



Statement on Georgia's Parliamentary Election

On October 26th, Georgians will be heading to the polls to take part in the country's Parliamentary Election, recognized by many as a choice between securing the country's democratic and European future or allowing the current government to continue undermining the rule of law and state institutions. As the election approaches, Kremlin-backed oligarchs are funnelling resources to their political proxies in Georgia to guarantee the victory of the ruling Georgian Dream, a Russophile and Eurosceptic political party.

During this year's campaign, the Georgian Dream has adopted aggressively authoritarian rhetoric, promising to ban several opposition parties, including the United National Movement, if it wins the election. The party's founder and Honorary Chairman, oligarch Bidzina Ivanishvili, promotes his party's pro-Russian vision to voters by threatening that, if the country strengthens its ties to the United States and European Union, Georgia will be dragged into an unwanted war with Russia. For most Georgians, the experience of war is all too familiar. During the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, Moscow illegally annexed the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which remain under Russian occupation.

While the Georgian Dream seeks to use fear to manipulate voters, there have been numerous reports of government officials and Kremlin proxies seeking to intimidate members of opposition parties, journalists, and voters, with threats ranging from job loss to physical violence. Earlier this year, the government's public repression efforts saw it overriding a presidential veto to pass its "foreign agents" bill, forcing individuals, independent groups, and media outlets to register as "agents of foreign influence" if they receive more than 20% of their funding from foreign donations. This legislation, modelled after Russia's own law, was designed to suppress free and legitimate civic discourse, accelerating the country's democratic backsliding.

The IDU unequivocally supports the Georgian opposition in its fight to guarantee free and fair parliamentary elections, a cornerstone of all democratic societies. We condemn in the strongest terms, the Russian regime's continued infringement of Georgia's national sovereignty and we express our gratitude to our Georgian member-party, the United National Movement, for courageously rising to the challenge of defending democracy and freedom for all Georgians, despite the government's unprecedented efforts to suppress them. The IDU wishes the UNM a great outcome in the election and a prosperous, democratic future for Georgia.