

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Georgia's Opposition Rejects Election Results, Accusing Ruling Party of Fraud

As of October 26, with over 99.97% of precincts counted, the ruling Georgian Dream party has claimed a majority in Georgia's parliamentary elections, securing 53.92% of the vote, as confirmed by the Central Election Commission (CEC). Meanwhile, opposition parties, collectively garnering 37.78%, have firmly rejected the results of the October 26 parliamentary elections, collectively accusing the ruling Georgian Dream party of widespread electoral fraud. Despite the Central Election Commission reporting that Georgian Dream received 53.93% of the vote, opposition parties claim the election results ignore the true will of the people.

The *Unity National Movement*, Georgia's largest opposition party, announced that it would not recognize the results or take seats in Parliament. Party Chair Tina Bokuchava expressed strong discontent, stating, "You remember that we were the first to make a statement yesterday regarding the fact that yesterday's historic elections were stolen by Ivanishvili, that this is a total disregard of the will of the Georgian people, that there was actually a Russian-type special operation against the Georgian people, who chose the European future, and Ivanishvili took this victory away." She added, "Naturally, when we said that we do not recognize the election re-



sults, this of course implies that we are not going to enter the parliament. Therefore, I am sure that there were no question marks at all when it comes to the unity of the national movement."

Similarly, the *Coalition for Changes* bloc has also refused parliamentary mandates, declaring the election results "falsified and illegitimate." Nana Malashkhia, the coalition's top candidate, stated, "We all say together that these elections are rigged and the results are illegitimate. We are not going to legitimize the votes stolen from

the Georgian people, we refuse our own parliamentary mandates. I, Nana Malashkhia, number one on the list, entered politics for ideas and to protect the interests of this country. That's why I am giving up my parliamentary mandate today."

Nika Gvaramia, another leader from the coalition, indicated that the opposition is coordinating with President Salome Zourabichvili to address what they allege is an "orchestrated operation" to secure GD's rule. "We are in close communication with the President of Georgia and

plan to meet with her again," he stated, reaffirming their commitment to "protecting the votes received at the elections."

Meanwhile, *Strong Georgia*, another opposition coalition, reiterated its refusal to accept the election results during an October 27 briefing. Mamuka Khazaradze, one of its leaders, voiced his distrust in the election process and condemned the alleged influence of GD's founder, Bidzina Ivanishvili. "Bidzina Ivanishvili, together with the Russian special services, appropriated yesterday's

elections and took them away from the Georgian people. We will continue to protect the right of our citizens to vote, and to fight so that this country, whose choice is the Euro-Atlantic space, does not take Ivanishvili to Russia. This will not happen," he declared.

Opposition leaders cite numerous issues surrounding the election, including reports of vote-buying, voter intimidation, and procedural tampering, which they claim tilted the results in favor of GD.

Joint Statement of Senior Parliamentarians in Europe and Canada on the Election in Georgia

Our solidarity belongs to the many committed Europeans in Georgia who share our values, strive for freedom, democracy and the rule of law. We remain convinced that Georgia deserves a place in the very heart of a united Europe.

But these elections were neither free nor fair. The political climate in the run-up to the elections was incompatible with European standards of fairness. Candidates were intimidated and threatened, state power was abused, votes were bought. The reports of the international election observer missions clearly confirm this. There is therefore considerable election fraud also through intimidation and vote buying on election day.

The country is more divided than feared between urban and rural regions, young and old.

This election was about Europe or isolation, democracy or authoritarianism, freedom or Russification. Obviously, during the election campaign it did not become clear enough that there can be no continuation of the EU rapprochement with the ruling party and its policies. The policy of the Georgian Dream is simply incompatible with the EU. The perfidious campaign of fear of a "global war party" that makes Georgia a second Ukraine, fell on fertile ground. There is only one "global war party", you should call it by name. Its name is Russia.

Against this background, the European Union cannot recognise the result.

We demand personal sanctions against those responsible for unfair electoral influence, intimidation and threats against the opposition and civil society.

Despite these massive disappointments, we must not now abandon the pro-European parts of society. We should even strengthen civil society exchanges. We reject a collective punishment such as the suspension of visa liberalisation at this time. However, we fear an exodus of the well-educated, pro-European youth. Although we welcome you to the EU, it would be a tragedy for Georgia's European orientation.

We are very concerned about a "Belarusification" of the country. If the ruling party and its leader follow their announcements with actions, there is a threat of persecution and prohibition of the opposition, independent media and critical non-governmental organisations. The EU must make it clear to the governing party that it will not accept this and in this case a complete termination of relations will follow.

We continue to strongly support the efforts of President Salome Zourabichvili to unite the country, to defend democracy, freedom and the rule of law and to preserve and secure the European future of Georgia.

October 27 2024

Michael Roth
Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the German Parliament

European and Canadian Parliamentarians Claim Election Fraud in Georgia

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

In a joint statement released on October 27, 2024, senior parliamentarians from Europe and Canada expressed grave concerns over the integrity of the recent parliamentary elections in Georgia, declaring them neither free nor fair. They emphasized widespread reports of fraud, manipulation, and intimidation in the lead-up to and during the elections.

The parliamentarians stated that the political climate was marked by significant abuses, including threats against candidates, state power being misused, and the buying of votes. They highlighted that international election observer missions confirmed these irregularities, citing instances of election fraud through intimidation and manipulation of the voting process. "This election was about Eu-

rope or isolation, democracy or authoritarianism, freedom or Russification," they declared, framing the electoral contest as a critical choice for the nation's future. They pointed to the ruling Georgian Dream party's tactics, which they argued played on fears of geopolitical instability, linking the situation in Georgia to broader concerns about Russian influence.

The statement asserted that the policies of the Georgian Dream party are fundamentally incompatible with European Union values, further undermining the legitimacy of the election results. Given the circumstances, the European Union stated it cannot recognize the outcome of the elections.

The parliamentarians called for personal sanctions against individuals responsible for electoral misconduct, intimidation, and threats against opposition

parties and civil society. They warned against collective punishments, such as suspending visa liberalization, which could harm the pro-European segments of Georgian society.

Expressing concern about a potential "Belarusification" of the country, they warned of the risk of persecution and suppression of the opposition, independent media, and critical NGOs. They urged the EU to make it clear to the ruling party that such actions would lead to severe consequences, including a complete breakdown of relations.

Despite these challenges, the statement reaffirmed support for President Salome Zourabichvili's efforts to unite the country and uphold democratic principles, emphasizing the importance of safeguarding Georgia's European aspirations amid ongoing turmoil.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

President Zourabichvili Rejects October 26 Election Results, Calls for Public Protest



President Salome Zourabichvili of Georgia has announced that she does not recognize the results of the October 26 elections, labeling them illegitimate. During a briefing at the Orbelian Palace, together with opposition leaders, she called on citizens to gather at Rustaveli Avenue at 7 PM on October 28 to protest the election outcomes.

She expressed gratitude to voters who supported Georgia's European future, stating, "There were lots of you, you won in these elections and no one has a right to take this European future

away from us."

Zourabichvili highlighted significant electoral violations, asserting that "it was impossible to detect them all" and described the events as "a total falsification, a total stealing of votes." She characterized the situation as a "Russian special

operation," calling it a new type of hybrid warfare against the Georgian people. Emphasizing the need for collective action, Zourabichvili urged citizens to gather on Rustaveli Avenue on October 28 to demonstrate their rejection of the election results. "We defend our constitutional right and every vote and our future. It is our right to have just, free and fair elections," she declared.

She also called for international support, stating, "Nothing can make these elections legitimate."

My Vote Claims Systematic Election Rigging in Georgia



My Vote, a coalition of Georgian civil society organizations, has alleged a significant scheme to rig the October 2024 parliamentary elections. According to spokesperson Londa Toloraia, the organization plans to demand the annulment of the official results released by the Central Election Commission, which showed a strong lead for the ruling Georgian Dream party.

Toloraia emphasized that election day was marred by serious violations, indicating that the irregularities observed were part of a broader strategy to manipulate the results. Key issues included the improper issuance of multiple ballots to voters, instances of ballots pre-marked

for the ruling party, and the compromising of voter verification processes. The group highlighted a pattern of in-

timidation and obstruction faced by their observers, including physical attacks and aggressive behavior from unauthorized individuals. They reported numerous violations, such as inadequate space and staffing at overseas voting precincts, and claimed that these actions collectively contributed to securing votes for the ruling party.

According to My Vote, by the end of the day, they documented 347 marking violations, 89 instances of breaches of voting secrecy, and 341 unauthorized individuals in polling stations, along with many other serious infractions that raise concerns about the integrity of the electoral process.

Statement by the European Commission and the High Representative Josep Borrell on the Parliamentary elections in Georgia

On Saturday 26 October, Georgian citizens voted in Parliamentary elections.

The EU has been following the developments leading to the parliamentary elections closely. Over the past months, the people of Georgia have demonstrated their attachment to democratic values and their country's EU path.

According to the preliminary findings and conclusions of the International Election Observation Mission led by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), "election day was gen-



employees, remained widespread in the campaign. This, coupled with extensive tracking of voters on election day, raised concerns about the ability of some voters to cast their vote without fear of retribution."

Moreover, election observers report an uneven level playing field, a divisive campaign in polarised atmosphere and significant concerns over the impact of recent legislative amendments on this election process.

We call on the Central Election Commission of Georgia and other relevant authorities to fulfil their duty to swiftly, transparently and independently investigate and adjudicate electoral irregularities and allegations thereof. Those irregularities must be clarified and addressed. That is a necessary step to rebuilding trust in the electoral

process.

The EU looks forward to the final OSCE/ODIHR report and recommendations, which should be implemented as soon as possible.

Constructive and inclusive dialogue across the political spectrum is now paramount. In line with the European Council Conclusions of 17 October, the EU calls on Georgia to adopt democratic, comprehensive and sustainable reforms, in line with the core principles of European integration.

In this context, the EU recalls that any legislation that undermines the fundamental rights and freedoms of Georgian citizens and runs counter to the values and principles upon which the EU is founded, must be repealed.

erally procedurally well-organised and administered in an orderly manner but marked by a tense environment, with frequent compromises in vote secrecy and several procedural in-

consistencies, as well as reports of intimidation and pressure on voters that negatively impacted public trust in the process. Reports of pressure on voters, particularly on public sector em-

Weather

Monday, October 28

Day ☀️ Clear
High: 16°C

Night 🌙 Clear
Low: 4°C

Tuesday, October 29

Day ☀️ Clear
High: 18°C

Night 🌙 Clear
Low: 5°C

published by

The Messenger

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All contributions should be submitted by e-mail.

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Celebration of the National Day of Hungary

On the occasion of the National Day of Hungary commemorating the 1956 Hungarian Revolution the Ambassador of Hungary, H.E. Anna Mária Sikó and Mr. Robert Christopher Summerfield held a reception on October 23.

On October 24, a special event was held to celebrate Hungarian Day at IArt Gallery, cultural festivities, including cultural and political presentations, opening of the exhibition and traditional Hungarian music.





