

NDI Presents Preliminary Statement on Georgian Elections and Finds Pre-Election Period Flawed

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- *The delegation calls on the Government to Embrace Political Pluralism*

TBILISI- The National Democratic Institute (NDI) international election observation mission (IEOM) deployed to the October 26 parliamentary elections in Georgia presented its preliminary findings and recommendations today.

The delegation, which included 22 short-term and six long-term observers from 15 countries, was led by the Honorable Tom Malinowski, former United States Congressman and former Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; Ambassador Per Eklund, former European Union Ambassador to Georgia; and Dr. Tamara Cofman Wittes, NDI's President.

“We have seen claims and counterclaims regarding the election's outcome, including legitimate concerns about the fairness of the overall election process. The primary domestic observer group, The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED), is still finalizing the detailed report of its parallel vote tabulation, which we urge everyone to respect. We have great confidence in this methodology, which has been used in more than fifty countries, and in the integrity and care with which ISFED is carrying it out.”

Election assessment demands scrutiny not only of events on the day a country votes but on all aspects of the process leading up to election day. The NDI report notes that the pre-election period was compromised by widespread threats, harassment and, in some cases violence, affecting voters, activists, and political actors.

“While Georgia's 2024 parliamentary elections saw greater turnout than the last two elections, demonstrating Georgian citizens' commitment to the democratic process, it is clear that the pre-election period failed to meet fundamental standards for democratic elections,” said Ambassador Eklund. “State-sponsored efforts to discredit election observers, legislation targeting civil society, and voter intimidation reported by observers both leading up to and on election day severely undermined the fairness of the process.”

According to the NDI observers deployed across ten regions in the country, voting largely proceeded in compliance with the law. However, citizen observer groups reported a significant increase in serious violations from the previous elections, including incidents of violence and ballot stuffing.

“The Georgian people have clearly expressed the value they place on their democratic path. Georgian political actors must move beyond their winner-take-all mentality and commit to pluralism to advance this path. Georgia’s governing party carries a special responsibility in this respect.” said Dr. Wittes. “The government must maintain political neutrality, allow peaceful protests, and protect the ability of all Georgians to participate in political life.”

The NDI observation mission believes it is urgent and essential for Georgian stakeholders to address electoral integrity shortcomings and rebuild public confidence. The statement presented today is preliminary in nature and, in the spirit of international cooperation, offers recommendations to promote pluralism and inclusive elections in the country.

The delegation arrived in Tbilisi on October 21, and held meetings with political leaders, election officials, senior government officials, representatives of civil society organizations, the media, and the diplomatic community.

NDI has organized more than 250 international observation missions or assessments in every region of the world, including 11 elections in Georgia since 1992. NDI expresses its appreciation to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which has funded the work of the delegation.

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NDI is a non-profit, non-partisan, non-governmental organization that works in partnership around the world to strengthen and safeguard democratic institutions, processes, norms and values to secure a better quality of life for all. NDI envisions a world where democracy and freedom prevail, with dignity for all.

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