



Plenary sitting

B10-0079/2024

4.10.2024

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

pursuant to Rule 136(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the democratic backsliding and threats to political pluralism in Georgia (2024/2822(RSP))

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on behalf of the PPE Group

B10-0079/2024

**European Parliament resolution on the democratic backsliding and threats to political pluralism in Georgia
(2024/2822(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Georgia,
 - having regard to the statement by the High Representative and the Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement of 17 April 2024 on the adoption of the ‘transparency of foreign influence’ law,
 - having regard to the statement by the High Representative of 18 September 2024 on the Georgian law on ‘family values and protection of minors’,
 - having regard to the statement by the European External Action Service Spokesperson of 4 April 2024 on the draft law on ‘transparency of foreign influence’,
 - having regard to the European Council conclusions of 14 and 15 December 2023,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 8 November 2023 entitled ‘2023 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy’ (COM(2023)0690),
 - having regard to the Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part¹,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
 - having regard to the European Convention on Human Rights,
 - having regard to the joint statement by the Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Chair of the Delegation for relations with the South Caucasus and the European Parliament’s Standing Rapporteur on Georgia of 18 April 2024 on the reintroduction of the draft law on ‘transparency of foreign influence’ in Georgia,
 - having regard to Rule 136(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the exercise of freedom of opinion, expression, association and peaceful assembly is a fundamental rights enshrined in the Georgian Constitution;
- B. whereas Georgia, as a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights, as well as a member of the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, has committed itself to the principles of democracy, the rule of law and respect for fundamental freedoms and

¹ OJ L 261, 30.8.2014, p. 4.

human rights;

- C. whereas Article 78 of the Georgian Constitution provides that ‘the constitutional bodies shall take all measures within the scope of their competence to ensure the full integration of Georgia into the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’;
- D. whereas the EU expects Georgia, a candidate country for EU accession, to abide fully by the Association Agreement and other international commitments it has made and, in particular, to fulfil the conditions and take the steps set out in the Commission’s recommendation of 8 November 2023; whereas the European Council decided to grant candidate status to Georgia solely on the understanding that these steps would be taken, including combating disinformation and interference against the EU and its values, engaging opposition parties and civil society in governance, and ensuring freedom of assembly and expression, as well as meaningfully consulting civil society and involving it in legislative and policymaking processes and ensuring that it can operate freely;
- E. whereas on 20 February 2024 the Parliament of Georgia passed amendments to the electoral code, changing the procedure for the election of chairman and so-called professional members of the Central Election Commission and abolishing the post of deputy chairman, which is filled by an opposition representative;
- F. whereas on 4 April 2024 the Georgian Parliament adopted amendments to the country’s electoral code and abolished mandatory parliamentary quotas for women, which required that at least one in four candidates on a party list be of a different gender than the majority;
- G. whereas on 28 May 2024, the Georgian Parliament adopted the so-called transparency of foreign influence law, which requires organisations receiving over 20 % of their funding from abroad to register within two months as ‘organisations pursuing the interests of a foreign power’ and label themselves as such; whereas these organisations are subjected to additional scrutiny, reporting requirements and possibly sanctions, including administrative penalties of up to GEL 25 000; whereas this law seriously restricts media and civil society organisations’ ability to operate freely; whereas adopting this law has led to the suspension of EU financial assistance for Georgia;
- H. whereas on 6 June 2024 the US imposed visa restrictions on dozens of Georgian officials over the adoption of the ‘foreign agents law’;
- I. whereas on 11 July 2024 the US Congress Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted Georgia sanctions legislation known as the Megobari Act, which imposes sanctions against Georgian officials responsible for undermining the country’s democratic system;
- J. whereas on 17 September 2024 the Georgian Parliament passed a law on ‘family values and the protection of minors’, which strips the LGBTI community of its rights and bans Pride events and public displays of the rainbow flag;
- K. whereas a parliamentary election will take place in Georgia on 26 October 2024; whereas there is growing anti-Western and hostile rhetoric from the Georgian Dream party against Georgia’s democratic partners, as well as promotion of Russian

disinformation and manipulation; whereas the Georgian Dream party is pursuing a narrative of the West as a ‘global war party’ trying to push Georgia back into a war with Russia;

- L. whereas on 28 August 2024, the leader of Georgian Dream, Bidzina Ivanishvili, at the inauguration of his party’s electoral campaign, spoke of his desire to ban democratic opposition parties; whereas he was seconded by the Prime Minister, Irakli Kobakhidze, who stated that if their party achieved a majority in the Georgian Parliament, it would ban certain opposition parties;
1. Strongly condemns the adoption of the law on ‘transparency of foreign influence’ and the law on ‘family values and protection of minors’, as well as the changes to the electoral code; considers that the foregoing are incompatible with EU values and democratic principles, run against Georgia’s ambitions for EU membership, damage Georgia’s international reputation and endanger the country’s Euro-Atlantic integration; strongly underlines that unless the abovementioned legislation is rescinded, progress cannot be made in Georgia’s relations with the EU; regrets that Georgia, once a champion of democratic progress with Euro-Atlantic aspirations, has been in a democratic backsliding free fall for a considerable period;
 2. Expects Georgian Dream to respect the will and free choice of the Georgian people in the upcoming parliamentary election and to relinquish power peacefully if defeated; demands that Georgian Dream and its leaders immediately stop the violence, intimidation, hate speech, persecution and repression that it is committing against the opposition, civil society and independent media;
 3. Strongly believes that the EU should consider temporarily suspending its visa-free regime with Georgia if the conduct of the election is not in line with accepted international standards and if Georgia’s fulfilment of the visa liberalisation benchmarks is questioned, in particular the fundamental rights benchmark;
 4. Strongly believes that the upcoming election will be decisive in determining Georgia’s future democratic development and geopolitical choice, as well its ability to make progress with its EU member state candidacy; considers that the result of the Georgian election should allow the country to return to its pro-Western democratic agenda, implement the necessary reforms and launch accession negotiations with the EU;
 5. Reiterates its unwavering support for the Georgian people’s legitimate European aspirations and their wish to live in a prosperous country, free from corruption, that fully respects fundamental freedoms, protects human rights and guarantees an open society and independent media; underlines that the decision to grant Georgia EU candidate country status was motivated by the wish to acknowledge the achievements and democratic efforts of Georgia’s civil society, as well as the overwhelming support for EU accession among its citizens; appreciates the efforts made by Georgia’s President Salome Zourabishvili to return Georgia to the democratic and pro-European path of development;
 6. Deplores the personal role played by Georgia’s sole oligarch Bidzina Ivanishvili, who returned to active politics on 30 December 2023 when he became ‘honorary chairman’ of the Georgian Dream party, in the current political crisis and in yet another attempt to

undermine the country's Western-oriented course in favour of pivoting towards Russia; reiterates its call on the Council and the EU's democratic partners to consider imposing personal sanctions on Ivanishvili for his role in bringing about the deterioration of the political process in Georgia and in working against the interests of its people;

7. Calls for the EU and its Member States to hold to account and impose personal sanctions on all those responsible for undermining democracy in Georgia, who are complicit in the violence committed against political opponents and peaceful protesters and who spread anti-Western disinformation; welcomes the personal sanctions imposed by the US on Georgian Dream officials;
8. Highlights the worrying fact that many recent legislative decisions of Georgian Dream betray the aspirations of the large majority of the Georgian people to live in a democratic society, continue democratic and rule of law reforms, pursue close cooperation with Euro-Atlantic partners and commit to a path towards EU membership;
9. Emphasises that the rights to freedom of expression and assembly and to peaceful protest are fundamental freedoms and must be respected under all circumstances, particularly in a country aspiring to join the EU;
10. Recalls that the European Council of 14 and 15 December 2023 granted Georgia candidate country status on the understanding that the relevant steps set out in the Commission recommendation of 8 November 2023 would be taken; stresses that recently adopted legislation clearly goes against this ambition and has effectively put on hold Georgia's integration into the EU;
11. Urges the Georgian Government to return to its European path, uphold its commitment to respect, strengthen and promote democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, and genuinely engage in the full implementation of the steps required to fulfil the conditions for candidate country status and EU membership, in a spirit of engagement and cooperation with Georgia's civil society and political opposition;
12. Reiterates the tangible opportunities that Georgia would take advantage of once the accession negotiations begin, such as pre-accession assistance that would improve the standard of living of Georgian citizens, as well as support the institutions, infrastructure and social services;
13. Expresses deep concern about the increased influence of Russia in Georgia, the increased number of Russian citizens residing in Georgia, increased trade ties with Russia, and Georgia's willingness to pursue reconciliation with Russia despite Russia's war in Ukraine and its occupation of a fifth of Georgian sovereign territory; calls on the Government of Georgia to impose sanctions against Russia in response to its war of aggression against Ukraine;
14. Reiterates its call on the Georgian authorities to release former President Mikheil Saakashvili from prison;
15. Calls on the Georgian Bureau of Investigation to conduct a thorough investigation of police brutality during the spring protests against the law on 'transparency of foreign

influence' in Georgia;

16. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the President, Government and Parliament of Georgia.