



Plenary sitting

B10-0179/2024

22.11.2024

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Commission

pursuant to Rule 136(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on Georgia's worsening democratic crisis following the recent parliamentary elections and alleged electoral fraud
(2024/2933(RSP))

Urmas Paet, Petras Auštrevičius, Malik Azmani, Dan Barna, Michal Kobosko, Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Nathalie Loiseau, Jan-Christoph Oetjen, Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann, Hilde Vautmans, Lucia Yar
on behalf of the Renew Group

B10-0179/2024

European Parliament resolution on Georgia’s worsening democratic crisis following the recent parliamentary elections and alleged electoral fraud (2024/2933(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Georgia, in particular its resolution of 9 October 2024 on the democratic backsliding and threats to political pluralism in Georgia¹,
- having regard to the Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part²,
- having regard to the joint statement by the Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Chair of the Delegation for relations with the South Caucasus and the Chair of the Delegation to the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly of 28 October 2024 on the parliamentary elections in Georgia³,
- having regard to the statement by the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, of 27 October 2024⁴, the joint statement by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, and the European Commission of 27 October 2024 on the Parliamentary elections in Georgia⁵ and the statement by the High Representative, Josep Borrell, of 29 October 2024 on the latest developments following the Parliamentary elections in Georgia⁶,
- having regard to the European Council conclusions of 17 October 2024, 27 June 2024 and 14 and 15 December 2023 and to the Commission communication of 30 October 2024 entitled ‘2024 Communication on EU enlargement policy’ (COM(2024)0690) and the accompanying 2024 Georgia report,
- having regard to the joint statement by Emmanuel Macron, President of the French Republic, Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany and Donald Tusk, Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland on the situation in Georgia of 7 November 2024⁷,
- having regard to the joint statement of EU ministers on the elections in Georgia of

¹ Texts adopted, P10_TA(2024)0017.

² OJ L 261, 30.8.2014, p. 4, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/agree_internation/2014/494/oj.

³ <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/delegations/en/joint-statement-on-the-parliamentary-elections-in-georgia/details/20241028DPU39584>.

⁴ <https://x.com/CharlesMichel/status/1850575679248593036>.

⁵ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/georgia-joint-statement-high-representative-josep-borrell-and-european-commission-parliamentary_en.

⁶ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/georgia-statement-high-representative-josep-borrell-latest-developments-following-parliamentary_en.

⁷ <https://www.bundesregierung.de/resource/blob/998352/2319124/2d7e6af61a2c9ff0ec158af294b23d9d/2024-11-07-joint-statement-georgien-en-data.pdf?download=1>.

28 October 2024⁸ and to the joint statement by the Friends of Georgia group of 6 November 2024 on an ‘international inquiry commission to investigate irregularities of elections in Georgia’⁹,

- having regard to the statement of preliminary findings and conclusions of the International Election Observation Mission led by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE-ODIHR) on the parliamentary elections held in Georgia on 26 October 2024¹⁰ and to the statement by the Head of the European Parliament’s election observation delegation¹¹,
 - having regard to the Preliminary Statement on the 2024 Georgia Parliamentary Elections of 27 October 2024 by the International Republican Institute¹² and the preliminary statement of 27 October 2024 by the National Democratic Institute international election observer delegation to Georgia’s 26 October 2024 parliamentary elections,
 - having regard to the Transparency International interim report entitled ‘Misuse of Administrative Resources in Parliamentary Elections 2024’ of 21 October 2024¹³, the summary statement on Georgia’s parliamentary election on 26 October 2024 by the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED)¹⁴ and to the final joint assessment by three independent Georgian domestic election observation missions led by ISFED, MyVote and the Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association (GYLA),
 - having regard to the Constitution of Georgia, and in particular Article 78 thereof on integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures,
 - having regard to Rule 136(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas parliamentary elections were held in Georgia on 26 October 2024; whereas numerous credible reports of violations cast doubt on the election results, leading many people both within and outside Georgia to question their legitimacy and to refuse to recognise the results;
- B. whereas the pre-election period failed to meet democratic standards due to actions by the ruling Georgian Dream party and the authorities that fostered a climate of fear, including through the arrest, home raids and intimidation of opposition politicians, civil society leaders, journalists, researchers and other persons critical of the government, and violence committed against them; whereas this also included the failure to investigate the violence committed against civil society and opposition figures, and the introduction of laws on ‘transparency of foreign influence’ and ‘family values and the

⁸ <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/elections-georgia/2681910>.

⁹ https://www.slideshare.net/slideshow/joint_statementdddd_geo-6-november-2024-pdf/273069254#2.

¹⁰ <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/3/0/579346.pdf>.

¹¹ <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/resources/library/media/20241027RES24997/20241027RES24997.pdf>

¹² <https://www.iri.org/resources/iri-preliminary-statement-of-the-2024-georgia-parliamentary-elections/> and https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/FOR%20PRINT%20ENG%20-%20Statement%20for%20translation_Part%201.pdf.

¹³ <https://transparency.ge/en/post/misuse-administrative-resources-parliamentary-elections-2024-interim-report>.

¹⁴ <https://www.isfed.ge/eng/gantskhadebebi/saqartvelos-parlamentis-2024-tslis-26-oqtombris-archevnebis-dghis-dakvirvebis-shemadjamebeli-gantskhadeba>.

protection of minors', which limited the capacity of civil society and media organisations to operate freely, curtailed freedom of expression and stigmatised minorities; whereas these measures collectively had a detrimental effect on political discourse and diverted resources away from essential election monitoring activities;

- C. whereas, during the campaign, the ruling Georgian Dream party exploited Georgian society's natural fear of war by reiterating that it was the 'party of peace', claiming that the opposition would supposedly drag the country into war with Russia under orders from the West, conspiratorially referred to as the 'Global War Party'; whereas leaders of the Russian Federation and its propagandists openly supported Georgian Dream both before and after the elections; whereas the top leaders of the ruling party made public statements during the campaign expressing their intent to ban key opposition parties following the elections, raising concerns about the fairness and inclusivity of the political process;
- D. whereas the ruling party's influence over a polarised media environment restricted access to unbiased information for the electorate, while targeted attacks on independent media further hindered balanced coverage; whereas disinformation narratives were disseminated and amplified by ruling party officials in the run-up to the elections; whereas at least two foreign journalists were denied entry to Georgia, where they intended to cover the elections;
- E. whereas Georgia's Central Election Commission (CEC), despite appeals and lawsuits from citizens, civil society organisations and the President of Georgia, failed to take the action necessary to provide sufficient polling access for Georgian citizens abroad, thereby compromising the inclusivity and accessibility of the electoral process;
- F. whereas independent third-party fact checkers, as well as dedicated research organisations, documented and reported on multiple cases of electoral disinformation, as well as Russia's information manipulation in the campaign, such as, but not restricted to, public statements made by Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service¹⁵;
- G. whereas the joint observation mission of the OSCE-ODIHR, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the European Parliament, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the NATO Parliamentary Assembly noted that the campaign was competitive but subdued, with language and imagery that were highly divisive, creating an atmosphere of tension and division among the electorate; whereas the OSCE-ODIHR-led observation mission also noted that reports of pressure on voters, particularly on public sector employees, remained widespread in the campaign and that this, coupled with extensive tracking of voters on election day, raised concerns about the ability of some voters to cast their vote without fear of retribution;
- H. whereas international and local observers documented systemic, organised violations during the elections, including violence, ballot stuffing, vote-buying, multiple voting, large-scale breaches of voter secrecy, voter coercion, undue pressure and intimidation of voters, particularly among public sector employees and other vulnerable groups, voting fraud, including the confiscation of state workers' identity cards, which were then

¹⁵ <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/russia-is-directly-and-indirectly-meddling-in-georgias-upcoming-election/>.

handed to loyal activists to use for voting, hate speech, systematic observer obstruction, organised transportation of voters and improbable deviation in female and male voter turnout as well as in rural precincts;

- I. whereas, on election day, observers noted a lack of intervention by the election administration and law enforcement, which reinforced the appearance of complicity by state actors in facilitating electoral fraud;
- J. whereas the final joint assessment by three independent Georgian domestic election observation missions – International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED), MyVote and Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) – concluded that the outcome of the 26 October 2024 parliamentary elections could not be seen as truly reflecting the preferences of Georgian voters nor be considered free and fair;
- K. whereas Georgian non-governmental organisations observing the elections claimed that there had been widespread violations of voter secrecy and called for the annulment of the results in all districts where electronic voting had been used; whereas Georgian civil society organisations filed court complaints and called for investigations into electoral fraud, but investigative bodies often did not initiate inquiries and the courts did not properly examine the reported violations; whereas the My Vote Coalition, a leading electoral watchdog, filed appeals to annul the election results in 245 precincts, representing over 415 000 voters citing breaches of voter secrecy, harassment of observers, procedural irregularities and restrictions to observation, but all these appeals were ultimately rejected by the courts; whereas the CEC has so far refused to publish the audit commissioned on the electronic voting system, and certified the results of the elections on 16 November 2024 notwithstanding the above-mentioned irregularities;
- L. whereas legal action by Georgian civil society organisations was followed by punitive measures by the authorities against civil society representatives, including unwarranted summons for questioning and heavy fines for speaking out about electoral fraud;
- M. whereas the four opposition coalitions that surpassed the electoral threshold rejected the election results and refused to legitimise the resulting parliament; whereas three opposition blocs – the United National Movement, the Strong Georgia Coalition and the Coalition for Change – turned down their parliamentary mandates and refused to join the 11th convocation of parliament, arguing that the 26 October 2024 parliamentary elections were illegitimate;
- N. whereas Georgia's President, Salome Zourabichvili, refused to recognise the validity of the results, citing profound irregularities and abuses that undermined the credibility of the electoral process and compromised the fundamental right of citizens to a free and fair election, and called for fresh elections; whereas Georgia thus finds itself in a constitutional crisis; whereas this crisis is unfolding ahead of the January 2025 presidential election, which will be the first to take place under reformed constitutional rules whereby the president is elected by parliamentary and regional representatives;
- O. whereas the Georgian Prime Minister, Irakli Kobakhidze, has again subsequently threatened the main opposition parties with a constitutional ban if they refuse to accept their parliamentary mandates;

- P. whereas on 16 November 2024, despite numerous complaints and calls by independent election observers for the results to be annulled, Georgia's Central Election Commission announced the final summary protocol of the 26 October 2024 parliamentary elections, attributing victory to the ruling Georgian Dream party with 54 % of the vote;
- Q. whereas systematic and organised electoral violations have sparked massive and ongoing protests in several Georgian cities; whereas several demonstrators have been arrested, and whereas Georgia has a record of violence against peaceful demonstrators;
- R. whereas the Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, travelled to Tbilisi to congratulate the Georgian Dream party before the final election results were published and without first consulting other EU leaders, and was the only EU leader to do so;
- S. whereas, according to Article 78 of the Constitution of Georgia, 'the constitutional bodies shall take all measures within the scope of their competences to ensure the full integration of Georgia into the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization';
- T. whereas oligarch and EU citizen Bidzina Ivanishvili, as Georgian Dream's 'honorary chairman' and de facto leader, who also wields considerable influence on Georgia's economy, has played a defining role in the country's democratic backsliding and in undermining its Euro-Atlantic orientation in favour of pivoting towards Russia;
- U. whereas the integrity of Georgia's electoral processes and the protection of political freedoms are crucial for the country's future democratic development and its potential membership of the European Union; whereas these elections did not meet the standards expected of an EU candidate country;
1. Strongly deplores the continuing democratic backsliding in Georgia and holds the ruling Georgian Dream party responsible for it; condemns all violations of international norms for free and fair elections documented during the recent elections in Georgia; deplores the refusal of responsible institutions to investigate complaints submitted by independent observer organisations and calls for a thorough, swift, transparent and independent investigation into all reported election-related irregularities and violations;
 2. Is appalled by the extent of the information provided by international and local observers on systematic and organised violations aimed at ensuring the victory of the ruling party; refuses to recognise the results of the 26 October 2024 parliamentary elections in Georgia; calls on Georgian political forces and civil society to engage in an inclusive dialogue in order to overcome the current political crisis and to proceed with organising new elections under international supervision within a year;
 3. Calls on the Georgian authorities to demonstrate their commitment to European values, beginning with ensuring full transparency in the electoral process; emphasises that violations of electoral integrity are incompatible with the standards expected from an EU candidate country;
 4. Deplores Russia's interference in democratic processes in Georgia and its divisive election rhetoric and propaganda, including the 'Global War Party' conspiracy theory

used by the ruling Georgian Dream party, which closely resembles the methods and narratives of Russian propaganda; calls on the Georgian authorities to ensure fact-based information and communication and to build the resilience of Georgian society to Russian disinformation and propaganda;

5. Stands in solidarity with the courageous Georgian people fighting for their democratic rights and the European future of their country, and reaffirms its support for their democratic and European aspirations; reiterates its unwavering support for all those who, in the face of verbal attacks, physical threats and legal persecution by the ruling party, advocate for and defend democracy and human rights, work for a peaceful society and are committed to equality and human dignity for all; urges the Georgian authorities to guarantee the right of citizens to assemble and to refrain from using force against them;
6. Urges the Georgian authorities to uphold their commitment to the promotion of democracy, the rule of law and human rights and encourages them to adopt and implement reforms in line with Georgia's stated objective of joining the European Union, as demanded by a large majority of Georgia's citizens;
7. Appreciates the efforts made by Georgia's President Salome Zourabichvili to steer the country back towards a democratic and European path of development;
8. Reiterates its call on Georgian decision-makers to cease all attacks on civil society, independent media and the LGBTIQ community and to ensure a genuinely enabling environment for civil society and media in the country; notes that civil society organisations targeted by 'transparency of foreign influence' legislation are looking into possibilities to register in the EU Member States, as numerous Belarusian civil society organisations have done; calls for the EU and its Member States to guarantee their full support for Georgian civil society and the independent media in this difficult period and to analyse the potential increase in migration from Georgia to the EU if politically motivated persecutions and attacks on fundamental freedoms continue;
9. Reiterates its strong condemnation of the adoption of the 'transparency of foreign influence' law and the 'family values and protection of minors' legislation by the Georgian Dream majority; calls again for the immediate withdrawal of these pieces of legislation;
10. Takes note of the coordinated dismissal of numerous election-related complaints by Georgian judicial institutions, particularly regarding large-scale breaches of voter secrecy; takes note of concerns raised by reputable Georgian watchdogs over state capture in the judiciary by a clan linked to Bidzina Ivanishvili, as well as of the US sanctions against four senior Georgian judges for 'significant corruption'; regrets the failure of long-standing EU assistance projects intended to strengthen the independence, impartiality and accountability of the Georgian judiciary;
11. Calls on the Council, the Commission, the European External Action Service and the new Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to conduct a comprehensive review and overhaul of EU policy towards Georgia; highlights the fact that the approach of accommodating Bidzina Ivanishvili and his regime has proven ineffective;

12. Calls for EU funding provided to the Georgian Government to be frozen until the election-related violations are properly addressed and the recently adopted illiberal pieces of legislation are repealed, and for strict conditions to be applied to the disbursement of any future funding; reiterates its calls on the Commission to assess the impact of Georgia's 'foreign agent' and 'family values' legislation on the country's continuous fulfilment of the visa liberalisation benchmarks, particularly the fundamental rights benchmark, a crucial component of the EU visa liberalisation policy;
13. Calls for the EU and its Member States to impose sanctions on Georgian political leaders and officials responsible for the country's democratic backsliding and violations of the electoral process, including those responsible for the organisation and administration of the elections, and the officials of the Ministry of Interior and its subordinate institutions responsible for using violence against peaceful protesters; calls, in this context, on the Council to consider imposing personal sanctions on Bidzina Ivanishvili, Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze and Kakha Kaladze, mayor of Tbilisi and Secretary General of the ruling Georgian Dream party, for their role in the significant deterioration of democracy in Georgia;
14. Condemns Hungarian Prime Minister Orbán's premature visit to Georgia as yet another attempt to undermine the EU's common foreign policy;
15. Strongly reiterates its urgent demand for the immediate and unconditional release of former President Mikheil Saakashvili on humanitarian grounds for the purpose of seeking medical treatment abroad;
16. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and the President, Government and Parliament of Georgia.