

Georgia: Widespread protests following the suspension of EU accession negotiations | Credendo

Event

Last week, Prime Minister and leader of the Georgian Dream party, Irakli Kobakhidze, decided to suspend Georgia's EU accession process until 2028 to "defend Georgia's sovereignty". He criticised the EU's demand to abolish the law on foreign agents and anti-LGBTQ+ policies. He also accused the EU of meddling in Georgia's elections. Despite the suspension, he reaffirmed Georgia's willingness to join the EU, as stated in the Georgian constitution.

Moreover, PM Kobakhidze called for Georgia's President Salome Zourabichvili, a pro-EU opposition figure, to step down when her term officially ends on 16 December. However, she vows to remain in office, as she alleges that the parliament is not legitimate and therefore cannot elect a new president. Her accusations relate to the parliamentary elections held in October. According to official results, the Georgian Dream party won the majority of the votes, but the opposition and the EU expressed concerns about the legitimacy of the results amid reports of intimidation and fraud at voting stations. As a result, the EU parliament called for the organisation of new elections and the imposition of sanctions against Georgia's Prime Minister and high-level officials.

Impact

Thousands of protesters have taken to the streets to protest against the government's decision to freeze EU accession talks. The police special forces have been deployed to contain the widespread protests, leading to allegations of use of violence to stem countrywide protests. Several Western countries have condemned the use of violence against protesters and the suspension of the EU accession process. For instance, the USA suspended its Strategic Partnership with Georgia. Russia, on the other hand, blamed foreign forces for trying to destabilise the country.

These widespread protests resonate with the protests against the foreign agents law enacted in May this year and with the Maidan protests in Ukraine, which resulted in the ousting of the then pro-Russian Ukrainian President Yanukovich and the outbreak of the Ukraine-Russia war (with the annexation of Crimea and the war in the Donbass). In this context, the outlook remains very uncertain, implying that Credendo has a negative outlook for Georgia's ST and MLT political risk ratings.

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