

European Parliament Renew Group statement on the Georgian government's decision to halt EU integration and violent crackdown on peaceful demonstrations

We deeply regret the Georgian government's decision yesterday to suspend its application of 3 March 2022 to join the European Union and to halt the European Union integration process—a move that goes against the Constitution of Georgia and starkly contradicts the will of the Georgian people, who have consistently expressed their strong pro-European aspirations. This decision further undermines Georgia's democratic progress and attempts to deprive its citizens of a prosperous future rooted in European values of freedom, democracy, and the rule of law. We strongly condemn the actions authorized by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and carried out by the police against peaceful demonstrators who gathered in Tbilisi last night in the aftermath of the government's decision to voice their support for EU integration. The dispersal of peaceful citizens using water cannons containing chemical irritants, tear gas, and pepper spray is a flagrant violation of their constitutional right to peaceful assembly. Reports of numerous unlawful detentions, physical violence during arrests, and continued harassment and assaults on citizens, journalists and media representatives, by police are deeply troubling.

It is important to stress that the requirements for joining the European Union are the same for every candidate country. The path to EU membership requires demonstrated commitment to democratic values, the rule of law, human rights, and the implementation of necessary reforms. By halting the integration process, the Georgian ruling party is moving the country further away from these shared values and aspirations.

A year ago, Georgia was granted candidate status for the European Union thanks to the Georgian people, who have repeatedly demonstrated their strong desire to join the European Union. Our political group was actively involved in the adoption of the European Parliament resolution of 28 November calling for accountability and sanctions against those who abuse the powers of their official positions and even authorise the violent suppression of peaceful assemblies. And we will continue to demand this.

Our message to the Georgian people who will gather on Rustaveli Avenue today, and across Georgia, to courageously stand up for Georgia's European future: *we stand in solidarity with you, your rightful place is in the family of European nations, and we remain ready to support your journey towards the European Union.*

The future of Georgia lies in the hands of its citizens, and their voices must not be silenced. We remind the Georgian authorities of their responsibility to serve their people and call on them to immediately cease all forms of violence and harassment against peaceful citizens, including media workers, political opponents and civil society organisations, and to release those unlawfully detained. We strongly encourage measures that would put an end to political and social polarisation in Georgia, ensure fair and transparent elections leading to an inclusive and cooperative political system, with a view to Georgia's full integration into the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, as enshrined in the Georgian Constitution.