

# 2023 and 2024 Commission reports on Georgia

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Rasa JUKNEVIEN (EPP, LT) on the 2023 and 2024 Commission reports on Georgia.

In December 2023, the European Council granted Georgia candidate status on the understanding that reforms in the areas of democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights would be taken. However, the situation in Georgia has deteriorated significantly with Russia systematically interfering in democratic processes in the country.

Concerns over the direction in which the country is heading and the decision to **pause the efforts to start accession negotiations until 2028** sparked large-scale protests across the country, with protesters demanding new, free and fair elections and an end to political violence and repression.

The report focuses the European Parliament's main concerns regarding the state of democracy, rule of law and European integration of Georgia.

## *Suspension of Georgia's EU integration*

Members strongly condemned the violent repression, arbitrary and politically motivated detention without sufficient legal grounds and the reported systemic torture of peaceful protesters, civil society actors, political opponents and media representatives. They demanded that the Georgian authorities refrain from using force, respect the freedoms of assembly and of expression and annul the recently adopted draconian legislation aimed at stifling popular protests, notably through extortionate fines. The report called for the immediate and unconditional release of political prisoners. It also expressed concern about the lack of independence within the judiciary, with high-placed judges with links to the Georgian Dream overseeing politically motivated court proceedings against peaceful protesters and government critics.

Members stressed the need for an immediate and comprehensive audit of the EU's policy towards Georgia given the ongoing democratic backsliding and the increasingly repressive political and legislative environment that constitutes a regression for many of Georgia's democratic achievements and successful EU reforms, fundamentally weakens democratic institutions and further consolidates power in the hands of the ruling party. They called, in this regard, on the Commission to **review the implementation of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement** in the light of the blatant breach of Georgia's obligations, namely respect for democratic principles, human rights and fundamental freedoms. Non-fulfilment of these obligations may result in the conditional suspension of economic cooperation and the privileges afforded by the Agreement.

The report regretted the fact that the media and information environment is being suppressed and dominated by TV and media outlets supported by Georgian Dream, which spread false narratives about EU integration, thereby emulating and playing into Russian-inspired propaganda and facilitating polarisation in society.

## *Continued backsliding on democracy and the rule of law and the autocratic consolidation of power*

Members reiterated their position that the settlement of the current political and constitutional crisis in Georgia can only be achieved by way of **new parliamentary elections**, which should be held in the next few months in an improved electoral environment, overseen by an independent and impartial election administration and monitored through diligent international and independent domestic observation to

guarantee a genuinely fair, free and transparent process that would reflect the true will of the people. They stressed that it does not recognise the self-proclaimed authorities established by the Georgian Dream party following the rigged parliamentary elections of 26 October 2024.

The report deplored the continued attempts by the ruling Georgian Dream party to persecute political opponents, including through their illegal arrest and detention, threats and physical attacks. It pointed out that the upcoming municipal elections in autumn 2025 present yet another test for the resilience of Georgia's democracy and political pluralism. It called on the opposition to seize the opportunity presented by these elections to reflect the unity of the Georgian people in favour of democracy and the rule of law.

Members commended the work of Georgia's **civil society** in the past months, providing free legal aid, documenting serious human rights violations and taking the lead on domestic and international litigation to seek justice and accountability against a background of continued attacks, the criminalisation of civic space, and disinformation campaigns against the work of civil society.

The report called on the Commission and the Council to review Georgia's **visa-free status**, with the possibility of suspending it if the relevant benchmarks and standards on democratic governance and freedoms are not met because of the ruling party's actions.

#### *Alignment on foreign policy matters*

The report deplored the fact that Georgian Dream is undoing decades of progress towards democracy, the rule of law and Euro-Atlantic integration and is alienating its allies, which had supported it throughout the process. Members regretted that Georgia has made no progress on implementing the EU's recommendations on foreign, security and defence policy and that the level of Georgia's alignment with the EU's common foreign and security policy (CFSP) remains remarkably low, at 49 %, demonstrating its lack of commitment to European integration. They also regretted the fact that misalignment of Georgia's foreign policy is leading to self-isolation and that Georgian Dream's repressive regime is worsening the instability in the South Caucasus region and the Black Sea. Members noted that Georgia, under the current government, is moving in a direction that puts it at risk of becoming a Russian vassal state like Belarus.