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Three-time elected mayor of Tirana, Erion Veliaj has dedicated his life to the public service and to Albania's future.

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On 10 February 2025, the elected mayor of Tirana, Erion Veliaj, was arrested by SPAK – the Albanian Special Structure against Corruption and Organized Crime. Since then, Erion has been arbitrarily detained and is awaiting trial in effective isolation. SPAK's allegations and charges against Mayor Veliaj remain unproven. No pre-trial judge or trial court has considered, much less ruled on, any of the allegations or evidence against him. Erion's case raises concerns around SPAK's systemic procedural failures and violations of constitutional law, as well as the European Convention on Human Rights. Mayor Veliaj continues to categorically deny all allegations and charges of wrongdoing.

Mayor Veliaj's prolonged detention has deprived him of the ability to govern, campaign, and otherwise perform his mayoral mandate. His repeated efforts to secure his release, through bail applications and subsequent appeals challenging his detention, demonstrate his commitment to following due process and abiding by the rule of law.

Recent attempts to remove the Mayor from office are unlawful and suggest his arrest is politically motivated. Although Albania's Constitutional Court upheld Erion's appeal and suspended the elections, unconstitutional manoeuvres and unwillingness to treat Mayor Veliaj fairly have left the people of Tirana vulnerable, effectively ignoring their democratic votes.

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Our concern

We are concerned that SPAK has not upheld its obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights in connection with its case against Erion.

Erion has maintained his innocence throughout this case. Corruption must be stamped out in Albania, but the Albanian justice system's efforts to do so must always uphold human rights and fundamental principles of justice.

Erion's case is a clear example of a system that is not working as it was originally intended. He must be allowed to return home ahead of his trial to ensure he can defend himself fully and properly. No one should turn a blind eye to this case.

The recent attempts to remove him from office are unlawful and suggest that Mayor Veliaj's arrest is politically motivated. The Albanian Constitutional Court suspended the Presidential decree calling for elections.

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Erion wishes to return to serving the people of Tirana as Mayor.

In September, the Albanian Authorities attempted to remove Erion from his position as Mayor of Tirana in violation of the Constitution. President Begaj called early elections in the municipality.

In October, Albania's Constitutional Court upheld Erion's appeal and suspended the elections. This decision restores hope in Albanian constitutional law and for Erion's future as Mayor of Tirana.

Learn more

"That's why what's happening to Tirana's mayor, Erion Veliaj, should worry us all... The EU should not be turning a blind eye...

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JUSTICE 4 ERION

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BalkanWeb
GAZETA SHQIPTARE

76 mayors of the B40 Network write in support of Imamoglu and Veliaj: Concerned about their indefinite detention, violation of democracy
January 28, 2026 08:58

The mayors of the member municipalities of the B40 Balkan Cities Network express their deep concern over the indefinite detention of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu and Tirana Mayor Erion Veliaj. In a joint letter, the heads of the 76 municipalities call the indefinite detention of Imamoğlu and Veliaj a "dangerous trend" that threatens local democracy in the Balkans and beyond.

They demand an end to the detention measure against them: "Our clear call is to end the indefinite detention of Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu and Mayor Erion Veliaj, and to allow them to await legal proceedings in freedom, while simultaneously exercising the duties entrusted to them by the citizens they represent."

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According to the signatories of the letter, the removal of elected officials from office without a final decision "is not justice" and undermines the will of the voters. They also refer to the October 2025 Report of the Venice Commission and the European Convention on Human Rights, emphasizing that the ban should be a measure of last resort and not a means of obstructing the mandate. B40 calls for transparent, proportional justice and respect for democratic mandates.

Below is the full letter from the B40 Balkan Cities Network:

Joint letter: Solidarity stance for Local Democracies and ending the detention of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu and Tirana Mayor Erion Veliaj

We, the undersigned mayors of the B40 Balkan Cities Network, the most important initiative of the Balkan region, established under the leadership of Mr. Ekrem İmamoğlu, Mayor of Istanbul, express our deep concern regarding the emergence of a dangerous trend that threatens local democracy in the Balkans and the world.

Despite our different political affiliations, we are united in raising the alarm about the indefinite detention of the Mayor of Istanbul, Ekrem İmamoğlu, founding President of the B40 Network, the Mayor of Tirana, Erion Veliaj, the third President of the B40 Network, as well as other mayors. Removing democratically elected officials from office without a final decision is not justice. It undermines the will of voters and poses direct threats to local democracies.

The October 2025 report of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe explicitly warns that the use of pre-trial detention against sitting mayors poses a serious threat to democratic governance. When applied indefinitely, such detention effectively deprives citizens of representation, removing their elected representatives without due process of law.

According to the European Convention on Human Rights, detention should remain a measure of last resort, not a means to prevent the exercise of a mandate for political reasons. When an elected mayor is detained without bail or trial, citizens are left without representation, which erodes public trust and institutional legitimacy.

It is clear that the detention and judicial proceedings related to Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu and Mayor Erion Veliaj do not comply with the principles and standards enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights and articulated in the October 2025 Report of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe.

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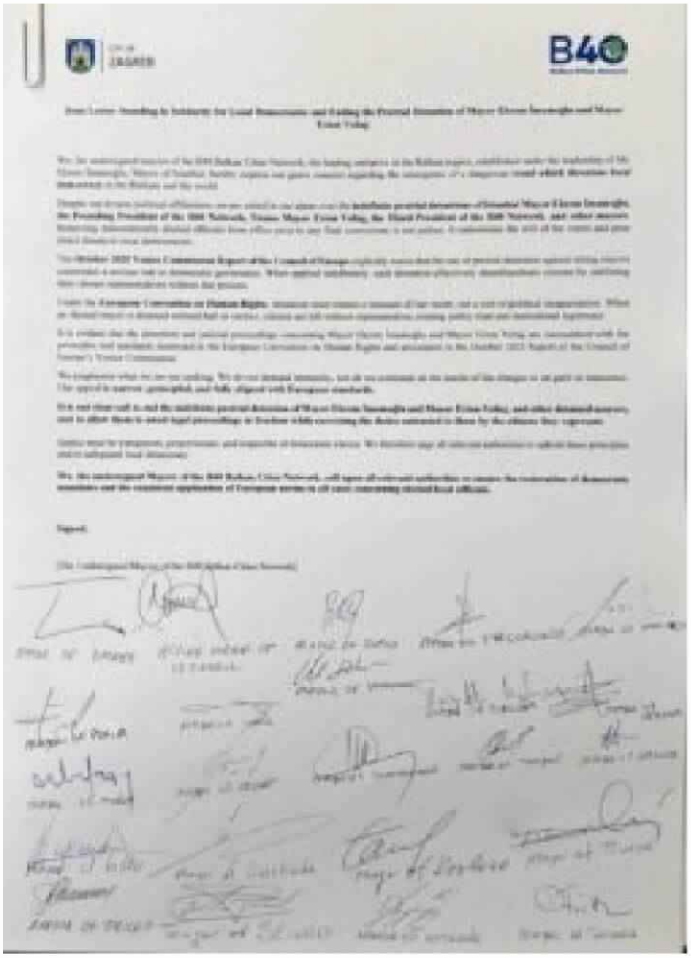
We emphasize what we are not seeking. We are not seeking immunity, nor are we commenting on the substance of the charges or on guilt or innocence. Our appeal is limited, principled, and fully in line with European standards.

Our clear call is to end the indefinite detention of Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu and Mayor Erion Veliaj, as well as other detained mayors, and to allow them to await legal proceedings in freedom, while simultaneously exercising the duties entrusted to them by the citizens they represent.

Justice must be transparent, proportional and respectful of democratic choice. Therefore, we call on all relevant authorities to implement these principles and protect local democracy.

We, the undersigned mayors of the B40 Balkan Cities Network, call on all relevant authorities to ensure the restoration of democratic mandates and the consistent implementation of European norms in all cases involving local elected officials.



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Founded in 1994 by Marsel Skendaj & Julien Roche

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Post

Constitutional Court Rules in Favor of Erion Veliaj Remaining Mayor of Tirana

CURRENT EVENT

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2025

const trinityScript = document.createElement('script'); trinityScript.setAttribute('fetchpriority', 'high'); trinityScript.src = 'https://trinitymedia.ai/player/trinity/2900012537/?pageURL=' + encodeURIComponent(window.location.href); document.currentScript.parentNode.insertBefore(trinityScript, document.currentScript);

The Constitutional Court of Albania has ruled in favor of Erion Veliaj, confirming his right to remain in office as Mayor of Tirana. The court's decision brings clarity to the recent legal debate surrounding Veliaj's mandate and the challenges raised against it.

According to the ruling, the Constitutional Court found no legal grounds to invalidate Veliaj's position or to interrupt his mandate. The decision reaffirms the continuity of his leadership at the head of the Tirana Municipality.

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Following the verdict, Veliaj welcomed the ruling, calling it "a victory for the rule of law and democratic institutions." He emphasized his commitment to continue ongoing development projects in the capital and to focus on improving public services for citizens.

The court's decision is final and marks the end of the legal uncertainty regarding the status of the Mayor of Tirana.

Erion Veliaj was arrested on February 10, by the Special Prosecution against Corruption (SPAK) on corruption charges.

EXCLUSIVES - INTEVIEWS

1 'No Pain' Room for Children with Serious Illnesses

2 A New Security Architecture for the Middle East

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After Nine Months in Prison Democratically Elected Mayor of Tirana, Albania, Erion Veliaj Speaks for Nine Minutes at the Albanian Constitutional Court and Wins Back His Office - Kasowitz and Mishcon de Reya Law Firms Hail It as a Victory for the Rule of Law

USA - English

KASOWITZ

NEWS PROVIDED BY
Kasowitz LLP →
Nov 06, 2025, 12:00 ET

TIRANA, Albania, Nov. 6, 2025 /PRNewswire/ -- On Monday, 3 November 2025, the Constitutional Court of Albania overturned the Tirana Municipal Council's dismissal of Erion Veliaj and formally reinstated him as Mayor, halting the city's planned special elections and marking a pivotal moment for democratic governance in Albania.

The decision is a major breakthrough in a nine-month legal and political battle arising from Veliaj's detention and subsequent removal from office. The Court ruled that the Municipal Council had acted unconstitutionally when it cited Veliaj's involuntary detention as the reason for his removal. The Court's ruling re-affirms the basic constitutional principle that an elected official's mandate cannot be terminated without due process.

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Appearing publicly for the first time since his arrest, Veliaj delivered an emotional nine-minute address before the Court. "I waited nine months to speak for nine minutes," he began, before underscoring the pretextual nature of the state's attempt to remove him from office:

> "You can imprison a person, but not their truth. And the truth is that my absence has not been a choice, but a consequence of an isolation imposed by the state, through a disproportionate decision ... which deprived me not only of my freedom, but also of my city, before any guilt was proven. . . Do we perhaps want to legitimize the idea that any elected official can be removed from duty through a temporary arrest, without a guilty verdict, taking from the people the mandate that they themselves gave with a free vote?"

Veliaj also condemned the process that stripped him of his mandate, remarking that "two injustices do not produce justice." He urged the Court to "protect together the democracy that is being tested."

Daniel Fetterman of Kasowitz LLP, international counsel to Mayor Veliaj, said: "This is a tremendous victory for Erion. But not just for him. It is a victory for all of the citizens of Tirana and a victory for the rule of law and democracy worldwide."

Observers see the Constitutional Court's decision as a defining milestone in Albania's efforts to strengthen its commitment to the rule of law and in Mayor Veliaj's fight to continue serving the citizens of Tirana and transforming it into a world class city and a hospitable European destination.

The Kasowitz team includes partners Daniel J. Fetterman and Brian S. Choi in New York, and senior counsel Clarine Nardi Riddle and special counsel David Miller in Washington, D.C.

The Mishcon de Reya team includes partners James Libson and Ben Brandon, managing associate Celia Marr, and associates Grace Houghton and Elizabeth Fitton.

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SOURCE Kasowitz LLP

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FLASHPOINT: A PATH TOWARD STABILITY IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Meeting Status: **Hearing**
Scheduled
|
Date:
Tue, 12/02/2025 - 2:00 PM
Location:
2172 Rayburn

Witnesses

Mr. Max Primorac
Senior Research Fellow
Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom
Heritage Foundation

Mr. Luke Coffey
Senior Fellow
Center on Europe and Eurasia
Hudson Institute

Mr. Edward P. Joseph
Lecturer and Senior Fellow
Merrill Center for Strategic Studies
Foreign Policy Institute
Johns Hopkins University SAIS

Meeting Documents

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- Hearing Notice
- Committee Repository

Subcommittees

Europe Subcommittee (119th Congress)

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EUROPE SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KEITH SELF DELIVERS OPENING REMARKS AT HEARING ON A PATH TOWARD STABILITY IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

December 2, 2025 | Press Release

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, House Foreign Affairs Europe Subcommittee Chairman Keith Self delivered opening remarks at a subcommittee hearing titled "Flashpoint: A Path Toward Stability in the Western Balkans".

Watch Here

The goal of this hearing is to promote balance in the Balkans. It is my hope that perhaps members on both sides of the aisle can agree on the common

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