

# Veteran Tajik leader to Seek New 7-Year Term in Nov. 6 Vote

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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DUSHANBE — Tajikistan's longtime President Emomali Rakhmon registered Wednesday to run for a new seven-year term in a Nov. 6 election that would extend his rule to nearly three decades.

The West has criticized his record on democracy, saying elections in Tajikistan fail to meet democratic standards. Rakhmon has overseen constitutional amendments that increased the length and number of terms he can serve as president.

He won a 2006 election with 79.3 percent of the vote. If he gets a new term, it will be his last under the constitution.

Tajikistan's opposition is weak and disparate amid widespread apathy among voters in the Muslim nation of 8 million, which lies on a heroin trafficking route out of neighboring Afghanistan and is the poorest of the post-Soviet nations.

Rakhmon, 61, once head of a Soviet cotton farm, is set to win outright in the first round. His potential rivals are little known in the impoverished Central Asian country that he has run with a firm hand since 1992, backed by his People's Democratic Party.

"Our chairman gave his official written consent to take part in the election," Rakhmon's deputy in the party, Safar Safarov, told reporters at the central election commission.

The commission is expected to register five more candidates Wednesday, all largely loyal to Rakhmon.

Oynihol Bobonazarova, a human rights activist and the sole opposition candidate, has until Oct. 10 to gather a minimum of 210,000 signatures to enable her to run for president.

"Even if there are no violations during the presidential election, the single opposition candidate has a very thin chance of posing any serious challenge to Rakhmon, let alone win the presidency," said Tajik political analyst Jamshed Kadyrov.

Rakhmon dominates state media, which lionizes him as the man who stopped a 1992-97 civil war. Tens of thousands died before his Moscow-backed secular government defeated its Islamist foes.

Tajikistan last week ratified a deal with Russia to extend by three decades Moscow's lease on Base 201 in the country, Russia's biggest military deployment abroad.

About a million Tajiks, or a quarter of the electorate, work abroad, mainly in Russia.

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