

To:
European Commission
Leaders of National governments
Members of the European Parliament
Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

December 13, 2024

Joint Call to Georgia's International Partners: Defend Democracy in Georgia

International human rights organizations, civil society groups, and election observers call on European and national leaders to stand with the people of Georgia, declare the non-recognition of the Georgian Dream government, and call for new, free, and fair elections.

Georgia now stands at a precipice between a once-promising democracy and the threat of authoritarianism. The current reality is the product of years of democratic backsliding and the deliberate distancing of the ruling Georgian Dream party (GD) from the European Union integration process.

Violations during the 2024 Parliamentary Elections

During Georgia's 2024 parliamentary elections, four of the five core democratic principles: universal, free, equal, and secret suffrage, were violated. According to the monitoring of the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED), the pre-election period and election day were marked by widespread abuse of administrative resources, voter intimidation, changes to CEC composition and procedures, restricted observer access, and serious violations of vote secrecy. Data revealed instances of ballot stuffing, multiple voting, and improbable voter turnout figures exceeding 100% of the male voter list. Observers documented intimidation, physical confrontations, and denial of observers' access, demonstrating that the election outcome did not reflect the genuine will of Georgian voters.

On November 25th, the GD party unconstitutionally recognized newly elected Members of Parliament while the election results were still contested in the Constitutional Court. Then, it appointed a new cabinet and set the Presidential election for December 14th. The proposed presidential candidate, known for anti-Western rhetoric and initiating a "Russian law" against civil society organizations, is widely seen as a message of defiance to the West.

Suspension of EU Integration and Violent Crackdown on Protestors

Subsequently, GD senior official Irakli Kobakhidze announced the suspension of Georgia's EU integration until 2028, violating the Constitution's Euro-Atlantic integration mandate. Massive peaceful protests have followed since November 28th. In response, the authorities used violent tactics: water cannons, tear gas, pepper spray, arbitrary arrests, and severe beatings, including attacks by masked "Titushki" (thugs) groups. Around 500 arrests have occurred, with many detainees tortured or otherwise ill-treated. Journalists have been attacked, and judges have consistently found peaceful protesters guilty despite a lack of evidence.

Erosion of Democratic Foundations

These developments crown a series of democratic erosions, culminating in the October elections. The outcome was undermined by election manipulation, abuse of administrative resources, biased Central Election Commission composition, restricted observer rights, and violence at polling stations. Afterward, dispute resolution by the election administration and courts favored the ruling party, while neither the President nor opposition parties recognized the results. No international actor validated the elections, and civil society organizations called for new, free, and fair elections.

These failures demonstrate that elections and the conduct of elections are directly connected to the security of the country—both its democratic foundations and its sovereignty.

The Georgian Dream party continues its violent crackdown, while the Russian Federation openly supports these actions. The situation is dire. If left unchallenged, Georgians, who have long aspired to Western democracy, will feel abandoned.

We urge Georgia's international partners to:

- 1. Publicly declare the non-recognition of the Georgian Dream (GD) government** and call for new, free, and fair elections to restore democratic legitimacy.
- 2. Publicly condemn the unconstitutional and repressive measures** taken by the Georgian Dream government against its people.
- 3. Request a strong assessment by OSCE/ODIHR** of the October elections to expose the full extent of the violations.
- 4. Use all available international leverage and mechanisms** to pressure the Georgian authorities to restore democratic norms and ensure accountability.
- 5. Impose both international and national sanctions** against those responsible for undermining electoral integrity and democratic principles in Georgia, as well as those endorsing the violent crackdown.

6. **Show solidarity through high-profile visits:** Promote trips to Georgia by national parliament members, leaders of global organizations, and other influential figures to express support for the Georgian population. These visits should involve engagements with the President, opposition parties, civil society organizations, and independent media.
7. **Demand the immediate release of all those arrested** and the holding of genuinely free and fair elections to reflect the true will of the Georgian people.
8. **Offer urgent assistance to civil society and media:** Allocate immediate financial support to Georgian civil society organizations and independent media outlets to enhance their capacity to function effectively in difficult circumstances.

Signatories:

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