

STATEMENT

Political actors must take responsibility for what they offered to the Albanian citizens in these elections, as well as clearly express their will to respect the Law and the Institutions

The Coalition for Reforms, Integration and Consolidated Institutions (KRIIK) in cooperation with 30 local partner organizations followed the counting process in a non-systematic way, but continuously, with frequent visits to the ballot counting centers. During the visits, observers directly monitored the counting process, as well as gathered information from members of the Election Administration Zone Commissions (CEAZs) and observers on its progress.

KRIIK notes that **the counting process, same as the voting process on election day, was calm and overall well-administered.**

Even though the process was again extended beyond the legal deadline regarding the counting of city councils' votes, in a number of Ballot Counting Centers (BCCs), the process was completed faster than in previous elections, with delays in a limited number of BCCs and mainly for objective reasons.

The Central Election Commission (CEC) continuously urged the commissioners and counting teams' members to conclude the counting as soon as possible.

While the counting process is almost closed and the CEAZs have started submitting election materials to the Central Election Commission, **KRIIK brings to the attention of the broad public opinion that the election process is still ongoing.**

Some very important phases are still to be completed, starting from the complaints and appeals, which has the potential to correct the process, or otherwise called the process of electoral justice, but also other important processes, which do not affect the result of the elections but are nonetheless very important, such as the review of ballot papers and election materials, as well as the reporting and control of campaign finance.

In this context, KRIIK deems it extremely important for **all actors involved in the process to show responsibility and maturity**, to follow the institutional path to address all claims they may have, as well as to **show a clear will to respect the law and the institutions in charge, without prejudging them and without exerting political pressure or attempting to intimidate them otherwise.**

The Central Election Commission and the Electoral College need to **function and follow the unequivocal application of the law, unaffected and unthreatened either directly by the exponents of the election contestants, or by attacks orchestrated against them.**

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KRIIK followed with concern both during election day¹, or during the counting process², **Prime Minister Rama's statements**, who, while the process was still ongoing, directly accused the Central Election Commission about the malfunctioning of the Electronic Identification Devices in a number of polling stations.

The morning statement on voting day was followed by an outbreak of statements from other Socialist Party officials and ministers³, even by a number of commentators in different media.

KRIIK considers these statements of the majority unacceptable and deems that the accusations against the CEC, while the election process was still in its most important part - the expression of the will by the citizens and its subsequent reading by the political election administration - **do not serve towards consolidating and strengthening Independent Institutions at all**, specifically the Institution of the Central Election Commission in this case.

¹ *"I believe everything that needs to be said has been said. Now is the moment for citizens to have their say. I really wish that the situation created by the CEC did not influence the discouragement of those who went to vote right from the beginning in those areas where the devices did not work. And that all those who may have been discouraged at the first moment return, so that the will is fully expressed throughout the territory of Albania, for all the candidates and for their municipal councils."* [Statement to the media by Prime Minister Edi Rama after the vote in Surrel, May 14, 2023, 10:50 a.m.](#)

² *"As for the standard of the election, I haven't read any preliminary reports to be honest, but I believe the election was nothing special in any respect. in addition to the spectacular failure of the CEC to guarantee the start of voting on time in over 500 centers for thousands and thousands of citizens, who correctly and willingly, in the early hours of the morning, had lined up to exercise their constitutional right and duty. This was a serious, shocking thing because of the fact that electronic identification devices have guaranteed a much greater transparency, a much greater security and their malfunction for the most banal reasons, while the CEC agrees to do many things before and after, but the CEC at the end of the day it is for that day. It is truly unforgivable and inexcusable. But I do not want to dwell on that anymore. Surely, we will not leave this matter at that. Even more so when we saw the terrible scenes of those devices being thrown like empty crates, because no crate with anything inside can be thrown like that into a truck to go to its destination.*

Millions and millions of euros made available from Albanian taxes to guarantee Albanians a safer, more transparent, and better electoral process, this was the only special thing. The rest are all things we have heard. (...)". [Conversation of the Chair of SP, Edi Rama with journalists](#), on May 15, 2023

³ *"Unfortunately, this day is a celebration of democracy it started with the absurd impasse created by the CEC, with the blocking of voting in many centers in Albania, due to the malfunction of electronic identification devices. Unbelievable that the CEC did not test and ensure the operation of equipment in every center, as early as the first minute of this election round. But even worse was the CEC's incomprehensible reluctance to resolve this self-inflicted impasse, delaying the start of voting in blocked centers by hours. This also led to the understandable departure of many voters from their polling station. We are terribly sorry about this. Even the CEC should ask for a public apology to all those who left in the morning for this failure in guaranteeing the start of voting in each center, at the official start time of the elections. (...)"*. Minister Bora Muzhaqi, [Statement for the media from the Headquarters of the Socialist Party of Albania, dated May 14, 2023, 2:05 p.m.](#)

Minister Bora Muzhaqi *We heard the reaction of commissioner Celibashi about "the government he belongs to ladies", but we did not hear his apology to the thousands of voters who, in more than 500 polling stations, were prevented from voting because the electronic equipment of the CEC did not work. The reasons for their malfunction were among the most absurd (even for battery not charging), but this deserves a special analysis after the elections. Because "the government of which the lady is a part" has massively financed the CEC for electronic identification devices, but also for electronic voting. Therefore, there is no way to not be terribly sorry for not providing the electronic identification service, hindering thousands of voters for several hours, while the CEC could not even take the most basic decision to start voting in every center, without keeping people waiting for hours and beyond the official start time of the elections, forcing many of them to leave.(...)"*. [Minister Bora Muzhaqi, Statement to the media from the Headquarters of the Socialist Party of Albania, dated May 14, 2023, 3:30 p.m.](#)

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On the contrary, **such approaches and statements, especially coming from the leader of the majority, remain disturbing and in line with negative approaches and practices of the past**, leading to the further reduction of public confidence either in these institutions or in the current electoral process and its result.

KRIIK assesses that it remains a major responsibility and obligation for political actors and election contestants to continue to responsibly follow the electoral process in all its remaining elements, addressing institutionally all their claims and contestations, whether in relation to the day of the elections, the process of counting, or other claims that may be related to the pre-election period.

Ensuring the integrity of the process and the credibility by all parties, as well as of the citizens in this process remains indispensable, keeping in mind the highest and widest public interest, as it is closely related to the integrity of the electoral process and is not only and simply related to correcting or not the result of any given election contestant.

Also, KRIIK calls on the electoral administration, and in particular the Central Election Commission, to ensure the closing of the process in accordance with the law, as well as to **initiate the administrative investigation regarding the observed problems, documenting all issues that were manifested during it in a detailed and rigorous manner, so that full transparency can be done**, and then analyze, as thoroughly as possible, all the elements that did not work properly.

Detailed analysis and full transparency will not only contribute to increasing public confidence in the electoral process but will also serve to guide the necessary improvements, both in the legal framework as well as in its implementation in practice in the future.

In parallel and in close connection with the above, **Albanian politics must take its responsibilities and prepare for the launch of a serious, thorough, and comprehensive reform process of the legal framework affecting the elections, not limited to the Electoral Code, but also to the entire package of laws affecting the elections.**

The practice of failed reformation processes of the legal framework can end only if the political class commits to this process totally and seriously, and with the public interest in mind, instead of short-term interests and political calculations of the moment.

In the judgment of KRIIK, also based on the Declaration of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions for the current election, **in the focus of the Electoral Reform, which must be completed by May 2024, among the main issues will have to be the undoing of the patronage and vote control system, with a special focus on freeing the public administration from politicization and intimidation**, thereby guaranteeing the fulfillment of the aspiration of the Political Agreement of June 5, 2020 for the administration of the 2025 parliamentary elections by non-political administrators.

Other key elements in the focus of the Reform will have to be fully address **the abuse of state resources and public office for electoral advantage of the use of state**

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resources and public office for electoral advantage, as well as supervision of party and campaign finance, among other essential elements.

As the counting process is coming to an end, KRIIK calls on the state police and the prosecutors to follow with responsibility and professionalism, and to investigate fully and swiftly the cases they are already working on, or others that may arise, so that persons responsible for affecting the will of the citizens or the votes are brought to justice.

Tirana, on May 17, 2023!

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