

Armenia Presidential Candidate Shot, Election in Doubt

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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YEREVAN — An Armenian presidential candidate was wounded by unknown gunmen in the capital Yerevan on Thursday night, police said, in an attack that could delay February's election.

Paruyr Hayrikyan, whose life was not in danger after the shooting, is one of eight candidates running in the Feb. 18 vote but is not seen as a strong challenger to Serzh Sarksyan, who is expected to be re-elected for a second five-year term.

However, according to Armenia's constitution, the election could be postponed by two weeks if a candidate is unable to campaign or run. In the event of a candidate's death, a new election is called, to be held within 40 days.

The 2008 presidential election in Armenia, Russia's main ally in the South Caucasus, were marred by violent clashes between opposition protesters and police.

"Those who did it wanted to destabilize the situation in the country, but they failed," Hovik Abrahamyan, the parliamentary speaker, told reporters.

"It will depend on Paruyr Hayrikyan's condition whether the election will be postponed or not," he said.

Armenian Shans TV reported that gunmen fired two shots, wounding Hayrikyan with a bullet to his shoulder, in the courtyard of his house in the center of the capital.

He was taken to a hospital after his neighbors, who heard shots and found him, called police and an ambulance.

"[Unknown gunmen] were shooting at the presidential candidate Paruyr Hayrikyan ... Doctors say his life is not in danger," Vladimir Gasparyan, the head of the country's police department, told reporters at the hospital in comments aired by Shans TV.

Hayrikyan, 63, a former dissident, is the leader of a moderate opposition party, the National Selfdetermination Union.

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