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Observation of the parliamentary elections in Georgia (26 October 2024)

Election observation report

Ad hoc Committee of the Bureau

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1. Introduction

1. On 23 April 2024, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia invited the Parliamentary Assembly to observe the parliamentary elections in the country. On 27 August 2024, in accordance with the constitution, the President of Georgia called parliamentary elections for 26 October 2024. On 27 May 2024, the Bureau of the Assembly decided to set-up an ad hoc committee composed of 30 members, plus the two co-rapporteurs of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee), to observe the elections. I was appointed as the committee's chairperson. The composition of the ad hoc committee (thereafter "PACE delegation") is provided in Appendix 1.

2. Georgia is under the monitoring procedure of the Assembly and has therefore committed to inviting the Assembly to observe elections and fulfilling its obligations as a member State of the Council of Europe. In response to recent developments in Georgia, the Assembly held a current affairs debate in April 2024 as well as an urgent debate in June 2024 which resulted in the adoption of [Resolution 2561 \(2024\)](#) "Challenges to democracy in Georgia". The PACE delegation notes that Georgia has signed and ratified the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5) and its Additional Protocol (ETS No. 9), which enshrine fundamental principles crucial for a functioning democracy, including the right to free elections (Article 3 of the Additional Protocol), freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and association, and the prohibition of discrimination (Articles 10, 11, and 14 of the Convention).



3. In accordance with the co-operation agreement signed between the Parliamentary Assembly and the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) on 4 October 2004, Ms Katharina Pabel represented the Venice Commission and provided legal support to the PACE delegation.

4. A two-day pre-electoral mission took place on 23-24 September 2024 in Tbilisi to assess the electoral campaign and the broader political environment. The mission's programme is outlined in Appendix 2, and my pre-electoral statement is provided in Appendix 3.

5. For the observation of the parliamentary elections on 26 October 2024, the PACE delegation worked from 24 to 27 October as part of an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM), together with delegations from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE-PA), the European Parliament (EP), and Parliamentary Assembly of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO-PA), as well as the electoral observation mission of the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR). The programme of the meetings held during this period is detailed in Appendix 4.

6. The PACE delegation thanks the Georgian authorities for their invitation and assistance, as well as all interlocutors and international partners for their co-operation. The delegation also extends its great appreciation for the support of the Council of Europe Office in Georgia in facilitating the smooth organisation of the election observation mission meetings.

7. We regret however to report that PACE observers from Ukraine experienced long delays at passport control upon both arrival and departure from Georgia, with no explanation provided. This is not acceptable and is inconsistent with the invitation extended to international observers.

8. The IEOM issued a joint press release (see Appendix 5) and a "Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions",¹ which provide detailed information. These documents were presented at a joint press conference in Tbilisi on 27 October 2024.

9. The IEOM concluded that, while voters were offered a choice between 18 candidate lists and candidates could generally campaign freely, Georgia's parliamentary elections were marred by an uneven playing field, tension, pressure, entrenched polarisation and concerns over recently adopted legislation and its impact on fundamental freedoms and civil society. Preparations for the elections were well-administered, including extensive voter education on the use of new voting technologies; election day was generally procedurally well-organised. The elections, however, were characterised by widespread reports of pressure on voters, particularly on public sector employees, highly divisive campaign rhetoric, a significant imbalance in financial resources and advantage of incumbency, polarised media environment concerns over the impartiality and political instrumentalisation of the oversight body as well as under-representation of women on party lists and in the campaign. Election day was characterised by a tense environment, with frequent breaches of voting secrecy and several procedural inconsistencies, extensive tracking of voters as well as reports of intimidation and pressure on voters that negatively impacted public trust in the process.

2. Context and recent developments

10. The elections took place in a context of deep political polarisation, with significant antagonism between the government and the opposition on one hand, the government and the office of the President on the other, as well as widespread social discontent due to the adoption of various pieces of controversial legislation.

11. In 2023 and 2024, large-scale protests erupted against the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence, often referred to by civil society as the "Russian law" or "foreign agent law", that was unexpectedly introduced in April 2024 (after it had been withdrawn in 2023) and adopted in May 2024. In June 2024, both the Assembly and the [Venice Commission](#) called for the law to be repealed in its current form.² During and in the aftermath of the protests, protesters, civil society groups, and journalists were subject to violence and intimidation. The law has had a stigmatising effect on civil society organisations and independent media. The law was challenged by the President, 38 members of parliament, and over 120 civil society and media organisations before the Constitutional Court, which deemed the case admissible on 9 October 2024 but

1. [Georgia, Parliamentary Elections, 26 October 2024: Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions | OSCE](#).

2. The Venice Commission stressed that the fundamental flaws of the Law "will involve significant negative consequences for the freedoms of association and expression, the right to privacy, the right to participate in public affairs as well as the prohibition of discrimination. Ultimately, this will affect open, informed public debate, pluralism and democracy".

declined to suspend its applicability pending a final ruling. On 17 October, 16 media organisations, 120 civil society groups, and four individuals filed a joint complaint with the European Court of Human Rights, arguing that the law violates the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights.

12. Furthermore, on 17 September 2024, the Georgian Parliament adopted the Law on Protection of Family Values and Minors, despite the [recommendations](#) of the Venice Commission. This law introduces measures that discriminate against the LGBTI community and could restrict freedoms of assembly and expression.

13. The campaign led by the ruling Georgian Dream party (GD) focused on themes such as the “Global War Party” conspiracy and retribution against political opponents. The party’s rhetoric called for the eviction of the United National Movement (UNM) and “all its successors and affiliates” – referred to by GD as the “collective UNM” – from the political scene, which, in effect, would mean a ban on key opposition. The campaign also sought to promote a crackdown on the LGBTI community in the name of defending traditional values and protecting children. Additionally, the party emphasised the need to amend Georgia’s constitutional order to restore the country’s territorial integrity. Honorary chairperson of the GD Bidzina Ivanishvili stated that the elections should lead to “Nuremberg trials for the UNM”³ accusing them of triggering the war on orders from foreign powers and offering to “apologise” for the war.⁴ The campaign heavily relied on fear-based rhetoric, often invoking images of the war in Ukraine, and was further exacerbated by provocative statements from Russian officials, who warned against a potential “colour revolution” driven by Western powers (and alleged manipulation of OSCE/ODIHR by the United States), which deepened the polarisation of Georgian society along geopolitical lines.

14. Additionally, there were increasing institutional tensions between the ruling party and the President of Georgia, Salomé Zourabichvili, culminating in an attempt to impeach her which, in the end, did not receive the required support from Parliament.⁵ The President vetoed several laws, including the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence and a law abolishing the mandatory gender quota for candidate lists. These vetoes were overridden by Parliament. While the president signed an amnesty law as a humanitarian gesture, she criticised its timing – just before the elections – as “indirect voter bribery.”⁶ In an effort to address the political crisis and support Georgia’s European Union integration, the president drafted the “[Georgian Charter](#)” aimed at abolishing laws harmful to the country’s European path, restoring trust in the justice and electoral systems, and preparing for snap parliamentary elections to be held in a “free and fair environment.” She also sought to unite opposition parties around this vision, and while most of them signed the Charter, their respective interpretations of the roadmap remained unclear.

15. These elections were the first ones since Georgia had been granted candidate status in December 2023, though accession has been *de facto* halted by the European Union since June 2024 due to democratic backsliding.

16. The political landscape is dominated by the ruling GD, which has been in power since 2012. In the 2020 parliamentary elections, nine political parties and coalitions won seats, with the GD securing 90 of the 150 seats. The UNM-led coalition became the largest opposition faction, winning 36 seats. In the years that followed, the opposition became increasingly fragmented due to internal instability within the parties. The 2021 local elections further solidified the ruling party’s dominant position, with the GD winning 63 out of 64 mayoral races.

17. For the 2024 elections, most opposition parties formed three coalitions: the “Coalition for Change” (comprising Ahali, Girchi – More Freedom, Droa!, and the Republican Party); “Strong Georgia” (made up of “Strong Georgia – Lelo”, For the People, Freedom Square, and Citizens); and “Unity – to Save Georgia” (a coalition of UNM, European Georgia [EG], and Strategy Aghmashenebeli [SA]).

3. Legal framework, electoral system, and recent developments

18. The 150-member Georgian Parliament is directly elected for a four-year term. These elections were the first held under a fully proportional election system, using a single nationwide constituency with closed candidate lists. This proportional system was adopted in 2017. It had long been recommended by both the Assembly and civil society to promote greater pluralism in parliament, strengthen the institution, and avoid super-majorities, thereby enhancing the democratic system of checks and balances. Parties must surpass a

3. <https://civil.ge/archives/621386>.

4. “Georgia’s most powerful man suggests an apology for 2008 war with Russia”, 15 September 2024.

5. See ISFED, “2024 Parliamentary Elections: Assessment of the Pre-Election Environment”, p. 8.

6. Over 1 000 prisoners were supposed to be released from penitentiary institutions; the law also impacted approximately 22 000 probationers, with 7 000 released from probation immediately.

5% threshold to be allocated seats. The formation of pre-electoral coalitions is not permitted. Georgian citizens aged 18 and older elect their representatives to the single-chamber legislature. The incoming parliament forms the government and, as part of the electoral college responsible for electing the president (following the 2017 constitutional reform), plays a significant role in the presidential election.

19. These elections marked the first nationwide vote in which electronic voting technologies were used on a large scale, with 2 262 out of 3 044 (72%) electoral precincts implementing electronic voting, covering 90% of the voters. This meant that voter registration, vote counting, and summary protocols for voting results were all carried out electronically.⁷ In 768 precincts, voting was conducted using traditional methods.

20. The law does not provide for independent verification or certification of the electronic technologies used. In October 2023, the Central Election Commission (CEC) selected a private company to conduct a compliance audit, which according to the CEC, confirmed that the devices met international standards and national legislation. In October 2024, just before the elections, the CEC tasked the same company with conducting a follow-up audit specifically related to the parliamentary elections. However, despite the completion of two out of three audit phases, the audit report was not published before election day. Key stakeholders, including political parties and citizen observers, were not granted access to the audit process and had limited access to related documentation, which limited transparency. This lack of openness was in contrast to the 2022 Committee of Ministers [Guidelines on the use of information and communication technology \(ICT\) in electoral processes in Council of Europe member States](#) and Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2017\)5](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on standards for e-voting.

21. The CEC conducted a large-scale information campaign to inform voters about the changes in the voting procedure, including the use of electronic devices, starting one and a half years before election day. For example, demonstrations of the electronic voting devices were organised gradually across Georgia in public gathering places. Additionally, the CEC organised training sessions for members of the Precinct Election Commissions (PECs) to ensure they were well-prepared for the new system.⁸

22. Voters living abroad are eligible to participate in the elections, provided they register with a Georgian consular registry or a Georgian diplomatic mission or consulate.⁹ Polling stations are established at diplomatic missions or consular offices, but only if there are at least 50 registered voters in a given location. However, as reported by our pre-electoral delegation, access to polling stations – 67 stations across 42 countries – was deemed insufficient. These stations were restricted to locations within embassies, limiting the possibility for the diaspora to vote. Despite calls from the president, opposition parties, and civil society organisations for more accessible voting options, such as additional polling stations, electronic voting, or extended voting periods, these concerns were not addressed.

23. Overall, the legal framework provides an adequate basis for conducting democratic elections; however, several long-standing OSCE/ODIHR and Venice Commission recommendations remain unaddressed, “among others, constituency delimitation, restrictive residence requirements for presidential and parliamentary candidates and other undue criteria on voter and candidate eligibility, additional aspects regarding the formation of election commissions, provisions on the misuse of official position for campaign purposes, high donation limits for election campaigns affecting the level playing field, further regulation and oversight of campaign finance, further elaborating media campaign regulations, strengthening the framework for electoral dispute resolution to ensure effective legal remedy, recounts and annulments, and measures to prevent voter intimidation”, as recalled by the Venice Commission in June 2024.¹⁰

7. After completion of the inking procedure, the voter is provided with a ballot paper and a special frame envelope. The voter chooses a candidate in the booth by colouring only one circle. The voter has to mark the circle corresponding to the candidate of his/her choice and not the number of the candidate. The voter then places the ballot paper in the special frame envelope and feeds it through the optical ballot scanner into the ballot box. The vote counting is conducted by electronic devices (voting device and poll count optical scanner). At each PEC at least 2 vote counting devices will be available. During the process of polling, each device independently counts the results of the received ballot papers. Once the polling is closed, the summarising process of received votes is done by direct connection of these devices (without internet connection). After the closure of the polling process, the device prints out a report of the preliminary results. After the preliminary results are printed, manual counting is provided. Once manual counting is completed, the summary protocol, that has legal force, is drawn up. The transfer of the preliminary results from the PEC to the CEC is done by using a tablet available at any polling station by the chairperson of the commission. The preliminary results can be transferred before the manual counting of the votes.

8. <https://cesko.ge/en/vesaubrebit-amomrchevlebs-eleqtronul-archevnebz>.

9. <https://cesko.ge/en/archevnebi/2024/parlamentis-archevnebi-2024/inpormacia-sazgvargaret-mkopi-amomrchevlebitvis>.

10. CDL-AD(2024)010-e.

24. The Election Code has been amended over 20 times since the last parliamentary elections, with the most significant changes occurring in 2022 and 2024. The Venice Commission has repeatedly stated that the frequent amendments to the electoral legislation in Georgia could undermine the integrity of the electoral process and hinder the country's ongoing efforts to consolidate its democracy.

25. While the 2022 amendments did not provide the comprehensive reform recommended by the Venice Commission, they were adopted following consultations and cross-party support. These changes address several previous recommendations from the Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR, including measures to improve the impartiality of lower-level election bodies and citizen observers, the introduction of additional grounds for automatic recounts, and the establishment of clearer deadlines for election dispute resolution.

26. The election is administered by a three-tier system: the CEC at the national level, 73 District Election Commissions (DECs), and around 3 030 PECs. The CEC is composed of 17 members: 8 nominated by the Speaker of Parliament and appointed by Parliament, and 9 nominated by opposition parties.

27. However, amendments to the Electoral Code adopted in 2023 and 2024, without an inclusive consultative process or broad political support, altered the election procedures for the CEC chairperson and non-partisan members (despite recommendations from the Venice Commission to the contrary). These changes also modified the CEC's decision-making process, which, as highlighted by the Assembly,¹¹ could potentially allow the ruling majority to exert control over all CEC decisions. In practice:

- candidates for the chairperson and non-partisan members of the CEC will now be proposed by the Speaker of Parliament (previously, it was by the President of Georgia);
- the Chairperson and non-partisan members of the CEC must be elected by a 3/5 majority in the first round, but only a simple majority is required in subsequent rounds as a mechanism to prevent deadlock;
- the position of vice-chairperson of the CEC, who was previously appointed by the opposition, has been abolished;
- the CEC Advisory Group for dispute resolution has been dissolved;
- a decision by the CEC that does not secure a 2/3 majority can be immediately submitted for a new vote at the same meeting, with only a simple majority then required for its adoption.

28. In addition, on 16 August 2024, the CEC issued a decree requiring the chairperson of each PEC to draw lots to assign duties among commission members one week before the election, rather than on election day. This raised concerns about the potential for undue pressure on election officers prior to election day.

29. Despite constitutional provisions mandating the State to ensure gender equality, the Georgian Parliament abolished mandatory gender quotas and other temporary measures designed to increase women's participation in public life in May 2024. This led to a significant decline in the number of women candidates in these elections. In my pre-electoral statement, I expressed concern over this measure, which I view as a political deal – the initiators, Girchi MPs, secured the ruling party's support for the amendment in exchange for their votes for the candidate backed by the GD for the chairmanship of the CEC. This decision has had a negative impact on women's participation in political life and, in my view, represents a step backwards and yet another indication of the country's democratic backsliding.

30. Georgia has a complex and fragmented system for resolving electoral disputes, which is often seen as a significant barrier to access to electoral justice. The procedure for resolving electoral disputes is spread across various levels of the Election Administration – Central Election Commission, District Election Commissions, and Precinct Election Commissions – and requires the complainant to be a direct victim of the alleged violation of electoral law. This means that voters themselves cannot lodge complaints, except in cases of exclusion from the voter list. The Venice Commission has repeatedly recommended simplifying the procedure and making it more accessible.

4. Key findings of the PACE pre-electoral mission

31. During our pre-electoral mission to Tbilisi on 23-24 September 2024, we met with a wide range of electoral stakeholders. These elections were taking place at a critical juncture in Georgia's European integration process. In this context, free and fair elections, accepted as legitimate by all stakeholders, were considered essential for safeguarding the country's rightful place in European structures.

11. [Resolution 2561 \(2024\)](#).

32. Our delegation observed an unprecedented level of political polarisation, which had turned the upcoming elections into a *de facto* referendum on Georgia's democratic trajectory and foreign alignment.

33. We were alarmed by public statements from the GD calling for a constitutional majority to ban the opposition. We strongly urged all stakeholders to refrain from such rhetoric, which threatens to undermine political pluralism. Calls to prohibit opposition parties would significantly derail Georgia's commitment to its obligations as a member State of the Council of Europe.

34. We also observed the chilling effect of the controversial Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence on activists and domestic election observers in the lead-up to the elections. This was compounded by crackdowns on demonstrations and expressions of dissent; allegations of harassment and intimidation; and hate speech against opposition members, civil society actors, and media representatives.

35. In this context, the decision by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) to designate a number of NGOs – including Transparency International (TI) – as “subjects with declared electoral goals,” thereby subjecting them to the same financial oversight and restrictions as political parties, was deeply concerning. This decision ultimately forced TI to end its election observation activities. The international community swiftly reacted. In a joint statement, the PACE co-rapporteurs for the monitoring of Georgia and myself deemed the decision unacceptable and likely to undermine public trust in the electoral process. We urged the relevant authorities to uphold the legitimacy of the elections and ensure that TI Georgia, along with other respected civil society organisations, could carry out their observation duties without interference or hindrance.¹² Following this, the Prime Minister instructed the ACB to reverse its decision. At the time, the application of legal provisions by the ACB appeared selective and inconsistent during the campaign.

36. Concerns were raised during our meetings about the potential misuse of administrative resources and the pressure exerted on civil servants, as well as the limited access to polling stations for the Georgian diaspora (as discussed above).

37. While the media landscape in Georgia is diverse, it is highly polarised. The instrumentalisation of private media outlets for political propaganda has undermined independent journalism, fostering divisive political rhetoric and impeding voters' ability to make informed choices. The safety of journalists remains a serious concern, with recent incidents of assaults, intimidation, and pressure, as documented by the [Council of Europe's Safety of Journalists Platform](#). Additionally, several defamation lawsuits filed by public officials against opposition-affiliated media and journalists have further hindered investigative journalism, exacerbating the already fragile financial state of the media. The Georgian National Communications Commission (ComCom), which oversees broadcast media, holds excessive sanctioning power, and its appointment process does not ensure its independence.

38. While we welcomed the introduction of the full proportional electoral system – a long-standing request from the Assembly and civil society – we noted that the combined effects of the 5% threshold and the prohibition on election blocs could undermine the impact of this crucial 2017 electoral reform. Furthermore, the May 2024 amendment allowing parties to designate a candidate for one of the 30 districts¹³ further diluted the intent of establishing a fully proportional system.

39. Our delegation also believed that the swift publication of preliminary results, facilitated by the introduction of electronic voting that would allow the establishment and transmission of preliminary results to the CEC immediately after the closing of the polling stations, would help reduce tensions on election day. However, we emphasised that the CEC must not only act impartially, but also be perceived as impartial. Recent changes to the legislation and internal rules, which could potentially undermine public trust in the electoral process, were raised with the relevant authorities during our visit.

5. Election Day Observation

40. On election day, 500 international short-term observers were deployed across nearly 2 000 polling stations, ensuring significant coverage of the electoral process. PACE teams were deployed in Tbilisi and its surrounding areas, as well as in several other cities and their surroundings, including Bolnisi, Dusheti, Gori, Kaspi, Khashuri, Marneuli, Mtskheta, Rustavi, Sagarejo, Signaghi, Telavi, Tianeti, Tsalka and Vakhtangisi.

12. “Georgia: PACE monitors and observer mission head express deep concern as Transparency International Georgia is forced to end its election operation”, 30 September 2024.

13. The 30 districts correspond to the 30 majoritarian districts that were in place for the 2020 election. An MP could become a delegate if his/her party receives the highest number of votes in the respective district.

41. Most members of the PACE delegation found that, overall, the elections were well-organised, with trained officers at many polling stations. The functioning of the electronic voting devices did not raise major concerns in most of the polling stations observed.
42. There was a prevailing sense that two distinct realities existed on election day: one inside the polling stations, where the voting process was generally well administered, and another outside, where a very different atmosphere prevailed.
43. Most PACE observers agreed that the overall election environment, including but not limited to election day, was heavily influenced by party-based intimidation and voter control.
44. Several teams, particularly those observing in rural areas, reported a widespread pattern of intimidation of voters as they entered polling stations by large groups of strongmen from the ruling party.
45. This sense of intimidation was further heightened by the presence of cameras installed by the ruling party in most (if not all) of the polling stations observed.¹⁴ These cameras recorded all activity within the polling stations, violating the principle of voting secrecy when placed close to the voting machines. The presence of these cameras increased the pressure on voters and contributed to the prevailing sense of “Big Brother is watching you”. In some of the observed polling stations, there was confusion over the ownership of these cameras, with some election officers mistakenly believing they had been provided by the CEC.
46. One team observed stationary minivans parked outside polling stations, with numerous individuals inside. Party observers and members of the outside crowds were in constant communication with the people in the minivans, who appeared to be performing tasks that were difficult to define, but likely included monitoring or counting voters.
47. Representatives of the ruling party attempted to control the activities inside the polling stations visited by one PACE team, even interfering in conversations between PACE observers and other accredited observers by demanding translations from English into Georgian.
48. PACE teams observed that many so-called “citizen observers” were unable to identify the organisations they represented and had to struggle to read the names of these “organisations” from their badges. These individuals admitted that they were working for these “organisations” only for election day. It became clear that they were, in fact, affiliated with the ruling party. Some of these “observers” refused to speak with PACE observers and exhibited aggressive behaviour.
49. Vote buying was witnessed by one PACE team, while another team received credible reports of organised vote buying throughout the day, with payments of 50 GEL per vote for the ruling party.
50. A PACE team observed voters taking photos of their ballots, raising concerns about voting secrecy and the integrity of the voting process.
51. An unacceptable incident occurred during a PACE team's observation at a polling station in the village of Bodbe, Signaghi district. The team's car was deliberately vandalised by a group of approximately 40 unfriendly strongmen outside the polling station. A tyre was punctured, and the perpetrators attempted to make it appear like an accident by deliberately smashing an old vehicle into the already damaged car.
52. Procedural irregularities were also noted by several PACE teams during the counting process, including instances of ruling party observers leaving and re-entering polling stations during the count, as well as directly interfering with the counting procedure.
53. However, some PACE teams reported that they did not observe any irregularities on election day.
54. The PACE observations are consistent with the findings of the IEOM, which reported that while election day was generally well-organised and administered in an orderly manner, it was marked by a tense environment, multiple incidents of physical altercations, and widespread intimidation of voters and citizen observers. IEOM observers frequently noted signs of pressure on voters, overcrowding, and procedural inconsistencies. In many instances, party representatives recorded the voting process and tracked voters, raising concerns about potential intimidation. Moreover, voting secrecy was potentially compromised in 24% of observations made by IEOM observers, due to the manner of ballot insertion into vote-counting devices or

14. According to a CEC decree, video recording by party representatives is permitted provided that it takes place from a designated space inside the polling station and that the secrecy of vote as well as protection of personal data are respected. The decree specifies a distance of at least 3 meters away from the subject/object of filming, unless the polling premises do not allow maintaining such a distance.

inadequate polling station layouts. Although the presence of both citizen and party observers contributed to the transparency of the process, many citizen observers appeared to be acting on behalf of specific political contestants.

6. Outcome of the elections and post-electoral developments

55. The CEC announced the official results on 16 November 2024. This session was marked by significant tension. Some protests occurred outside the CEC office, and several individuals were detained by police. During the session, opposition CEC member Davit Kirtadze (UNM) allegedly referred to CEC chairperson Kalandarishvili as a “black mark” – seemingly alluding to black marks on the ballot paper that allegedly violated the secrecy of the vote – and threw black paint at him. As a result, Mr Kirtadze was expelled from the meeting room, briefly interrupting the session. The Prosecutor's Office initiated an investigation into Mr Kirtadze. We unequivocally condemn this physical attack on the CEC chairperson, which is entirely unacceptable.

56. According to data released by the CEC, a total of 2 111 834 voters participated in the election out of 3 508 294 registered voters, resulting in a voter turnout of 58,94%. A total of 34 974 ballots were declared invalid. The use of electronic devices to scan ballots at polling stations and the immediate transmission of results to the CEC enabled the publication of preliminary results 1 hour and 45 minutes after voting ended.

57. The official results announced by the CEC indicate that the GD party secured 53.93% of the votes, with four coalitions entering parliament. GD won the majority of votes in all districts except for the capital, Tbilisi (where the four major coalitions together garnered 46%), Rustavi, and the diaspora vote (where GD secured just 15%). GD performed particularly well in rural areas, including remote regions and ethnic minority constituencies, which have traditionally been strongholds of Georgia's ruling parties. In contrast, the GD narrowly won in other major cities. The UNM-led Unity – National Movement coalition suffered a dramatic decline, losing about half of its support, some of which shifted to the newly-formed Coalition for Change, created just months before the election by former UNM members.

No	Name of the Political Party	Number of votes received	%	Number of Mandates received	+/- compared to 2020 elections
3	The Party of Georgian Unity and Development	3 892	0.19%		
4	Coalition for Change – Gvaramia, Melia, Girchi, Droa	229 161	11.03%	19	+ 17
5	Unity-National Movement	211 216	10.17%	16	23
6	European Democrats	7 955	0.38%		
8	Alliance of Patriots of Georgia	50 599	2.44%		
9	Strong Georgia – Lelo, For the People, For Liberty!	182 922	8.81%	14	+ 8
10	Georgian Labour Party	15 103	0.73%		
12	Our United Georgia	1 845	0.09%		
16	Change Georgia	12 528	0.60%		
17	Georgia	2 780	0.13%		
20	Free Georgia	4 145	0.20%		
21	Tribuna	2 483	0.12%		
23	We	2 593	0.12%		
25	Gakharia for Georgia	161 521	7.78%	12	New party
26	Left Alliance	1 260	0.06%		
27	Georgian's Unity	4 500	0.22%		
36	Girchi	62 223	3.00%		
41	Georgian Dream	1 120 053	53.93%		-1

58. As required by law, the CEC announced on 29 October that it would recount ballots from five randomly selected polling stations in each electoral district. Of the 366 electoral precincts (approximately 14% of the total), the results remained unchanged for 334 precincts, representing 91.25% of the recounted precincts. For the remaining 32 precincts, the data from the summary protocols showed slight changes.¹⁵

59. In contrast, the results of the elections were immediately challenged by opposition parties, which declared they would not recognise the election outcomes and would refuse to take up their parliamentary mandates, thereby preventing the parliament from achieving the quorum. The main opposition coalitions have since organised protests, demanding new elections.

60. President Salomé Zourabichvili declared the elections “illegitimate” and described the outcome of the parliamentary vote as fraudulent. She claimed that modern technology had been used to cover up electoral fraud and suggested that the country had fallen victim to a “Russian special operation”.

61. Giorgi Gakharia, leader of the “Gakharia for Georgia” party, called on 29 October 2024 for the transfer of the voter base to a neutral, objective platform where voters could independently verify their participation – including details such as the precinct and time of voting. His request was rejected by a court on 8 November. Mr Gakharia also demanded that the contract signed with Smartmatic, as well as any subsequent changes to the contract, be made publicly available.¹⁶

62. The Prosecutor’s Office launched an investigation into allegations of vote rigging and called on anyone with evidence to come forward and testify. However, the opposition has raised concerns, claiming that the investigation will not be independent, as the head of the Prosecutor’s Office was appointed by the GD-dominated parliament.

63. Immediately following election day, domestic election observers reported multiple breaches of voting confidentiality, incidents of ballot stuffing, and various procedural irregularities.

64. The monitoring coalition “My Voice” filed complaints in 29 constituencies, seeking the annulment of results from 246 polling stations. The complaints cited a range of violations, including breaches of voting secrecy, instances of proxy voting and multiple voting by individuals, failure to verify voter markings, voting without proper markings, physical and verbal attacks at polling stations, obstruction of observation (particularly during the verification process), the presence of unauthorised and aggressive individuals in the polling areas, and electoral agitation by commission members.¹⁷

65. “My Vote” a local observer mission representing dozens of Georgian civil society organisations, accused the electoral administration of playing a central role in executing a [large-scale election-rigging operation](#) orchestrated by the ruling party. The mission called for an investigation and the annulment of over 300 000 votes – approximately 10% of the electorate.

66. The Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) called for the annulment of results in all 2 263 precincts where new voting technologies were used, citing violations of voting secrecy. GYLA argued that the thin paper ballots allowed voters’ choices to be revealed through transparency, thus compromising voter anonymity. In addition to filing 11 complaints regarding pre-election violations, GYLA requested the annulment of summary protocols from 460 precincts and the recalculation of results. It also called for disciplinary action against members of the PECs in 349 of these cases.¹⁸

67. Based on its observations, Transparency International (TI) claimed that [mechanisms enabling multiple voting](#) and [controlling voters and breaching voter anonymity](#) had been employed during the elections. TI’s concerns were echoed by an [investigative report](#) by TV Pirveli, which exposed a scheme for controlling voters and compromising electoral integrity. TI submitted up to 200 complaints related to these issues.

68. The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) reported “a number of inexplicable discrepancies in the data provided by the CEC”. ISFED found significant differences in the gender distribution of registered voters versus actual voter turnout in certain electoral districts. In some cases, the male voter turnout exceeded 100%, which ISFED described as “theoretically improbable”.¹⁹

15. <https://cesko.ge/en/siakhleebi/pres-relizebi/singleview/11035074-sainformatsio-brifingi-gadatvlis-shedegebis-da-shemajamebeli-okmebis-shesakheb>.

16. <https://georgiatoday.ge/gakharia-voter-base-should-be-transferred-to-a-neutral-platform-where-each-voter-can-verify-the-information/>.

On 15 November, responding to allegations that the CEC had changed the markers before the elections, the Smartmatic company confirmed that it had provided the special markers used to mark the choices on the ballot to the electoral administration.

17. www.interpressnews.ge/en/article/134484-londa-toloraia-the-observation-coalition-my-voice-filed-complaints-in-29-election-constituencies-demanding-the-annulment-of-the-results-of-246-election-precincts-where-the-number-of-registered-voters-is-417305.

18. www.interpressnews.ge/en/article/134475-young-lawyers-association-demands-the-annulment-of-the-results-of-all-2263-precincts-conducted-using-new-technologies-due-to-the-violation-of-the-secrecy-of-voting.

19. ISFED statement of 7 November 2024.

69. The final 2024 exit poll analysis, conducted by the leading US consulting firm HarrisX, raised concerns about “statistically unexplainable data discrepancies by the Central Election Commission amounting to over 8% of the total vote, or at least 172 523 raw votes, across a minimum of 27 districts.” The discrepancy could not be explained “by statistical variance, pointing to possible voting irregularities”.²⁰

70. The CEC reported that a total of 1 201 appeals were filed with district electoral commissions (DECs). Of these, 167 were either partially or fully satisfied, 917 were rejected, and 107 were not considered. The appeals primarily called for the cancellation or recount of results in precincts (537 appeals), requested disciplinary action against election officials (477 appeals), and 47 appeals did not specify any particular demand. As a result of these appeals, the results of 12 mobile ballots were annulled, and the results of 12 precincts were recounted.²¹

71. According to the CEC’s database as of 7 November, 102 decisions made by 73 DECs were appealed to first instance courts. Only two of these appeals were successful: one in Tetrtskaro and one in Gori, both located in eastern Georgia. In the Tetrtskaro case, the court found that the secrecy of the vote had been violated, while in the Gori case, the court ordered a recount of the results in one precinct.

72. All rulings of the first instance courts were subsequently appealed to the Tbilisi and Kutaisi Appeal Courts, depending on the jurisdiction. The two successful appeals at the first instance level were also challenged by the CEC.

73. The Tbilisi Court of Appeals consolidated all appeals from the GYLA and the “My Vote” coalition into a single case, while all appeals related to ISFED were consolidated into another. On 6 November, the court overturned the decision of the Gori District Court, which had ordered a recount of the results in one precinct but upheld the decisions of other first-instance courts that had ruled in favour of the CEC.

74. On 7 November, following an exceptionally long deliberation of nearly 24 hours, the Tbilisi Court of Appeals rejected the appeals from GYLA and the “My Vote” coalition. The court also overturned the Tetrtskaro District Court’s ruling regarding the breach of voting secrecy, which had been in favour of the appellants.²²

75. Similarly, the Kutaisi Court of Appeals consolidated the cases filed by GYLA and ISFED. The court ruled on all cases, affirming the decisions of the first instance courts, all of which had been in favour of the CEC.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

76. The parliamentary elections of 26 October 2024 were marked by high polarisation of the political and media landscape, hate speech against the opposition and civil society and deep antagonism between the ruling party and the opposition on the one hand, and the ruling party and the President on the other. Our delegation is particularly concerned about the widespread climate of party-organised intimidation, before and during the elections, especially in rural areas, that marked these elections as well as questions about the impartiality and independence of certain State agencies responsible for implementing the law. Our delegation was particularly alarmed by the public statements made during the campaign by the ruling party calling for a ban on key opposition. These statements were further echoed by the Prime Minister in response to post-electoral protests, where he suggested that opposition parties should be declared unconstitutional “if they continue to undermine the constitutional order.”

77. Our findings, based on observations of the pre-electoral campaign and election day, as well as credible and consistent reports from domestic observers following the elections, raise concerns about the correctness of the election results, namely whether the election results truly reflect the will of the voters. Additionally, serious doubts persist regarding whether the electoral environment provided the necessary conditions for a fair election, enabling voters to make an informed choice free from intimidation and undue pressure. This is reflected in the response from the opposition and civil society, which have expressed deep mistrust in both the results and the institutions and continue to challenge the outcome of the election.

20. <https://civil.ge/archives/633038>.

21. <https://civil.ge/archives/627971>.

22. ISFED reported that Tetrtskaro judge Khuchua, who confirmed that the secrecy of the vote had been violated, had become the subject of a discrediting campaign by GD-affiliated media, anonymous social media pages, and individuals.

78. In particular, the following issues must be highlighted, as they significantly undermined the fairness of the electoral process and challenged the legitimacy of its results:

- Transparency and fairness of the electoral process: last-minute changes and adjustments made to the electoral process raised significant concerns about its transparency and fairness. One of the most serious issues was the breach of voting secrecy, which was observed in almost a quarter of the polling stations visited by IEOM observers. This issue undermined the integrity of the election, as secret suffrage is a key feature of European electoral heritage, as set out in Article 3 of the Additional Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights and highlighted by the Venice Commission in its [Code of good practice in electoral matters](#).
- Politisation of State institutions: The decision by the Anti-Corruption Bureau to designate certain NGOs, including Transparency International, as “entities with political goals” was an unacceptable move. Furthermore, recent amendments to the composition of the CEC have raised questions about the impartiality of the CEC and undermined the trust in this institution.
- Uneven playing field: The fairness of the elections was compromised by unequal competition conditions between political parties, with a clear advantage given to the ruling party. Administrative resources were used to benefit the ruling party, creating an uneven playing field. Additionally, unequal access to media outlets and media polarisation further hindered balanced representation and the dissemination of information, making it more difficult for voters to make an informed choice.
- A widespread climate of intimidation and pressure targeted both voters and activists, discouraging open participation. The Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence contributed to the stigmatisation of civil society groups, independent media, and dissenting voices. Intimidation both inside and outside polling stations on election day undermined voters’ sense of safety. Civil society organisations and journalists faced significant pressure and harassment. Reports of voter intimidation, coercion, and undue pressure were particularly prevalent among public sector employees and the economically vulnerable.
- Controlled environment: A “Big Brother is watching you” atmosphere was created by the installation of cameras by the ruling party in polling stations, often violating rules of secrecy of the vote. This led to a widespread sense of surveillance among voters and activists, fostering an environment of potential voter control and undermining trust in the electoral process.
- Democratic backsliding: Recent legislation restricting freedom of expression and freedom of association, particularly before and during the elections, along with the negative impact of abolishing the gender quota law, have further contributed to the country’s democratic backsliding.

79. Our delegation strongly encourages the authorities to address the aforementioned issues, as they are critical to aligning with European standards in electoral processes. They should be considered in the framework of the PACE monitoring procedure and electoral co-operation programmes. The authorities should in particular:

- as a priority measure, revise the electoral framework ahead of the 2025 local elections and restore credibility and impartiality of the CEC and the Anti-Corruption Bureau, in line with the recommendations of the Venice Commission and Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), in particular:
 - reverse recent changes that eliminated the position of the opposition-nominated deputy CEC chairperson, altered the selection procedure for CEC members, and allowed the CEC to bypass the required 3/5 majority in repeat voting;
 - in line with the Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR’s December 2023 [joint opinion](#), reintroduce an anti-deadlock mechanism requirement for the election/appointment of the CEC chairperson and non-partisan members which favours qualified majorities;
- in addition, launch a comprehensive review of the legal framework and electoral legislation, in line with Venice Commission recommendations, to address other long-standing issues related to comprehensive regulations to prevent the misuse of administrative resources, oversight of campaign activities and finance, media regulations, improved electoral dispute resolution mechanisms. These changes should also prevent undue pressure on voters and the usurpation of their identities, particularly by ensuring strict adherence to proper voter identification procedures;
- ensure swift, credible, and transparent investigations into all irregularities and allegations of vote manipulation, carried out by independent bodies that enjoy the trust of all electoral stakeholders. This is essential for restoring confidence in the electoral process; additionally, provide full access to electoral data (while safeguarding personal information) and facilitate comprehensive electoral audits. This will enhance transparency and strengthen trust in the electoral system;

- restore a climate conducive to genuinely competitive electoral campaigns by repealing the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence, which subjects civil society organisations and independent media to undue stigmatisation and pressure. Demonstrate zero tolerance for political violence and reinforce measures to prevent the misuse of administrative resources;
- strengthen voter education programmes targeting in particular first-time voters and minorities to raise awareness of electoral rights, prevention of electoral corruption, misuse of administrative resources, etc. in co-operation with civil society organisations;
- enhance voting secrecy, notably by reviewing rules on recording electoral activities and the presence of cameras in polling stations, and by regulating the storage and use of this data in line with Council of Europe standards on data protection, ensuring that such recordings do not breach voting confidentiality or lead to intimidation;
- refrain from any rhetoric or actions that undermine pluralistic democracy and risk violating the country's obligations as a Council of Europe member State.

80. The Assembly calls on the Georgian authorities to demonstrate strong and genuine political will to address the shortcomings identified during the election observation process, as highlighted in the IEOM Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions.

81. Given the prevailing climate of deep antagonism and mistrust, the Assembly also calls on:

- the Council of Europe to support, through its electoral expertise and ongoing political dialogue, Georgia's democratisation on its European path, a goal shared by the vast majority of Georgian society. Pending the completion of internal investigations, this could include assisting in all endeavours, including at international level, aimed at restoring trust and addressing, with all electoral stakeholders, post-election controversies, allegations of frauds, and electoral shortcomings that further undermine the integrity of the election results;
- the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to continue to closely follow the situation in Georgia, to use his political role to reaffirm the Council of Europe's support to the democratic process in Georgia and to facilitate constructive dialogue between all parties concerned. The Assembly invites the Secretary General to take all necessary steps in this respect.

82. In the spirit of the Reykjavik Summit of Heads of State and Government, where the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy were adopted, the Assembly urges the Georgian authorities to take concrete steps to secure and strengthen democracy, uphold good governance, and "encourage democratic participation at all levels through free and fair elections".

83. The Assembly is ready to support this process, working within the framework of its monitoring procedure and in close co-operation with the Venice Commission.

Appendix 1 – Composition of the ad hoc committee

Chairperson: Mr Iulian Bulai, Romania

Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group (SOC)

- Mr Frank Schwabe, Germany *
- Ms Anna-Kristiina Mikkonen, Finland
- Mr Yves Cruchten, Luxembourg
- Ms Aurora Floridia, Italy
- Mr Pierre-Alain Fridez, Switzerland
- Mr Didier Marie, France
- Mr Antonio Gutiérrez Limones, Spain
- Ms Blerina Gjylameti, Albania
- Mr Namık Tan, Türkiye
- Mr Jone Blikra, Norway

Group of the European People's Party (EPP/CD)

- Ms Boriana Åberg, Sweden *
- Mr Christophe Brico, Monaco
- Ms Linda Hofstad Helleland, Norway
- Mr Pablo Hispán, Spain
- Mr Reinhold Lopatka, Austria
- Mr Georgios Stamatis, Greece
- Mr Emanuelis Zingeris, Lithuania

European Conservatives Group and Democratic Alliance (EC/DA)

- Mr Simone Billi, Italy *
- Lord David Blencathra, United Kingdom
- Ms Olena Khomenko, Ukraine
- Mr Fabio Pietrella, Italy
- Mr Armen Gevorgyan, Armenia
- Mr Oleksii Goncharenko, Ukraine

Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)

- Mr Iulian Bulai, Romania *
- Mr Olivier Bitz, France
- Ms Béatrice Fresko-Rolfo, Monaco
- Ms Yevheniia Kravchuk, Ukraine
- Mr Ryszard Petru, Poland

Group of the Unified European Left (UEL)

- Mr Andrej Hunko, Germany *

Co-rapporteurs AS/MON (ex officio)

- Mr Claude Kern, France – ALDE
- Ms Edite Estrela, Portugal – SOC *

Accompanying person

- Lady Tara Blencathra, accompanying Lord David Blencathra

Secretariat of political group

- Ms Denise O'Hara, EPP/CD

Venice Commission

- Ms Katharina Pabel, member of the Venice Commission
- Mr Michael Janssen, Legal Advisor, Secretariat of the Venice Commission

Secretariat

- Ms Sylvie Affholder, Head of the Elections Division, Secretary of the ad hoc committee
- Mr Bogdan Torcătoriu, Senior Elections Officer, Elections Division, Secretariat of the ad hoc committee
- Mr Bas Klein, Deputy Head of the Secretariat of the Monitoring Committee
- Ms Carine Roller-Kaufman, Assistant, Elections Division

* Participants in the pre-electoral mission

Appendix 2 – Programme of the pre-electoral delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly

Monday, 23 September 2024

- 09:00-10:00 PACE delegation meeting
- Welcome by Mr Iulian Bulai, Head of Delegation
 - Presentation by Ms Natalia Voutova, Head of the Council of Europe Office in Tbilisi
 - Presentation by Ms Edite Estrela, co-rapporteur of the Monitoring Committee
 - Presentation of the programme by the Secretariat
- 10:00-11:30 Meeting with members of the international community (*)
- Romania: Ambassador Răzvan Rotundu
 - Germany: Ambassador Peter Fischer
 - Sweden: Ambassador Anna Lyberg
 - Italy: Ambassador Massimiliano D'Antuono
 - Lithuania: Ambassador Darius Vitkauskas
 - France: Ambassador Sheraz Gasri
 - European Union Delegation: Ambassador Pawel Herczynski, Deputy Head of Mission: Ms Zane Rungule, and Project Officer in charge of elections: Mr Antonio Del-Bargi
- 11:30-13:00 Meeting with Mr Eoghan Murphy, Head of Mission, Mr Marcell Nagy, Deputy Head of Mission, and members of the core team of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission:
- Ms Daria Paprocka, Political Analyst
 - Ms Marcela Mašková, Election Analyst
 - Ms Anna Melikyan, Legal Analyst
 - Ms Elma Šehalić, Media Analyst
 - Mr László Belágyi, Security Expert
- 13:15-14:15 Working lunch hosted by H.E. Salomé Zourabichvili, President of Georgia
- 14:30-16:00 Meeting with representatives of the civil society (*)
- Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA): Ms Nanuka Kruashvili
 - Transparency International Georgia: Ms Eka Gigaauri
 - International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED): Mr Levan Natroshvili
 - Democratic Research institute: Mr Ucha Nanuashvili
- 16:00-17:30 Meetings with representatives of the media (*)
- 16:00-16:50
- Georgian Public Broadcaster: Ms Tinatin Berdzenishvili, Director General, and Mr George Gvimradze, Director of News and Current Affairs
 - Rustavi 2: Mr Vako Avaliani
 - Imedi TV: Mr Irakli Rukhadze
- 16:50-17:30
- Mtavari Arkhi TV: Ms Tamta Muradashvili, Director of International Advocacy, and Ms Nino Nakashidze, Deputy Director General
 - Pirveli TV: Mr Zaal Udumashvili, Deputy Director
- 17:45-18:15 Meeting with representatives of the National Communications Commission (ComCom)
- Mr Kakhi Bekauri, Head of the ComCom
 - Mr Ivane Makharadze, Commissioner
 - Ms Nino Grdzelishvili, Head of International Relations

Tuesday, 24 September 2024

- 10:00-10:45 Meeting with Mr Aleksandre Darakhvelidze, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of Georgia
- 11:00-11:50 Meeting with members of the Central Election Commission (CEC)
- Mr Giorgi Sharabidze, Deputy Chairperson
 - Mr Giorgi Javakhishvili, Secretary
 - Mr Dimitri Javakhadze, Member
 - Ms Maia Zaridze, Member
 - Mr Giorgi Chikaberidze, Member
 - Mr Gia Tsatsashvili, Member
 - Mr Giorgi Dzagania, Member
 - Mr Archil Anasashvili, Member – “Georgian Dream”
 - Mr Levan Jgerenaia, Member – “Girchi”
 - Mr Davit Kirtadze, Member – “United National Movement”
 - Mr Giorgi Sioridze, Member – “Lelo”
 - Ms Ana Khobakhidze, Member – “Giorgi Vashadze – Strategy Aghmashenebeli”
 - Mr Davit Jinjolava, Member – “European Georgia”
 - Ms Nino Basilaia, Member – “European Socialists”
 - Mr Ivane Norakidze, Member – “Aleko Elisashvili – Citizens”
 - Ms Ia Pirtakhia, Member – “European Democrats of Georgia”
- 11:55-12:15 Meeting with Mr Giorgi Kalandarishvili, Chairperson of the Central Election Commission of Georgia
- 12:30-14:00 Working lunch hosted by H.E. Shalva Papuashvili, Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia, with the participation of the delegation of Georgia to the PACE
- 14:15-15:00 Meeting with Mr Razhden Kuprashvili, Head of the Anti-Corruption Bureau
- 15:10-15:40 Meeting with the Parliamentary Opposition
- Ms Khatuna Samnidze, Chairperson of the Parliamentary Political Group “Reforms Group”
 - Ms Ana Buchukuri, Member of the Parliamentary Political Group “For Georgia”
 - Ms Khatia Dekanoidze, Member of the Parliamentary Political Group “Eurooptimists”
 - Mr Nika Matchutadze, Chairman of the Parliamentary Political Group “For a National and Democratic State”
 - Ms Ketevan Turazashvili, Member of the Parliamentary Political Group “Citizens”
 - Ms Tamar Kordzaia, non-affiliated Member of the Parliament
- 15:50-16:20 Meeting with the Parliamentary Majority
- Mr Givi Mikanadze, Head of the Georgian Parliamentary Delegation to the PACE, Chairman of the Education, Science and Youth Affairs Committee
 - Mr Nikoloz Samkharadze, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee
 - Ms Maka Botchorishvili, Chairperson of the Committee on European Integration
 - Mr Levan Karumidze, First Deputy Chairman of the Committee on European Integration

Meetings with coalitions and individual runners ():*

- 17:10-17:30 Unity to Save Georgia
- [Faction United National Movement – United Opposition “Unity Makes Strength”, European Georgia, Strategy Aghmashenebeli]
- Mr Zurab Tchiaberashvili, International Secretary
 - Mr George Tsereteli
 - Mr Giorgi Vashadze

- 17:35-17:55 Coalition for Change
- [Representatives of Droa and the Republican Party present in parliament]
- Mr Giga Lemonjava, Executive Secretary
 - Ms Marika Mikiashvili
- 18:00-18:20 Coalition Strong Georgia
- [Parliamentary Political Group “Lelo-Partnership for Georgia”, Parliamentary Political Group “Citizens”]
- Ms Salomé Samadashvili
 - Mr Bakur Kvashilava, Movement Freedom Square
- 18:25-18:45 Party For Georgia
- Ms Natia Mezvrishvili
- 19:00-19:45 Delegation meeting and preparation of a statement

(*) Meetings organised by the Council of Europe Secretariat

Appendix 3 – Statement of the Head of the pre-electoral delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly

“Free and legitimate elections essential to safeguard Georgia’s place in Europe”, says head of PACE pre-electoral delegation, ending visit.

A PACE pre-electoral delegation, headed by Iulian Bulai (Romania, ALDE), has concluded a two-day visit to Georgia (23-24 September 2024) ahead of the parliamentary elections of 26 October 2024. Mr Bulai stressed that these elections are taking place at a very crucial moment in Georgia’s European integration trajectory. He underscored that free and fair elections, that are accepted as legitimate by all stakeholders, are essential to safeguard the country’s rightful place in European structures.

“Our delegation is concerned that polarisation of the political landscape has reached unprecedented levels, turning the forthcoming elections into a de facto referendum on Georgia’s democratic trajectory and foreign alignment. I share the concerns of the delegation’s interlocutors about crackdowns on demonstrations and expressions of dissent, which are fully legitimate in a democratic society. The authorities are expected to act in line with human rights standards, refrain from a disproportionate use of violence and demonstrate their ability to conduct due and diligent investigations in cases of violence,” he added.

“We are also concerned about allegations of harassment of opposition members, as well as threats, intimidation and hate speech against civil society and media representatives. I urge the relevant authorities to fully and transparently investigate these allegations. I deplore the chilling effect of the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence on activists and domestic election observers ahead of the elections and I reiterate the Assembly’s demand to withdraw this law, which is incompatible with European democratic and human rights standards. I call on the authorities to show the utmost restraint – we note in this respect that this legislation is being examined by the Constitutional Court. In this respect, we are concerned about the decision to designate NGOs as ‘entities with declared electoral goals’ subject to the same financial oversight and restrictions as political parties, which creates a chilling effect on domestic observers.”

“These elections will be the first held under a fully proportional election system in Georgia. However, the combined effect of the five per cent threshold – despite several negotiations and provisional agreements to lower it – and the prohibition of election blocs could mitigate the effect of this crucial electoral reform from 2017. This has been a long-standing recommendation of the Assembly and civil society to increase pluralism in parliament, strengthen the parliament and avoid super-majorities, thus enhancing the democratic system of checks and balances,” said the head of delegation.

Mr Bulai added: “I very much deplore the amendment to the electoral law that abolished the gender quota, which could have a detrimental effect on women’s participation in political life and I urge the political parties to ensure that a significant proportion of women are on eligible position on party lists.”

“Our delegation was informed about, and I welcome, the speedy publication of preliminary results made possible by the introduction of electronic voting, which could help reduce tension on election day. I also note the educational campaign for voters launched by the Central Electoral Commission (CEC). I believe the CEC should not only act impartially, but also be seen as impartial. However, recent changes to the legislation and internal rules could undermine public trust in the electoral process. Several interlocutors also raised questions about access to polling stations for Georgians living abroad,” Mr Bulai continued.

“We would also like to express our concern about politicised state institutions and media. We heard concerns about the misuse of administrative resources and pressure exerted on civil servants that would impact a level playing field. I urge all stakeholders to refrain from rhetoric that would seek to undermine political pluralism, such as calling for the prohibition of the opposition, which would seriously derail Georgia from its Council of Europe membership obligations,” he concluded.

The six-member cross-party delegation²³ led by Mr Bulai met with the President of Georgia, the Speaker of the Parliament, the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, members of the parliamentary majority and opposition, the Chairperson and members of the Central Electoral Commission, and the heads of the National Communications Commission and Anti-Corruption Bureau, representatives of civil society and the media, international observers as well as representatives of the diplomatic corps.

23. Composition of the delegation: Iulian Bulai (Romania, ALDE), Head of delegation, Frank Schwabe (Germany, SOC), Boriana Åberg (Sweden, EPP/CD), Simone Billi (Italy, EC/DA), Andrej Hunko (Germany, UEL) and Edite Estrela (Portugal, SOC), Co-rapporteur of PACE Monitoring Committee.

A fully-fledged PACE delegation comprising 32 members, accompanied by legal experts from the Venice Commission, will travel to Georgia to observe the vote on 26 October 2024 alongside other international organisations.

Appendix 4 – Programme of the meetings of the International Electoral Observation Mission

Thursday, 24 October 2024

- 09:30-10:00 Registration
- 10:00-10:30 Welcome and Introductory Remarks
- Pascal Allizard, Special Coordinator and leader of the short-term OSCE observer mission
 - Iulian Bulai, Head of PACE Delegation
 - Antonio López-Istúriz White, Head of the EP Delegation
 - Faik Öztrak, Head of the NATO PA Delegation
 - Pia Kauma, Head of the OSCE PA Delegation
- 10:30-12:30 Briefing by the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission (part 1)
- Welcome and overview of the mission's work – Eoghan Murphy, Head of Mission
 - Political overview: Contestants and the Election Campaign; Q/A – Daria Paprocka, Political Analyst
 - Media Landscape; Q/A – Elma Šehalić, Media Analyst
 - Legal Framework, Electoral System, Electoral Dispute Resolution; Q/A – Anna Melikyan, Legal Analyst
 - Election Administration, Voter and Candidate Registration; Citizen Observers; Q/A – Marcela Mašková, Election Analyst
 - Voting Technologies – Tarvi Martens, New Voting Technologies Analyst
 - Security – László Belágyi, Security Expert
- 14:00-16:00 Socio-political Context
- Eka Gigauri, Executive Director, Transparency International Georgia
 - Victor Kipiani, Chairman, Geocase (Thinktank)
 - Julie Giorgadze, Senior Advisor, Public Movement Multinational Georgia
 - Nino Dolidze, Executive Director, International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED)
 - Nanuka Kurashvili, Director of the Democratic Institution Support Program, Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA)
- 16:15-18:15 Media and Campaign
- Tinatin Berdzenishvili, Director General, Georgian Public Broadcaster
 - Tamta Muradashvili, Director, Mtavari Arkhi TV
 - Irakli Rukhadze, Founder, Imedi TV
 - Ivane Makharadze, Commissioner, National Communications Commission
 - Nino Gelashvili, Head Editor, Radio Liberty
 - Mamuka Andguladze, Chairperson, Media Advocacy Coalition

Friday, 25 October 2024

- 09:00-09:45 Candidates / Representatives (part 1)
- Georgian Dream
- Irakli Kobakhidze, Prime Minister
 - Nikoloz Samkharadze, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee and Head of the Georgian Delegation to the OSCE-PA
 - Givi Mikanadze, Chairman of the Education, Science and Youth Affairs Committee and Head of the Parliamentary Delegation to PACE
 - Maka Bochorishvili, Chairperson of the Committee on European Integration
- 10:00-10:20 Candidates / Representatives (part 2)
- Strong Georgia coalition: Lelo / For the People / Freedom Square / Citizens

	– Salomé Samadashvili, Political Secretary
10:20-10:40	Candidates / Representatives (part 3) For Georgia party – Natia Mezvishvili, Deputy Chairperson and Head of Election Task Force – Dimitri Tskitishvili, Leader, Former Member of Parliament – Elguja Khokrishvili, Leader, Former Ambassador to Germany
10:45-11:30	Candidates / Representatives (part 4) Unity – To Save Georgia coalition: UNM / Strategy Aghmashenebeli / European Georgia – Tinatin Bokuchava, Leader of coalition and Chairperson of UNM, and Gigi Tsereteli, Chairperson of European Georgia Coalition for Change: Akhali / Girchi – More Freedom / Droa / Republican Party / Activists for Future – Giorgi Butikashvili, Head of the Office for Foreign Affairs International and Non-Governmental Organizations
11:45-12:45	Election Administration and Institutions – Giorgi Kalandarishvili, Chairperson of the Central Election Commission of Georgia – Razhden Kuprashvili, Head of the Anti-Corruption Bureau
13:00-14:15	Briefing by the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission (part 2) – Election-Day Procedures, Marcela Mašková, Election Analyst – STO Reporting, Andreas Roth, Statistical Analyst – Briefing by Long-Term Observers deployed in Tbilisi and surroundings
Followed by	Meeting with Drivers and Interpreters

Saturday, 26 October 2024

All day	Election Day – Observation in polling stations
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Appendix 5 – Press release of the International Election Observation Mission

Georgia's elections marred by an uneven playing field, pressure and tension, but voters were offered a wide choice: international observers

TBILISI, 27 October 2024 –While voters were offered a choice between 18 candidate lists and candidates could generally campaign freely, Georgia's parliamentary elections were marred by entrenched polarization 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 pressure on voters, international observers said in a [statement](#) today.

The joint observation mission from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA), and the European Parliament (EP) noted deepening political divisions, as well as a significant imbalance in financial resources and the many advantages taken by the ruling party contributed to an already uneven playing field. In the run-up to the elections, numerous civil society organisations reported on the stigmatizing impact of the 'law on transparency of foreign influence', together with incidents of attacks and intimidation. This, along with potential sanctions for not complying with the law, has also impacted their ability to carry out their work free from undue pressure.

"Imbalances in financial resources, a divisive campaign atmosphere, and recent legislative amendments were of significant concern throughout this election process," said Pascal Allizard, Special Co-ordinator and leader of the OSCE short-term observer mission. "Yet the engagement shown on election day – from the active voter participation, robust presence of citizen and party observers, and rich diversity of voices – gives the sign of a system that is still growing and evolving, with a democratic vitality under construction."

Observers found the legal framework to be adequate for holding democratic elections. However, some previous positive changes were reversed by recent amendments, and several longstanding recommendations remain unaddressed. While the earlier amendments were adopted following inclusive public discussions, frequent revisions, including a number made shortly before the elections and without broad cross-party support, undermined its stability, and raised concerns about the potential for misusing the changes to gain political benefit. At the same time, the effectiveness of campaign finance oversight was undermined by limited enforcement and concerns over the impartiality and political instrumentalization of the oversight body.

"These elections were marked by high polarisation of the political and media landscape, hate speech against the opposition and the civil society and antagonism towards the office of the President," said Iulian Bulai, Head of the PACE delegation. "The quality of the elections reflected the pre-electoral period. Given the cases of vote-buying, widespread climate of pressure and party-organised intimidation before and during the elections, especially in rural areas, questions about the impartiality of state institutions, we express our concerns about the electoral conditions, in particular the uneven playing field which undermines trust in the outcome and explains the reactions to the election results. These issues need to be addressed by the authorities."

Despite a constitutional obligation to ensure gender equality, legal changes made this year have undermined this aim and led to a significant decline in the number of women on party lists for these elections. Party programmes lacked messages specifically targeting women and featured few women in their campaigns. At the same time, women politicians in Georgia continue to face deeply rooted stereotypes and even violence.

"While we commend the largely peaceful election, the decline in female candidates due to the removal of gender quotas is a setback for diversity, especially as women's active participation at polling stations highlights their vital role and demand for greater representation," said Pia Kauma, Head of the OSCE PA delegation. "With the recent adoption of the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence, I hope its implications for freedom of association and expression will be re-evaluated in the next parliament to protect civil society's vital work in Georgia and ensure all voices are heard."

The election administration organized the elections efficiently, but the public perception of its impartiality was harmed by concerns about recent changes over its nomination and decision-making processes, as well as perceived links between members without formal political affiliation and the ruling party. For the first time, electronic devices were used in most polling stations, and the election administration made a significant effort to educate voters on their use ahead of election day. Election day was generally well organized procedurally and orderly, but it was marked by a tense environment. The secrecy of the vote was frequently compromised and there were reports of intimidation and pressure on voters.

“Respect for the shared values of individual liberty, democracy and the rule of law is an essential condition for becoming a NATO member. This election was yet another critical test for Georgia’s democracy, and its aftermath will be another,” said Faik Öztrak, Head of the NATO PA delegation. “It is now my duty to report back on these elections – from election administration to intimidation and pressure on voters – so that the Assembly can explore how to best support the Georgian people, who have demonstrated again and again that they want a democratic Georgia in the EU and NATO.”

The campaign was competitive although subdued, but the language and imagery used were highly divisive. During the campaign, ruling party representatives made public statements about their intention to ban key opposition parties after the elections. Observers also noted reports of intimidation, coercion and pressure on voters, particularly on public sector employees and other groups, raising concerns about the ability of some voters to cast their vote without fear of retribution.

“We continue to express deep concerns about the democratic backsliding in Georgia. The conduct of yesterday’s election is unfortunately evidence to that effect,” said Antonio López-Istúriz White, Head of the EP delegation. “We will continue to closely follow the situation in Georgia to see if the next government chooses to realign with EU values and norms and reverse the negative tendencies of the last months.”

Georgia’s media scene is diverse but highly polarized, and depends on financing by political actors. Media monitoring carried out by the observation mission showed clear political bias across all outlets, while legal obligations for impartial news coverage on commercial television were ignored. Although the public broadcaster’s coverage of candidates was mostly positive or neutral in tone, it devoted significantly more time to the ruling party than to other parties. In addition, the safety of journalists remains a major concern following a series of recent assaults, intimidation and pressure.

“While the campaign offered voters a wide choice in the run-up to Georgia’s parliamentary elections, which was good to see, that is not enough to bring an election in line with international democratic principles,” said Eoghan Murphy, who headed the ODIHR election observation mission. “The deep polarisation in the country, the undue pressure on voters and civil society, and the tension that we saw on election day demonstrate that much work is still needed.”

The international election observation mission to the parliamentary elections in Georgia totalled 529 observers from 42 countries, composed of 380 ODIHR-deployed experts, long-term, and short-term observers, 60 parliamentarians and staff from the OSCE PA, 39 from PACE, 38 from the NATO PA, and 12 from the EP.

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