ARMENIA'S NEW GOVERNMENT

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Following the parliamentary elections held on May 6, the new government was formed in Armenia last week. In the period of 2008-2012, Armenia was governed by a government coalition with the Republican Party being at the forefront along with the Prosperous Armenia Party, the Rule of Law Party and the Dashnak Party. After the signing of the Turkey-Armenia Protocols, the Dashnak Party, which is almost against all relations with Turkey, had withdrawn from the coalition and this had not created any difficulty for the Dashnaks have a rather small number of deputies. During the election on May 6, by winning 115 deputies in the Assembly which has a total of 131 seats, the coalition parties had easily gained a majority. However, this coalition was not able to be formed. The Prosperous Armenia Party, whose leader is wealthy businessman Tsarukyan and which is said to still be under the influence of former President Robert Kocharyan, according to rumors, wanted the office of Prime Minister and did not enter the coalition when it was not able to gain this position. Consequently, the Republican Party headed by Serge Sarkisian, which gained 70 deputies during the elections, formed a coalition together with the Rule of Law Party which had 6 deputies. It is expected that this coalition, which has an additional of ten deputies to the absolute majority of 66, will rule Armenia without much difficulty until the presidential elections to be held next year in February. For only being able to gain 7 deputies during the elections, the Armenian National Congress headed by Armenias first President Levon Ter-Petrossian and which is considered as Armenias main opposition party, has lost its influence to a great degree. When the Prosperous Armenia Party, which holds 37 deputies, has not entered the coalition, it has become the main opposition party. It is possible that this party will play an important role during the presidential elections and if he runs as candidate, will support Robert Kocharyan who was president from 1998-2008, but will support Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanyan if Kocharyan does not run for office. Based on the Constitution, the Prime Minister and ministers are appointed by the President. Serge Sarkisian has not made any change in the Cabinet, but has only appointed to the ministries held by the Prosperous Armenia Party, members of his own party. In this situation, Prime Minister Tigran Sarkisyan, Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandyan, Minister of Defense Seyran Ohanyan and Diaspora Minister Hranush Hakobyan have retained their posts. The government program foresees in summary that the economic growth will be 7%, minimum wage will increase to two folds, level of poverty will be reduced to 5% and 100.000 new jobs will be created. Although not impossible to achieve, these are very difficult goals; for instance, the World Bank has announced that this year the economic growth in Armenia could increase by 4.3%. The government

program has been put to vote in the Assembly on 21 June and has been adopted with 75 votes in favor, 47 votes against and 1 abstaining vote. These results also show to what extent the Government will be able to lead the Assembly.

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To cite this article: LÜTEM, Ömer Engin. 2026. "ARMENIA'S NEW GOVERNMENT." Center For Eurasian Studies (AVİM), Commentary No.2012 / 32. June 25. Accessed October 30, 2026. https://avimbulten.org/public/en/Yorum/ARMENIA-S-NEW-GOVERNMENT

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