

# Joint Statement of Georgian Diaspora Organizations in the United States On the Protection of the Constitutionally and Internationally Guaranteed Voting Rights of Georgian Citizens Living Abroad

We, the Georgian community and diaspora organizations operating in the United States, express our unified and profound concern regarding the recently initiated amendments to Georgia's electoral legislation, which would substantially restrict — and in practice, effectively eliminate — the constitutionally guaranteed right of Georgian citizens living abroad to vote.

Such an initiative would reverse and diminish rights previously guaranteed under existing legislation, which enabled Georgian citizens residing abroad to participate in elections in accordance with national and international norms, including:

- **The Constitution of Georgia (Article 28)** — guaranteeing universal, equal, and direct suffrage;
- **The Electoral Code of Georgia** — which for years has ensured the participation of citizens living abroad through consular polling stations;
- **The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, Article 25)** — obliging states to ensure every citizen's right to vote without unreasonable restrictions;
- **The OSCE/ODIHR Copenhagen Document (1990)** — requiring member states to create inclusive electoral systems that guarantee participation for all citizens;
- **Georgia's EU integration commitments** — which clearly include the protection of political rights, diaspora engagement, and support for democratic processes.

The proposed amendment represents a restriction of participatory mechanisms previously guaranteed to citizens, and constitutes a clear departure from the democratic norms and human rights standards to which Georgia has internationally committed itself.

Today, **over one million Georgian citizens live outside the country**. Tens of thousands study, work, and reside in the United States, maintaining strong family, cultural, economic, and civic ties with Georgia. In 2024 alone, remittances from the United States to Georgia exceeded **\$573 million**, with projections rising to **\$700 million** in 2025. Additionally, hundreds of children each year study the Georgian language, dance, and music in cultural centers and schools abroad — reflecting not only economic, but deep national and identity-based ties.

For Georgians living abroad, voting is not symbolic — it is an integral component of citizenship, civic responsibility, and democratic participation. The diaspora has been part of Georgia's electoral processes for many years, and the right to vote strengthens the bond between citizens abroad and their homeland. Restricting this right contradicts the constitutional principle of universal and equal suffrage, diminishes democratic participation, and harms Georgia's international reputation.

By limiting voting rights, Georgia would also violate its obligations under international law, and undermine the inclusivity, transparency, and legitimacy of its democratic institutions.

The participation of citizens abroad in elections is not an act of governmental goodwill — it is a constitutional obligation of the state, grounded in the equal rights of all citizens.

Therefore, we respectfully and firmly call on the Government of Georgia to:

- 1. Reconsider the proposed amendment,**  
ensuring that no legislative change undermines constitutional guarantees or international obligations.
  - 2. Protect the universal and equal right to vote,**  
including for all Georgian citizens living abroad.
  - 3. Strengthen and expand external voting mechanisms,**  
and instead of restricting them, develop modern, secure, and accessible administrative procedures.
- In accordance with international best practices and in support of fair and democratic processes, we additionally call for:

- **Increasing the number of polling stations abroad, based on diaspora demographic data;**
- **Simplifying administrative procedures for voter registration for citizens outside Georgia to remove technical barriers;**
- **Ensuring the safety, integrity, and accessibility of external voting.**

Our shared responsibility is to guarantee that every citizen — whether residing inside or outside Georgia — can exercise their constitutional right to participate in shaping the country's future. Voting is not merely a procedural act or privilege; it is a constitutional right upon which democratic development depends.

We stand firmly united in defending this right for every Georgian citizen and for future generations.  
The undersigned organizations stand together in this commitment.

