

EU Ambassador Pawel Herczyński Discusses Upcoming Elections and EU-Georgia Relations

By Liza Mchedlidze

On October 22, at an event organized by the Social Justice Center and CRRC-Georgia, EU Ambassador to Georgia H.E. Pawel Herczyński addressed the upcoming elections and the state of EU-Georgian relations. The event highlighted findings on judicial oversight of covert surveillance measures in Georgia and the government's promotion of anti-Western narratives on social media.

Ambassador Herczyński underscored the European Union's commitment to fostering civilian oversight of the security sector in Georgia, an essential step outlined in the European Commission's nine steps for progress. "Security sector reform is a long-term process requiring everyone to cooperate, especially regarding parliamentary and judicial oversight of security forces," he noted. "Unfortunately, in the case of Georgia, there is still a lot to be done."

The Ambassador described elections as a "festival of democracy," urging citizens to participate actively. "Please go out, please vote, and please choose a government that would represent your desires, your wishes, your aspirations," he emphasized. He expressed pride in witnessing the large turnout at a rally held on October 20, where he saw numerous flags and many young people advocating for their future. "Young people deserve a better future; they should not have to seek opportunities elsewhere," he stated, reaffirming the importance of creating a conducive en-



vironment for youth in Georgia.

Reflecting on EU-Georgia relations, Herczyński expressed his disappointment that ties are at a "historic low" and that the EU integration process has stalled due to the current government's actions. He urged citizens to make their voices heard, pointing to the recent European referendum in

Moldova as an example of how each vote can be decisive in shaping a country's future.

"Every country that has joined the European Union has had the opportunity for significant advancement. I sincerely hope that this will also be the case for Georgia. However, it is up to you. The decision lies with you," he stressed. Herczyński reassured

attendees that the EU has opened its doors for Georgia but emphasized that the responsibility to step through those doors lies with the Georgian people.

When asked about the EU's plans to cooperate with the ruling Georgian Dream party in the event of its electoral victory, the Ambassador responded, "The European Union will respect

whatever choice is made by the Georgian people. It is not for the EU to make political decisions before, during, or after elections. I have full trust in the choice of the Georgian people. Provided the elections are free and fair, we will respect the outcome and work with any democratically elected government of Georgia."

TI – Georgia Reports Alarming Decline in Democratic Norms Ahead of Parliamentary Elections

By Liza Mchedlidze

Transparency International Georgia (TI Georgia) has raised alarm over the declining state of democracy in Georgia from 2020 to 2024, just ahead of crucial parliamentary elections. In its latest report, the watchdog pointed to deepening corruption, a compromised judiciary, ineffective parliamentary oversight, and increasing challenges for the media.

TI Georgia warned that state capture has intensified, with corruption at high levels now bordering on kleptocracy. The report highlights that the Anti-Corruption Bureau, established to tackle corruption, has itself become ineffective and compromised.

The report criticized the growing control of the judiciary by a small group linked to the government, referring to this influence as "clan rule." U.S. sanctions against several influential judges have further revealed the extent of corruption. TI Georgia also notes that the government has used the judiciary to target

peaceful protesters, opposition politicians, and critical media, while failing to implement the European Union's recommended judicial reforms.

TI Georgia's findings also pointed to significant shortcomings in parliamentary oversight, which they say primarily serves narrow political interests. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Parliament reportedly avoided properly overseeing the actions of the executive branch. Oversight of the security sector remains largely symbolic, and barriers have been created to prevent opposition parties from holding the government accountable.

The watchdog expressed concern over the increasingly hostile environment for journalists in Georgia. Journalists have faced threats, violence, and in some cases, death, while critical media owners and founders have been targeted by legal actions. TI Georgia called attention to restrictive laws that have made it harder for independent journalists to work freely.



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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.7262; Euro - 2.9514; GBP - 3.5378; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.8281; Swiss Franc - 3.1491

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

What Happens After the Elections: Three Possible Scenarios

As the October 26 parliamentary elections approach, there is growing interest in what the outcome will be and what will happen on October 27. This question is not only on the minds of people within Georgia but also of foreign observers, including long-time friends of Georgia and openly aligned supporters of the ruling Georgian Dream party. Both the ruling Georgian Dream and the so-called “radical opposition,” as labelled by the current government, are confidently predicting their future victory. However, we should not rule out more complicated “intermediate” scenarios.

Let’s begin with the Georgian Dream’s desired scenario. The leaders of the ruling party unanimously talk about their party’s 60% rating and the inevitability of securing a constitutional majority in the next parliament. A recent survey by the research organisation “Gorbi” indeed reported a 59.5% rating for them, which sparked mocking reactions from the opposition.

What will happen if the Central Election Commission announces results in line with this prediction for Georgian Dream? According to other polls, which the opposition finds more credible, Georgian Dream’s rating

hovers around 30%, meaning the ruling party would not win the elections. In case the Georgian Dream rigs the elections, naturally, the opposition would call for protests, and it’s likely that the West would not recognize these results. New sanctions would be imposed on the Georgian Dream, and Georgia’s European prospects would be taken off the table. The government, meanwhile, would turn to repression to quash the protests, following the example of Lukashenko’s Belarus. The so-called radical opposition would once again be accused of attempting a Western-backed revolution, leading to the “natural” banning of the “collective United National Movement” — in other words, all pro-Western political parties. This has already been hinted at multiple times by Bidzina Ivanishvili, who referred to it as “cleansing the political system” and “liberation from Western agents”. If the Georgian Dream manages to pull this off, this kind of isolated regime could survive in Georgia as long as Putin’s rule continues in Russia.

The second scenario is being

discussed by the pro-Western opposition. According to this scenario, Georgian Dream may come in first in the elections but would only secure around 30% of the vote, forcing them into opposition. The government would be formed by parties that Georgian Dream labels as the “radical opposition” or the “collective United National Movement.” These parties include alliances around the United National Movement, Lelo, and Akhali, as well as Gakharia’s party. They have already signed the charter proposed by President Zurabishvili, and after their victory, they plan to swiftly fulfil the European Union’s 9 recommendations in order to start EU accession talks. They also intend to create conditions for fair elections and hold new parliamentary elections ahead of schedule. This would be ensured by a technical government proposed by President Zurabishvili, made up of specialists. This scenario is likely the most desirable for the country’s progress, but Georgian Dream is not the kind of party that would willingly transition from power to opposition, especially when its leaders

face significant personal risks.

The third, more “intermediate” scenario seems the most likely. Despite their anti-Western rhetoric, Georgian Dream still seeks recognition of the election results by the West and claims to be aiming for EU membership — albeit with “peace, dignity, and prosperity” (as their campaign banners say). They assure voters that “after the war in Ukraine ends,” things will settle down, the “global war party” will calm, and Georgia will restore its “good” relations with the West. Therefore, it’s possible that Georgian Dream will avoid large-scale election fraud and record a more “modest” victory, somewhere in the range of 40-45%. Afterward, the search for additional votes in parliament will begin. There are several possibilities:

- Georgian Dream would receive a significant portion of the votes from parties that fall below the 5% threshold, as allowed by law, making their victory seem more impressive;

- They could form alliances with parties that make it past the 5% barrier, such as the Patriots’ Alliance or Iago

Khvichia’s Girchi;

- They might entice individual parliament members from other parties to switch sides, a tactic Georgian Dream has used successfully in the past.

Through these methods, it may be possible not only to retain power but also to contemplate winning a constitutional majority. In this scenario, protests are inevitable, with the opposition likely boycotting parliament. Georgian Dream would again talk about attempts to stage a revolution and might activate its repressive apparatus, but their main hope would be to wait out the protest wave. They recall the post-2020 election period, when no opposition party entered parliament, but over time, the opposition was individually coaxed into parliament. Back then, European Council President Charles Michel visited Georgia three times, trying to broker an agreement between Georgian Dream and the opposition, genuinely believing that everyone wanted EU membership and the reforms to make it happen.

Soon we will see which of these scenarios will play out.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

PM Kobakhidze Accuses EU Ambassador Herczyński of Violating Election Principles



Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze criticized the EU Ambassador to Georgia, Paweł Herczyński, for what he called the misuse of “administrative resources” regarding the upcoming elections. Kobakhidze claimed that the ambassador’s

source use, which is a clear violation of election principles,” Kobakhidze stated.

He further added, “When a foreign diplomat makes a propaganda call related to elections, it is a blatant violation of election principles, and it represents a kind of administrative resource use.”

Kobakhidze urged diplomats to remain neutral in election matters, stating, “I call on everyone to avoid violating election principles and to speak objectively about the processes in our country.”

These comments were in response to Ambassador Herczyński’s call for Georgian citizens to vote on October 26, saying that the election is crucial for the future of the country.

Gakharia Responds to Ivanishvili’s Warning: ‘This Isn’t the First Time’

The leader of the For Georgia party, Giorgi Gakharia, has responded to recent remarks made by Bidzina Ivanishvili, the honorary chairman of Georgian Dream, describing them as yet another instance of intimidation. In his statement, Gakharia



remarked, “This is not the first threat or act of blackmail from Ivanishvili against me. He has done it before, and now he’s publicly threatening criminal cases and arrests, particularly targeting honest civil servants from my team.”

Gakharia also expressed his full support for his party members, dismissing Ivanishvili’s threats as desperate and irrational. “Ivanishvili seems to be emotionally unstable, making

wild claims that are beyond reason. His threats are empty, and he lacks the resolve to act on them,” he added.

Bidzina Ivanishvili, in a recent interview with Imedi, warned that the members of Gakharia’s party, as well as Gakharia himself, would face strict legal consequences. He claimed that the ruling party has already prepared legal cases against them.

Weather

Wednesday, October 23

Day ☀️ Clear
High: 17°C

Night 🌙 Clear
Low: 6°C

Thursday, October 24

Day ☁️ Partly Cloudy
High: 18°C

Night ☁️ Partly Cloudy
Low: 9°C

remarks were inappropriate and violated election standards.

“The EU ambassador’s evaluation is not objective, and it is very unfortunate. When such biased statements are connected to elections, it’s alarming. This is a form of administrative re-

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