

Tajikistan's Lacklustre Election Campaign

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Despite multiparty process, there's little doubt who will win parliamentary polls.

Although eight parties have candidates running for parliament in Tajikistan's March 1 election, few have made their presence felt, and campaigning has been limited.

As campaigning ends, the governing People's Democratic Party looks almost certain to win again.

Its only serious challenger is the Islamic Rebirth Party, which will be lucky to be awarded a handful of seats despite its large membership and electorate. The party, which currently has two seats, has complained of harassment and underhand tactics designed to discredit it.

Of the rest, few can expect to pass the threshold. They include true opposition parties like the Social Democrats and the "loyal opposition" like the Communists and the Agrarian party.

The parties have had airtime and have been putting up election posters around Tajikistan, and the election authority says the process will be transparent. But some argue that this is just going through the motions, and that the outcome will be fixed.

"The political parties are not that visibly active, and some of them aren't in evidence at all," political analyst Parviz Mullojanov told IWPR. "This campaign is somewhat superficial, as if everyone already knows the result. Why is this? I don't think anyone believes that the makeup of the next parliament will be much different from the current one. And sadly, many people think their vote doesn't count, and that everything has already been decided."

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