

All eyes on Georgia and its European future

4 December 2024

The Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) fears that the accelerating erosion of democratic governance and European values in Georgia brings the country dangerously and, potentially, irreversibly close to Kremlin's orbit.

As warned by the EaP Index findings, 2024 brought upon Georgia an unprecedented series of alarming setbacks that contradict the aspirations of the Georgian people and the constitutional commitment to European integration enshrined in Article 78 of the Georgian Constitution.

The decision of the Georgian Dream-led government on 28 November to suspend the EU accession process and reject EU budgetary support until the end of 2028 has sparked another wave of nationwide protests, lasting for several consecutive nights already. This decision, allegedly influenced by Russian interests, undermines the promise to pursue full integration by 2030 and betrays the will of the majority of Georgian citizens who continue to demand a European future.

The protests have swiftly transformed into a full-blown crackdown on fundamental freedoms, with enforcement authorities forcibly dispersing protestors, beating and detaining hundreds of them.

In light of these ongoing troubling developments, **the EaP CSF Steering Committee:**

- **Stands firmly with Georgian civil society and the nationwide protest movement** and all Georgian citizens, including students, academics, civil servants, non-governmental sector representatives, clerics, youth, and diaspora representatives who have united in their fight to uphold democratic principles and restore Georgia's European path;
- **Supports the leadership of President Salome Zourabichvili**, Georgian diplomats, and other public servants who remain committed to the European future of

Georgia, despite increasing political repression;

- **Rejects the recognition of the results of the parliamentary elections held on 26 October**, and endorses the European Parliament's proposal to have the elections reorganised under international supervision and by an independent election administration;
- **Welcomes the EU's redirection of financial support** (EUR 121 million) from the Georgian government to civil society, as proposed by former High Representative/ Vice President of the European Commission (HR/VP) Josep Borrell during the 18 November Foreign Affairs Council, and calls for the expansion of similar measures by EU Member States and the international community;
- **Appreciates the support of newly appointed EU leaders**, High Representative/ Vice President of the European Commission, Kaja Kallas and Commissioner for Enlargement, Marta Kos, who reaffirmed the EU's commitment to standing with the Georgian people and their choice for a European future;
- **Condemns the growing influence of Russian disinformation and authoritarian tactics adopted by the Georgian Dream**, which aim to subvert Georgia's sovereignty and undermine its democratic institutions.

To reverse Georgia's democratic backsliding, we urge:

- **The Georgian authorities** to cooperate with the EU and international partners to reorganise the parliamentary elections under international supervision with the support of an independent election administration;
- **Following the re-run of the parliamentary elections, the Georgian government** to immediately resume EU accession talks, uphold democratic freedoms, and align with the aspirations of its people for European integration;
- **Following the re-run of the parliamentary elections, the Georgian Parliament** to unconditionally withdraw the laws on "Transparency of Foreign Influence" and "Family Values and Protection of Minors"
- **The Georgian authorities** to immediately and effectively investigate all reported cases of harassment, threats and violence against civil society, media and political opposition that occurred throughout 2024, including at the November-December 2024 protests;
- **The European Union and Member States** to intensify political and financial support for Georgian civil society, rights defenders and media workers, and to impose sanctions on individuals and entities involved in electoral fraud, vote manipulation, and intimidation of voters and observers, as well as state violence against protestors; this includes freezing assets, applying visa restrictions and imposing travel bans;

- **The donor community** to cease all financial support and development assistance programs directed toward Georgian ministries and government agencies and strengthen their support to local civil society in Georgia in a flexible manner as the needs emerge;

The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum remains unwavering in its solidarity with the people of Georgia who continue to resist tyranny, fight for democracy and European values. We stand ready to assist Georgian civil society in restoring their country's rightful place in the European family.

The members of the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

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