

Poland set for high-stakes election amid disputes over EU, democracy

WARSAW, Oct 11 (Reuters) – Poles vote in a parliamentary election on Sunday which the opposition says will determine the country's democratic standing and place in the European Union, after a bitterly contested campaign dominated by issues of sovereignty and security.

Since coming to power in 2015, the nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) party has repeatedly clashed with the EU over reforms that critics say have politicised the judicial system and turned state-owned media into a propaganda outlet.

The opposition says the vote could be the last chance to halt what it sees as Poland's drift away from the European mainstream and towards a semi-authoritarian system.

"I know... that they are planning systematically, in cold blood, to take Poland out of the European Union," Donald Tusk, leader of the largest opposition grouping Civic Coalition (KO) told supporters.

PiS denies any such plan.

With war raging in neighbouring Ukraine and a migrant crisis brewing, national security and immigration have featured heavily in a campaign that was also marked by a souring of relations with Kyiv over Poland's ban on grain imports.

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