held?

Precinct Election Commission (PEC) members will conduct the vote count. After the completion of the counting process, PECs will record the results in protocols. These results will be transported no later than 24 hours after Election Day to the Constituency Election Commissions (ConEcs), accompanied by the [chairperson of the PECs, two members from different political parties, and observers](#). The ConEcs compile results from the PECs within two days following Election Day and issue protocols. The protocols must be sent no later than two days after Election Day to the Central Election Commission (CEC), accompanied by the chairperson of the ConEcs and political party representatives. Immediately after the ConEcs submit the protocols, the CEC publishes preliminary results on its website. The CEC must publish all the information from the ConEcs' protocols in the mass media no later than 45 days after Election Day and must publish all the information from protocols in an official publication within six months.

How will election disputes be adjudicated?

Lower-level election commissions' decisions or officials' actions that may have violated citizens' electoral rights may be appealed to a higher election commission by voters, candidates, political parties and

¹¹ Based on the OSCE/ODIHR EOM 2018 interim report, AzTV is the state television and the state-owned newspapers are *Azerbaijan*, *Xalq qazeti*.

coalitions and their representatives, observers and election commissions. Central Election Commission decisions may be appealed to one of the five courts of appeal. Court of appeal decisions can be challenged to the Supreme Court.

When will official results be announced?

The Central Election Commission (CEC) has to compile preliminary election results and send them to the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Azerbaijan for approval no later than 10 days after Election Day. The constitutional court must officially announce the final results within 14 days of Election Day.

Who can observe during Election Day?

The Central Election Commission (CEC) is responsible for the registration of domestic and international observers. The CEC has accredited 58,175 local observers for the April 11 election as well as 890 international observers representing 60 organizations from 59 countries. Among the expected international groups monitoring the voting will be the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Council of Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, among others.

Resources

- [AzerNews](#)
- [Central Election Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan](#)
- Central Election Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan: [Election Procedures](#)
- [Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United States of America](#)
- Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights: [Elections in Azerbaijan](#)