

Observers: Türkiye's competitive presidential runoff marked by uneven playing field



Tim Knoblaue and Farah Karimi in an Ankara polling station, 28 May

The second round of Türkiye's presidential election was well run and gave voters the opportunity to choose between real political alternatives, but was characterized by increasingly inflammatory and discriminatory language. Media bias and restrictions on freedom of expression contributed to an unjustified advantage of the incumbent, international observers said Monday.

The joint mission from the OSCE/ODIHR, the OSCE PA, and PACE found that although the election authorities introduced some regulations ahead of the first round to ensure the smooth running of a potential run-off, the legislation does not address important aspects of holding second rounds, which has a negative impact on legal certainty and the stability of the overall legal framework.

"Concerns raised during the first round over the lack of a level playing field and the unfairness of the campaign remained unaddressed, with the incumbent president continuing to benefit from an unjustified advantage," said Farah Karimi, who headed the OSCE PA delegation and served as Special Co-ordinator and leader of the short-term OSCE observer mission. "Regretfully,

the use of harsher rhetoric by both contesting sides that was discriminatory and inflammatory further polarized the political environment. Voters came out in great numbers yesterday, and it is crucial that the winner makes genuine efforts to ensure the unity of the people of Türkiye."

The election administration managed the preparations for the second round efficiently within a short timeframe. However, the national election authorities postponed the declaration of the final parliamentary results until after the second round, missing the deadline earlier set. It also continued the practice noted during the first round of holding closed sessions and withholding the publication of most decisions, including complaints related to the first-round results. This further impacted the transparency of its work. Election day was largely peaceful, but there were isolated instances of violence that were mostly directed against opposition supporters.

Trials and arrests of journalists and bloggers continued ahead of the run-off, further restricting freedom of expression. At the same time, observers noted that many broadcasters did not meet a legal obligation to provide impartial coverage of the campaign and equal opportunities for the two presidential candidates, with the public broadcaster significantly favouring the incumbent and a similar bias noted in numerous private media outlets.

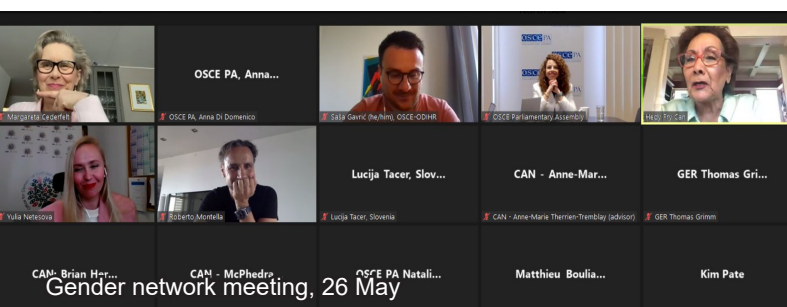
The international election observation to the second round of the presidential election in Türkiye totals 232 observers from 31 countries, made up of 181 ODIHR-deployed experts, long-term, and short-term observers, 31 from the OSCE PA, and 20 from PACE. The OSCE PA's delegation was supported by Stephanie Koltchanov, Freyja Koci, and Tim Knoblaue from the International Secretariat.

Call for Action – Helsinki +50 meeting: future challenges for the OSCE

The war in Ukraine has had a severe impact on OSCE processes and operations in a number of ways, beyond the obvious consequences of the violation of the Helsinki principles. OSCE PA Members can play an important role in raising awareness of these issues within the respective parliaments and urging governments to engage with a view to their timely and effective resolution.

Join the PA for an online discussion of these issues and more. Starting at 14:00 on 31 May, the meeting is taking place in the framework of the Call for Action – Helsinki +50 initiative, and will stream live here: <https://bit.ly/3lJfUv2>

Gender network, Rules Committee meet ahead of Vancouver Annual Session



The informal gender network of the OSCE PA met on 26 May for the third time under the leadership of OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues Hedy Fry. With the participa-

tion of President Margaretta Cederfelt and Secretary General Roberto Montella, the meeting featured a presentation on how OSCE/ODIHR can support national parliaments to achieve greater gender equality in politics. The discussion focused on generating ideas for the gender portfolio ahead of the upcoming Annual Session in Vancouver.

On 30 May, the OSCE PA's Sub-Committee on the Rules of Procedure met online to continue consideration of priority topics. President Cederfelt, Committee Chair Pascal Allizard and Members from six other countries participated in an active discussion focused on proposals related to sanctioning delegations, and gender representation. The Sub-Committee expects to present proposals for consideration by the Standing Committee in the near future.

OSCE PA and OSCE leaders issue joint statement on missile attacks in Ukraine

The OSCE Chairman-in-Office and Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia Bujar Osmani, OSCE Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid, OSCE PA President Margaretta Cederfelt and Secretary General Roberto Montella issued a joint statement on 26 May denouncing the Russian Federa-

tion's continued missile attacks against Ukraine, which have intensified in recent weeks. "Such missile attacks constitute major human rights violations, are contrary to international humanitarian law," the statement reads. For the full text, please click here: <https://bit.ly/3OlbkAU>