



Plenary sitting

B10-0180/2024

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))

**Markéta Gregorová, Nicolae Ștefănuță, Mārtiņš Staķis, Leoluca Orlando,
Virginijus Sinkevičius, Sergey Lagodinsky, Reinier Van Lanschot**
on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

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,
 - having regard to the European Council conclusions of 14 and 15 December 2023,
 - having regard to the 2024 Enlargement Package,
 - having regard to the report of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE ODIHR) of 11 October 2024 entitled ‘Georgia, Parliamentary Elections, 26 October 2024: Interim Report’,
 - having regard to the OSCE ODIHR report of 25 October 2024 entitled ‘Georgia, Parliamentary Elections, 26 October 2024: Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions’,
 - having regard to 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 Georgian parliamentary elections,
 - having regard to the statement by High Representative Josep Borrell of 29 October 2024 on the latest developments following the Georgian parliamentary elections,
 - 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 part¹,
 - having regard to Rule 136(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas parliamentary elections were held in Georgia on 26 October 2024; whereas the months leading up to the parliamentary elections were characterised by significant attacks on democracy in Georgia, including the hasty adoption of anti-democratic legislation criticised by the UN, the Venice Commission and the EU, concurrent with attacks on civil society and independent media, prolonged mass protests and strong political and societal tensions and polarisation;
- B. whereas Georgia’s Central Election Commission (CEC) claimed that the incumbent Georgian Dream party won the election with nearly 54 % of the vote; whereas international exit poll companies have since reported that the discrepancy between the independent exit polls and the election results reported by the CEC cannot be explained

¹ OJ L 261, 30.8.2014, p. 4, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/agree_international/2014/494/oj.

by statistical marginal error;

- C. whereas President Zourabichvili, opposition parties and local observers did not accept the CEC's reported results and demanded an immediate investigation into the alleged fraud, pointing to the widely reported manipulation, election day irregularities and the significant discrepancies with the exit polls; whereas President Zourabichvili called the result a 'Russian special operation' and accused the ruling party of resorting to Russian-style tactics and propaganda;
- D. whereas the OSCE ODIHR international election observation mission found that the elections were not free and fair, but rather marred by entrenched polarisation and concerns over recently adopted legislation and its impact on fundamental freedoms and civil society, as well as highly divisive campaign rhetoric and widespread reports of intimidation, coercion and pressure on voters by the ruling party, especially on public sector employees and the economically vulnerable; whereas this raises concerns about the ability of some voters to freely form their own opinions and cast their vote without fear;
- E. whereas several long-standing recommendations by the ODIHR and the Venice Commission were not addressed, including the composition of the CEC being altered in direct contradiction to the ODIHR's guidance;
- F. whereas the international and local observers throughout the country, including the European Parliament observation mission, witnessed many instances of high tension, confusion and chaos in polling stations on election day, including one case of ballot box stuffing, as well as physical assaults on observers attempting to report violations, the removal of observers and the media from polling stations, the tearing-up of observer complaints, the intimidation of voters inside and outside of polling stations, the presence of multiple party-affiliated observers posing as citizen observers, and voter secrecy not always being ensured; whereas the OSCE ODIHR reported that in 6 % of the 1 924 observations, which is a significantly high proportion, the process was assessed negatively, mainly due to indications of pressure and voter intimidation, while voter secrecy was potentially compromised in 24 % of observations by the way in which voters had to cast their ballots and in 7 % of observations by the layout or set-up of polling stations;
- G. whereas, after the elections, further allegations were raised by civil society organisations and free media, including that Georgian Dream members had used call centres to monitor and pressure voters, positioned fake observers at polling stations and bribed voters with money to obtain their identity cards to cast fraudulent votes;
- H. whereas observer organisations have reported that electoral authorities 'created insurmountable and unjustified barriers for voters at all stages of the election process' for Georgian emigrants abroad, both during the registration phase and on election day, which 'restricted the right of thousands of Georgian citizens to participate in the elections';
- I. whereas Georgian courts have continued to fast-track and dismiss, en masse, lawsuits brought forward by opposition political parties and local observers alleging voting irregularities, while denying motions to summon witnesses and motions that would

oblige the CEC to hand over the delivery and receipt records of markers and papers procured and used for ballots;

- J. whereas, upon an appeal by the CEC, the Tbilisi Court of Appeals consolidated 26 legal appeals alleging widespread voting irregularities into a single case and then dismissed it, after independent-minded judges from the Tetrtskaro, Gori and Tsalka District Courts, among others, ruled that ballots from dozens of voting stations were invalid;
- K. whereas on 16 November 2024, the CEC announced the final election results, which it said confirmed the previously published results, despite complaints by local observers that the election administration and investigative bodies did not inquire into their reports of detected fraud and manipulation;
- L. whereas all opposition parties that passed the election threshold have announced that they will boycott the inauguration of the Georgian Parliament on 25 November 2024; whereas on 13 November 2024, echoing statements made in August, Georgian Prime Minister Kobakhidze iterated plans to constitutionally ban major opposition parties if they refuse to accept their parliamentary mandates;
- M. whereas President Zourabichvili called for peaceful protests following the elections; whereas hundreds of protesters have been gathering over the past few weeks, primarily in Tbilisi, demanding investigations into the alleged fraud and calling for new elections; whereas on 19 November 2024, police forcibly dispersed a demonstration in Tbilisi and used disproportionate violence against peaceful protesters and journalists;
- N. whereas on 18 November 2024, President Zourabichvili held a briefing in which she called for an independent investigation into the elections of 26 October 2024, followed by new elections; whereas she proposed that the pre-election government stay on as a caretaker government until these new elections take place; whereas she also announced plans to file a lawsuit with the Constitutional Court regarding alleged violations of the constitutional rights to voter secrecy and universal suffrage; whereas she urged the Georgian Dream party to reconsider its stated goal of convening the parliament on 25 November 2024; whereas on 19 November 2024, she appealed to the Constitutional Court to declare the 26 October 2024 parliamentary elections invalid, citing violations of the two fundamental rights to voter secrecy and universal suffrage, as she claimed that many Georgians abroad were unable to cast their votes;
- O. whereas Georgia's international partners, including the EU, called for an independent international investigation into the election violations; whereas on 18 November 2024, Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) Borrell proposed that the EU redirect over EUR 100 million of aid, initially meant for the Georgian Government, to the country's civil society organisations to support them in their fight for a fair election; whereas VP/HR Borrell further confirmed that the process of Georgia's accession to the EU is being put on hold, unless the Georgian Government changes course;
- P. whereas Hungarian Prime Minister Orbán, acting in complete disregard of the European Council's broader position, visited Georgia two days after the election and congratulated the Georgian Dream leadership on its victory; whereas this was immediately denounced by senior EU officials and heads of government of the Member

States;

1. Condemns all contraventions of international norms during the Georgian parliamentary elections of 26 October 2024 and calls for a full and independent investigation into all reports of election-related violations without delay; considers that it cannot recognise the CEC reported election results unless reported violations are adequately investigated;
2. Expresses serious concern about the systematic dismissal of lawsuits concerning election fraud and manipulation brought before Georgia's courts and the complete lack of investigation by the CEC into any of the reported incidents of alleged fraud and manipulation; stresses that the inability of the Georgian authorities to adequately address the statistically significant discrepancy between the exit polls and the CEC reported results, as well as the strong allegations presented by the political opposition and local and international observers, are further contributing to rising tensions and the widespread distrust of the election results reported by the CEC;
3. Considers that, by not responding to the genuine concerns within society and the reports by local and international observers, the Georgian authorities are wilfully steering the country to the verge of a domestic political crisis and a state of international isolation from Georgia's democratic partners;
4. Calls on the Georgian authorities to meet with President Zourabichvili and the political opposition without delay in order to find a peaceful way forward; proposes the option of EU-led mediation in this regard; calls on the Georgian authorities to swiftly implement the recommendations of the OSCE ODIHR's final report once it has been published;
5. Stresses that, beyond the irregularities during the campaign and election day, the Georgian Dream party pushed through a coordinated programme of democratic backsliding in Georgia that was implemented throughout the year; points, in this regard, to the broader package of Russian-inspired laws proposed and adopted in recent months by the ruling Georgian Dream party that violate the right to freedom of expression, censor the media, science and arts, and are incompatible with international human rights standards in a way that will have a significant impact on the lives and well-being of the residents of Georgia; calls on the Georgian authorities, in this regard, to repeal the law 'on transparency of foreign influence' and the law 'on family values and protection of minors';
6. Deplores the disinformation narratives disseminated and amplified by ruling party officials and government-affiliated media in the run-up to the elections, including false narratives about the EU intending to open a second front in Georgia as part of the Russo-Ukrainian war and including omnipresent posters comparing scenes of war-torn Ukraine with peaceful Georgia;
7. Condemns the broader campaign of attacks by the government targeting civil society organisations and reputable international donors that support democracy, the rule of law and the protection of human rights in Georgia; expresses its concern about the increasing number of reports of intimidation, threats and physical assaults on protesters, civil society representatives, political leaders, civil activists and journalists in Georgia;
8. Highlights that after the Georgian Dream majority in parliament abolished the gender

quota, there was a decline in female candidates running in the parliamentary elections; stresses that this represents a severe setback for diversity and a discredit to Georgian women's political participation;

9. Condemns the confirmed intention of the Georgian Dream party to ban opposition parties, whom they have referred to as a 'criminal political force' and a 'global war party', if they do not take up their mandate; highlights that pursuing such a path would alienate Georgia from the EU and make any move towards EU accession talks impossible;
10. Expresses serious concern about the violent dispersal of anti-government protests in Tbilisi by police forces on 19 November 2024 and condemns the violence used against journalists at the scene, with several injured and prevented from performing their duties by the police;
11. Reminds the Georgian authorities, in particular the ruling Georgian Dream party, that Article 78 of the Georgian Constitution states that the constitutional bodies shall take all measures within the scope of their competences to ensure the full integration of Georgia into the EU;
12. Welcomes the proposal by VP/HR Borrell for an EU technical mission to investigate reports of electoral fraud and irregularities in Georgia, complementing the OSCE report by engaging in broader stakeholder consultations; implores the VP/HR to deploy this mission as soon as possible in order for its findings to inform the decision-making of the Commission and the Member States; calls for constructive cooperation between this technical mission, the Georgian authorities, including the Georgian President, and all other stakeholders, including all Georgian political parties;
13. Calls on the intelligence services of EU Member States and the EU Intelligence and Situation Centre to collaborate on establishing a clear picture of alleged Russian interference in the domestic politics of Georgia, Russia's organised (financial) ties with leading Georgian government officials and its organised crime in the country, and broader Russian geopolitical intentions in the Southern Caucasus and Black Sea region;
14. Expresses its support for the proposal by VP/HR Borrell to redirect over EUR 100 million in funding, initially meant for the Georgian Government, to the country's civil society; calls for this move to be clearly communicated to the Georgian authorities and people; notes that this should be a first step and calls therefore on the Commission and the Member States to further investigate the consequences of the democratic backsliding on their donor role in Georgia; calls for the EU and the Member States to adjust and accelerate the EU funding mechanisms for Georgian civil society organisations to help make them resilient against efforts by the Georgian Government to cut off their financial lifelines; calls for the focus of that funding to reflect the adjusted project needs in the context of a more hostile and anti-democratic environment;
15. Supports the assessment presented in the Commission's 2024 Enlargement Package, which states that Georgia's EU accession process is to be halted indefinitely as a result of the democratic backsliding initiated by the Georgian Government; emphasises that the adoption of the 'foreign influence' and 'family values' laws directly contradicts the EU's nine recommendations upon which Georgia's EU candidate country status was

made contingent; highlights further that Georgia has made little to no progress on any of the nine recommendations;

16. Considers that, in accordance with Article 29 of the Treaty on European Union and Article 215(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, since the rule of law is a principle of the EU's common foreign and security policy and the law on foreign influence violates the Council of Europe's rule of law standards as interpreted by the Venice Commission, the Council should impose targeted individual sanctions on those confirmed by independent investigations to have orchestrated electoral manipulation;
17. Stresses that young people in particular are the future of a modern, democratic and European Georgia, and that they are often the key individuals organising and mobilising the grassroots and peaceful pro-democratic protests, which are the only effective way to demonstrate the Georgian people's legitimate desire for a different future; considers that it is those same young people who often have limited political, human or financial capital and that the EU should take responsibility and support them;
18. Reiterates its continued support for the democratic ambitions of the Georgian people and their wish for a European future; stresses that independent polls consistently show that over 80 % of Georgians wish to join the EU, ranking among the highest percentages in any candidate country; recalls that, in years past, Georgia was a front runner in adopting reforms in line with its society's long-standing aspirations to join the EU;
19. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the European External Action Service, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the President, Prime Minister and Parliament of Georgia.