

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

TSU Students Demand Accountability Over Police Presence During Protest

A group of Tbilisi State University (TSU) students has issued a statement condemning Rector Jaba Samushia for allegedly facilitating police actions during the November 19 protest. Riot police reportedly used the university campus to stage their operation, crossing through the grounds to disperse demonstrators.

The students accuse the rector of being responsible for "closing the doors of the university for students," "deploying police forces in the historic building," and enabling "violence against students in the yard of the university." While Samushia reportedly proposed a meeting with the students, they insist it should take place in a public forum with critical media present and open participation for all students. "A meeting with the rector can only make sense if it is held in a public space, in the presence of critical media, and all students of the university will have the opportunity to ask questions to the rector," their statement declared.

The incident sparked sharp criticism from university faculty. Political science lecturer Lado Napetvaridze questioned the university's role in the operation, asking, "Can someone explain to me why the riot police were using the university premises to plan the special operation? Where do I work? Am I the TSU lecturer or the MIA officer?"



Iago Kachkachishvili, head of TSU's Sociology Program, called the events a "gross violation of all standards of academic social responsibility" and urged the rector to clarify the situation. Similarly, Salome Dundua, Dean of the Faculty of Social and

Political Sciences, condemned the presence of police on campus, stating, "There is no place for police in the university."

Dundua also voiced broader concerns about the university's mission, writing, "Tbilisi State University has always been, is,

and must remain the institute of transfer of knowledge, education, academic and research experience, and national values. What has happened, in fact, calls into question this purpose and these values and tarnishes its reputation."

The controversy surrounding the police presence on campus has amplified calls for accountability, with both students and faculty demanding answers and action to safeguard academic integrity and the university's independence.

Independent Observers Raise Serious Concerns Over October 26 Parliamentary Elections in Georgia

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

On November 16, three prominent Georgian monitoring organizations: the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED), My Vote, and the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) released a joint assessment of the October 26 parliamentary elections. The report casts a shadow over the credibility of the election, citing large-scale, systemic violations that question the legitimacy of the process.

According to the groups, the elections were marred by coordinated efforts to manipulate the vote in favor of the ruling Georgian Dream party, calling into question the integrity of the results. With more than 3,500 observers deployed across the country, the organizations identified widespread irregularities, ranging from voter intimidation to obstructed observation efforts.

The observers pointed to organized efforts to control voters through intimidation and bribery. Investigations revealed that the Georgian Dream party used "call centers" to mobilize voters on election day, leveraging personal data to coerce participa-

tion. Despite calls for action, law enforcement agencies failed to investigate reports of voter data collection and other irregularities.

The monitoring organizations were systematically hindered from performing their duties. Observers were expelled from polling stations and intimidated, with minimal response from authorities. This lack of accountability allowed election violations to go unchallenged.

The report highlights disturbing instances of voting secrecy violations, including the use of cameras at polling stations and voters taking photos of their ballots to prove their vote. These actions were seen as part of a broader effort to intimidate voters and control the election outcome.

Observers documented irregularities in the marking process, including instances of multiple voting, suggesting deliberate manipulation of the process to inflate support for the ruling party.

The collection of voter data and identity cards before the election, along with efforts to pressure vulnerable voters, laid the



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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.7484; Euro - 2.8998; GBP - 3.4789; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.7361; Swiss Franc - 3.1017

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groundwork for a compromised election day. These actions severely restricted voters' freedom

of choice.

The Central Election Commission (CEC) played a pivotal role in managing election processes, with several changes to regula-

tions before the election designed to facilitate voter manipulation. The CEC's role in facilitating these fraudulent practices, including the installation of sur-

veillance cameras in problematic locations and ignoring proper procedures, further undermined transparency.

The election complaint process, which was supposed to address violations, was criticized for failing to meet international standards. District election commissions and courts routinely dismissed complaints, even in cases where violations were clearly evident. In some instances, appeals courts overturned decisions that had been made in favor of correcting the irregularities.

All three monitoring mis-

sions concluded that the election results could not be considered a legitimate reflection of Georgian voters' will. They argued that the scale and consistency of the violations point to a system rigged by the ruling party, with direct involvement from state institutions such as the CEC, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the State Security Service. The report calls for significant reforms to restore trust in Georgia's electoral system and ensure future elections are free, fair, and transparent.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

President Zourabichvili Discusses Election Concerns with German Bundestag Committee Chair



On November 20, Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili met with Anton Hofreiter, Chairman of the European Affairs Committee of the German Bundestag, during his visit to Georgia.

According to the President's Administration, the discussion focused on the October 26 par-

liamentary elections and the "most serious and systemic violations" reported during the pre-election period and on election day. These issues, the President stated, affected the secrecy of the ballot, the free expression of voters' will, and the universality of the voting process.

President Zourabichvili noted that the elections have not been recognized as free and fair, and Western partners have yet to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Parliament. The conversation also touched on Russia's ongoing hybrid warfare in Georgia and the President's strategy for resolving the political crisis.

Her plan involves mobilizing international support for new elections and pursuing legal methods to challenge the disputed results.

The President concluded by reaffirming the Georgian people's commitment to European Union integration, emphasizing that the European path remains the country's only viable direction.

Investigation Launched into Obstruction of Journalists' Work During Tbilisi Protest

The Special Investigation Service of Georgia has initiated an investigation into incidents of journalists being obstructed while covering a protest rally on November 18-19 in Tbilisi. According to a statement by the Service, the investigation focuses on violations under the first and second parts of Article 154 of the Georgian Criminal Code, which address illegal interference with journalistic activities.

The rally, initially held on Chavchavadze Avenue, later moved to Melikishvili Avenue after police took control of the area near Tbilisi State Univer-

sity. Reports emerged that law enforcement officers physically assaulted several journalists during the dispersal. The Special Investigation Service em-

phasized that all necessary investigative actions are actively underway to address these allegations.



Foreign Affairs Council discusses EU military support for Ukraine

On 19 December, the Foreign Affairs Council, in its Defence configuration, discussed EU military support for Ukraine.

After the EU-27 internal discussion, EU Defence Ministers exchanged views with NATO Secretary-General, Mark Rutte, who joined in person for the first

time, with Ukrainian Defence Minister Rustem Umerov, and with adviser to President Zelenskyy on Strategic Affairs, Alexander Kamyshin (online).

During the discussion, EU High Representative Josep

Borrell said military support from the EU and its member states had now reached more than €45 billion, and that the EU had almost achieved its objective of delivering 1 million artillery ammunition rounds to Ukraine.

"The fate of the Ukrainians will determine the destiny of the European Union. And if Putin is successful in Ukraine, we will pay a very high bill, it will be much more expensive than any kind of military

support that we could provide today," Borrell said.

EU Defence Ministers touched on the European Peace Facility, use of the second tranche of so-called windfall profits (i.e. net profits stemming from revenues accruing to central securities depositories in the EU as a result of implementing the EU's restrictive measures against Russia), and continued training support through the EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine), which so far has trained 65,000 Ukrainian soldiers.

After the Council, Borrell told reporters that he had called on

ministers to reconsider his proposal of establishing a coordination cell in Kyiv, directly under EUMAM: "It is not escalating; it is just putting in Kyiv a cell that could coordinate better our activities with the needs of the Ukrainian armed forces," Borrell said.

He also proposed to ministers that a larger part of the second tranche of the windfall profits that will be available in next March or April, be directed to purchasing military equipment to the benefit of Ukraine directly – "directly to their own industrial capacity".

(euneighbourseast.eu)



Weather

Thursday, November 21

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 16°C

Night Clear
Low: 5°C

Friday, November 22

Day Clear
High: 19°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 7°C

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