

Emergency Resolution on the Rule of Law in Albania The case of Freddy Beleris



Approved by the EPP Political Assembly
Tabled by Nea Demokratia

4-5 September 2023

Whereas Freddy Beleris, as the Greek minority candidate for the post of Mayor of Chimara, a town in Albania populated predominantly by ethnic Greeks, was personally attacked by Albania's Prime Minister Edi Rama, during the electoral campaign period;

Whereas the attacks by Albania's Prime Minister Edi Rama culminated the week before the election and these personal attacks against Beleris ended up with his arrest by the Albanian authorities, on the eve of the local elections in Albania, on the allegation of bribing voters;

Whereas Freddy Beleris, while in custody on May 14th, 2023, was elected Mayor of Chimara;

Whereas after more than three months, ethnic-Greek Freddy Beleris remains in custody and his lawyer's repeated appeals have been turned down; whereas as a result of the ongoing detention of Freddy Beleris at the prison of Vlore, several kilometers away from Chimara, he hasn't been allowed to be sworn in, and may thus lose the right to take up his office as elected Mayor of Chimara;

Whereas the application of law should never result in the violation of the presumption of a defendant's innocence and their fundamental human rights, and whereas it is obvious that Mayor-elect Beleris' custody is being used from the Albanian authorities as a pretext to block him from taking his oath of office and subsequently block him from taking up his duties as Mayor of Chimara;

Whereas Albania is a candidate for EU accession and whereas democratic transformation, the rule of law, fundamental rights and adherence to EU rules, values and standards play a central role in the EU accession process and are a key benchmark for assessing progress towards EU accession; whereas each accession country should demonstrate robust, irreversible results as regards their democratic resilience;

The European People's Party Political Assembly:

Recalls the concerns expressed in the European Parliament's Resolution of 12 July 2023 on the 2022 European Commission Report on Albania, regarding the arrest of the new Mayor of Chimara, Freddy Beleris, on the eve of the municipal elections in May, which both violated the presumption of innocence and prevented the Mayor-elect from taking office, as he remains imprisoned to this day.

Recalls that the European Parliament Resolution of 12 July 2023, linked this matter to the overall respect for fundamental rights, the pending issue of the properties of members of the Greek ethnic minority in the municipal area and the accusations of encroachments by the State.

Strongly condemns the Albanian government's actions against an ethnic minority Mayor-elect and its direct interference in the electoral proceedings, which go against European values.

Stresses that Albanian government's blatant disrespect for the rule of law, fundamental rights, the rights of the Greek minority and, above all, the *acquis communautaire*, creates a political gap between Albania and the EU.

Underlines that no country that strives to be a member of the European Union should act in this way.

Calls on the Albanian authorities to ensure that voters are able to exercise their fundamental democratic right through free and fair elections. Everybody should abide by the laws, the electoral rules, as well as all major international norms.

Urges the Albanian authorities to respect the results of the local election of May 14th, 2023 and the presumption of innocence of any accused individual and take all necessary steps -be that legislative, administrative or other- to secure that the Mayor-elect is sworn in, which is not related to judicial proceedings.

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If you have any question you would like to ask please contact us.