

Police in Georgia Arrest Dozens in Clash With Pro-EU Protesters

By [Irakli Metreveli for AFP](#)

November 29, 2024



Demonstrators with the flag of Georgia (L) and the European Union gather to protest in front of Georgia's parliament in central Tbilisi. **Giorgi Arjevanidze / AFP**

Police in Georgia arrested dozens of people overnight and early Friday in a violent crackdown on protests against the government's decision to delay EU membership talks.

The Black Sea nation has been rocked by turmoil since the ruling party declared victory in October parliamentary elections that the pro-EU opposition decried as falsified.

On Thursday night and Friday morning, riot police deployed rubber bullets, tear gas and water cannons to disperse gatherings outside parliament in Tbilisi, beating peaceful protesters and journalists, an AFP reporter witnessed.

The interior ministry said 32 of its staff were injured and "43 individuals were detained by law enforcement for disobeying lawful police orders and for petty hooliganism."

Thousands of people took to the streets after Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze of the ruling Georgian Dream party announced the Caucasus country would not pursue membership of the European Union until 2028.

Embed:

После ночной акции протеста в Тбилиси задержаны 43 человека, пострадали 32 сотрудника полиции — МВД Грузии

Противостояние демонстрантов и полиции продлилось всю ночь. Только к 7 утра полиция окончательно смогла оттеснить протестующих с проспекта Руставели к площади Первой... pic.twitter.com/GH3idWC1Z0

— SOTA (@Sota_Vision) [November 29, 2024](#)

The opposition has accused Georgian Dream of steering Tbilisi away from its long-held dream of joining the bloc and gravitating towards Russia.

Two politicians from the opposition Coalition for Change, Elene Khoshtaria and Nana Malashkhia, were reportedly injured during the protests.

Khoshtaria sustained a broken arm, while Malashkhia suffered a broken nose, the coalition said.

Prominent poet Zviad Ratiani was among those arrested, the PEN writer's association in Georgia said, demanding his immediate release.

Post-election crisis

Opposition lawmakers are boycotting the new parliament, while Georgia's pro-EU president Salome Zurbishvili has sought to annul the election results through the country's constitutional court.

The prime minister's announcement to delay EU accession came hours after the European Parliament adopted a non-binding resolution rejecting the results of Georgia's Oct. 26 elections, alleging "significant irregularities."

The resolution called for a new vote within a year under international supervision and for sanctions to be imposed on top Georgian officials, including Prime Minister Kobakhidze.

Accusing the European Parliament of "blackmail," Kobakhidze said: "We have decided not to bring up the issue of joining the European Union on the agenda until the end of 2028."

But he pledged to continue implementing reforms, saying: "By 2028, Georgia will be more prepared than any other candidate country to open accession talks with Brussels and become a member state in 2030."

On Thursday, Georgian Dream MPs voted unanimously for Kobakhidze to continue as prime minister.

But constitutional law experts say any decisions made by the new parliament are invalid, because it is still awaiting a court ruling on Zurabishvili's bid to annul the election results.

On Wednesday, the ruling party nominated far-right politician and former football international Mikheil Kavelashvili for the largely ceremonial post of president, further ratcheting up tensions.

The former Soviet country officially gained EU candidate status in December 2023, an aspiration that is supported by 80% of the population, according to polling.

But earlier this year Brussels froze Georgia's accession process, citing the need for Tbilisi to address what it says is democratic backsliding.

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