A Georgian Nightmare

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Keso Gigitashvili and Leonie Nienhaus



A Stolen European Dream: How the Illegitimate Georgian Government is Trying Undermining Georgia's European Identity.

Rigged Elections

The adoption of pro-Russian laws comes on top of the party's increasing erosion of democracy. Since coming to power in 2012, the Georgian Dream party has expanded its control over state institutions and security forces as well as of obstructing the work of civil society and independent media.

The most recent attempt to consolidate power can be seen in the falsified parliamentary elections on October 26, 2024. The ruling Georgian Dream party was declared the winner by the Central Election Commission (CEC), securing nearly 54% of the vote. However, independent observers have exposed clear and widespread election fraud, including vote-buying, voter intimidation, compromised voting secrecy, and instances of multiple voting.

Mass Demonstrations and Police Brutality

On November 28, 2024, Irakli Kobakhidze, Georgia's illegitimate prime minister, announced that the process of Georgia's EU accession would be frozen until at least 2028. Kobakhidze's statement effectively signaled a major shift in the country's foreign policy, with many viewing it as a direct pivot toward Russia. The announcement was also a further blow to the pro-European forces in the country, who have long seen EU membership as a vital step for Georgia's political and economic development, but most importantly its freedom from Russian influence.

In response to the rigged elections and the halt of Georgia's EU accession, mass protests have erupted across Georgia, with citizens and opposition groups demanding fair elections, the respect of democratic freedoms and the release of political prisoners. The illegitimate government's violent crackdown on these protests has led to numerous reports of police brutality, including raids on opposition offices and media outlets. So far, over 400 protesters have been detained, including minors, over 300 of whom are said to have been brutally beaten. In addition, more than 50 members of the media were injured.

Another turning point will be the official inauguration of Mikheil Kavelashvili on 29 December, nominated as president by the Georgian Dream. This is expected to be the last working day of the legitimate president Salome Zourabichvili, who has repeatedly stated that she will not leave office until new elections are announced. However, there is little optimism that the ruling party will agree to these demands. In fact, Zourabichvili has even been threatened with the prospect of imprisonment.

International Response

The EU's response toward the Georgian Dream has been criticised as slow and insufficient. On December 18, 2024, Zourabichvili addressed the European Parliament, stating: 'While Georgians are fighting day and night, Europe has been slow to wake up and slow to react. While European flags are banned in Tbilisi, Georgians are still waiting for biting measures from Brussels and Washington.' While the three Baltic states Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have imposed sanctions against Ivanishvili and several high-ranking officials of the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), strict sanctions at EU level are being blocked by Hungary and Slovakia, close allies of Ivanishvili. The only breakthrough so far has been the decision by

the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) to suspend visa-free travel for Georgian's holding diplomatic passports. However, according to Germany's Foreign Minister Baerbock, member states of the EU are considering further measures against the Georgian Dream party.

On the other hand, The US and UK have imposed sanctions on Georgian officials, with the US targeting them under the Global Magnitsky sanctions program. Moreover, on December 27th Bidzina Ivanishvili has been sanctioned by the United States under Executive Order 14024 for actions that undermine democratic processes and institutions, benefiting the Russian Federation. Besides this, the OSCE's final report on Georgia's October 2024 parliamentary elections questions the legitimacy of both the electoral process and the government formed.

Potential Scenarios for Georgia's Future:

There are several possible scenarios for the country's future. As the Georgian Dream continues to consolidate its power, suppress dissent and deepen its rapprochement with Russia, one scenario could mean isolation and a possible 'Belarusification' of the country. Another possibility is the de facto removal of the current illegitimate government, followed by new elections. In response to the ongoing protests and growing international pressure, the Georgian Dream could be forced to resign and call new elections. Indeed, Georgian Civil Society has continued to insist that they will not give up their fight for freedom.

Ultimately, The future of the country remains uncertain and depends to a large extent on international pressure on the illegitimate Georgian Dream-led government. Nevertheless, Georgians are proving every day that they are and have been an integral part of Europe, fighting not only for their own, but for our, European freedom.

As former Georgian Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania impressively expressed at the Council of Europe in 1999: 'I am Georgian, therefore I am European.'

Graphic Major Events

October 26: Falsification of parliamentary elections

November 28: Georgian Dream suspends EU membership talks

November 28: Eruption of mass protests and police violence *

December 2: Sanctions by Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

December 16: Decision of Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) to suspend visa-free travel for Georgian's with Diplomatic Passport

December 27: US sanctions Bidzina Ivanishvili

*over 400 detained including minors, 300 brutally beaten up (Amnesty International, 2024).

Background graphic:

Source: EEAS **https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/european-perspective-georgia_en?s=221**

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