

Zourabichvili Calls for New Elections Amid Growing Political Tensions in Georgia

By Liza Mchedlidze

On November 18, Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili presented her evaluation of the October 26 parliamentary elections and outlined an anti-crisis plan in response to the country's growing political instability. In a briefing held at the President's administration, Zourabichvili reiterated her stance that the elections were illegitimate, warning that the current situation risks further destabilizing Georgia.

Zourabichvili characterized the political climate as increasingly polarized and stressed that the risks of both domestic and external destabilization were rising. She noted that the deepening political divide and the government's current isolation from international partners could trigger significant challenges for Georgia.

"We face serious threats," Zourabichvili declared. "One such threat is destabilization. This could stem from dualism and polarization. Political destabilization can lead to external destabilization, and this danger increases when the country, instead of maintaining close relations with its partners, chooses



isolation, as is the case with the current government. As the president, I cannot allow this, and I will not allow it."

The President proposed that the only viable solution to this political crisis is the holding of new elections. However, she

stressed that this would depend on resolving a series of key issues, including the need for an international investigation into the electoral process, the formation of a new election administration, and amendments to the election code based on OSCE-

ODIHR recommendations.

"The timeline for new elections depends on the resolution of several issues," Zourabichvili explained. "First, we need an international investigation. With international support, we must establish a new election admin-

istration, amend the election code, and implement procedures for opening precincts abroad. A special court should also be created for election disputes."

In the meantime, Zourabichvili suggested that the political environment should revert to the conditions that existed before October 26. She emphasized that no new elections, parliamentary sessions, or even presidential elections should take place until these critical issues are addressed.

"Until the elections are held, the status quo should remain. This means no new actions should be taken by the government, parliament, or any other state body," she said.

Zourabichvili also underscored the importance of public protest in driving change. She called on Georgian society to continue pushing back against what she views as an illegitimate government, emphasizing that only through active and politically mature protest can Georgia move forward.

"Without your protest, my efforts will be meaningless," she stated. "A politically mature protest is essential for this process. It's time for society to stand firm."

Georgian Opposition Urges EU to Intervene Over Alleged Election Fraud

By Liza Mchedlidze

In a letter addressed to EU High Representative Josep Borrell and Foreign Ministers of EU member states, Georgia's pro-European opposition parties have raised serious concerns over the October 26 parliamentary elections, calling for decisive international action.

The opposition claims that the elections, which they argue were marred by widespread fraud and manipulation, have undermined Georgia's democratic future and European integration. According to the letter, had the elections been free and fair, opposition parties collectively would have secured 52% of the popular vote.

The letter outlines several alleged irregularities, including compromised ballot secrecy in over 120,000 cases, fraudulent voter identification practices, and potential identity theft affecting approximately 50,000 voters. The opposition also highlighted that 82% of election commission members reportedly have ties to the ruling Georgian Dream party.

"Georgia's President, Salome Zourabichvili, described the election as 'an attempt of a Russian takeover,' refusing to convene the first parliamentary session as required by the Constitution," the letter states. The opposition warns of a looming constitutional crisis as Georgian Dream prepares to bypass the President and convene Parliament.

The letter draws parallels between the alleged electoral fraud in Georgia and tactics observed in Belarus and Russia, accusing the ruling party of undermining democratic processes to consolidate power. It also highlights concerns over the potential election of Georgia's next President by Parliament, which could further strengthen the influence of Bidzina Ivanishvili, the billionaire widely seen as the country's de facto leader.

The opposition has called on the EU to take immediate steps, including:

1. Initiating an international assessment of the



To: Josep Borrell Fontelles - High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the EU Member States: Alexander Schallenberg, Hadja Lahbib, Ivan Kondov, Gordan Grlić Radman, Constantinos Kombos, Jan Lipavský, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, Margus Tsahkna, Elina Valtonen, Jean-Noël Barrot, Annalena Baerbock, Giorgos Gerapetritis, Péter Szijjártó, Micheál Martin, Antonio Tajani, Baiba Braže, Gabrielius Landsbergis, Xavier Bettel, Ian Borg, Caspar Veldkamp, Radosław Sikorski, Paulo Rangel, Luminița Odobescu, Juraj Blanár, Tanja Fajon, José Manuel Albares Bueno, Maria Malmer Stenergard

Your Excellencies,

Given the upcoming EU Foreign Affairs Council discussion regarding the parliamentary elections in Georgia, we would like to share the position of the pro-European opposition parties regarding the political situation in the country. Based on preliminary results and independent analysis, these four parties collectively received 52% of the popular vote, if the elections had been free and fair.

Euro-Atlantic integration is a unifying vision for Georgia, representing our shared aspiration to return our country to Europe-whole and free. However, the October 26 elections have created an insurmountable obstacle for our European future, directly contradicting the Copenhagen criteria for EU membership and the fundamental principles outlined in Georgia's candidate status requirements.

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elections to investigate alleged electoral fraud.

2. Urging the Georgian government not to convene the newly elected Parliament until the investigation is complete.

3. Halting Georgia's EU

accession process due to non-compliance with democratic standards.

4. Suspending financial assistance to the Georgian government and redirecting support to civil society and independent media.

5. Supporting new elec-

tions in 2025 under an improved electoral framework.

The letter emphasizes that failure to address these issues would cement Georgia's status as an "electoral autocracy" and stall its aspirations for EU membership. The opposition parties argue that a clear stance from

the EU is necessary to uphold democratic values and safeguard Georgia's future.

Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze addressed the opposition's recent letter to the European Union, dismissing their appeal as an effort to destabilize Georgia and hinder its

European integration.

Kobakhidze reaffirmed the government's position that the October 26 elections were conducted fairly and accused opposition leaders of seeking external interference to advance their political interests.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

EU to Send Mission to Georgia to Investigate Election Fraud Allegations



The European Union will send a mission to Georgia to investigate allegations of fraud in the country's October 26 parliamentary elections, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Josep Borrell announced after the Foreign Affairs Council meeting on November 18.

Borrell confirmed that the head of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in Georgia

would also be invited to present an assessment of the election irregularities. "We will discuss the irregularities, and the election will have to be investigated," Borrell said, emphasizing the need for

decisive changes from the Georgian government.

Borrell described the conduct of the elections as evidence of Georgia's "democratic backsliding" and accused the ruling Georgian Dream party of steering the country away from its European Union aspirations. "Georgia cannot move forward in its relationship with the European Union [and] will not be able to advance into the European path without

strong changes," he warned.

In his remarks, Borrell reassured the Georgian people of the EU's commitment to their aspirations for integration. However, he criticized the Georgian government's actions, stating, "The door of the European Union will remain open for Georgia, but the course of the government of Georgia... is turning Georgia away from its European Union integration path."

Kobakhidze: Weakening Opposition Essential for Georgia's Growth

Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze, speaking at a government meeting on November 18, emphasized the need to further diminish the influence of the "radical opposition".

"The radical opposition is in a very difficult situation, and this is worsening by the day," Kobakhidze said. "It is important for the country's unhindered development that these processes continue in this direction."

Kobakhidze further claimed that periods of stronger opposition had coincided with weaker national positions. "Weakening the radical opposition is essential to strengthening the country and ensuring its progress in the right direction," he asserted.

His rhetoric intensified as he described opposition leaders as "evil forces" and "people without a motherland". "Their state is so dire that, under different circumstances, we might pity them. But their actions leave no space for sympathy," he added.



EU condemns large Russian missile and drone attack on Ukraine

Weather

Tuesday, November 19

Day Mostly Cloudy
High: 16°C

Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: 7°C

Wednesday, November 20

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 14°C

Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: 5°C



On 17 November, Russia launched a massive missile and drone attack on Ukraine, "terrorising civilians across Ukraine and specifically targeting energy infrastructure, including nuclear, ahead of winter," EU High Representative Josep Borrell said on X.

This was the largest attack in the last three months, with Russia

launching 120 missiles and 90 drones.

"Ukraine needs more air defence - now," Borrell added.

"Air raid in Kyiv lasted 4 hours. Emergency outages imposed. Critical infrastructure hit across Ukraine, also in western part. People killed in two regions. No place is safe in Ukraine," Katarina Mathernova, EU Ambassador to Ukraine wrote on X.

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