

## Fact Sheet

Three women were elected to leading posts in parliament



In the first session of the 5th convocation of the newly elected National Assembly that took place on May 31, MPs elected the Parliament Speaker, the Deputy Speakers and the Chairmen of the 12 Standing Committees. Amongst them three women were elected.

The chairwoman of RPA Women's Council and RPA faction member **Hermine Naghdalyan** became one of the NA Deputy Speakers.

**Naira Zohrabyan** from PAP will chair the Standing Committee on European Integration, while **Elinar Vardanyan**, also a PAP member, will chair the Standing Committee on Protection of Human Rights and Public Affairs.

Of the six NA factions one is headed by a woman - **Heghine Bisharyan** from "Rule of Law Party".

### Together We Overcame the Parliamentary Threshold

Women nominated by means of the Majoritarian Electoral System together overcame the 5% threshold, receiving 98,685 votes. However on a serious note, of the 11 women battling within this electoral system only 2 became victors- the Principle of Artashat School #1 and RPA member **Karine Poghosyan** from electoral district #17, and "International Masis Tabac" LLC executive director and nonpartisan **Marine Marabyan** from electoral district #40.

Let us point out; almost all of the remaining women were second in their respective polling stations.

### Women in Electoral Commissions



The Central Electoral Commission of RA (CEC) consists of 7 members of which 3 are women. One of them is the vice-chairperson of the CEC.

In the Territorial Electoral Commissions (TEC) women are represented by approximately 30.5% and at the same time by 34% in Yerevan and 28% in the marzes (regions). Women constitute only 16% of the leadership in TECs: 3 of them are chairpersons, 8 are vice-chairpersons and 9 are secretaries. In 25 of the 41 TECs women are not included in leadership positions.

Women's representation is especially visible in the Precinct Electoral Commissions, where women constitute 44%. At the same time women are the chairpersons of 2/3 of the 1982 Precinct Electoral Commissions.

# Woman & politics

May 2012

Radmila Šekerinska deems the representation of women in the pre-electoral lists of political parties as a positive development.



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As a result of the May 6 parliamentary elections, 14 female MPs have been included in the 5th convocation of the National Assembly- 2 more than in the previous Assembly.

## De jure, de facto

### The Metamorphoses of Quotas

The percentage ratio of women's representation in the newly formed parliament is 10.67%, which means as a result of raising the gender quota up to 20% and presenting an average of 22.8% of women in the proportional electoral lists to the public, the parties de facto included in parliament less women than half of what was documented.

Let us remind that during the previous elections in the case of a 15% quota, 12 women (9.16%) were elected into parliament through the proportional electoral system, and none through the majoritarian. If we take into account that two of the 14 women of this NA convocation were elected to parliament through the majoritarian electoral system, then it turns out that in general the Parties have not made any progress. Moreover they have devalued the 20% quota stipulated in the Electoral Code, through the implementation of which the public could have expected at least the same number of women in the National Assembly.

In essence the mechanism foreseen by the law to support women did not work due to relocations and withdrawals based on certain party considerations, which in most cases remained incomprehensible to the public.

There will yet be a chance for us to analyze in more detail what happened, so let us reflect on the overall picture of women's representation according to parties.

9 of the 69 MPs of the "Republican Party of Armenia" (RPA) faction are women, which constitutes 13% (21.3% in the pre-electoral list)

The "Prosperous Armenia" (PAP) faction consists of 37 MPs, including 2 women. That is to say women constitute 5.4% (21.8% in the pre-electoral list).

The "Armenian National Congress" (ANC) faction has 7 MPs and one woman. This is 14% (20.3% in the pre-electoral list).

Only 1 of the 6 MPs of the "Rule of Law" (RL) faction is a woman, so the percentage ratio is 16% (20.2% in the pre-electoral list).

One of the 5 MPs of the "Heritage" faction is a woman. This constitutes 20% (24.6% in the

pre-electoral list).

None of the 5 MPs of the "Armenian Revolutionary Federation" (ARF) faction is a woman (32% in the pre-electoral list).

If we compare the composition of the factions with that of the previous convocation, we will notice that RPA has obviously increased the number of women in its structure from the 3.1% of the previous convocation to the 13% of today.

On the contrary, PAP having 12% women in its faction during the previous convocation has currently included only 5%. In addition, the number of the faction's MPs has increased by 12, while the number of women has decreased.

A significant regression is seen from the point of view of women's representation in ARF and "Heritage". During the previous convocation the factions women constituted 18.7% and 42.8% respectively, while this time round these numbers are 0% and 24.6%. RL has not recorded progress- it still has one woman, just like it used to.

Let us also note that almost 2/3 of the women represented in the NA are new. Only 5 of the 14 women were MPs during the previous convocation.

## Past & Present

### We can wait 100 years?

It would require at least a 100 years to reach equal representation of women and men in the NA. One can come to this conclusion after analyzing the pace and trends in the increase in women's numbers in the Armenian parliament during the last 20 years, which by the way, can be placed within the framework of the famous formula of political officials "We have no reason to make haste".

In comparison, let us remember that in 1985. Women constituted 35.6% of the Supreme Council of Soviet Armenia.

On the eve of independence, the 1st convocation of Armenia's Supreme Council, which was formed in 1990 solely by the majoritarian electoral system, consisted of 260 MPs, 9 of which were women, which is 3.5%.

In the 1st convocation of the National

Assembly in 1995, 12 women were included from 190 MPs; that is 6.3%. However all the women that had been voted for through the proportional electoral system were elected from "Shamiram's" electoral list, and 4 women were elected through the majoritarian electoral system.

The lowest number of women were included in the 2nd convocation in 1999, - only 4 out of 131 MPs, which constitutes 3%. By the way, two out of those four were elected through the majoritarian electoral system.

In the 3rd convocation of the NA in 2003, the unprecedented discriminatory 5% quota for women was introduced, and the number of women reached seven out of 131 MPs, which constituted 5.3%. Only one woman was elected by the majoritarian electoral system.

In the previous, 4th convocation of the NA the 15% quota was implemented and 12 women

were elected; that is 9.2%. No woman was elected through the majoritarian electoral system.

For these recent elections the quota was increased to 20%. As a result 14 women MPs have been included in the 5th convocation of the NA. This is to say women constitute only 10.7%, of which two have been elected through the majoritarian electoral system.

Thus in a period of 20 years the number of women in our parliament has increased by only 7%. Taking into account the dynamics of women's representation, we can assume that another 25 years are needed in order to make the current 20% quota a reality.

As a reminder, the average representation of women in parliaments worldwide is currently 19.5%, while the lowest percentage of women's participation is in the Arabic countries - only 11.3%...

## The Elections Kitchen

## Why the mechanism of quotas didn't work

We are far from the idea that the political parties which entered parliament have misunderstood the concept of quotas, but the fact remains that they did not provide 20% representation of women in the composition of the de facto National Assembly, and yet exceeded the quota's index in the number of withdrawals. According to CEC data in general 102 MP candidates from various political parties had presented applications for withdrawal. 26 of these candidates were women- that is almost 25%. By the way this number could have been higher; it's just that there were no more women in passing positions to resign.



What are the main reasons for waiving of mandates? It turns out they differ greatly not only according to political parties, but also between women and men.

The main portion of the withdrawals was done by officials involved in the executive authority (government). However if the number of MPs waiving their mandates with this excuse is almost 80% in the case of men, then in the case of women the picture is the opposite.

Although there are those holding high offices in government or other spheres in the number of women who applied for a waiver, they are only 30%. In the case of others the reasons for withdrawing from the intention of becoming an MP are unknown to the broader public, because women who have taken this measure categorically refuse to explain themselves to journalists.

Only one conclusion can be drawn from this; if a person can not substantiate their decision in a convincing way, then it means that that decision was made without asking them. If the political party is the one making such a decision by considering these women unworthy of becoming a MP then a question arises: why do they include them in the lists in the first place? Not to mention why do those women agree to being included in the list with the prospect of withdrawing later?

In many cases, even logic does not help guess the real reason for withdrawing from being a MP. Anyway this is the impression we have after observing the lists of women who have presented applications for withdrawal.

And so, from RPA proportional list 69 candidates presented applications for withdrawal, including 14 women who were occupying positions 6 to 106. The only concrete assumption that one can come to on studying this list is that the portfolio of a minister or deputy minister and maybe another two- three top positions can really be a strong argument for withdrawing from the prospect of being an MP. However in the case of at least half of those included in the list the motives for waiving their mandates do not have a logical explanation.

Let's look at another example: 28 candidates from PAP proportional list have presented applications for withdrawal, including 10 women who were in positions 16 to 61. It is practically impossible to find a logical explanation to the waiving of mandates by almost all of the women included in this list.

The decision made by the ARF was similarly incomprehensible. According to this decision Artyusha Shahbazyan who was 3rd on the list waved his mandate as did the social science expert of the RA National Institute of Education Karine Haroutunian, who was 6th on the list. And this when ARF entered parliament with a team consisting only of men, having provided for a 32% representation of women in their proportional lists...

In one word, this analysis of withdrawals, even though superficial, demonstrates to a certain extent why the mechanism of quotas stipulated by the Electoral Code once again did not work for us...

## Expert Opinion

## International observers on women's representation

While presenting the interim report immediately following the elections, Radmila Shekerinska, the head of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission, positively assessed the representation of women in the pre-electoral lists of political parties.

"It is significant, that a new range of quotas were foreseen by the new Electoral Code for women's participation in political processes. The role and application of the quota is evident and welcomed; however there is concern in this sense. Women, who are included in political party lists, announce their withdrawal once elected. In this case the meaning of the

quota's significance is lost"- said Shekerinska.

The speaker also noted that the chairpersons of 32% of the Precinct Electoral Commissions were women, as were 44% of its members.

"This means that the gender quota was upheld when organizing the elections. NGOs dealing with women's issues were also very active in the con-



stituencies, and a big portion of local observers were women, which is to be welcomed"- concluded Shekerinska.

## "It will be more beneficial to have women, than yawning MPs"

"The victory of two women through the majoritarian electoral system is a big achievement". This is the opinion of Aharon Adibekyan, the head of the "Sociometer" Sociological Research Center, expressed during an interview with us on analyzing the results of women's participation in the elections.

- Previously we only knew of Hranush Hakobyan, who always managed to overcome the majoritarian barrier. This time round the women that were elected to parliament through the majoritarian system had a brilliant victory- receiving 70% or more of the votes. This is a serious achievement. Women had rather significantly high ratings in other constituencies as well. Heghine Bisharyan and Violet Petrosyan received 1/3 of the votes; losing simply because they were up against oligarchs whose organizational and financial abilities were higher. The other group of

women received 1/5 of the votes; for example Zaruhi Postanjyan received 20% of the votes while president of the Armenian National Movement Aram Manukyan received just 16.7%. Satik Seyranian received 11%, Gayane Arustamyan 15% and Anahit Bakhshyan 12.7% of the votes. These are good indicators. We can see that many were in second place and not third or fourth. This means that if favorable conditions exist, they always have the possibility to win. Not to mention that women nominated by the majoritarian electoral system brought a considerable number of votes to their respective political parties.

At the same time the sociologist regarded the nomination for election through the majoritarian system of more than one woman candidate in the same constituency as a serious oversight.

- In this case the chances for women to be elected were divided. In addition, women nominated through the majoritari-

an system should have carried out serious preparatory activities in their communities in order to have won. Marine Marabyan won because the company supporting her had carried out a lot of work as of the previous elections- work regarding social issues, unemployment, and they had assured voters that this would continue if they elect her.

In all cases Adibekyan is convinced that a higher level of women's representation should be provided by legislation.

- It should be done in such a way that there are at least two women candidates in the top ten of the proportional lists, and for women to have at least 25-30% representation in parliament. Women are more effective, more disciplined. They will be more beneficial than those yawning MPs who are only elected because of their so-called "reputation". In this sense the law should support women...

Marianna Ghahramanyan

## Electoral Campaign

## The slogan was: how it will be done?



Interesting approaches were recorded in the slogans of women candidates nominated through the majoritarian electoral system.

Parliamentary candidate Satik Seyranian, editor of the "168 zham" daily, was appealing "Together let us edit the National Assembly". The other female candidate nominated at the same constituency (#4) Zaruhi Postanjyan, was announcing her arrival by saying "I am coming for justice", just like "Heritage", the political party she was representing. One of the mentioned candidates was basically appealing, the other informing. In essence there was an element of a proposal to willingly work with joint forces in the first appeal, while the second contained an element of trust to willingly act as patron by investing her own efforts.

The clash between the slogans of NA MP Anahit Bakhshyan, again from "Heritage" Party, and "Chorord

Ishkhanutyun" reporter Gohar Veziryan at electoral district #12 was no less interesting. If Bakhshayan, who has a lengthy and successful pedagogical experience, using the slogan of her affiliated party was specifying "I am coming for quality education", then reporter Veziryan based on her own journalistic principles, was determinedly insisting "Impose your will. You are the authority". Although the foundation for the slogans of the women nominated at the same constituency was their professional experience and stemmed from the aim to provide another quality of life for the public, nevertheless it had key differences: the first informed, the second appealed, with a predominant undertone of obligation.

Director of "International Masis Tabac LLC" Marine Marabyan who was nominated in electoral district #4, intends to initiate radical changes. Her slogan was "Employment and a dignified life", the substance of which, at least on a spoken level, is traditionally emphasized from one pre-election period to the other.

Rule of Law" Vice-president Heghinar Bisharyan, another candidate with comprehensive change as her mission, who was campaigning for a parliamentary seat in electoral district #11, wanted to build a lawful Armenia, for which she was appealing to the voter "Trust, so that we build a lawful Armenia".

The slogan of electoral district #32 nominee Ofelia Vahanyan was reminis-

cent of a wish "Let us live dignified". And since even in the case of supreme and insurmountable desire it will be impossible for us to wake up and start living a dignified life as of tomorrow, the RPA has thought, found the solution, and turned it into a slogan saying: "Let us believe to change". RPA nominated Karen Poghosyan, who was a candidate in electoral district #17, had the same slogan as that of the RPA.

"Let us change to believe". No, this is not a play on words; it was a slogan considered very relevant and actual by Narine Movsisyan, a self-nominated candidate in electoral district #38 through the majoritarian electoral system. And apparently she wasn't the only one. Violet Petrosyan, who was nominated in electoral district #13, stands by the "No votes to the criminal regime" slogan of ANC, but personally considers the appeal "Let us build our home that bears the name Armenia" close to her heart and important, and has supported its realization by working at the All-Armenia Fund. It was left to hope that from the two slogans the constructive one would have been selected during future activities.

By nominating herself at electoral district #1 reporter Gayane Arustamyan had expressed her desire to carry out parliamentary activities. Her slogan "Vote so you are not defeated" was in essence a more mild and generalized reformulation of the ANC slogan.

Nana Petrosyan

Public Tribune

## Three questions to women's organizations

It is difficult to underestimate the role of women's NGOs in increasing the gender quota in the Electoral Code. Of course not all the suggestions they made were accepted during amendments to the Code, however the experience of the elections demonstrated that the law did not function especially in the areas that had been stressed

by NGOs during the discussions. In this sense the actual results did not surprise our interlocutors, the leaders of women's NGOs. Once more it became clear that work should be continued to amend the shortcomings in the law. Our post-election conversations with them were around three questions:

1. How did women's participation and their campaigns differ in these elections?
2. In what form was the cooperation of women's NGOs with women nominees?
3. How do you evaluate the fact that women constitute only 10% of the new NA?

### "It is necessary to have guarantees..."



- One can only talk with reservations about women's participation in the campaign; in reality women did not become active participants of the campaign; and this, when women have significant potential in the political parties. The campaigns of the leading parties especially - the Republican Party of Armenia and Prosperous Armenia Party- took place at the level of the leaders;

not only did female party members not participate fully, but the men also. In reality this verifies that interparty democracy has not been fully developed within our society.

Although there is slight progress on the issue of women's representation compared to the 4th convocation of the National Assembly, and today women have already been elected to the posts of NA deputy speaker and chairpersons of two standing committees, nevertheless we must note that women's representation in the newly elected parliament is two times lower than the international index.

It is deplorable that in the Prosperous Armenia Party faction, which in size is the second largest in the National Assembly, only 2 of the 37 mandates were given to women. This means that women consist only 5.1% of this faction, although their representation in the party's proportional list was within the margins foreseen by the Electoral Code.

We believe it to be immoral when women allow their name to be used by agreeing to be included in party electoral lists and subsequently then afterwards easily withdrawing. In doing so, they hinder the entry of women of principle to the legislative body.

The situation created reinforces our profound belief, that the numerous NGOs who proposed a clause in the Electoral Code, according to which when a woman's candidacy is removed from the electoral list or she waives her mandate, then the next woman in the list should take her place, were right. That would have been a guarantee that the issue of women's representation would not be taken from the political sphere to that of willfulness, and for it not to be dependent upon the whims of male party leaders...

**Jemma Hasratyan**  
President of the Association of Women with University Education

### "If the quota did not exist..."

- I did not expect that 20% representation of women would be secured in the NA, because prior to the elections the proposal of Women Leaders' Forum to stipulate the quota according to the results was refused. I think work needs to be done on the shortcoming in the legislation; that is, the article stipulating the quota should clearly note that 20% women should be secured not in the electoral lists, but in those receiving the mandate.



The second reason for having only 10% women was due to the lack of political will in the political parties. The third reason was those indicators that are in place for inclusion in the list. They have to be changed. That is to say if being included in the list is based not on the person's merits but on money, wealth and position, then it will be difficult to find a place for women. Since we do not have a stratum of women oligarchs, in most cases parties are obligated, by the quota, to include women. It is possible that we would not have any women included if the quota did not exist. This was clearly visible in the majoritarian system, where women mainly lost to the "wealthy".

In regards to cooperating with the nominated women let me say that the Women Leaders' Forum had started an initiative towards developing the culture of debating in Armenia by organizing a meeting with the women candidates entitled "Only Women Debate". We tried to find out how prepared are they? How do they imagine their activity in the National Assembly? It was important for us that the culture of debating was introduced, and it will be great if it continues.

I have heard that some women nominated through the majoritarian system had complained that supposedly women's NGOs did not support them. But they should have been aware that, by law, an NGO cannot be engaged in politics. Many NGOs, including women's, participated in the elections as independent observers. Many members of NGOs have been a parliamentary candidate's proxy. But such cooperation is a result of mutual measures. This is to say that the candidate herself takes some action to involve the resources of women's NGOs.

**Dustrik Mkhitarian**  
Chairwoman of the board of "Women Leaders' Forum"  
President of the coordinating committee

### "The result was not a surprise for me"

- In general women rarely appeared during the election campaign. Two or three political parties took part in the campaign only with their leaders. Basically we did not get to meet the new women included in the proportional lists; often the women MPs whom we already knew were to be seen.

In order to make a conscious choice it is very important for the public to see and know who it elects and for what. We had organized debates during previous elections for this very reason, to get to know the new women. I regret that we did not do so this time around, that we did not discuss their programs. But we participated in the election process as an observer.

The result we have in the NA from the

point of view of women's representation was in no way a surprise for me. Following years of struggling we finally managed to convince them that the quota is necessary; they accepted it, but once again did what they always do. During discussions on the Code we proposed that following withdrawals the Central Electoral Commission should not confirm those lists that didn't include 20% women. I remember that the chair of the NA Standing Committee on State and Legal Affairs Davit Harutyunyan saying that that was not possible... After that response I had no expectations...

**Aida Topuzyan**  
President of the Women's Republican Council



### "Women MPs that were established and active were ignored"



- These elections can be considered the most calm in that all the political parties were running a balanced and tolerant pre-election campaign. It is another question that very few people were included in the main campaigning. All the parties were participating only with their leaders and other

candidates included in the lists were almost invisible.

It was peculiar that although the proportional number of women was preserved in the political lists, in compliance with the law, at the same time women who had carried out active parliamentary work were pushed to the rear and ignored. For example Heritage party which was recognized not only by its leader, but also its most active women MPs ignored Anahit Bakhshyan; the ARF acted the same towards Lilit Galstyan... I think you cannot ignore established and active MPs, who have already accumulated a certain experience, including working in international institutions, and are devoted. We need such women in the parliament.

Now new ones will come, maybe no less devoted, but they will need time to establish themselves. In any case it was not neces-

sary to reject the existing experience. Instead of adding to what we have, we make an exchange, which does not always have positive consequences.

It is difficult to assess the degree to which the cooperation between NGOs and the nominated women assisted the electoral process. In Gyumri, the local branch of the Association of Women with University Education had organized two roundtables and invited different NGOs to meet with those women included in the party electoral lists who resided and worked in the Shirak marz (region). However they were included in positions so low in the lists that neither us nor they had any hope that they would pass. The meeting was simply an opportunity to get to know one another.

**Yelena Vardanyan**  
Chair of the Public Council's Committee on Gender and Demography Issues

### "This time around they were more active and prepared"

- Compared to previous years, women nominated through the majoritarian system were visibly more active. I think their PR campaigns were better prepared as well. I can especially single out Satik Seyranyan's campaign, particularly the fact that she had also used the social network- Facebook, which I consider a new technology in this sphere.

Our center had initiated special meetings with the women included in party lists, during which they mainly presented the election programs of their political parties. The meetings demonstrated that women were in general well prepared and quite



aware of gender issues. Unfortunately however, many of our speakers did not make it through to the National Assembly.

By the way, political parties were very open and amenable towards NGOs... However, there was not cooperation per se. The NGO was simply a platform to organize debates, to talk, to present their opinions and programs. It would be good if real cooperation was established and had a continuous nature, and not just from one election to another.

**Gohar Shahnazaryan**  
Co-founder of Women's Resource Center

**P.S.** As we had already reported, the Civil Society Partnership Network (CSPN), which unites 29 OXFAM Armenia partner NGOs, organized a petition immediately prior to the elections and had sent a letter/appeal to all political parties in an attempt to prevent in advance the waiving of mandates by women included in the lists. By the way, the appeal proposed that parties be guided by the principle of gender equality, allowing the next woman on the electoral list to replace the woman who has waived her mandate.

Read the opinions of the initiative's organizers in the upcoming issue...

**Lilit Kochinyan**  
Ninel Hovhannisyanyan

**New faces of the National Assembly**

In the current and the upcoming issues we will be presenting the women members of the National Assembly. The complete interviews can be found at [www.WomenNet.am](http://www.WomenNet.am) where you can also address your questions.

**Naira Karapetyan: "I'll be among the first ones to raise the women's rights issue".**



Member of United Liberal National Party (MIAK) Naira Karapetyan was elected by proportional electoral sys-

tem of the Republican Party of Armenia (RPA). Her major is diplomacy and she graduated from the Faculty of Oriental Studies of Yerevan State University. Later she studied and developed her skills on political sciences at Great Britain and Germany. Mrs. Karapetyan is the Secretary of External and Public Relations.

- Have you ever experienced any gender discrimination towards yourself.

- I have experienced no discrimination and in this regards I have chosen a "right" political party... but I can say that the phenomenon passed nearby me... I am sure that in the Armenian political reality the phenomenon of discrimination towards women is not possible. It may sound rhetorical but Armenians are so called "women-glorifying" nation. Our real problem is that women in many

cases do not want to be involved in politics. The reason is not because they are not allowed to but because they do not express willingness. By the way, within the frameworks of its activities MIAK addressed the issue of provoking interest among young women towards civic and political participation.

- Do you intend to address women's issues at the Parliament?

- Throughout my societal or political activeness I have intensively promoted women's participation. Since I am a new person in the Parliament, I still have to comprehend which standing committee should I be involved in or to what sphere could I contribute to my best. For now, it is hard for me to sketch the distinct directions for the future pace, but I ensure that I will be amongst the first ones to upraise about violations of women's rights.

**Margarit Yesayan. "Women can feel things that are yet to come..."**

"Nowdays one shouldn't run after the news but should take part in the news production," - this is how Margarit Yesayan, the newly elected Parliamentarian explains her transition from journalism to politics. Margarit is an RPA member and was elected by proportional electoral system.

- In fact, the journalists know everything or almost everything, they recognize everyone or almost everyone, they are aware of strengths and weaknesses of politicians and are well aware on the place and the way decisions are being made. The journalists know much and thanks to journalists the political filed is being formed, I mean the real and professional journalists, of course. The journalist being a newscaster and news-reporter for years becomes a "newsmaker" and this is a tendency in the world. The same happened to

myself: I worked as a journalist for long years but one day I have decided to take part in politics, and why not become one of the policy makers instead of political news-reporter. I am happy that I was given this chance."

- Do you think women should have a different style in politics? If so do those styles differ from each other?

- In general, women are more impulsive and men are "deliberate in moves" and it is being reflected in politics as well. If you noticed, women speak loud when making a speech, they are active in gesticulations during socio-political events, women's voice is usually louder and they are the ones to make uproar and perhaps all that is natural. Regarding the woman's style; of course the woman has to have a style, but besides, women have such an immanency, that all men altogether can't have it: women feel things that are yet to come because women



give birth. Thus, the women's style should nurture and keep men vigilant.

**Elinar Vardanyan: "To what extend women are ready and willing to participate in the political life?"**

Elinar Vardanyan has a background of lawyer and has been elected by proportional electoral system from the Prosperous Armenia Party. She has been elected as a chairperson for Standing Committee on Protection of Human Rights and Public Affairs. She was involved in politics after an extensive activity in the social sector, meantime acted as an attorney.

- Is there discrimination towards women in Armenia?

- To be honest, I have never experienced discrimination towards myself. In our legislation the discrimination as a whole is not visible. That is to say, our laws extend equal rights to women and men. Another thing I would like to mention is the woman's mentality. I'll explain, the woman in our society, or more specifically a certain group of women are not yet ready to apply the equal rights. It is hard to anticipate political vigor from a woman who has been nourished to



be obedient and resilient since her childhood, the one who believes she should participate in the societal life whenever she finds time for it or if permitted by her family members. It is not realistic to anticipate a woman be confident on her strength and abilities, since Aitsemnik was the only

Armenian combating woman-idol in our school textbooks. We still have to overcome the stereotypes and stigmatize mentality. Besides, it is not always men who do not allow women work. We need to understand to what extend women are ready and willing to participate in the political life."

- In this regard, it is interesting to know your opinion on the parliamentary second hearing on the Draft Law on "Ensuring equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men".

- I am completely positive in this regard. I have reviewed the recommendations made by the NGOs and I know that some of them are not acceptable for the government. I think the recommendations are valuable enough and my first suggestion would be their inclusion into the draft that passed first hearing. Anyways, we will be discussing it during the fall session.

Lia Khojayan, Hasmik Harutyunyan

**Voices of the many**

**How did women and men elect**



Most of the electors of the Prosperous Armenia Party were women, even though the party has the lowest percentage of women representation in the Parliament. The proof for this is the results of the first Exit Poll in Armenia conducted on May 6, the day of Parliamentary elections.

The survey was conducted by famous Gallup World Association. During the survey the citizens exiting the polling station were answering to the sole question on which party did they elect? Out of 22 thousand respondent-electors only 12 thousand agreed to answer the question. 10 thousand electors refused to answer to the mentioned question. This figure is 15% higher compared to other countries, but according to the Gallup Association Armenian Branch Director Aram Navasardyan the result was predictable, since this was the first Exit Poll in Armenia and people were cautious in their responds. The survey also allowed envisaging the approximate picture of the elections before announcing the final results as well helped to identify which party was mainly elected by men and women. According to the Exit Poll results women are most likely to empathize Prosperous Armenia Party, since the majority of electors of the Party were women. The majority of Armenian National Congress electors were men since 5.3% of women and 7.9% of men voted for this party. Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnaksutyun was elected by 5.5% men and 4.7% women.

Orinats Yerkir (Rule of Law) Party also gained trust of women mostly and 6.4% women and 5.2% men elected this party. The same picture is with "Heritage" Party: 6.9% women and 5.9% men trusted and voted for the party. According to the Exit Poll the Republican Party of Armenia was elected by 42.5% women and 43.3% men. In this perspective, surveys conducted in the pre-election period are more valuable than the Exit Poll results, to measure the perception of women and men of political preferences, excluding the phenomena, when electors express one opinion, think of other and vote for the third option.

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**Say No Sexism**

**Women "Nicht Politics?"**

One of the peculiarities of the previous elections perhaps was the evident sexism towards women candidates. Ruben Hayrapetyan the proposed candidate of #1 electoral constituency responded that he would not accept the offer and debate with Gayane Arustamyan, because "she was a woman" and besides that "he was

afraid that Gayane would scabble". It also worth mentioning that instead of condemning the incident Arustamyan's men colleagues suggested their candidacy for debate with Hayrapetyan. If you are interested in women candidates' opinion and reaction about expression of sexism, please visit [www.WomenNet.am](http://www.WomenNet.am).

It also worth mentioning that several unsuccessful attempts have been done in Armenia to transfer the practice of political debate to the false gentlemen platform. Times ago when Gagik Beglaryan was competing with Ruzanna Khachatryan from People's Party of Armenia during Yerevan Center community elections, he announced that "it's a shame to be defeated by a woman".

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