

Press Release

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'Building bridges through political dialogue is essential to restore confidence in Georgia' stress PACE rapporteurs

Strasbourg, 10.11.2007 - Matyas Eörsi (Hungary, ALDE) and Kastriot Islami (Albania, SOC), co-rapporteurs for Georgia of the Monitoring Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), today expressed their conviction that it is in the interest of Georgia to lift the state of emergency as quickly as possible.

The co-rapporteurs called upon the Georgian government to fully restore the normal democratic processes and functioning of the institutions. They reminded the Georgian authorities to strictly abide by the principles of the rule of law in all its actions and to comply with the provisions of the European Convention of Human Rights, especially for the freedom of expression, information and association.

"Building bridges though political dialogue is more than ever essential and we call on the authorities and the opposition alike to restore meaningful dialogue, find a compromise over how to bring the country out of this negative dynamic and take decisions for the future electoral processes with a large consensus," said the PACE co-rapporteurs, who called on the opposition, at the same time, not to boycott their participation in parliamentary work.

Furthermore, the co-rapporteurs pointed out that police violence against peaceful demonstrators, shutting down private broadcasting stations or clamping down on information dissemination was unacceptable under any circumstances in a democratic system. "The freedom of the media has to be guaranteed without restrictions. The measures taken in the last few days represent a huge step backwards from the aspiration to become a fully-fledged democratic state that respects the fundamental values of pluralistic democracy and human rights," declared Mr Eörsi and Mr Islami.

"PACE, alongside the international community, will stand by Georgia in leading its young democracy through this difficult situation and help the country restore confidence and trust. We welcome the announcement by President Saakashvili of early presidential elections. The focus now needs to be on preparing the conditions for carrying out free and fair elections that will live up to European standards," they concluded.

The PACE co-rapporteurs are paying a three-day visit to Tbilisi finishing on Sunday 11 November, to assess the situation on the spot by meeting senior authorities, political opposition, media representatives and ambassadors.

The Parliamentary Assembly brings together 318 members from the national parliaments of the 47 member states.

President: René van der Linden (Netherlands, EPP/CD); Secretary General of the Assembly: Mateo Sorinas.

Political Groups: SOC (Socialist Group); EPP/CD (Group of the European People's Party); ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe); EDG (European Democratic Group); UEL (Group of the Unified European Left).