

Draft resolution on the current situation in Albania

Proposed by PDSH -Albania

The CDI strongly stands for respect of the rule of law and institutional integrity as the backbone of democratic societies. Under the 12-year socialist governance, in Albania, all powers are concentrated in the hands of one person and the periodic elections are merely a facade. Similar to the situations in Belarus and Tunisia, leaders of opposition, members of Parliament, and local government from opposition, face political prosecution and imprisonment, along with direct threats and attempts on their lives.

It is worrying the rampant corruption, as well as troubling connections and influence of organised crime.

Drug trafficking and organized crime, deeply intertwined with Latin American drug cartels, who have infiltrated many European countries, are using the Albanian economy and political landscape for money laundering, showcasing a troubling merge of state and criminal enterprise. Recent revelations from Belgian authorities alarmingly expose direct links between organized crime networks with the Socialist Party leadership and law enforcement officials.

Leaked wiretaps and documents illustrate a coordinated effort between criminal organizations and government officials to assign their people as members of parliament, ministers of interior affairs, judges, prosecutors, senior police officers, high officials and manipulate elections in favour of the Socialist Party. This collusion has fostered an environment where crime networks are used to buy votes, intimidate voters, and systematically rig elections.

While in power since 2013, the Socialist majority failed to address the OSCE/ODIHR outstanding recommendations, calling for urgent measures to prevent vote-buying, intimidation of voters and the misuse of state resources. Prime Minister Rama unilaterally amended the constitution, prohibiting the right of opposition parties to form coalitions. As the 2025 parliamentary elections approach, the political situation has deteriorated significantly, in stark contrast to the conditions of 2013, when the socialists won the elections and a rotation of power was feasible.

CDI underlines the need for an impartial and independent Albanian judiciary. In this context, there are legitimate concerns that key institutions, supposed to function impartially, as guarantors of democracy and the rule of law, have in large part been turned into potent instruments SP majority to stifle its political opponents.

1 On September 8, 2024, at the Political Assembly of the Socialist Party, Edi Rama stated that the Socialist Party (SP) will secure more seats than in 1997, the worst year for the Democratic Party of Albania (DPA), when it only won 25 seats in Parliament. Rama said, "I will leave the PD with as many seats as in '97" ("Zgjedhjet e ardhshme/ Bashkë me Ramën: 'Do e lë PD me aq mandate sa në '97").

2. Former President & Opposition Party leader, Ilir Meta, arrested

3. The political context of MP Sallari's explanatory note

The latest cases of politically motivated arrests, imprisonments, and persecution of opposition leaders, MPs, and Local Government Officials few months before general elections proves that Edi Rama wants by all means a forth mandate.

Only 5 months prior to upcoming elections all opposition leaders en-block face political prosecution and imprisonment, along with direct threats and attempts on their lives. Albania is among few countries with political prisoners: ¹: 1. **Prof. Dr. Sali Berisha**: President of DPA and Leader of opposition. For nine months in political house arrest as person under investigation, after a false complaint filed by the leader of the Socialist Party's parliamentary group and repeated order of Edi Rama. His house arrest is in violation of the Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights. Recently is facing politically motivated charges of passive corruption based on falsehoods, falsified official documents, without any criminal evidence. There is no legal violations, no public harm, and no signature from Berisha no witness against him; 2. **Mr Ilir Meta**: former President, former Prime Minister and former Speaker of Parliament, and currently the leader of the Freedom Party (the second-largest opposition party), was is in prison as person under investigation. He was stopped in the road arrested brutally and dragged and beaten in the head by masked policemen in an ordered schenario.²; 3. **Mr. Fatmir Mediu**, President of Republican Party, former Minister of Defence – facing prosecution while Albania's Supreme Court dismissed Mediu's "abuse of duty" case in 2009. Albania's 10 years statute of limitation in Mediu's case was met in 2019. But the Prosecutor did opened the case in violations of statute of limitations and double jeopardy; 4. **Mr Ervin Salianji**, DP Member of Parliament Vice Chair of the Group, sentenced to one year in prison, based on false witnesses and accused for false deposition, which he never made ³; 5. **Mr. Fredi Beleri**, MEP, Mayor elected of Himara - politically arrested and imprisoned⁴.

The judiciary cannot be used as a political weapon setting the stage for electoral manipulation, reminiscent of authoritarian regime tactics. The 2015 Venice Commission warning that the judicial reform risked being co-opted by the ruling party and creating chaos within the system has seemingly materialized under Rama's leadership.

CDI emphasizes, that ignoring the will of the people, clearly expressed in last parliamentary elections, can lead to reduced confidence in the already weakened democratic processes and can cause long term political instability.

The CDI condemns politically motivated arrests and imprisonment of leaders and MP and local government officials in Albania and ask for their immediate releas.

¹ 8 September 2024, in the Political Assembly of Socialist Party, Rama made the statement that SP will win more sits than in 1997 (the worse year for the DPA with 25 seats in Parliament. (Zgjedhjet e ardhshme/ Basti i Ramës: "Do e lë PD me aq mandate sa në '97")

² Former President & Opposition Party leader, Ilir Meta, arrested

³ The political conviction of MP Salianji - explanatory note



The CDI unequivocally supports the Albanian opposition's efforts for EU accession, as well as its fight to guarantee free and fair parliamentary elections, recognizing their courageous and vital role in restoring democratic governance and protecting fundamental rights.

We reiterate the importance of combating organized crime and drug trafficking as vital responsibilities of a NATO member and EU candidate country, emphasizing the need for urgent measures to break the viscous circle between crime and votes.

CDI stands for an independent judiciary, one that is based on respect for the constitution and the laws and is not used as a political weapon against opponents. The judiciary must serve the people enabling Albanians to fully enjoy their rights and freedoms.

It is in Albania's interest to allow for the establishment of a caretaker government, based on North Macedonian model. A caretaker government, overseeing the electoral process and ensuring its integrity was a successful experience in North Macedonia.

The CDI will follow closely the developments in Albania and will stand in support of their member parties in upcoming elections and support the European future of Albania.

Executive Committee – Siem Reap 18.11.24