



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

2 March 2025

ODIHR NEEDS ASSESSMENT MISSION REPORT

16-18 December 2024



Warsaw
31 December 2024

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**REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN
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ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission Report

I. INTRODUCTION

In anticipation of an invitation from the authorities of the Republic of Tajikistan to observe the 2 March 2025 parliamentary elections, and in accordance with its mandate, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) undertook a Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) from 16 to 18 December 2024. The NAM included Keara Castaldo and Kseniya Dashutsina, ODIHR Senior Election Advisers.

The purpose of the mission was to assess the pre-election environment and the preparations for the parliamentary elections. Based on this assessment, the NAM recommends whether to deploy an ODIHR election-related activity for the forthcoming elections, and if so, what type of activity best meets the identified needs. Meetings were held with officials from state institutions and the election administration, as well as with representatives of political parties, media, civil society and the resident international community. A list of meetings is annexed to this report.

ODIHR would like to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe for their assistance in organizing the visit. ODIHR would also like to thank all of its interlocutors for taking the time to meet with the NAM and to share their views.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tajikistan has a presidential system of government in which the president holds a wide range of executive powers. On 4 December, President Emomali Rahmon set 2 March 2025 as the date for elections to the lower chamber of the parliament, *Majlisi Namoyandagon*. Several ODIHR NAM interlocutors described an overall deterioration in the exercise of freedoms of association, assembly and expression, citing increased control and intimidation of media and civil society.

The electoral legal framework remains largely unchanged since the last parliamentary and presidential elections. Previous ODIHR electoral recommendations remain unaddressed, including, those related to the need for comprehensive review and harmonization of the legislation, candidate and voter rights, stronger guarantees on the freedom of expression, additional safeguards in voter registration, enhanced transparency of campaign finance and election dispute resolution, and provisions for citizen election observation.

Administrative preparations are underway, and the Central Commission on Elections and Referenda (CCER) has adopted a calendar of deadlines for key operational activities and several instructions. All ODIHR NAM interlocutors from the state institutions expressed trust in the work of election administration and its ability to professionally manage the process. Several ODIHR NAM interlocutors voiced concerns over the independence and impartiality of the election administration at all levels due to influence of the ruling party and some raised significant concerns related to the conduct and integrity of the election-day process, including of the results reporting. Interlocutors also emphasized a need for greater civic education and awareness on the election process, indicating a concern about a lack of voter engagement in elections and subdued participation on election day.

Citizens aged at least 18 years are eligible to vote in parliamentary elections. The legislation retains a blanket denial of voting rights to all those imprisoned regardless of the severity of the crime or declared incapable, at odds with international standards and previous ODIHR recommendations. Given the decentralized system of voter registration management and the lack of existing safeguards in place to prevent duplicate registrations or multiple voting, ODIHR has previously recommended the introduction of a permanent, centralized voter register. The authorities, including the CCER, informed the ODIHR NAM that they support the introduction of a permanent register but that such a solution will require additional financial resources and technical capacity. According to the CCER, existing efforts to verify the accuracy of the lists rely on door-to-door inspections.

Citizens of Tajikistan who hold no other citizenship, are at least 30 years of age, have resided in the country for at least five years, possess a higher education and a full command of the state language are eligible to stand for parliamentary elections. Political parties are entitled to nominate a list of no more than 28 candidates for the national 22-mandate constituency and one candidate in each single-mandate district. Independent candidates can run only in single-mandate districts and are additionally required to collect at least 500 supporting signatures within their respective constituency. Each voter can support only one candidate. Political parties that the ODIHR NAM met with did not raise concerns about the candidate registration process.

The principle of gender equality is guaranteed in the Constitution; however, women remain underrepresented in parliament and in political life in general, and according to ODIHR NAM interlocutors continue to be inhibited by gender stereotypes combined with lack of financial resources. Fourteen members of the outgoing *Majlisi Namoyandagon* (22 per cent) are women. Despite previous ODIHR recommendations, there are no special measures to promote women candidates. Some ODIHR NAM interlocutors stated that female politicians face more personal attacks.

The representatives of political parties the ODIHR NAM met with informed of their intention to participate in these elections. Political parties plan to focus their campaigns on socio-economic issues and security, and expect to campaign using traditional campaign methods as well as on-line. All parties met by the ODIHR NAM expect to campaign without hindrance. Several ODIHR NAM interlocutors anticipated a limited campaign due to the overall lack of political alternatives along with a noted deterioration in the exercise of freedoms of association, assembly and expression, as well as lack of open opposition from the registered political parties to the president's policies and agenda.

Electoral campaigns can be financed by public funds and private donations. The Law on Political Parties was amended in April 2024 to introduce public funding of political parties who pass a five per cent threshold. Candidates and parties can receive donations from individuals and legal entities. The election law foresees the submission of financial reports by all contestants, but it does not demand disclosure of financial data by parties or the CCER.

Several ODIHR NAM interlocutors emphasized an overall deterioration of the media environment in recent years, citing in particular intimidation tactics, additional restrictions on license renewals, and a number of arrests of journalists since 2022. ODIHR NAM interlocutors indicated that self-censorship is prevalent among media professionals due to fear of different forms of pressure. Some ODIHR NAM interlocutors stated that the possibility to receive information of public interest from the state authorities is limited due to reluctance of these bodies. During election periods, all contestants are entitled to equal coverage in public media. The State Committee on Television and Radio, which oversees broadcast media, informed the ODIHR NAM that guidance to media outlets during the elections emphasizes the principle of impartiality, and anticipated that all political parties as well as all candidates in single-mandate constituencies would be granted free airtime.

Courts and election commissions both have jurisdiction to consider complaints on decisions, actions, and inactions of election commissions, including relating to election results. The Supreme Court is the final instance in all cases. The Supreme Court informed the ODIHR NAM of efforts to brief lower-level commissions and courts on applicable legislation, international standards, and the effective review of electoral complaints. Several ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed a lack of confidence in the effectiveness of the redress system, mainly because of a lack of the independence of the judiciary, election administration and law enforcement bodies.

The electoral legislation provides for international election observation, and the authorities assured the ODIHR NAM that a potential election observation activity would be facilitated at all levels of the election administration. While the legal framework foresees that political parties and independent candidates may appoint observers to election commissions, there is no opportunity for non-partisan citizen observation, despite previous ODIHR recommendations for the legal framework to conform commitments made in the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document. ODIHR NAM interlocutors described a general lack of civil society organizations examining democratic governance and elections issues in Tajikistan, and encouraged a potential ODIHR election observation activity as a means to build awareness among the electorate about the importance of elections and civic participation.

All ODIHR NAM interlocutors welcomed a potential ODIHR election observation activity, noting the value of an external assessment and of exchanging good electoral practices within the OSCE framework. Representatives of state bodies underlined that they intend to administer elections transparently and welcomed additional scrutiny of the process. Several interlocutors emphasized the absence of organizations that focus on democratic governance and election-related issues operating in Tajikistan, and noted an ODIHR presence would contribute to awareness-raising about the electoral process. While limited or no progress was made on addressing previous ODIHR recommendations, interlocutors pointed to several issues which would merit ODIHR's attention and analysis, including the work of election commissions at all levels, the media environment and coverage of the elections, implementation of voter registration, the regulation and control of political parties, their campaigns, and financing. As previous ODIHR recommendations related to measures to ensure the integrity of the election day remain outstanding, the authorities' efforts to prevent irregularities and adherence to procedures would also merit independent scrutiny.

On this basis the ODIHR NAM recommends the deployment of an Election Observation Mission (EOM) for the 2 March parliamentary elections. In addition to a core team of experts, ODIHR will request the secondment by OSCE participating States of 20 long-term observers to follow the electoral process countrywide, as well as 150 short-term observers to follow election day procedures. In line with ODIHR's standard methodology, the EOM should include a media monitoring element.

III. FINDINGS

A. BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

Tajikistan has a presidential system of government in which the president holds a wide range of executive powers, including determining the direction of domestic and foreign policy, appointing and dismissing the prime minister and other members of the government and judiciary. Since 2023, the president has carried out an extensive reshuffle of government officials, judges and prosecutors, who were either released from their duties or rotated based on presidential decrees.

Legislative power is vested in the bicameral Supreme Assembly (*Majlisi Oli*), which consists of a directly elected lower chamber (*Majlisi Namoyandagon*) and an indirectly elected upper chamber (*Majlisi Milli*), both elected for five year terms.¹ On 4 December, President Emomali Rahmon issued a decree that set 2 March 2025 as the date for elections to the *Majlisi Namoyandagon* as well as local elections at all levels.²

The political landscape is dominated by the People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan and its Chairperson, President Rahmon, who won the 2020 presidential election with an overwhelming majority of votes and is now serving his fifth consecutive term since 1994.³ Following the 2020 parliamentary elections, six of the seven registered political parties are represented in the parliament. The People's Democratic Party holds 47 of the 63 seats. Other parliamentary parties are the Agrarian Party with seven seats, the Party of Economic Reforms (five seats), the Communist Party (two seats), and the Socialist Party and the Democratic Party with one seat each. In September 2015, the Supreme Court banned the largest opposition party, the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT), declaring it an "extremist and terrorist organization". No new political party has been registered since 2005.

Since 2023 the leadership of several political parties some of which were in opposition to the policies of the ruling party and the president shifted. In 2024, several high-level officials and prominent public figures, including the former chairperson of the Supreme Council, chairperson of the Democratic Party and the first deputy chairperson of the Social-Democratic Party were detained without public justification.⁴ Proceedings related to these cases take place *in camera* and further information is not available. According to some ODIHR NAM interlocutors, these events further narrowed political debate.

Several ODIHR NAM interlocutors described an overall deterioration in recent years in the exercise of freedoms of association, assembly and expression, citing increased control and intimidation of media and civil society, including multiple arrests and lengthy prison sentences imposed on journalists and human rights defenders, which have contributed to a climate of fear and repression.⁵ Interlocutors indicated that these developments follow events in the Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAO) over 2021 and 2022, when protests erupted following the alleged persecution of the local population and the killing of Gulbiddin Ziyobekov by law enforcement. According to media reports, these protests were violently dispersed and led to the deaths of a high number of civilians and the arrests of hundreds of GBAO residents, including journalists, lawyers and civil society activists.⁶

ODIHR has observed eight elections in Tajikistan. Most recently, ODIHR deployed an Election Assessment Missions (EAM) for the 11 October 2020 presidential election, and the 1 March 2020

¹ Of the 33 members of *Majlisi Milli*, 8 are appointed by the president and 25 are elected by the councils of the regions and cities.

² Elections to *Majlisi Milli* are scheduled for 28 March 2025.

³ President Rahmon is entitled to run for re-election without limitations following the 2016 constitutional referendum.

⁴ According to media sources the charges relate to an attempted coup.

⁵ According to the announcement of Ministry of Justice, some 700 NGOs in Tajikistan had been liquidated since 2023. See the [Statement](#) of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, which states that "dissolution of human rights NGOs signals a deteriorating environment for civil society and human rights defence in Tajikistan".

⁶ See the European Parliament [Resolution](#) of 7 July 2022 on the situation in Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province, which urged the Government of Tajikistan to respect and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including people's right to life, peaceful assembly, freedom of association, freedom of expression and freedom of the media, in the GBAO and in the rest of the country, in line with international law. See the statement of UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues which urged Tajikistan to end a deadly crackdown against the Pamiri minority.

parliamentary elections. The final report for the 2020 EAM issued on 27 May 2020 contains 23 recommendations, including seven priority recommendations, for the authorities to improve the electoral process and bring it closer in line with OSCE commitments.⁷

B. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Parliamentary elections are primarily regulated by the 1994 Constitution and the 1999 Constitutional Law on the Elections to the *Majlisi Oli* (parliamentary election law). Other applicable legislation includes the 2019 Law on Central Commission on Elections and Referenda (CCER), the 1998 Law on Political Parties, the 1998 Law on Public Meetings, the 2008 Civil Procedures Code, the 1998 Criminal Code, the 2013 Law on Periodical Print and Other Mass Media, as well as CCER instructions. Tajikistan is party to major international instruments related to the holding of democratic elections.⁸

The electoral legal framework remains largely unchanged since the last parliamentary and presidential elections. Previous ODIHR electoral recommendations remain unaddressed, including those related to the need for comprehensive review and harmonization of the legislation, candidate and voter rights, stronger guarantees on the freedom of expression, additional safeguards in voter registration, enhanced transparency of campaign finance and election dispute resolution, and provisions for citizen election observation.

The 63 members of parliament are elected under the mixed proportional-majoritarian system, 41 are elected from the single-mandate districts, and the remaining 22 under a proportional closed-list system with a five per cent threshold.⁹ For elections to be valid, a 50 per cent turnout is required; otherwise, repeat elections must be held. By law, the number of registered voters in the 41 single-mandate constituencies should not deviate from the national average by more than 20 per cent. The law requires the CCER to revise constituency boundaries before each election but does not specify criteria for permitted deviations in the number of voters and does not address the issue of managing future boundary reviews. On 6 December, the CCER established the boundaries of the 41 single-mandate districts. According to the information published by the CCER, the largest deviation in projected numbers of voters from the average size of a constituency is 61 per cent.

C. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

Parliamentary elections are managed by a three-tiered election administration, comprising the Central Commission for Elections and Referendums (CCER), 41 District Election Commissions (DECs), one in each of the majoritarian districts and some 3,380 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs). The CCER has seven members, and these are nominated by the president and approved by the *Majlisi Namoyandagon* for a seven-year term. The new composition of the CCER was appointed in 2019, and only two members are women.

The CCER adopts regulations on various aspects of the process; issues guidance to district and precinct election commissions; and directly handles candidate registration for lists competing in the nation-wide constituency. The district and precinct election commissions hold significant responsibilities, including the compilation of final voter lists, the registration of candidates and

⁷ See [all previous ODIHR election reports on Tajikistan](#).

⁸ Including the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 2003 Convention against Corruption. In 2018, Tajikistan signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which remains to be ratified.

⁹ If no candidate gets an absolute majority in the majoritarian race, the second round is held between two leading candidates in two weeks.

establishment of results for single-mandate constituencies, and the organization of campaign meetings for contestants. ODIHR has previously recommended that the appointment process for election management bodies be more transparent and subject to more explicit criteria, citing allegations of control of the election administration by the executive.¹⁰ Representatives of the CCER posited to the ODIHR NAM that the exclusion of political parties from election commissions helps ensure their impartiality in overseeing the process.

Administrative preparations for the forthcoming elections are underway, and the CCER has adopted a calendar for key operational activities and several instructions. The CCER jointly with the Supreme Court plan to conduct trainings for election administration members focusing on electoral legislation and election day procedures. All ODIHR NAM interlocutors from the state institutions expressed trust in the work of election administration and its ability to professionally manage the process. Political parties and contestants are not entitled to nominate representatives to election commissions, but may register representatives as observers (see also *Election Observation*).

Several ODIHR NAM interlocutors voiced concerns over the independence and impartiality of the election administration at all levels due to influence of the ruling party and some raised significant concerns related to the conduct and integrity of the election-day process, including of the results reporting. Previous ODIHR reports have recommended that concrete measures be taken to improve the clarity and transparency of vote-counting and tabulation procedures, to ensure the security of sensitive election materials, and to publish the disaggregated election results of all polling stations. Interlocutors also emphasized a need for greater civic education and awareness on the election process, indicating a concern about a lack of voter engagement in elections and subdued participation on election day.

D. VOTER REGISTRATION

Citizens aged at least 18 years are eligible to vote in parliamentary elections. Citizens serving a prison sentence are disenfranchised, regardless of the nature of the committed crime or the term of the sentence. Citizens who are determined to be legally incapacitated by a court decision on the basis of an intellectual or psycho-social disability are likewise disenfranchised. ODIHR has previously recommended that these restrictions on voting rights be removed to be in line with international standards and obligations on the rights of persons with disabilities and to ensure proportionality.

Voter lists are compiled by precinct election commissions on the basis of information supplied by local authorities. The Supreme Court informed the ODIHR NAM that, together with the CCER, it is planning a dedicated training for these commissions that includes procedures for organizing and drafting the voter lists. Given the decentralized system of voter registration management and the lack of existing safeguards in place to prevent duplicate registrations or multiple voting, ODIHR has previously recommended the introduction of a permanent, centralized voter register. The authorities, including the CCER, informed the ODIHR NAM that they support the introduction of a permanent register but that such a solution will require additional financial resources and technical capacity. According to the CCER, existing efforts to verify the accuracy of the lists rely on door-to-door inspections. There are no regulations on the establishment of voter lists for citizens abroad, who may participate in the elections at diplomatic representations by presenting a valid identity document.

¹⁰ All seven members of the CCER are nominated by the president and approved by the parliament. According to the electoral legislation, the CCER selects and appoints district election commission members, on the basis of proposals from the local executive authorities, but did not supply the ODIHR NAM with specific criteria for the selection process. These district-level commissions must subsequently appoint precinct-level commissions based on submissions from local executive authorities.

E. CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

Citizens of Tajikistan who hold no other citizenship, are at least 30 years of age, have resided in the country for at least five years, possess a higher education and a full command of the state language are eligible to stand for parliamentary elections. Notwithstanding that previous ODIHR recommendations to lift restrictions on candidacy rights in line with international standards remain unaddressed, the legislation remains unchanged.

Candidates may be nominated by a political party or independently. Political parties have to put forward candidates during party conventions, and several political parties have recently held their conventions for the upcoming elections. Political parties are entitled to nominate a list of no more than 28 candidates for the national 22-mandate constituency and one candidate in each single-mandate district. Independent candidates can run only in single-mandate districts and are additionally required to collect at least 500 supporting signatures within their respective constituency.¹¹ Each voter can support only one candidate. Each candidate, both on party list or majoritarian, has to provide an electoral deposit.¹² Deposits are returned to candidates nominated within the lists of parties that win over 5 per cent of votes nationwide and to majoritarian candidates that receive at least 10 per cent of votes in their respective districts. Political parties that the ODIHR NAM met with did not raise concerns with candidate registration process.

The principle of gender equality is guaranteed in the Constitution and gender-based discrimination is criminalized; however, women remain underrepresented in parliament and in political life, and according to ODIHR NAM interlocutors continue to be inhibited by gender stereotypes combined with lack of financial resources. Fourteen members of the outgoing *Majlisi Namoyandagon* (22 per cent) are women.¹³ Despite previous ODIHR recommendations, there are no special measures to promote women candidates. In August 2023, the government adopted a human rights strategy aimed at promoting gender equality, empowering women, eliminating gender discrimination, and increasing women's political participation and representation in state bodies. Some ODIHR NAM interlocutors stated that female politicians face more personal attacks with the purpose of discrediting them.

F. CAMPAIGN AND CAMPAIGN FINANCE

The campaign starts after completion of candidate registration and ends 24 hours before election day. By law, candidates and political parties have the right to independently determine the form and nature of their campaign, but the Law on Meetings, Demonstrations and Street Processions, requires any public event initiated by candidates or parties to be pre-approved by authorities at least 15 days prior to the event. ODIHR has previously recommended to revise these requirements to require a simple notification procedure rather than an authorization and enable candidates and parties to design and conduct their campaigns independently.

The representatives of political parties the ODIHR NAM met with informed of their intention to participate in these elections. Political parties plan to focus their campaigns on socio-economic issues

¹¹ Candidate lists for the proportional contest can be submitted from the announcement of elections. Majoritarian candidates can be put forward starting from 60 days before the elections. The nomination period for both contests concludes 45 days before election day.

¹² According to the law, deposit is calculated on a basis of an indicator that is reviewed yearly in the Law on State Budget.

¹³ In its [Concluding Observations on the seventh periodic report of Tajikistan](#), the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women welcomed adoption of the Equality and Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Act in 2022 and other efforts to improve the institutional and policy framework, but raised concerns about a shrinking civic space for women and recommended immediate steps to ensure women's fundamental rights to can be exercised without interference.

and security and plan to campaign using traditional campaign methods such as rallies, door-to-door campaigning and distribution of posters, as well as on-line. Campaigning on social networks and in the online media is not regulated by the law. All parties met by the ODIHR NAM expect to campaign without hindrance. Several ODIHR NAM interlocutors anticipated a limited campaign due to the overall lack of political alternatives along with a general deterioration in the exercise of freedoms of association, assembly and expression, as well as lack of open opposition from the registered political parties to the president's policies and agenda.

Electoral campaigns can be financed by public funds and private donations. The Law on Political Parties was amended in April 2024 to introduce public funding of political parties who pass a five per cent threshold with the stated aim to strengthen the multi-party system, transparency of the activities of political parties, and improve the country's status as a democratic state.

Candidates and parties can receive donations from individuals and legal entities. Donations from state-owned, anonymous and foreign sources are prohibited. The law also sets spending limits for individual candidates and political parties. The CCER is mandated to oversee campaign finances. All campaign expenses should be made via special bank accounts opened specifically for these elections. The election law foresees the submission of financial reports by all contestants, but it does not demand disclosure of information on campaign finances data by parties or the CCER.

G. MEDIA

The media environment is state-dominated with limited independent news sources.¹⁴ Only state-owned media broadcast nationwide. Several ODIHR NAM interlocutors emphasized an overall deterioration of the media environment in recent years, citing in particular intimidation tactics, additional restrictions on license renewals, and a number of arrests of journalists since 2022.¹⁵

The Constitution and other legislation guarantee the freedom of expression as well as rights and protections of journalists. ODIHR has previously noted strict criminal provisions on defamation and slander which include more severe punishments for the slander of the president or other state officials, as well as a practice of authorities blocking access to certain news websites and social networking platforms without public decisions. A package of draft amendments to media legislation was discussed in a parliamentary working group and was welcomed by a number of ODIHR NAM interlocutors as containing several positive elements, such as provisions that would facilitate the registration and license renewal process for media outlets. These amendments are not expected to be adopted under the current legislature.

The Law on Access to Information grants every citizen the right to seek and obtain information freely. Meanwhile, the Law on the Periodical Press and Other Mass Media safeguards fundamental press freedoms, ensures media access to public information, prohibits censorship. However, several ODIHR NAM interlocutors indicated that these are restricted in practice and that self-censorship is prevalent among media professionals due to fear of different forms of pressure. Moreover, some ODIHR NAM interlocutors stated that possibility to receive information of public interest from the state authorities is limited due to reluctance of these bodies.

¹⁴ Reporters Without Borders's 2024 World Press Freedom [Index](#), out of 180 countries Tajikistan is now ranked 150, as compared to 115 in 2014.

¹⁵ See also reports and statements of the [OSCE Representative on Freedom of Media](#), [UN Human Rights Committee](#), [Committee to Protect Journalists](#) and [Reporters San Frontières](#), as well as a statement by independent media outlet Asia Plus on [its decision to cease coverage](#) of unrest in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region. See European Parliament [resolution](#) of 18 January 2024 on Tajikistan: state repression against the independent media which condemns the ongoing crackdown, including anti-extremism legislation, against independent media, government critics, human rights activists and independent lawyers.

During election periods, all contestants are entitled to equal coverage in public media. The CCER sets regulations on private media coverage and obligations during election campaigns, and such rules for these elections are forthcoming. The State Committee on Television and Radio (SCTR), which oversees broadcast media, informed the ODIHR NAM that guidance to media outlets during the elections emphasizes the principle of impartiality, and anticipated that all political parties as well as all candidates in single-mandate constituencies would be granted free airtime. Neither the SCTR nor the CCER conduct systematic monitoring of election-related coverage in the state and private media.

H. ELECTION DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The electoral dispute resolution process is primarily regulated by the electoral law, the Civil Procedures Code, and the Code of Administrative Offences. Courts and election commissions both have jurisdiction to consider complaints on decisions, actions, and inactions of election commissions, including relating to election results. Complaints alleging other violations of the law are filed to courts. The Supreme Court is the final instance in all cases, and first instances cases are reviewed by a single judge.¹⁶

The Supreme Court informed the ODIHR NAM that all election-related hearings are public, but the decisions of courts are published only with the consent of interested parties. The Supreme Court informed the ODIHR NAM of efforts to brief lower-level commissions and courts on applicable legislation, international standards, and the effective review of electoral complaints. According to the Supreme Court, all courts have received an instruction to extend their working hours during electoral period to provide for effective remedy and guarantee timely review of potential cases. The 2021 Law on Access to Information on Activities of the Judiciary obliges all courts publish all relevant information on their websites, but the ODIHR NAM was informed that some of the websites are not yet fully updated due to limited financial and human resources. Several ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed a lack of confidence in the effectiveness of the redress system, mainly because of a lack of the independence of the judiciary, election administration and law enforcement bodies.

I. ELECTION OBSERVATION

The electoral legislation provides for international election observation, and the authorities assured the ODIHR NAM that a potential election observation activity would be facilitated at all levels of the election administration. The legal framework foresees that political parties and independent candidates may appoint observers to election commissions but there is no opportunity for non-partisan citizen observation, despite previous ODIHR recommendations for the legal framework to conform with the commitments made in the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document.

Political parties met by the ODIHR NAM did not describe plans to deploy representatives or observers to polling stations, although one expressed interest in following the vote count, and all encouraged a potential ODIHR election observation activity. ODIHR NAM interlocutors described a lack of civil society organizations examining democratic governance and elections issues in Tajikistan, and encouraged a potential ODIHR election observation activity as a means to build awareness among the electorate about the importance of elections and civic participation.

¹⁶ Complaints and appeals should be submitted within ten days of a decision and be adjudicated in three.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

All ODIHR NAM interlocutors welcomed a potential ODIHR election observation activity, noting the value of an external assessment and of exchanging good electoral practices within the OSCE framework. Representatives of state bodies underlined that they intend to administer elections transparently and welcomed additional scrutiny of the process. Several interlocutors emphasized the absence of organizations that focus on democratic governance and election-related issues operating in Tajikistan, and noted an ODIHR presence would contribute to awareness-raising about the electoral process. While limited or no progress was made on addressing previous ODIHR recommendations, interlocutors pointed to several issues which would merit ODIHR's attention and analysis, including the work of election commissions at all levels, the media environment and coverage of the elections, implementation of voter registration, the regulation and control of political parties, their campaigns, and financing. As previous ODIHR recommendations related to measures to ensure the integrity of the election day remain outstanding, the authorities' efforts to prevent irregularities and adherence to procedures would also merit independent scrutiny.

On this basis the ODIHR NAM recommends the deployment of an Election Observation Mission (EOM) for the 2 March parliamentary elections. In addition to a core team of experts, ODIHR will request the secondment by OSCE participating States of 20 long-term observers to follow the electoral process countrywide, as well as 150 short-term observers to follow election day procedures. In line with ODIHR's standard methodology, the EOM should include a media monitoring element.

ANNEX: LIST OF MEETINGS

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Firuz Kosimov, Head, Department of International Organizations
Rukhshona Ruzieva, Second Secretary, Legal Department
Takhmina Nazarova, Advisor, Department of International Organizations

Central Commission for Elections and Referenda

Makhfirat Umar Khidirzoda, Member
Navruz Samadzoda, Secretary

Supreme Court

Lutfullozoda Shavkat, First Deputy Chairperson
Rahmonzoda Saidali, Deputy Chairperson
Dodozoda Abdumanon, Head, Department of Court Functioning

State Committee on Television and Radio

Nuriddin Said, Chairperson
Ibrohim Ahmad, Head, Department of Coordination of Television Programmes

Political Parties

Shahbozi Abror, Chairperson, Democratic Party
Zuhro Mirzoeva, Deputy Chairperson, Democratic Party
Kiyomiddin Azizov, Chairperson, Social-Democratic Party
Abduhalim Ghafforov, Socialist Party

Media and Civil Society

Sadriddin Shamsiddinzoda, Director, Jahonamo TV
Obid Saidzoda, Director, Radio Tajikistan
Nuriddin Karshiboev, Chairperson, National Association of Independent Mass Media
Other representatives of media and civil society organizations

International Community¹⁷

OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe, Representatives of diplomatic missions of France, Italy, Türkiye, and United States of America

¹⁷ The ODIHR NAM extended an invitation to representations of all OSCE participating States resident in Tajikistan.