



# Facebook

## as a Campaign Platform in Armenia

Electronic Bulletin N2



This study of the coverage of 2012 Parliamentary elections by political forces and Armenian electronic media via Facebook social network has been conducted by Region Research Center within a project implemented with the financial support of Open Society Foundations - Armenia.

*Monitoring idea, methodology and results analysis*

*by the Director of Region Research Center **Laura Baghdasaryan***

*Monitoring group: **SonaKyurkchyan, Angela Chobanyan, Anahit Shirinyan, Lena Nazaryan, Vahe Sarukhanyan***

*Technical processing, calculations,  
tables and graphics by **Shoghik Stepanyan***

*English translation of the bulletin by **Kristine Soghikyan***

Region Research Center  
in the Internet

<http://regioncenter.info>

<http://caucasusjournalists.net>

<http://facebook.com/RegionCenter>



## Parliamentary Election Campaign (April 8 – May 4) and Election Day (May 6) Coverage on Facebook (Monitoring Stage Two)

In the period of the official campaign (April 8 – May 4) and on the Election Day (May 6) Region Research Center continued the monitoring of the Facebook pages of 5 media outlets. Besides, we also monitored the pages of political parties running for election and/or their nominees, as well as a number of Facebook group pages.

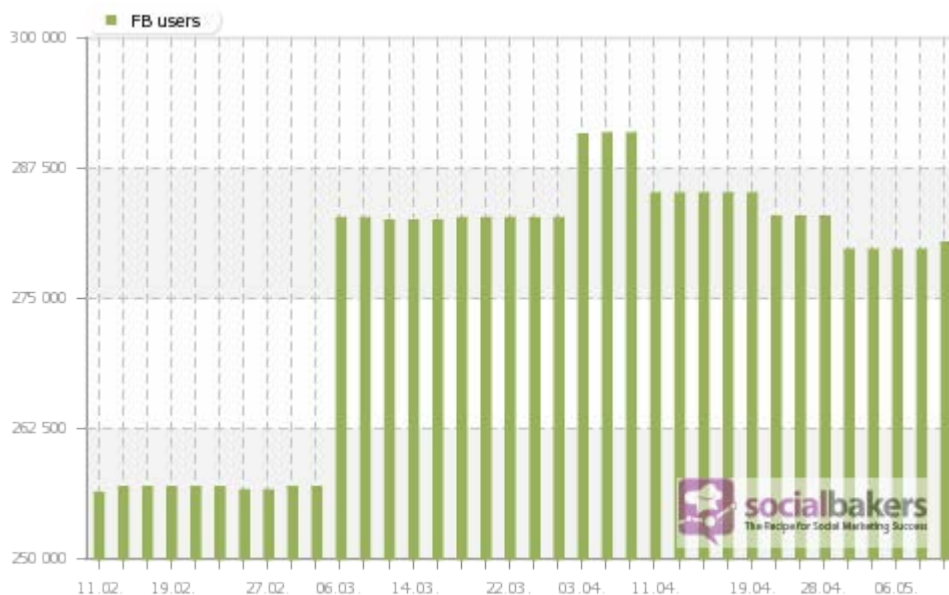
This was the more comprehensive stage of our study of Facebook as a campaign platform in the course of which we focused on three key players who steered campaign processes on Facebook, the latter being as follows:

- **Mass media** –Our monitoring focused on the characteristic features media outlets displayed on Facebook while fulfilling their primary function, i.e. providing coverage of the official campaign stage and the Election Day,
- **Political parties**, who, due to their representation on Facebook, had an opportunity of establishing exclusive contacts with the electorate and presenting their platforms in a more detailed and comprehensive manner,
- **Facebook groups**, which, could, on the one hand, act as consumers of the content offered by the media outlets and individual MP candidates, and on the other hand, become co-authors of the electoral discourse, since they enjoyed an opportunity of reacting (liking, sharing, commenting on) to the content on elections on Facebook and discussing electoral processes.

### Facebook Users from Armenia throughout Campaign

As of the end of April – beginning of May the number of Facebook users from Armenia amounted to 208 340 people. If we compare this indicator taken from Socialbakers.com statistical website with that as of late March (290 840 users), we will see that there was a considerable decline in the number of Facebook users from Armenia in April.

## Dynamics of the Number of Facebook Users from Armenia in February – May, 2012



Certainly, it is difficult to give an unambiguous reason as to why the original indicator decreased by 10500 usernames in the course of the official campaign. However, taking into account the fact that the numbers began to grow again (as of May 2, the total amount reached up to 283 460 user names) we can assume that the sharp decline in the number of Facebook users from Armenia in the first ten-day period of April could be accounted for by technical reasons.

In April Facebook adopted a new system for page design and content archiving, the so-called *timeline*. The users from Armenia (including the media outlets we monitored – Tert.am, News.am, 1in.am, 7or.am and Zham.am) had already begun to gradually convert to the new system since March. Technical deficiencies with archiving content came forth during the first two-three weeks of the introduction of the timeline, a system for archiving materials which makes it easier to chronologically systematize the content. Our monitoring group observed that the Facebook pages of the media outlets would preserve only the materials posted on the previous day and no earlier than 15 – 18 hours before. Most Facebook users from Armenia were not very excited with the novelty. There was a need to learn all the technical details, and it took time to master them. By the way, it was during this period that there was a decline in the numbers of users from other countries, too

([http://www.redorbit.com/news/technology/1112536895/facebook\\_users\\_express\\_strong\\_dislike\\_of\\_new\\_timeline\\_format/](http://www.redorbit.com/news/technology/1112536895/facebook_users_express_strong_dislike_of_new_timeline_format/)).

On the other hand, again coming from the data of the statistical socialbakers.com website, the age group ratio of users from Armenia did not considerably change in the last three months: in February – March, i.e. during the official campaign, the vast majority of users from Armenia were citizens of age and above (84%) who enjoyed franchise.

## Coverage of Official Campaign and Election Day on Facebook Pages of Online Media Outlets from Armenia and Interactivity of Audience

We continued the monitoring of the Facebook pages of 5 media outlets from Armenia (Tert.am Новости/Медиа (News/Media), News.am Новости/Медиа (News/Media), 1in.am Armenian News &Analyses, Zham.am and 7or.am Новости/Медиа (News/Media)) throughout the official campaign period and on the Election Day.

### Number of Materials on Elections on Facebook Pages of Media Outlets

It is natural that the vast majority of materials on the main websites and Facebook pages of media outlets related to the elections. If prior to the launch of the official campaign (during February and March) only the two third of the materials on elections placed on the main websites of the media outlets were uploaded onto Facebook, in the course of the official campaign this Facebook indicator of the three out of 5 media outlets (Tert.am, News.am, 7or.am) reached a maximum value.

### Number of Materials on Elections on Media Outlets' Main Website and their Facebook Pages during Campaign (April 8 – May 4)

Mass media outlet	Main website	Facebook	%
1in.am	1091	525	48%
7or.am	597	573	96%
News.am	762	684	91%
Tert.am	650	574	88%
Zham.am	633	307	48%

### Number of Materials on Elections on Media Outlets' Main Websites and Their Facebook Pages on Election Day (May 6)

Mass media outlet	Main website	Facebook	%
1in.am	148	67	45%
7or.am	72	72	100%
News.am	80	54	68%
Tert.am	92	92	100%
Zham.am	91	76	84%

However, it was still difficult to understand the principles by which materials were selected from the general content of the media outlets' main websites to be uploaded onto their Facebook pages, since the decision was still up to the Facebook page administrator of the media outlet or was made in accordance with the perceptions of the employees in charge of the news flow of the day: if a material was of interest to the Facebook audience of the media outlet, it would consequently increase the number of reactions (shares, likes and comments) to the content, while some other story would most likely fail to yield such results.

On May 6 1in.am which as compared with other media outlets had a considerably larger number of materials on the events of the day on its main website, posted the fewest number of materials onto its Facebook page (45% of the 148 materials on the main website), whereas 7or.am and Tert.am posted onto their Facebook pages all their materials on the elections positioned on the main websites. By the way, from May 2 to 4 1in.am website placed all its content onto its Facebook page due to the technical breakdown of its main website.

**This was not the first case when a media outlet temporarily “harbored” on Facebook due to the breakdown of the outlet’s main website, thus inviting all its readers there. That was a similar case during the Parliamentary elections in the Russian Federation in December 2011 when on the Election Day the websites of several media outlets ([www.slon.ru](http://www.slon.ru), [www.echo.msk.ru](http://www.echo.msk.ru), <http://www.kommersant.ru/>) simultaneously broke down because of the DDoS viral attack. And this can be considered another specificity of Facebook, that is to say, to serve not only as an additional, but a reserve platform “in emergency situations.”**

**Publishers from different countries are well-aware of this “service” inherent to Facebook and actively practice sharing the original content of their own media outlets onto Facebook pages, turning it into a comprehensive repository of multilingual mass media outlets from different countries.**

## **An Outline of the Campaign on Facebook**

Coming from the specificities of the official campaign stage, while monitoring the Facebook pages of the media outlets we were more interested in the themes the media focused on during the coverage of the campaign, rather than the intensity of references to political parties running for election. The rationale was simple: we tried to understand what themes were central in the stories offered by the media outlets and how they were accepted by the audience.

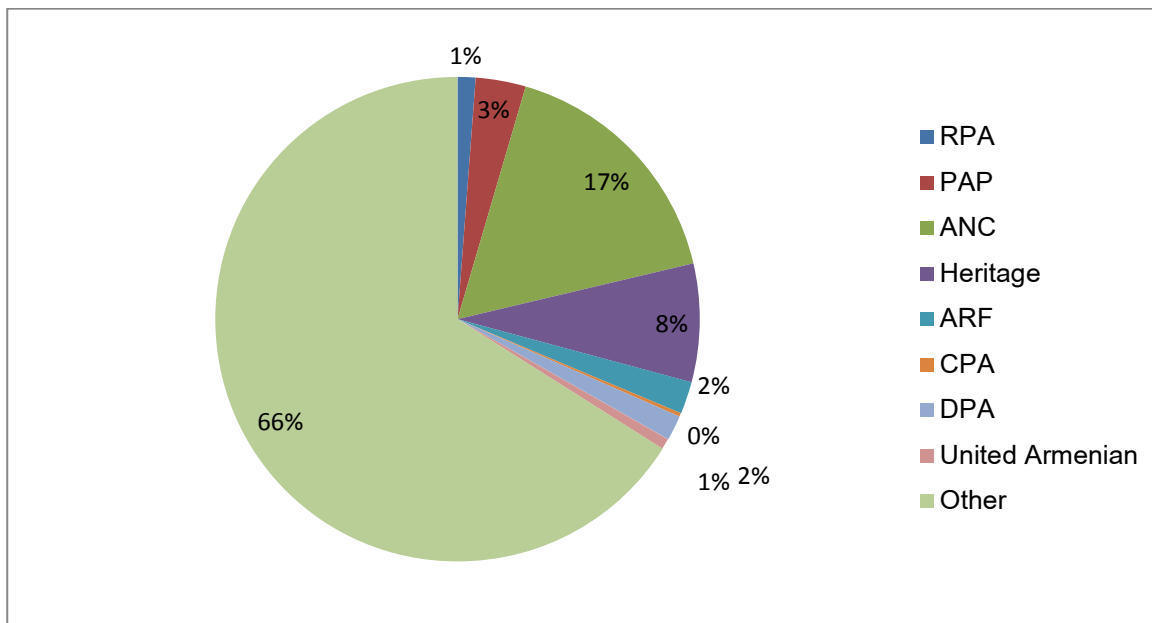
The websites of the 5 monitored media outlets principally contained stories on **electoral processes** (the course of the campaign, the meetings of the candidates with the electorate in different marzes, descriptions of work at the polling stations, observation missions, the activities of NGOs related to the elections and so on) **and electoral bribes/election violations/ abuse of administrative resources.**

### General Rating of Topics Raised in Materials on Elections during Campaign

Electoral process	1919	62%
Electoral bribes/election violations/abuse of administrative resources	434	14%
Political freedoms	258	8%
Socio-economic	249	8%
Foreign policy	64	2%
Culture	62	2%
Security/army/Karabakh	57	2%
Environmental protection	40	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3083</b>	<b>100%</b>

The other themes (army, Karabakh, foreign policy, environmental protection) that regularly (also on the eve of the official launch of the campaign process) became a topic of public discussions, were covered considerably less. The media outlets focused more on the coverage of course of the campaign rather than the political platforms (the content) of the competing parties: they covered how the political parties held their meetings, what they said with regard to electoral bribes, what they promised or gave to the voters and so on.

### Parties Running for Election Spoke about Election Fraud/Electoral Bribes/Abuse of Administrative Resources (in media outlets)



Since there was great interest in this issue, in the course of our monitoring we aimed to extend our calculation of the total number of statements on electoral bribes, election violations and abuse of administrative resources beyond the official campaign. Besides, we aimed to highlight who spoke on these topics, how (making concrete references or general remarks) and which political forces were pointed out. Thus, 34% of those who spoke of electoral bribes and other violations were the representatives of parties involved in the campaign. The considerable part of the remaining cases (66%) was constituted by reprints from other monitored media outlets (112 mentions). Due to a smaller number, references made by the media's own reporters (92 mentions) came last. The other authors – experts, NGOs and other social figures – made relatively fewer references to the topic. By the way, 7 of the 13 references made by the experts did not contain any concrete mention, that is to say they spoke of violations in general terms. The representatives of various public initiatives and NGOs spoke more concretely and mentioned mostly the RPA as the main role player in the election violations. Only 2 out of the 112 references to the topic of election violations contained in the reprints from other media outlets were made in general terms and without concrete mentions (and it is for this very reason that these materials appeared on the Facebook pages of the monitored media outlets). The references with concrete mentions were the majority among the materials of the media's own reporters (See Appendix, Table 1,2).

We can see an interesting picture when we conduct a deeper analysis of the references to the topic of election violations, authored by the representatives of political parties running for election. They have spoken on this issue with varied intensity and targeting different addressees. Thus, if the representatives of the RPA spoke about this less than the others and exclusively in general terms, without mentioning concrete names, the other parties mentioned the RPA most, when they chose to speak with concrete names. In the course of the campaign the ANC spoke on the topics of electoral bribes, violations and abuse of administrative resources most – 70 times: in 15 cases the ANC representatives spoke about the topic without concretely mentioning anyone, 48 times they mentioned RPA on the Facebook pages of all monitored media. They mentioned OEK in the Facebook pages of 1in.am, Tert.am and Zham.am only once in each. The representatives of the other oppositional force running for election – the Heritage party – also spoke about the election violations more often with concrete mentions of other forces, than in general terms or in declarative statements (See Appendix, Table 1,2).

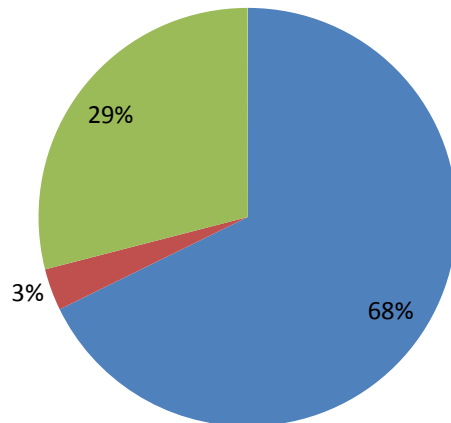
### Coverage of Election Day on Media Outlets' Facebook Pages (May 6)

On the Election Day the materials uploaded onto the Facebook pages were on the following three topics:

- **Electoral processes** –stories that covered voting in different polling stations. These were original materials or reprints from other media, announcements made by the parties or their blocks running for election. Once Tert.am even chose to refer to a citizen's message posting a material entitled "A Call from a Facebook User" on both its main website and its Facebook page.
- **Political freedoms** –materials on the realization of franchise on the Election Day,
- **Electoral bribes/election violations/abuse of administrative resources** – reports and materials on violations in different polling stations (See Appendix, Table 3).

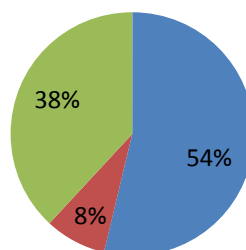
### www.1in.am

- Electoral process
- Political Freedoms
- Electoral bribes/election violations/abuse of administrative resources



### www.7or.am

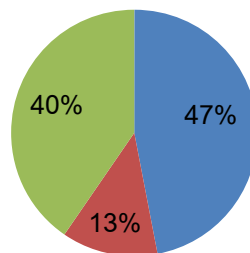
- Electoral process
- Political Freedoms
- Electoral bribes/election violations/abuse of administrative resources





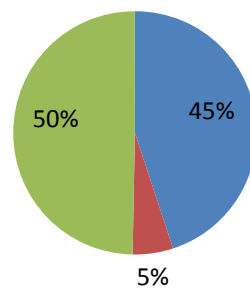
### www.News.am

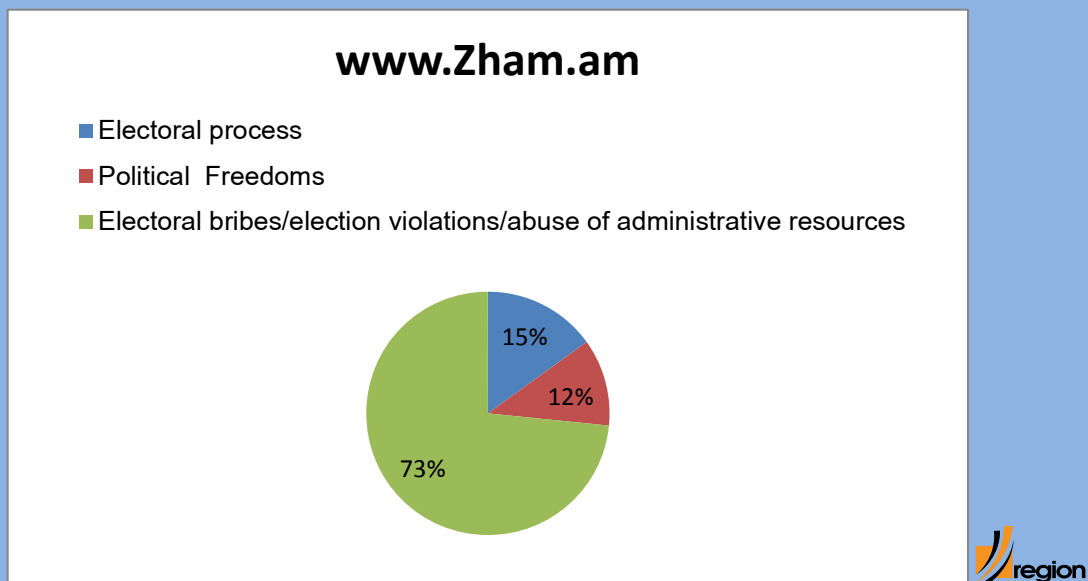
- Electoral process
- Political Freedoms
- Electoral bribes/election violations/abuse of administrative resources



### www.Tert.am

- Electoral process
- Political Freedoms
- Electoral bribes/election violations/abuse of administrative resources





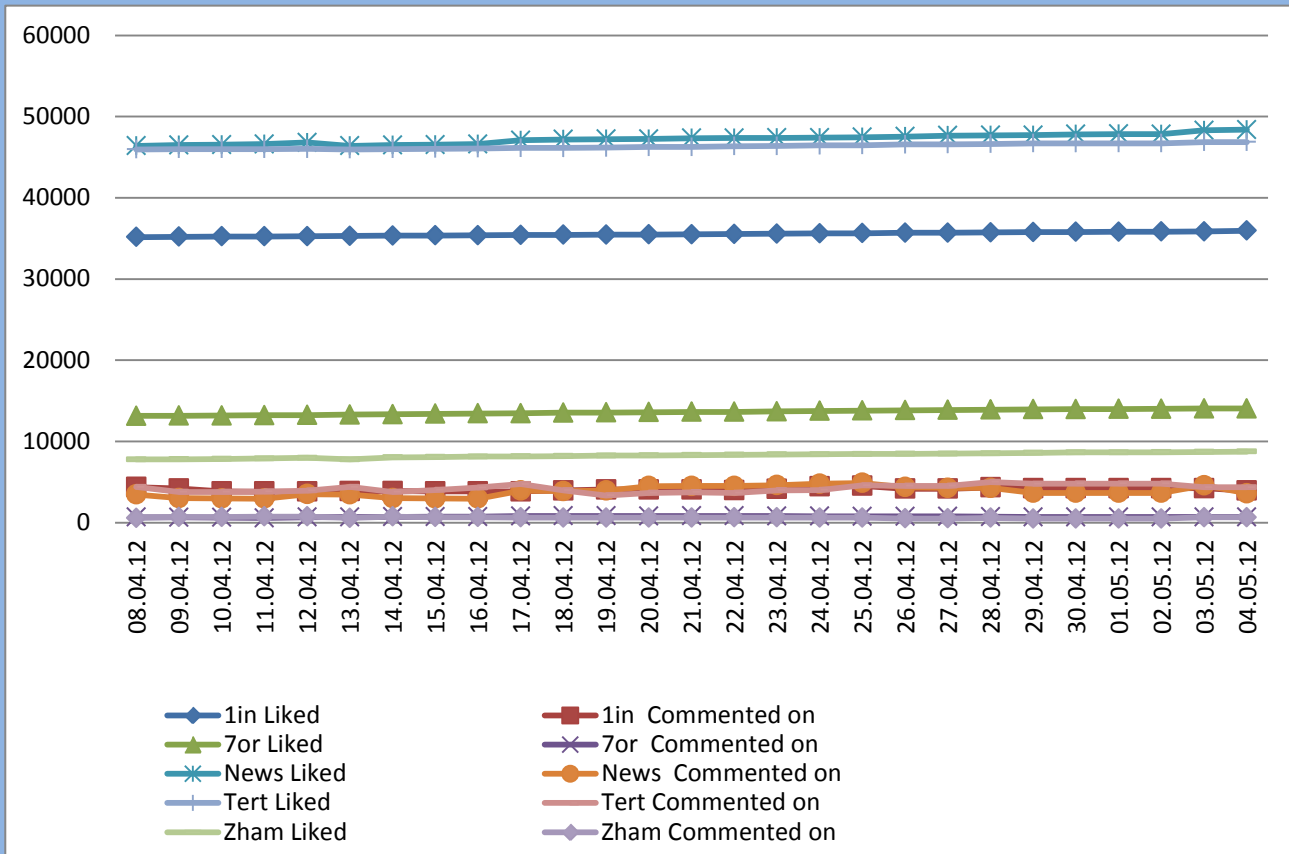
As it can be seen from the charts above, different media outlets focused on different topics. Thus, 68% of the topics raised in the stories in 1in.am on May 6 were descriptions of electoral processes. In its stories of the day Zham.am mostly covered the topics of electoral bribes, election violations and abuse of administrative resources (73%). According to Tert.am's results, the difference between the stories on electoral processes and election violations is not large (45% and 50% respectively). On the Election Day Zham.am and News.am were the media outlets that had most stories on political freedoms (15% and 13% respectively).

We focused on the names of the polling stations, mentioned in the stories on electoral bribes/election violations/abuse of administrative resources on the pages of the monitored media outlets. The results reveal that there were reports on election violations in 165 out of the total 1982 polling stations operating in Armenia. A considerable number of these reports were disseminated by the parties running for election. By the way, 1in.am mentioned 14 polling stations, 7or.am named 22, Tert.am spoke of 40, News.am referred to 66 and Zham.am pointed out 87 different polling stations (the highest number from among the 5 media outlets) (See Appendix, Table 4, 5, 6, 7, 8).

### **Interactivity in the Course of the Campaign and the Election Day**

When compared to the preceding time period, the audience of the media outlets had not essentially and abruptly changed; it had neither grown nor shrunk. In the course of the official campaign the chart displaying the reactions to the materials on Facebook pages had not registered any sudden ups or downs either. The picture is the same also with regard to the indicators of readers' numbers and their reactions to the 1in.am stories on May 2 – 4. Let us remind that on the mentioned days this media outlet had completely resorted to its Facebook page because of the breakdown of the main website. Hence, the abrupt growth in the number of 1in.am's Facebook page "consumers" should not be surprising.

Dynamics of Media Outlets' Readership and Reactions to Content (April 8 – May 4, 2012)



The readership of almost all media outlets and the number of reactions to materials grew on the Election Day. As compared to the indicators of the last day of the campaign (May 4), on the Election Day (May 6) the number of the readers who liked the Facebook pages of the media outlets grew from 70 (Zham.am had the smallest number of likes) up to 338 likes (News.am had the largest number of likes). On Election Day News.am held the top position due to the number of discussions on its content on elections with 547 people talking about the matters: this indicator was higher than the ratio of discussions on election coverage materials posted by other outlets. The only media outlet which had a decline in the number of comments on its content on May 6 as compared to the same indicator on May 4 was Tert.am (the number of comments decreased by 119).

## Media Outlets' Audience and Number of Reactions to Content on Election Day (May 6, 2012)

Media Outlet	1in.am		7or.am		News.am		Tert.am		Zham.am	
	Liked	Commented on	Liked	Commented on	Liked	Commented on	Liked	Commented on	Liked	Commented on
04.05	35944	3936	14043	693	48381	3592	46872	4344	8745	638
06.05	36066	4043	14152	813	48719	4139	47150	4225	8815	733

However, the level of activity with which the stories and materials were reacted to (the number of likes, shares and comments) varied. Thus, the stories on elections were mostly reacted to in 1in.am, News.am and Zham.am. The materials published in Tert.am and 7or.am had fewer reactions.

## Audience's Reactions to Materials on Elections during the Campaign

Media outlet	Number of materials on election topics, excluding reactions of audience	Number of materials on election topics that were reacted to by audience on Facebook pages (Like, Share, Comment)
1in.am	45	480
7or.am	116	481
News.am	8	332
Tert.am	210	332
Zham.am	61	239

## Facebook as a Campaign Platform for Political Parties Running for Election

The Facebook pages of the parties running for election and their members were monitored during the campaign. We aimed to find out whether they were making use of the possibilities of the social network to have utmost contact with Facebook users from Armenia and present their political platforms more thoroughly. The monitoring was conducted by a few criteria: the intensity of materials posted on the Facebook pages, the topics raised in the materials, the dialogues that took place among MP candidates and Facebook users, the intensity of the audience's reactions and the so-called "degree of their activity." The **degree of the activity** of MP candidates was determined by several criteria: to what extent the Facebook page was run personally by its user (authentic materials – presence of statuses), the possibility of posting materials onto the page by others, the intensity of placing campaign and propaganda materials in general and presentation of the events of the day.

**We monitored:**



**Armen Ashotyan's**

<http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=1177137998>



**Karen Avagyan's**

<http://www.facebook.com/avagyankaren>



**Artak Zakaryan's**

<http://www.facebook.com/artak.zakaryan>

Facebook pages, **representatives of RPA.**



**Gagik Tsarukyan's**

<http://www.facebook.com/GagikTsarukyan>



**Vartan Oskanian's**

<http://www.facebook.com/VartanOskanian>

Facebook pages, **representatives of PAP**



**Hrant Bagratyan's**

<http://www.facebook.com/hrant.bagratyan>



**Levon Zourabyan's**

<http://www.facebook.com/LevonZourabyan>



**Aram Manukyan's**

<http://www.facebook.com/aram.manukyan.anc>

pages, **representatives of ANC.**



**Zaruhi Postanjyan's**

<http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100001686206577>



**Styopa Safaryan's**

<http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100000434784551>



**Karapet Rubinyan's**

<http://www.facebook.com/rubinyan>

pages, candidates from the joint slate of the *Heritage and Free Democrats*.



**Lilit Galstian's**

<http://www.facebook.com/Lilit.Galstian>



**Armen Rustamyan's**

<http://www.facebook.com/armenrustamyan>

pages, who were ARFnominees, as well as the arf2012.am page that was started specifically for the campaign.

We monitored the official pages of the other parties, these being - OEK(<http://www.facebook.com/Oek.Party>), Free Democrats(<http://www.facebook.com/freedemocrats?ref=ts>), CPA (<http://www.facebook.com/HayastaniKomunistakanKusakcutyun>), DPA(<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Democratic-Party-of-Armenia/229082303851219>), and United Armenians(<http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100003687860239>)

At first sight this selection of study objects may seem abstruse, since the comparison of the official pages of MP candidates and political parties by several quantitative criteria is not practically applicable. Besides, there was a varied degree of access to information. For example, it was possible to see the number of RPA member Karen Avagyan's Facebook friends only when you "made friends" with him. However, the whole content of the page was open to public. Due to the non-homogenous nature of MP candidates' Facebook pages (in one case, personal profiles, in other cases – official walls, possibility or impossibility for others to post content onto the page wall, and so on) we have chosen only common criteria of these pages to monitor.

The well-known **OEK** leaders and members were either unrepresented on Facebook, or had closed pages with no public access. Even though during the campaign the party's meetings with the electorate in different marzes were crowded, the number of the people who liked the Facebook page of the party did not grow abruptly in that period of time and had only about 2000 likes. As of the end of May, the page had 2354 likes.

**Free Democrats** started their Facebook page in September 2011, however as of the end of May the number of the users who liked their page testified to a rating much lower than that of the others (346 likes on the eve of the campaign and 352 likes as of May 28).

**United Armenians Party** started its Facebook page as a private Wall on April 3<sup>rd</sup> and had 254 friends on the eve of the campaign. Since April 24<sup>th</sup> the page functioned as the official wall of the party and had 92 likes as of the end of May.

**CPA** joined Facebook in January 2012, was quite active in terms of posting various materials onto the Wall during the campaign, and using timeline, presented stories and materials on the events of its history in the past decades.

**DPA** has had a Facebook page since February 2012. The page has not been very active. On April 13, 5 days after the launch of the campaign, Artur Ghazaryan, a Facebook user, wrote to the party, requesting the link to the party's electoral platform. The platform was placed on the page of the party only on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 3 days prior to the Election Day.

**We observed a different picture when monitoring the Facebook pages of the above-mentioned candidates.**

These pages varied in both the size of the audience and the number of reactions (likes, comments and shares) to their content, and the topics of the materials that were regularly presented to the users who had liked the page and the number of dialogues held with the readers.

Besides, these pages had varied technical specifications. The walls of most pages were open to public and gave others a possibility to share materials on election topics onto the page. However, the pages of the following candidates – Armen Ashotyan from RPA, Lilit Galstyan from ARF and Levon Zurabyan from ANC, were exceptions to the above-stated. As for the others' possibility to post shared materials onto MPs' pages, we observed the highest indicator on the pages of Heritage representatives Styopa Safaryan (users shared 286 stories on the campaign onto his page) and Zaruhi Postangyan (252



stories), RPA members Karen Avagyan (128 stories) and Artak Zakaryan (105 materials). On others' pages that are considered open to public the number of shared materials ranged from 3 to 33.

As for the audience's reactions (likes, shares and comments) to the content, maximum indicators were observed on the pages of Heritage representatives – Styopa Safaryan (155) and Zaruhi Postanjyan (112). In these terms the lowest number of reactions was seen on Artak Zakaryan's page, only 7 reactions by the audience throughout the campaign. The page that had the largest audience (as of the last day of the campaign May 4 the page had 24188 likes) and belonged to PAP leader Gagik Tsarukyan displayed a minimal number of reactions – only 14 likes, shares and comments, made to the content throughout the campaign period.

With regard to the dialogues that rolled out on MP candidates' pages the general indicators were quite modest. The largest number of discussions could be seen on the pages of the following candidates – Heritage member Styopa Safaryan (37 cases of interactive discussions), RPA member Armen Ashotyan (23 interactive discussions) and PAP representative Vartan Oskanian (13). During the campaign the following MP candidates did not have any interactive discussions with the audience whatsoever: Zaruhi Postanjyan (Heritage), Lilit Galstian (ARF), Aram Manukyan and Levon Zourabyan (ANC), Karen Avagyan (RPA) (See Appendix, Table 12).

Instead, by Radio Liberty's invitation a number of other MP candidates (including Levon Zourabyan from ANC) had so-called Facebook press conferences during the campaign. In these press conferences they answered the questions of Radio Liberty's Facebook page users. Levon Zourabyan's press conference that contained a large number of questions and answers was later posted onto his page.

A number of candidates ran their pages personally which can be clearly testified to by the existence of authentic materials created specifically for their pages (the so-called statuses). MP candidates from the Heritage slate Styopa Safaryan and Karapet Rubinyan, RPA member Armen Ashotyan and PAP member Vartan Oskanian stood out with this regard.

The vast majority of materials posted on MP candidates' pages during the campaign were stories that were published in various media outlets from Armenia during that time period and concerned either their person or the campaign run by their parties. Besides, there were references to various propaganda materials prepared by the party. The themes these materials covered were as follows:

The largest number of materials on political freedoms/electoral processes was posted onto the pages of Heritage members Styopa Safaryan and Zaruhi Postanjyan, the quantitative indicators of which are comparable with the numbers of materials on the same subject placed on arf2012.am website that was created specifically for ARF's campaign. More materials on socio-economic issues were posted on the pages of ANC members Hrant Bagratyan and Levon Zourabyan and RPA representative Karen Avagyan. References to other topics (foreign policy, security/army/Karabakh, culture, and environment) were obviously much fewer in number (see Appendix, Tables 13 & 14).

## Campaign and Election Day in Facebook Groups

The monitoring of Facebook group content was the third direction of our study.

Our work at this stage could be divided into three parts:

- **The first part** was constituted by the so-called “multi-profile” groups that were formed and functioned before the start of electoral processes in Armenia, they had numerous members and were open to all.

Here belonged:

**Verjin lurer (Latest News)** - which had 31 504 members as of the beginning of April, the number of members on May 12 reached 31 598; this was an open group (<http://www.facebook.com/groups/verjin/>).

**VERJIN LURER – Aranc graqnnutyán (LATEST NEWS – uncensored)** had 5280 members in the campaign period, the number of its members reached 5587, and it was an open group. (<http://www.facebook.com/groups/verjinlurer/?ref=ts>):

**Polit Club** – this group had 10467 members at campaign stage, the number of its members amounted to 10 327 on May 12; it was an open group <http://www.facebook.com/groups/hayastanciner/>.

**Քաղաքացիական հասարակություն (Civic Society)** – it had 4120 members during the campaign, and it was an open group (<http://www.facebook.com/groups/qahhasarakutyun/>).

- **In Part Two** we focused on groups that were created specially on the eve of Parliamentary elections who highlighted this event in their names.

These included:

**Քաղաքական ընտրություն (Political Choice)** – this group had 1062 members as of the beginning of April, the number of its members reached 1109 on May 12, and it was an open group. (<http://www.facebook.com/groups/208745595878157/>)

**ԱԺ ընտրություններ. 2012թ. մայիսի 6 (Parliamentary Elections: May 6, 2012)** – As of the beginning of May it had 1020 members, the number of the members increased up to 1057 on May 12, and it was an open group (<http://www.facebook.com/groups/123773261081217/>).

Even though the “About ” section of the group page stated that the page was created in order to enhance the focus on education and science matters in MP candidates’ platforms, throughout the electoral process this group called forth the so-called multi-profile content which means it was not

very different from others. Moreover, here we saw incomparably fewer comments on the content shared by group members during the campaign period.

«Հայաստանն առանց ընտրակեղծիքների» (“Armenia without Election Fraud”) - (<http://www.facebook.com/groups/359070090780617/>). As of May 12 the page had 4246 members. Even though the information about the page stated that this Facebook “initiative was for all RA citizens, regardless of their party affiliation and political preferences” and united “those citizens who are for free and fair elections and are ready to fight against election fraud,” it was a closed group. The group came up with an initiative, proposing a volunteer from among its members who could, in any possible status, join the Gallup Company during the exit poll on the Election Day to participate in the survey in all the 131 polling stations and act as an assistant or an interviewer or an observer. However, the proposal was not accepted. The public learnt of the initiative made by the group from its own announcement that was published in the media outlets in Armenia.

- **The third part** embraced the groups that declared of their political orientation, such as:

**ՊԱՅՔԱՐ, ՊԱՅՔԱՐ ՄԻՆՉԵՎ ՎԵՐՋ (Payqar, payqar minchev verj ) (STRUGGLE, STRUGGLE TO THE END)** – It had 2012 members as of the beginning of April, the number of members reached 2038 on May 12; it was a closed group and united ANC supporters (<http://www.facebook.com/groups/payqar.payqar/>).

**Քվեն ուժ է. Հասարակական շարժում (The Vote Is Power: Civil Movement)** – this group had about 3000 members on the eve of the elections, it was an open group, and united ARF supporters (<http://www.facebook.com/qven.uje>).

**It should be mentioned that the names of the groups are presented in the language/alphabet in which they are registered on Facebook.**

Throughout the electoral period, even prior to the start of the official campaign, discussions of varying activity rolled out on Facebook among users who had come together within this or that group. Following the content of these discussions it was possible to compile a chronology of materials related to the different stages of electoral processes that had been covered in Armenian media outlets, as well as to understand which electoral processes the Armenian media outlets and Facebook groups focused on specifically in the last few months. Here we could also familiarize ourselves with the so-called Facebook “folklore” – jokes made up on different campaign slogans, half-joking initiatives, such as “We Demand to Increase the Frequency of Elections.” According to the creator of the group, this was necessary to increase the frequency of elections since it would entail the renovation of all roads in the country, all the elevators of all buildings would be repaired, the citizens would be treated in an extremely friendly manner at every governmental body and so on ([www.facebook.com/PahanjumEnkAvelacnelntrutyunneriHacaxakanutyun](http://www.facebook.com/PahanjumEnkAvelacnelntrutyunneriHacaxakanutyun)).

Substantive discussions took place in the so-called multi-profile groups that had comparatively few members (Civic Society), and debates were going on among the representatives of different parties. The materials on electoral topics shared from different media outlets prevailed in larger groups, these pieces were posted quite frequently, however were rarely reacted to.

While monitoring the so-called “apolitical” groups, the discussions resembling debates touched upon the types of electoral processes and the electoral tactics adopted by the parties (successful or failed cooperation, the nomination of oppositional block representatives in the same polling stations who thus prevent each other from being elected, the conduct and behavior of candidates during meetings with the population of different marzes and so on) rather than the platform theses of the forces running for election.

Both party members and MP candidates took part in the discussions in these groups. The Heritage nominee Styopa Safaryan was especially active in the debates with the members of the Civic Society group members.

The results of various surveys, inclusive of those held within other Facebook groups, were treated with extensive suspicion by the users of the above-mentioned Facebook groups.

There were regular waves of “exposing” fake accounts (users who introduced themselves by fake names) within the groups. Materials that would ensure black PR and the debates about these also constituted a certain share of content on the group pages.

## Appendix

### Parliamentary Elections Campaign on Facebook

(April 8– May 4)

Table 1. The political parties running for election on issues of electoral bribes/election violations/abuse of administrative resources on Facebook pages of monitored media outlets (Campaign – April 8 - May 4)

Who spoke on violations?	Mentioning whom?	Media Outlet					Total
		1in.am	Tert.am	News.am	7or.am	Zham.am	
RPA	With no concrete reference	0	2	1	1	1	5
	Total	0	2	1	1	1	5
	RPA	1	0	1	3	0	5
PAP	With no concrete reference	0	2	0	6	1	9
	Total	1	2	1	9	1	14
	RPA	8	11	9	15	5	48
ANC	PAP	1	0	0	0	0	1
	OEK	1	1	0	0	1	3
	Independent candidate	1	0	0	1	1	3
	With no concrete reference	2	3	2	5	3	15
	Total	13	15	11	21	10	70

Heritage	RPA	8	2	2	0	0	12
	PAP	2	1	0	0	0	3
	ANC	0	0	0	0	1	1
	ARF	1	0	0	0	1	2
	OEK	1	1	0	0	2	4
	With no concrete reference	3	1	2	1	4	11
	Total	15	5	4	1	8	33
ARF	RPA	0	0	1	3	0	4
	With no concrete reference	0	0	1	4	0	5
	Total	0	0	2	7	0	9
CPA	RPA	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Total	0	0	0	1	0	1
DPA	RPA	0	1	0	1	1	3
	PAP	0	1	0	0	0	1
	With no concrete reference	0	1	0	2	0	3
	Total	0	3	0	3	1	7
United Armenians	RPA	0	0	2	1	0	3
	Total	0	0	2	1	0	3

Table 2. Others speaking on election fraud/electoral bribes/abuse of administrative resources on the Facebook pages of monitored media outlets (Campaign – April 8 – May 4)

Who spoke on violations?	Mentioning whom?	1in.am	Tert.am	News.am	7or.am	Zham.am	Total
Expert	RPA	1	0	0	3	0	4
	PAP	0	0	0	1	0	1
	OEK	0	0	0	1	0	1
	With no concrete reference	1	1	1	4	0	7
	Total	2	1	1	9	0	13
Public/Civic movement/union	RPA	1	1	0	6	5	13
	Independent candidate	0	0	0	1	0	1
	With no concrete reference	1	1	0	5	0	7
	Total	2	2	0	12	5	21
Individual citizen	RPA	6	2	2	0	0	10
	OEK	2	1	0	1	0	4
	With no concrete reference	1	1	1	0	0	3
	Total	9	4	3	1	0	17
Own reporter	RPA	5	18	6	8	9	46
	PAP	0	3	2	0	0	5
	Heritage	0	0	0	0	1	1
	ARF	0	1	0	0	0	1

	OEK	3	4	2	0	1	10
	CPA	0	0	0	1	0	1
	With no concrete reference	5	4	3	13	3	28
	Total	13	30	13	22	14	92
Other media	RPA	21	39	12	0	1	73
	PAP	6	9	2	0	0	17
	ACN	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Heritage	0	1	0	0	0	1
	ARF	0	1	0	0	0	1
	OEK	5	9	2	0	0	16
	With no concrete reference	0	1	0	1	0	2
	Total	32	62	16	1	1	112
Independent candidate	RPA	2	3	0	1	0	6
	With no concrete reference	2	0	0	2	1	5
	Total	4	3	0	3	1	11



## Election Day (May 6, 2012)

Table 3. Topics covered in Materials on Election Day on Facebook Pages of Monitored Media Outlets (May 6)

Media Outlet	Electoral processes	Political freedoms	Electoral bribe/ Election violation/ Abuse of administrative resources	Total
www.1in.am	84	4	36	124
	68%	3%	29%	100%
www.7or.am	79	12	56	147
	54%	8%	38%	100%
www.News.am	93	25	80	198
	47%	13%	40%	100%
www.Tert.am	75	9	83	167
	45%	5%	50%	100%
www.Zham.am	26	20	127	173
	15%	12%	73%	100%

Polling stations which were mentioned in materials, posted onto monitored outlets' Facebook pages in connection with electoral bribes/ election violations/ abuse of administrative resources (May6)

Table 4. 1in.am (14 polling stations)

Polling stations

04/12	09/11	3/17
05/08	10/33	3/22
06/05	13/09	35/31
06/07	23/19	4/19
09/07	26	

Table 5. 7or.am (22 polling stations)

02/31	07/24	09/06	17/27	34/25
03/22	08/03	10/17	22/30	Lernarot
06	08/33	11/08	24/34	
07/07	09/02	13/09	26/07	
07/23	09/05	15/19	31/01	

Table 6. News.am (66 polling stations)

01/09	06/07	07/20	09/16	13/32	28/28	33/70
01/11	06/12	07/23	10/21	14/09	3/22	331/25
01/20	06/17	08/03	11/02	15/30	30	34/25
02/37	06/18	08/14	11/08	17/05	30/04	38/38
03/11	07/01	08/18	11/27	17/08	30/18	39/27
03/33	07/07	08/23	11/28	17/11	30/37	Zolakar
04/04	07/08	08/25	11/36	18/22	31/08	
04/27	07/12	09/05	12	21	31/18	
06/01	07/13	09/12	12/27	25/06	31/28	
06/02	07/19	09/15	13/14	26/06	33/68	

Table 7. Tert.am (40 polling stations)

05/14	07/03	12	30/22
05/20	07/23	12/07	30/33
05/30	07/25	13	30/36
06	07/26	14/14	30/37
06/02	07/30	24	31/05
06/12	07/35	24/26	33/77
06/19	09/17	25	34
06/32	09/23	26	34/25
07/01	10/08	28/28	35/39
07/02	10/27	29/03	39/27

Table 8. Zham.am (87 polling stations)

01/02	07/10	11/08	24/27	34/29
01/04	07/12	12	24/28	37
01/07	07/23	12/09	25/06	37/38
01/08	07/25	12/32	25/26	38/38
02/37	07/26	12/33	28/28	39/27
03/22	07/29	13/32	3/22	5/12
03/33	08/03	15/30	30/04	9/11
04/04	08/07	17/05	30/18	
04/20	08/32	17/08	31/18	
05/08	09	17/11	31/25	
06/04	09/02	17/21	31/28	
06/07	09/05	17/27	32	
06/10	09/06	17/42	32/33	
06/12	09/15	18	33	
06/15	09/16	23/04	34/12	
06/18	09/17	23/07	34/22	
06/21	1/11	23/18	34/23	
07/02	10/06	23/19	34/25	
07/07	10/21	23/34	34/26	
07/08	10/27	24/26	34/28	

Table 9. Total number of polling stations, mentioned in relation to electoral bribes/election fraud/abuse of administrative resources in the materialsonmonitoredmediaoutlets' Facebook pages (May6)

(165 pointed out polling stations from among 1982 functioning polling stations)

01/02	06	07/12	09/02	11/28	17/27	26/06	32/33	4/19
01/04	06/01	07/13	09/05	11/36	17/42	26/07	33	5/12
01/07	06/02	07/19	09/06	12	18	28/28	33/68	9/11
01/08	06/04	07/20	09/07	12/07	18/22	29/03	33/70	Lernarot
01/09	06/05	07/23	09/11	12/09	21	3/17	33/77	Zolakar
01/11	06/07	07/24	09/12	12/27	22/30	3/22	331/25	
01/20	06/10	07/25	09/15	12/32	23/04	30	34	
02/31	06/12	07/26	09/16	12/33	23/07	30/04	34/12	
02/37	06/15	07/29	09/17	13	23/18	30/18	34/22	
03/11	06/17	07/30	09/23	13/09	23/19	30/22	34/23	
03/22	06/18	07/35	1/11	13/14	23/34	30/33	34/25	
03/33	06/19	08/03	10/06	13/32	24	30/36	34/26	
04/04	06/21	08/07	10/08	14/09	24/26	30/37	34/28	
04/12	06/32	08/14	10/17	14/14	24/27	31/01	34/29	
04/20	07/01	08/18	10/21	15/19	24/28	31/05	35/31	
04/27	07/02	08/23	10/27	15/30	24/34	31/08	35/39	
05/08	07/03	08/25	10/33	17/05	25	31/18	37	
05/14	07/07	08/32	11/02	17/08	25/06	31/25	37/38	
05/20	07/08	08/33	11/08	17/11	25/26	31/28	38/38	
05/30	07/10	09	11/27	17/21	26	32	39/27	

## Parties/MP Candidates in the Course of the Campaign

Table 10

Candidates' personal pages	Date	Number of Friends
Armen Ashotyan	08.04.12	4996
	04.05.12	4987
Zaruhi Postanjyan	08.04.12	4881
	04.05.12	4846
Artak Zakaryan	08.04.12	2375
	04.05.12	2463
Karapet Rubinyan	08.04.12	1821
	04.05.12	1895
Lilit Galstian	08.04.12	4896
	04.05.12	4965
Styopa Safaryan	08.04.12	2619
	04.05.12	2730

Table 11

Official pages of Candidates/ political parties	Date	Liked	Are Talking about This
Aram Manukyan	08.04.12	180	143
	04.05.12	264	48
Armen Rustamyan	08.04.12	839	48
	04.05.12	872	22
Gagik Tsarukyan	08.04.12	23769	146
	04.05.12	24188	309
Hrant Bagratyan	08.04.12	383	32
	04.05.12	438	38
Levon Zourabyan	08.04.12	112	0
	04.05.12	294	72
Vartan Oskanian	08.04.12	2786	320
	04.05.12	3391	320
OEK's page	08.04.12	2270	468
	04.05.12	2282	80
ARF's page	19.04.12	2671	262
	04.05.12	2749	274

Table 12. General Level of Activity on Candidates'/Political Parties' Pages during Campaign

Candidates'/political Parties' Pages	Number of Audience's Reactions (Likes, Shares, Comments) to Materials on Elections on Facebook Pages	Number of Dialogues on Materials on Elections	Number of posts on a Party/MP	Posts by others on Political parties/MPs
Armen Ashotyan	58	23	153	0
Zaruhi Postanjyan	112	0	14	252
Artak Zakaryan	7	1	5	105
Karapet Rubinyan	61	8	82	27
Lilit Galstyan	43	0	43	0
Styopa Safaryan	155	37	59	286
Aram Manukyan	24	0	21	12
Armen Rustamyan	21	4	18	3
Gagik Tsarukyan	14	2	2	33
Hrant Bagratyan	21	1	11	5
Levon Zourabyan	43	0	43	0
Vartan Oskanian	30	13	11	16
Karen Avagyan	67	0	57	128
OEK's page	24	8	24	47
ARF's page	923	20	133	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1603</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>676</b>	<b>914</b>

Table 13. Topics covered in materials on elections during the campaign on MP candidates'/political parties' pages

Pages of MP candidates/political parties	Political freedoms/ Electoral processes	Socio- economic	Foreign policy	Environment	Security/army/Karabakh	Culture
Hrant Bagratyan	4	21	0	0	2	0
Aram Manukyan	22	8	0	1	2	5
Levon Zourabyan	40	12	1	4	3	1
Vartan Oskanian	28	5	5	0	2	1
Lilit Galstian	49	5	9	1	3	4
Armen Rostamyan	19	0	0	0	0	2
Gagik Tsarukyan	13	6	0	0	0	3
Artak Zakaryan	22	3	1	0	1	4
Styopa Safaryan	176	9	5	2	2	2
Karapet Rubinyan	80	6	0	4	0	0
Zaruhi Postanjyan	130	8	3	1	3	2
Armen Ashotyan	46	7	1	0	3	7
Karen Avagyan	79	20	4	1	5	4
ARF's page	133	6	0	0	1	1
OEK's page	23	7	0	0	0	3
Total	864	123	29	14	27	39



Table 14. Topics covered in materials on elections on MP candidates' Facebook pages (indicator, total)

Political freedoms/ Electoral process	864	79%
Socio-economic	123	11%
Foreign policy	29	3%
Environment	14	1%
Culture	39	4%
Security/army/Karabakh	27	2%
Total	1096	100%