

Council of Europe Challenges Georgia's Parliamentary Credentials Over Human Rights Violations

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) has raised concerns about the credentials of Georgia's parliamentary delegation following the October 2024 elections. The Monitoring Committee's report, issued on 28 January 2025, cites violations of freedom of assembly and expression, and a crackdown on opposition and civil society, which it says are inconsistent with Georgia's obligations as a Council of Europe member.

The committee has called for clear assurances from Georgia's authorities that they are committed to reversing democratic backsliding and fulfilling their obligations. Despite these concerns, the committee suggests that the Assembly approve the credentials of the Georgian delegation at the upcoming April 2025 part-session, pending substantial reforms.

The conditions outlined by the committee include:

- Inclusive political process: Georgia must engage in an inclusive dialogue that includes all parts of society.
- Electoral reform: Immediate attention to shortcomings in the 2024 parliamentary elections and preparation for genuinely democratic new elections.
- Ending police brutality: An immediate halt to police violence, with effective investigations into these incidents.
- Freedom of expression: Full respect for the right to peaceful assembly and expression.
- Release of political prisoners: All political prisoners must be released before the April session.



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In addition, the committee has suggested suspending certain rights of the Georgian delegation within the Assembly as a signal of disapproval for the failure to address ongoing human rights abuses.

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UN Human Rights Experts Urge Georgian Authorities to Investigate Police Violence During Protests

BY LIZA MCHEDLIDZE

Independent experts appointed by the United Nations Human Rights Council are calling on the Georgian government to

urgently investigate allegations of excessive force used by law enforcement during protests in November and December 2024. The experts emphasized the need for accountability and concrete

measures to prevent further violence, including allegations of torture, ill-treatment, and arbitrary detention of peaceful demonstrators and media workers. "We have received credible

reports of intentional violence, threats, intimidation, and retaliation against peaceful protesters, human rights defenders, and journalists by law enforcement officials in Georgia, as well as by individuals without uniforms or identifying insignia," the experts stated.

These actions, they stressed, could amount to torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. The experts pointed out that the scale and severity of the incidents, including the widespread use of rubber bullets, water cannons, pepper spray, and other chemical irritants, could be indicative of systemic abuses.

Reports indicate that hundreds of demonstrators were injured, many suffering serious head and facial injuries. A significant number of protesters were arrested and denied access to legal representation or the ability to notify their families of their whereabouts. Allegations also include verbal abuse, physical beatings, threats of sexual violence, and the denial of medical care for those in detention.

While the Special Investigation Service of Georgia has opened an inquiry into the

events, the experts expressed concern over the lack of progress, with many detainees still in custody and no clear outcomes from the investigation so far.

The letter urged Georgian authorities to ensure an independent, impartial, and transparent investigation into the use of force and subsequent treatment of protesters, in line with international standards. They also called for the immediate release of those arbitrarily detained and for the provision of medical care where necessary.

The experts reminded the government that any use of force by security forces must adhere to the principles of legality, necessity, proportionality, and non-discrimination, emphasizing that the right to life and physical integrity must be protected.

In a letter to the Georgian authorities, the experts have requested a report detailing the measures taken to prevent torture and other abuses, particularly during peaceful assemblies and in places of detention, and reiterated their commitment to closely monitoring the situation moving forward.



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Georgia must investigate use of force by police during demonstrations: Experts

28 January 2025

Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.8766; Euro - 3.0014; GBP - 3.5808; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.9406; Swiss Franc - 3.1765

South Caucasus and the New Geopolitical Landscape

By MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

In 2025, the South Caucasus finds itself in a reshaped geopolitical landscape: Georgia, once a key strategic partner of the West in the post-Soviet period, has moved away from Western alignment under the “Georgian Dream”, gravitating instead towards Russia and China. Conversely, Armenia is gradually distancing itself from Russia and seeking closer ties with the West. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan’s leader, Ilham Aliyev, accuses Armenia of being a fascist state and issues threats of renewed conflict.

“Georgian Dream” concluded the year of 2024 openly distancing from the European Union following the contentious October 26 elections. During a briefing held on November 28, 2024, Irakli Kobakhidze announced that they would not place the issue of “opening negotiations with the European Union” on the agenda until the end of 2028 and that they would refuse “any form of budgetary grants from the EU” until that time. In a way, it was a response to the European Parliament’s resolution, which deemed the October 26 parliamentary elections fraudulent. The process of sanctioning “Georgian Dream” leaders by EU member states has already begun.

It is unlikely that relations between the European Union and “Georgian Dream” will be “smoothed over.” Following January 20, there is growing anticipation in Georgia regarding the stance of the United States’ new administration toward Bidzina Ivanishvili’s ruling team. The opposition predicts a tightening of sanctions initiated by the Biden administration, while “Georgian Dream” and its experts hope that President Trump will not have the time to focus on Georgia, thus paying less attention to developments in the country. If this turns out to be the case, “Georgian Dream” will have a chance to “catch its breath” for a little while, which cannot be said in the event of the first scenario.

Recently, Armenia has refrained from participating in events organized within the framework of the CSTO, including military exercises. In February 2024, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announced that Armenia had effectively frozen its participation in the CSTO. He stated that the CSTO failed to fulfill its obligations toward Armenia and, on the contrary, two member states of the organization assisted Azerbaijan during its military operations in Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020. As a result, Armenia suffered defeat in the war in

Nagorno-Karabakh, leading to the exodus of the Armenian population from the region.

According to a recent assessment by Armenia’s Foreign Intelligence Service, it is unlikely that the reasons for freezing Armenia’s CSTO membership will disappear in 2025. Clearly, this stance has provoked dissatisfaction within Russia’s leadership.

Armenia is also cautiously distancing itself from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Eurasian Union. At the end of December 2024, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan did not attend the informal CIS summit in Russia or the Supreme Economic Council meeting of the Eurasian Economic Union. The Armenian Prime Minister cited illness from COVID-19 as the reason for his absence.

In parallel with distancing itself from Russia, Armenia is working to establish new foreign policy priorities. Specifically, following its defeat in Karabakh, the country is striving to strengthen ties with the European Union and initiate integration processes. On January 9, 2025, the Armenian government approved a draft law titled “On Initiating the Republic of Armenia’s Accession Process to the European Union.” The draft will soon be discussed in Armenia’s parliament and is

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On January 15, 2025, Armenia’s Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken signed a strategic partnership agreement in Washington. The agreement aims to expand cooperation in areas such as the economy, security and defense, and democracy.

During the signing ceremony, Blinken announced the creation of a Strategic Partnership Commission to oversee the implementation of the agreement. He also emphasized that efforts are underway with Armenia to strengthen the country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In the fall of 2024, it seemed likely that a peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan would be signed, potentially re-

solving the long-standing conflict between the two countries. However, on January 7, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev stated in an interview with local television that Armenia poses a threat to the region and that its military armament could lead to new tensions.

Aliyev also called on France and other countries supplying weapons to Armenia to cancel their contracts and reclaim the arms already delivered. Predictably, neither Armenia nor its partners will comply with this demand. Armenia’s government has repeatedly emphasized that maintaining a combat-ready army is a sovereign right of the country.

The demand for Armenia’s disarmament was followed by threats of a new war. According to Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, Armenia, as an independent state, is essentially a “fascist state” because it was governed for nearly 30 years by leaders with “fascist ideology,” which shaped the country accordingly. Aliyev asserted that Azerbaijan remains a neighbor to a fascist state, and this threat has not disappeared. “Therefore, fascism must be eradicated. Either Armenia’s leadership will eliminate it, or we will. There is no other option,” Aliyev declared.

Hopefully, this is just posturing and won’t derail the prospects for peace.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Doctors Urge Immediate Medical Access to Mzia Amaglobeli Amid Hunger Strike



Doctors in Adjara have raised urgent concerns over the health

of Mzia Amaglobeli, who has been on a hunger strike for 17 days in prison. At a special briefing, they warned that continued fasting without food could lead to severe, life-threatening health complications.

The doctors explained that after 17 days of drinking only water, Amaglobeli’s body is in a critically low energy state, heightening the risk of organ failure, particularly in the heart, kidneys, and liver. They warned that brain function could weaken, potentially leading to loss of consciousness, coma, or even death. Electrolyte imbalances may cause heart arrhythmias, muscle spasms, and other serious issues, while her immune system becomes increasingly vulnerable to infections.

The doctors also highlighted the potential for mental health

problems such as depression and aggression. They stressed that while Amaglobeli’s life might still be saved, irreversible health damage is becoming a significant concern.

In their statement, the doctors demanded immediate medical access to Mzia Amaglobeli: “Our demand is that reliable, qualified, multidisciplinary doctors, whether in a consilium or in another form, immediately be allowed to see Mzia Amaglobeli. Each of us standing here is ready to see Mzia Amaglobeli, following the appropriate protocol. Freedom for Mzia! Freedom for political prisoners! Freedom to Georgia from dictatorship!”

EU Ambassador Urges Action Amid Georgia’s Deepening Political Crisis

EU Ambassador to Georgia Pawel Herczyński condemned Georgia’s ongoing political crisis, highlighting human rights violations, violence, and a loss of



trust in the judicial system. He emphasized that the EU is working on sanctions against those responsible but noted that unanimity among EU member states is still lacking.

Herczyński pointed out that despite Georgia being granted EU candidate status, relations have worsened. He stressed the importance of Georgia’s authorities engaging with citizens to address the political crisis and fulfill their European aspirations.

The EU recently suspended visa liberalization for Georgian officials and is considering per-

sonal sanctions for those involved in repression and violence. Herczyński clarified that these measures are meant to target responsible individuals, not the Georgian people.

The Ambassador expressed outrage over the case of journalist Mzia Amaglobeli, who has been on hunger strike while facing pre-trial detention. He criticized the lack of accountability for those responsible for violence against journalists and protesters.

Protests have continued for over two months, with no action taken against those responsible for the violence. Herczyński called out the government for its refusal to listen to the people, urging them to seek a resolution to the crisis.

Despite the crisis, Herczyński praised the resilience of the Georgian people and their commitment to a European future. He reiterated EU support for Georgia’s democratic values, warning that the country’s civil society and governance are under attack.

Weather

Wednesday, January 29

Day Clear
High: 11°C

Night Clear
Low: -1°C

Thursday, January 30

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 11°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: -1°C

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