

Georgia's elections marred by uneven playing field, pressure and tension, but voters offered wide choice: observers



Pascal Allizard, Pia Kauma and Roberto Montella speak to the press on 26 October 2024.

While voters were offered a choice and candidates could generally campaign freely, Georgia's parliamentary elections were marred by polarization and widespread reports of pressure on voters, international observers said in a statement on Sunday. Observers noted a significant imbalance in financial resources and other advantages that contributed to an uneven playing field. In the run-up to the elections, numerous civil society organizations reported on the stigmatizing impact of the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence, together with incidents of attacks and intimidation, which impacted their ability to carry out their work.

"Imbalances in financial resources, a divisive campaign atmosphere, and recent legislative amendments were of significant concern throughout this election process," said Pascal Allizard (France), Special Co-ordinator and leader of the OSCE short-

term observer mission. "Yet the engagement shown on election day—from the active voter participation, robust presence of citizen and party observers, and rich diversity of voices—gives the sign of a system that is still growing and evolving, with a democratic vitality under construction."

Observers found the legal framework to be adequate for holding democratic elections but that some previous positive changes were reversed by recent amendments.

"While we commend the largely peaceful election, the decline in female candidates due to the removal of gender quotas is a setback for diversity, especially as women's active participation at polling stations highlights their vital role and demand for greater representation," said Pia Kauma (Finland), Head of the OSCE PA delegation. "With the recent adoption of the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence, I hope its implications for freedom of association and expression will be re-evaluated in the next parliament to protect civil society's vital work in Georgia and ensure all voices are heard."

Joined by Secretary General Roberto Montella, a team of more than 60 parliamentarians and staff from the PA observed the elections in Georgia, working closely with the OSCE/ODIHR, PACE, NATO PA, and the European Parliament.

Voters lacked choice in Uzbekistan's technically well-prepared parliamentary elections: observers

Uzbekistan's 27 October parliamentary elections took place amid ongoing reforms but the political environment remained constrained, not providing voters with a genuine choice, international observers said in a preliminary statement released on Monday. Fundamental freedoms remain disproportionately limited both by legislation and in practice, the statement says.

"These elections were held under a new mixed electoral system, reflecting significant constitutional amendments and a revised electoral code as part of Uzbekistan's ongoing reform efforts," said Azay Guliyev (Azerbaijan), Special Co-ordinator and leader of the OSCE short-term observers. "While these reforms represent progress in enhancing human rights provisions, significant challenges remain."

While the election-related laws have gradually evolved and the elections were technically well-prepared, significant challenges in meeting international standards persist in such areas as political party registration, the right to stand, campaign finance transparency, citizen observation, and the publication of polling station results.

"In a landscape where the five registered parties share a



Post-election press conference in Tashkent, 28 October 2024

common support for government policies, voters were not presented with genuine alternatives. This further highlights a need to foster a more dynamic and competitive political environment to truly represent citizens' voices," said Sargis Khandanyan (Armenia), Head of the OSCE PA delegation. "At the same time, the increased gender quota for parliamentary candidates marks a positive development."

Nearly 60 OSCE PA observers from 25 countries deployed to Uzbekistan to observe the parliamentary elections, working closely with the OSCE/ODIHR mission led by Douglas Wake.

Op-ed published ahead of OSCE PA's US election observation mission

President Pia Kauma, who is serving as Special Co-ordinator of the OSCE short-term observer mission to the US general elections next week, has published an op-ed at Medium.com: <https://bit.ly/4houQ11>

Some 150 members of parliament from more than 40 countries are travelling to the United States to observe the 5 November general elections, led by Head of Mission Pere Joan Pons (Spain).

Kauma and Raidma represent PA at International Crimea Platform in Riga

OSCE PA President Pia Kauma (Finland) and Head of the OSCE PA's Estonian Delegation Mati Raidma represented the PA at the Third Parliamentary Summit of the International Crimea Platform last week in Riga, conveying the PA's contribution in ensuring full respect of Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. Kauma and Raidma condemned Russia's actions and reiterated the PA's calls for full accountability and justice.



Mati Raidma and Pia Kauma in Riga on 24 October 2024

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