

**COALITION FOR REFORMS, INTEGRATION AND CONSOLIDATED INSTITUTIONS  
(KRIIK)  
*in cooperation with*  
30 partner organizations**

**2023 ELECTIONS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES  
REPEAT ELECTIONS FOR THE MAYOR OF RROGOZHINA  
23 JULY 2023**

**STATEMENT OF PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS \***

On 23 July 2023, were held the repeat elections for Rogozhina Mayor, based on a decision of the Electoral College establishing that the elections held on 14 May at Special Polling Station 2224/01 in the prison of Rogozhina were invalid, resulting in the mayoral results for the whole municipality being invalidated<sup>1</sup>.

Two candidates ran for office, the current Mayor, Mr. Edison Memolla, from the Socialist Party, and the Mr. Shkëlqim Hoxha, from the “Together We Win” [Bashkë Fitojmë] Coalition.

Turnout was at some 35.5%, an increase of 3.5 percentage points from May 14<sup>2</sup>. According to preliminary results<sup>3</sup>, Mr. Edison Memolla, the Socialist Party candidate, was elected as Rogozhina Mayor by some 57.6% of votes. Two days after the election day, on 25 July, the “Together We Win” Coalition’s candidate reacted to the result, calling it non-compliant with the citizens’ will<sup>4</sup>.

The Coalition for Reforms, Integration and Consolidated Institutions (KRIIK), in a consolidated cooperation with 30 local partner organizations for over a decade, in view of its commitment to strengthen the integrity of elections in Albania, monitored closely the 14 May 2023 Elections for Local Government Bodies.

In the Statement of Findings and Preliminary Conclusions on the 14 May elections, the KRIIK stated that “...the Albanian state and the decision-making political class failed to organize an election process, which was built for the citizens and around the interests of the citizens, failing to guarantee that the latter can vote on May 14 in a free and uninfluenced manner.”<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Upon [Decision No. 28](#), dated 15.06.2023, the Electoral College ruled “...The local elections of 14 May 2023 in Electoral Administration Zone No. 43 for Rogozhina Mayor are hereby declared invalid and shall be repeated...”

<sup>2</sup> On 14 May 2023, 32.02% of eligible voters voted in Rogozhina Municipality.

<sup>3</sup> See preliminary results on the [CEC website](#).

<sup>4</sup> On 24 July, Mr. Sali Berisha held a press conference where he defined the result as a byproduct of the next electoral farce.

<sup>5</sup> See the [Statement of Findings and Preliminary Conclusions](#), dated 15 May 2023. For further information on KRIIK’s involvement in the observation of the 14 May 2023 Elections for Local Government Bodies, see [KRIIK’s webpage](#).

Following the 14 May Elections, the KRIIK also observed the repeated elections for Rogozhina Mayor.

During the pre-electoral period, an experts' team monitored the relevant political and institutional situation of elections, as well as continuously observed the preparation of the electoral process by the Central Election Commission.

The experts' team conducted two observation missions to Rogozhina Municipality, meeting with members of the Commission of the Electoral Administration Zone<sup>6</sup>, with one of the candidates for Mayor<sup>7</sup>, as well as with a Civil Status local office registrar.

The monitoring of Repeat Elections for Rogozhina Mayor was conducted voluntarily by KRIIK activists.

On Election Day and during vote counting, KRIIK deployed 12 observers to monitor the voting process and the situation outside of polling stations at all polling stations in Rogozhina Municipality<sup>8</sup>; the activity of the Commission of Electoral Administration Zones throughout the Election Day; vote counting<sup>9</sup> and counting process<sup>10</sup>.

The 23 July 2023 Repeat Elections for Rogozhina Mayor were held in against a strongly polarized political background, similar to the 14 May Elections.

During the period preceding the repeat elections, the process of complaints and appeals related to 14 May Elections was under way, highlighting several issues, including alteration of voters' will in two municipalities<sup>11</sup>.

Throughout this period, the opposition has accused the ruling majority of manipulating election results, focusing primarily on abuse of state resources for electoral advantage, emphasized by the fact that, in preparation for the elections, it had complete control over central and local powers; voter intimidation and vote buying, and manipulating the administration process during election day and vote counting, particularly in the municipalities where electronic voting was carried out.<sup>12</sup>

The accusations of the opposition regarding the manipulation of the election process extended to the Central Election Commission, mainly to the Appeals and Sanctions Commission, on grounds of partiality and partisanship in its decision-making, thus indicating low trust in the electoral administration.

While the opposition made serious accusations of "electoral farce" against the ruling majority, in line with the stance held since the 2017 elections; the ruling majority considered the elections as having had no issues and as the best elections ever held.

The completely contrary narratives of the ruling majority and opposition regarding the process exacerbated further political polarization.

---

<sup>6</sup> During such missions, they obtained a copy of the CEAZ working (decision-making) documentation as of 20 July 2023.

<sup>7</sup> The observation team met with the "Together We Win" Coalition's candidate for Mayor, Mr. Hoxha. Meanwhile, the Socialist Party candidate and acting Mayor, Mr. Memolla, did not respond to the meeting request.

<sup>8</sup> Four teams composed of two mobile observers each monitored the voting process and the situation outside of every PS.

<sup>9</sup> Four observers monitored the CEAZ activity throughout the Election Day and during vote counting.

<sup>10</sup> One observer monitored the work carried out by vote counting teams throughout the counting process.

<sup>11</sup> For further information, see the Public Stance of the KRIIK, "[The proactive approach of the Central Election Commission in the identification and denunciation of electoral crime, essential for ensuring the integrity of elections and law enforcement in the country](#)", published on 2 June 2023.

<sup>12</sup> Elbasan, Vora and Kamza.

The pre-electoral period was accompanied by a series of public events involving higher officials of the ruling majority, thus aggravating the political conflict further and increasing the opposition's accusations of mass corruption<sup>13</sup>, or issues relating to the Parliament's proper functioning<sup>14</sup>.

The most concerning issue appears to be the lack of reflection by either political party regarding the major harm being caused to the civil and political rights of Albanian citizens, and public interest. The same approach and language used over the years by both the ruling majority, which considers the elections as the best ever held and denies any issues, and the opposition, which considers the elections to be the next electoral massacre, are constantly observed.

Page | 3

In such situation, exacerbated by the grave crisis that the Albanian opposition has been facing since at least September 2021, on the one hand, and the loss of morality and true meaning of an electoral campaign that is being carried out with a complete lack of respect toward the citizens for the umpteenth time, on the other hand, the Albanian citizens' uncertainty and loss of hope in the institutions and the democratic system are further intensified, which also appears to be one of the main reasons for their low participation, especially that of young people, in the 14 May elections.

The legal framework is lacking regarding the repetition of elections and it does not exhaustively address this matter, thus leaving it to the discretion of election administration and other institutions involved in the election process.

The aspects provided for under the Electoral Code concerning the repeat elections include the conditions for their repetition and some deadlines<sup>15</sup>, as well as the right to vote<sup>16</sup>.

Despite the legal vacuum, the relevant institutions, such as the CEC or the General Directorate of Civil Status, did not issue any instructions to clarify the concerns and ensure a problem-free election process, and they made incomplete decisions, namely: not specifying the obligation of the AMA to monitor the media coverage of the campaign in the Regulatory Commission Decision<sup>17</sup>,

---

<sup>13</sup> The most notorious events included the dismissal of the newly elected Kukës Mayor, Mr. Gjici following the publication of a video where he was seen obtaining sexual favors in exchange for the promise of a public contract; the resignation of Member of Parliament, Mr. Rraja, and the dismissal of the Minister of Interior, Mr. Çuçi, following the publication of a video showing relatives of MP Rraja beating two citizens and the State Police's omission and support; the issuance of the arrest warrant against the former Deputy Prime Minister and SP MP, Mr. Arben Ahmetaj, who has fled the country; as well as the cessation of relations between the EU and the ARDA upon OLAF's findings of misuse of EU funds for Agriculture.

<sup>14</sup> The irregular and arbitrary functioning of the Parliament on the part of the ruling majority, especially in relation to the opposition's requests, the implementation of the regulation and legal framework on public consultation, particularly with regard to the draft law "On some amendments and addenda to Law No." 53/2019, "On the Academy of Sciences in the Republic of Albania", the draft law "On the control of Cannabis plant cultivation and processing and production of byproducts thereof for medical and industrial purposes", the draft law "On the special treatment of students enrolled in the "General Medicine" integrated second-cycle study program at public higher education institutions", etc., or the procedure followed for the request of the Special Prosecution Office against Corruption and Organized Crime to the Parliament to authorize the arrest/remand and carrying out of the personal/dwelling check of the Albanian Member of Parliament, Mr. Arben Ahmetaj.

<sup>15</sup> Article 161 of the Electoral Code.

<sup>16</sup> Article 59, paragraph 4 of the Electoral Code, "In case of election repetition, in accordance with Article 161 herein, the voter list shall not change".

<sup>17</sup> [Decision no. 25](#), Regulatory Commission, dated 6.7.2023.

as expressly provided for in the Electoral Code, or the lack issuance of an instruction on the republication of voter lists for information by the General Directorate of Civil Status.

For the Repeat Elections for the Mayor of Rogozhina, the State Election Commissioner adopted eight decisions and the Regulatory Commission two.

Page | 4

The elections were administrated by the Central Election Commission (CEC), one Commission of Election Administration Zone (CEAZ no. 43) and 54 Polling Stations Commissions (PSC)

The administration of the elections from the Central Election Commission was efficient in terms of the administrative aspects of the process, but it was observed that CEC was passive in other elements which play an important role.

The Electoral Code<sup>18</sup> and the Methodology Approved by the Regulatory Commission for Monitoring Audiovisual Media<sup>19</sup> demand that AMA monitors the coverage of the campaign by media and sends daily report to CEC, which are to be posted on the latter's website<sup>20</sup>, meanwhile it was found that no such reports were published on the website of CEC<sup>21</sup>.

The Regulatory Commission's<sup>22</sup> decision to set a deadline for the Repeat Elections does not oblige AMA to conduct monitoring, which KRIIK considers a violation and a failure to fulfil its obligations under the Election Law.

Two of the members of the Commission of Election Administration Zone (CEAZ) no. 43 who managed the Repeated Elections for the Mayor of Rogozhina were changed by CEC on 14 and 20 July.

The CEAZ generally functioned collegially and without issues throughout the pre-election period. The CEAZ made several decisions, most of which in regard to the appointment of members of the Polling Stations Commissions.

Until the day of the election, the CEAZ had not made any official decisions on the accreditation of observers from political parties. According to the members of the CEAZ, until 18 July, which was also the deadline for submission of requests for observers by electoral subjects, there had been no such request.

Meanwhile, on the day of the elections, KRIIK observers identified a significant number of political observers equipped with observation accreditation documents, despite the fact that no formal decision had been taken on this accreditation by the CEAZ until that moment. The names in these accreditation documents were filled in by hand. In practice, electoral authorities had no control over the party observers on election day; observers were placed without any filters and entirely at the will and discretion of the political parties.

---

<sup>18</sup> Article 85 [under the Electoral Code](#).

<sup>19</sup> [Decision No. 2, dated 30.01.2021 of the Regulatory Commission](#), "On adoption of the Monitoring Methodology of Audiovisual Media", amended under Decision No. 07 dated 27.01.2022 "On some amendments and addenda to Decision No. 2, dated 30.01.2021 of the Regulatory Commission, "On adoption of the Monitoring Methodology of Audiovisual Media".

<sup>20</sup> Article 10 of the Monitoring Methodology of Audiovisual Media (cit.).

<sup>21</sup> Official communications between KRIIK and CEC confirmed that AMA had not submitted a monitoring report on the campaign for repeated elections in Rogozhina to the Central Election Commission.

<sup>22</sup> [Decision no. 25](#), Regulatory Commission, dated 6.7.2023.

Political observers continue to pose a serious problem and concern to the course of the process or interventions in the process. Lack of control and non-enforcement of laws from the first moment of accreditation means that all obligations and other control mechanisms in regard to them remain fictitious and inoperative.

Officially, Polling Stations Commissions were constituted within the legal deadline. The change of members of the Polling Station Commissions from electoral subjects at the last moment, including Election Day itself, remains an ongoing problem.

Page | 5

Approximately 40% of the Commission members have been replaced in the last three days before Election Day, raising strong suspicions that the names of the Commissioners sent in advance are fictitious and the majority of the actual Commissioners are announced only at the time of the election.

In violation of the law, the CEAZ did not fill vacancies in accordance with the legal procedures, according to which a decision should be made on the dismissal of the departing commissioners and one on the appointment of replacement members, but by adopting decision appointing the members of the PSCs with a previous date, but with the names of the new commissioners<sup>23</sup>; this phenomenon has been observed before in the general decision-making process of the CEAZs in previous elections.

During election day and the vote counting process it was observed a high presence of support staff of the Central Election Commission assisting CEAZs and PSCs, senior officials even, which in KRIIK judgement is unjustifiable even for normal election processes, considering this was a partial and repeated election process.

The list of voters for the Repeat Elections for Mayor of Rogozhina was the same as that of 14 May 2023. In accordance with legal provisions, voters who had reached voting age in the meantime were not included in the list.

On Election Day were observed cases of voters that had reached 18 years of age between 14 May and 23 July that were able to vote under a court decision.<sup>24</sup> KRIIK deems that the court has issued these certificates in violation of the law, since the list of voters should have been the same<sup>25</sup> in view of the fact that these were repeat elections and that the Electoral Code expressly defines such a case. Only voters who were of legal voting age by May 14 should have been included in the list. The legal basis used by the courts in adopting these decisions remains unclear.

The Civil Registry Office reprinted the voter lists and the municipality re-posted them at the polling stations just four days before Election Day, on the evening of July 19.

In some polling stations the lists were posted without the Mayor's signature or seal. According to the Civil Registry Office this situation came to be since there was no order or instruction that the lists had to be printed again. The printed voters' lists were sent to CEAZ after 19 July 2023.

---

<sup>23</sup> According to the CEAZ, the reason for this is that electoral subjects have changed their commissioners at the last moment, whilst CEAZ was charged with distributing electoral materials. In addition, several commissioners have been replaced many times in a short period. As a result, CEAZ did not have physical time to carry out the dismissals and appointments according to the legal procedure.

<sup>24</sup> KRIIK observers have found at least two such cases, one in PSC no. 2233 and one in PS no. 2451. According to CEAZ, there have been other such cases.

<sup>25</sup> Article 54, paragraph 4 under the Electoral Code.

Voters in Rogozhina IECD, the Special Polling Station in which the elections were declared invalid by the Electoral College, leading to the repetition of the elections, did not vote on July 23<sup>26</sup>.

The Socialist Party conducted several public events mainly on the last days of the campaign. Meanwhile, the candidate of the Coalition “Together We Win” did not hold any such events, focusing on door-to-door campaign.

Page | 6

The campaign on social media followed the trend of public events. There were no paid ads on Meta platform<sup>27</sup>.

Regarding the potential advertisements in the audio-visual media, the lack of monitoring reports from AMA, does not allow any data for assessment, either in terms of equality in the competition on the media coverage, or in terms of expenses.

Consistent with the local election, the campaign for the repeat elections in Rogozhina Municipality remained polarized, dominated almost entirely by central-level political leaders of the Socialist Party, who eclipsed the mayoral candidate.<sup>28</sup>

The ruling majority used state resources and other privileges that come from being in power to gain electoral advantage throughout the pre-election period. Public officials, in support of the Socialist Party Candidate, were also actively engaged in the campaign.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> On July 19, the General Director of Prisons sent an official request to the CEC regarding the establishment of a polling station in this institution, ignoring the decision of the Electoral College and claiming that the 89 listed voters in the institution should be allowed to vote there.

In the response of the CEC dated July 21, sent by the General Secretary, there is evidence of variation in the legal basis used, while in the end it is concluded that in its assessment, the establishment or not of the polling stations should consider the orders of Decision No. 28 dated 16.05.2023 of the Judicial Electoral College.

<sup>27</sup> See Meta's Political Ads Library for Albania.

<sup>28</sup> The Political Leader of the Socialist Party for the district of Tirana, as well as the Mayor of Tirana, Mr. Erion Veliaj, was present and the main speaker in all the public events during the campaign for the elections, accompanied by other high political exponents of the SP or public officials, such as the MP Mr. Etjen Xhafaj, MP Mr. Orinaldo Rakipi, the Prefect of the District of Tirana, Mr. Afrim Qëndro, Chairman of the Region Council of Tirana, Mr. Aldrin Dalipi, etc. (See Veliaj's Facebook page [for more](#))

<sup>29</sup> At the campaign's closing event on 21.07.2023, the Political Leader of SP for the District of Tirana and Mayor of Tirana, Mr. Erion Veliaj spoke of the engagement in the campaign of the Prefect of the District of Tirana, Mr. Afrim Qëndro, Chairman of the Region Council of Tirana Mr. Aldrin Dalipi, MP Mr. Etjen Xhafaj, and MP Mr. Orinaldo Rakipi. (see [the video](#), after minute 9:35).

*“... The Prefect of Tirana, Qazim Mulleti of our days would have gone everyday in Gosa. To learn about its problems and issues, to learn all its villages, to visit canal after canal, vineyard after vineyard, tree after tree. ...*

*Think of Aldrin, our amazing Chairman of the Region Council of Tirana, would Aldrin know all the households in Lekaj, all the households in Gërmenj and so on had he not gone door to door? But since he is the Chairman of the Region Council of Tirana and Afrim is the Prefect they have the opportunity to help us. And it is easier to help if you know the people, if you know their problems, rather when it is only Edison that is asking for help. Now, when Edison calls, not only I, but the Prefect and the Chairman also know exactly what are the issues, which are the opportunities and which are the problems to be solved.*

*Naldi (Ronald Rakipi, MP) gave us an extraordinary victory in Vora, since he has connections considering he has family, acquaintances, friends, in-laws, many people and a huge household, he knows the problems of Kryevidh by heart and he gathered all his friends and it is just like that phrase one for all and all for one. All for one to help Edison, just like the Socialist Party has always helped in our victories, just like it has always shown maximal support. Special thanks goes to our amazing Etjen (Etjen Xhafaj MP)...*

*For gathering all of us here today to give a helping hand to Edison. The problems that can be resolved promptly, will be resolved promptly, whereas others will wait until it is time.”*

The active engagement of public officials in the campaign in their role as officials, along the lines of the May 14 Election, blurred the dividing line between party and state and gave a clear advantage to the Socialist Party in this election, undermining equality.

Throughout all the public events held during the campaign carried out by the Socialist Party, derogatory language and personal attacks were dominant<sup>30</sup> and visible. Meanwhile, the treatment of the political opponent as an enemy that had to be eliminated and not as an opponent in a democratic electoral contest continued to be noticed. While some of the campaign topics were focused on local problems and their solutions, again, the tendency to merge the central government with the local one was noticed and local development was conditioned by election of the mayor by the current majority in order to have the support of the power at the central level<sup>31</sup>, in the same line as the dominant narrative during the elections on May 14.

Page | 7

Throughout the campaign, there were numerous claims by the Socialist Party<sup>32</sup> for vote buying by the candidate of the "Together We Win" Coalition, while on the part of the latter there were claims both for vote buying and for using the state administration in the campaign through the presence of a number of public officials, pressure and intimidation on voters and his supporters by a number of institutions, the use of criminal elements to support the majority candidate's campaign, etc.

The law enforcement bodies were not invested in concrete reports, leaving these claims in the range of political speculations.

---

<sup>30</sup> The candidate of "Together We Win" was repeatedly labeled as a "gambler" and in general as a person of questionable integrity by the representatives of the Socialist Party at the central level, including as a reason the fact that he had agreed to run against Sali Berisha and Ilir Meta.

*"... That Gambler Çimi, do you think he is worried and is spending money to serve Rogozhina? He had the opportunity. If he spent as much money as he is spending now for his back, for a position, he should have come to help when the earthquake happened. We had so many needs then. We brought containers and tents, we had needs but he didn't spend millions of euros but not a single penny, because he doesn't care about people, he wants Rogozhina as plunder. We had problems. Do you remember the vaccine? I was here when we brought vaccines with the Prime Minister to the health center. And we lined up one after another, we started with the pensioners, so they could be vaccinated. What about Çimi, who had millions of euros, to spend them on vaccines, to spend them on unfortunate people, to help us save many of those people we mourned for. But there was no worry there, because they find the money when it comes to the position. Meanwhile, we find the time, the opportunity, the vaccines and the houses when it comes to solving the problems. My friends, that's the big difference. ..."*

*I understand that Sali is non-grata, but he is the original non-grata. Ilir Meta is non-grata but he is not the original non-grata. But this one goes to register in their list. So one who willingly become a non-grata is only this fool of yours. In fact, he is not even yours because is not even from Rogozhina. So this Çimi is like them, because he tells me, please don't make fun of me too much because i have become a joke of Rogozhina. This is like those gamblers. ...", Erjon Velia at the closing meeting of the campaign on 21.07.2023 in Rogozhinë.*

<sup>31</sup> *"... The Socialist Party has 55 municipalities. Do you think that the Socialist Party would lose power because it has 55 or 56? It is in fact in the interest of Rogozhina to stay with Edi Rama, to stay with the Socialist Party, to stay with the Prefect of Tirana, to stay with the District Chairman, with the opportunity offered by this whole organization, which is led by our political force but that serves everyone equally. ...", Erjon Velia at the closing meeting of the campaign on 21.07.2023 in Rogozhina.*

<sup>32</sup> At almost every public event, the Political Leader of the SP for Tirana District and the Mayor of Tirana, Mr. Veliaj, has publicly stated that the candidate of the "Together We Win" Coalition was buying votes. In no case were these claims accompanied by an official report to the law enforcement bodies.

KRIIK notes with concern that the commitment from the local civil society organization or even from international actors to observe the electoral process for the repeat Elections for Mayor of Rogozhina was minimal, with a very low number of domestic observers<sup>33</sup> and no accredited international observers. Media's attempts to cover the campaign in the Rogozhina Municipality have faced intimidation and threats from the supporters of the majority<sup>34</sup>.

The extensive media coverage of the day of the elections and its issues is considered positive, while the election campaign also had coverage, especially the public events of the majority which were widely shown with "live" broadcasts.

Page | 8

Even in this campaign, the phenomenon of the use by the media of ready-made film materials provided by the election contestants was noticed, but as far as it was sporadically observed by KRIIK, they did not turn out to have the special inscription according to the provisions of the law. It was found that the events of the majority with the participation of Mr. Erion Veliaj were widely covered, which were broadcast with the label "live", while they were held a day or two before.

The use of pre-edited film materials provided to the media by the contestants, is a major problem that, in practice, totally eliminates the role of the media in truthfully and impartially informing the public and turning them into broadcasters of propaganda materials of political parties.

Broadcasting the activities simultaneously in several media, claiming to be "live", while the activity was recorded 1 or 2 days earlier, raises even stronger questions about the role and mission of the media in relation to the political power of the majority.

The election silence was broken on Saturday by a number of media<sup>35</sup> and during the election day by the candidate of the "Together We Win" Coalition, as well as other political officials.<sup>36</sup>

The candidates for Mayor visited a number of polling stations on the day of the elections, giving public statements, which can be considered a campaign in essence, regardless of the messages conveyed, since their very presence in the vicinity of the PSs is associated with the election campaign. Moreover, there is no need and no reason for visits by the candidates to the polling stations during election day.

An increased presence of political officials at the central level, both from the majority and from the opposition, was also noticed on Election Day.

Election day was generally peaceful, with sporadic conflicts at a few polling stations. The main problems were related to the presence of unauthorized persons near the voting centers, especially in rural areas; family voting<sup>37</sup>, massive in rural areas; as well as some cases of photographing the

---

<sup>33</sup> CEC accredited 23 local observers from four organizations, 15 of which were accredited by KRIIK. Meanwhile, the media accredited 102 of the media.

<sup>34</sup> On July 16, during a live broadcast of an activity of the Socialist Party in Rogozhina, [the Syri Television crew were intimidated](#) by a group of supporters of this party and, according to reports, relatives of the Mayor and candidate of this party. Mr. Edison Memolla.

<sup>35</sup> See [KRIIK's report](#) to the CEC for breaking the election silence by a number of media.

<sup>36</sup> See [the interview of the Candidate from the "Together We Win" Coalition](#)", Mr. Shkëlqim Hoxha; see [the status on Facebook page](#) of the deputy Mr. Etjen Xhafaj.

<sup>37</sup> A problem generally identified in rural areas, but more pronounced in the Lekaj Administrative Unit.



vote<sup>38</sup>, placing secret rooms in such positions that the secrecy of the vote was not guaranteed<sup>39</sup>, organized transport of voters<sup>40</sup>, etc.

According to the members of the CEAZ, the presence of polling station commissioners in the conducted trainings was very low, which, in combination with their change at the last moment, may be one of the factors for the lack of knowledge and preparation observed.

Page | 9

Three polling stations<sup>41</sup> opened late, as they did not have enough commissioners to have a quorum. The commissioners were replaced by the CEAZ and the polling stations were opened about an hour late.

KRIIK observers noticed different levels of commissioners' preparation and knowledge about the process; in some areas, mainly rural, the level of knowledge and preparation was significantly low and the commissioners constantly needed support and consultancy from the CEAZ or the CEC staff<sup>42</sup>.

Generally, the administration was free of serious issues, however, procedural violations were observed in a number of polling stations<sup>43</sup>.

The most concerning issue in terms of administration were the extremely low level of polling stations commissioners preparation related to the voting process, lack of reaction by the commissioners towards the unauthorized individuals in proximity of the polling stations, lack of reaction towards family voting, and lack of reaction according to the legal framework in the evidenced cases of photographing the vote, where in any case the Commissions of the Polling Stations did not notify the State Police, but simply declared the vote as invalid.

The last two violations are particularly disturbing, since in these cases the commissioners violated the criminal legal framework, while the conduct and ease of handling the cases is a major concern regarding the tolerance shown and the relativism made to the violation of the law.

In line with the elections of the 14 May and the previous elections, the presence of the unauthorized individuals near the polling stations or even inside them, including the internal environments of public buildings where the polling stations were allocated and its surrounding environments, continued to be a problem.

In some polling stations, these persons were provided with voters lists<sup>44</sup>, which is contrary with legal framework and the Commissioner's order. In one case<sup>45</sup>, these unauthorized persons, even

---

<sup>38</sup> Cases of taking photos of votes were observed in PS no. 2233 PS no. 2232 2209.

<sup>39</sup> PS 2229, PS no. 2230, PS no. 2226, PS no. 2151.

<sup>40</sup> During the election day, several private vehicles were observed which carried out dedicated transportation, accompanying various individuals to vote.

<sup>41</sup> PS no. 2209/00. 2210/00 and 2210/01.

<sup>42</sup> Even in some PS, commissioners asked for the opinion of the party observers or even of technical operators of the Electronical Identification Device when they has issues.

<sup>43</sup> In some polling stations, commissioners did not consider the presence of unauthorized individuals as an issue near the Polling Stations, however, the guidelines from CEC and CEAZ towards them shows that this is not allowed. In a number of polling stations in Lekaj Administrative Unit, voters were marked after receiving the ballot paper and were not checked if they had been marked before entering the polling station.

<sup>44</sup>“Lekaj” School.

<sup>45</sup> In Gosa United High School, where are placed four polling stations.

checked anyone, and even stopped the observers' group of KRIIK, demanding information of what they represented.

The presence of these individuals near the polling stations is illegal, while it clearly affects the will of the voters, as the voters may feel intimidated to participate or freely vote in such conditions of being constantly controlled or in surveillance. The fact that such unauthorized individuals stopped the KRIIK observers, shows that they are actively and continuously interacting with voters, clearly aiming to intimidate them and control all voters that enter the PS.

Page | 10

KRIIK observers also observed organized transportation of voters at a high number of polling stations, mainly in rural areas.

Both these phenomena are closely related with each other and they are a clear manifestation of the system of political patronage and the capillary direction of the vote, which continues to remain a major problem, not even unaddressed in any case as a concern but enthusiastically accepted as a main value by the majority, developing and expanding it further

In a polling station<sup>46</sup>, KRIIK observers addressed that the placement of the secret room did not guarantee the secrecy of the vote and notified the Commission of the Polling Station of this fact through an official notification.

The Electronic Identification Device worked normally, except for one case<sup>47</sup> where it was blocked for some 30 mins, and the cases of fingerprint non-recognition, mainly for voters of the third age.<sup>48</sup>

Cameras filming inside the polling station were assessed by KRIIK observers as having being placed in an appropriate position in most of the cases, except for one polling station<sup>49</sup>. However, it is worth noting that judging the appropriate placement of cameras in polling stations is difficult, as the camera is not accompanied with a monitor to check its field of vision.

The presence of the technical support staff of the Central Election Commission in Rogozhina throughout the entire voting day is positively evaluated.<sup>50</sup>

The voting process was closed at 7:00 PM according to the legal stipulation and the delivery of the election materials in CEAZ started at 7:20 PM and ended at 9:00 PM.

The counting process started around 11:20 PM. The delay in starting the counting came as a result of the late arrival of the members of the vote counting group<sup>51</sup>, the last group of which was presented at 11:10 PM. According to the communication with CEAZ, the members of the vote counting group had previously completed the necessary training.

Generally, vote counting process was fast and without significant problems.

---

<sup>46</sup> PS no. 2151.

<sup>47</sup> PS no. 2212.

<sup>48</sup> In all of these cases it was proceeded through the manual identification.

<sup>49</sup> PS no. 2151.

<sup>50</sup> Including State Subcommissioner of Elections, ms. Lealba Pelinku, who is responsible for the technology progress.

<sup>51</sup> The members of the vote counting group appointed by SP appeared around 22:30, those appointed by DP around 23:00 and those by PDIU at 23:10.

Around 2:30 AM on Monday morning, a number of votes in three polling stations<sup>52</sup> were found to have a special voting additional mark, which could potentially be used to show the voters' will<sup>53</sup>. The counting was interrupted until around 4:00 AM, on Monday morning after these votes were opposed by the representatives of the "Bashkë Fitojmë" Coalition<sup>54</sup>.

Regarding this situation, the CEAZ was verbally consulted and by majority of votes decided that they should be deemed valid. The relevant findings and decisions taken by CEAZ regarding these cases were recorded by it in the Protocol Book<sup>55</sup>. The suspension of the counting process, came as a result of communication, consultation and debates between commissioners, representatives of electoral subjects who were present during the counting process. After the end of all these debates and discussions between them, the process continued normally until its closure. The counting ended around 9:30 AM on Monday July 24.

During the counting was observed an increased and unjustified presence of the representatives and observers from the electoral subjects both inside and outside the Votes Counting Center. The increased presence did not cause blockages in the process or other problems during it. Even during the counting process there was no lack of presence of senior political officials for the "Bashkë Fitojmë" Coalition, as well as the senior public and political officials of the Socialist Party.

**Tirana, 25 July 2023!**

---

***\* This STATEMENT is published in Albanian and in English.  
The Albanian version is the only official document.***

---

<sup>52</sup> Around 50 votes in PS no. 2207, 2208 and 2208/1.

<sup>53</sup> Voters who have made these marks, by placing the mark enable the electoral subjects to identify that they have voted for them. All ballots had the same mark.

<sup>54</sup> All the marked votes in this way were for the Candidate of the Socialist Party, Mr. Memolla.

<sup>55</sup> According to the Protocol Book of CEAZ: "During the counting of PS 2208/1 from Counting group No. 4, 42 votes were found which belonged the candidate of SP Edison Memolla and of which, by a majority of votes, 28 voters were declared invalid and 14 valid. Also, 12 votes were found that belonged the candidate Shkëlqim Hoxha, by which CEAZ declared 10 votes as invalid.

During the counting of the PS 2208 by the enumerators, were found that 8 votes were separated in 7 votes for the candidate Edison Memolla and 1 vote for the candidate Shkëlqim Hoxha. CEAZ declared these votes invalid.

The Counting Group No. 1, presented 7 contested votes in PS 2210/1 to CEAZ for assessment, which were assessed as valid by the majority of the member's votes.

"During the counting of PS 2209/1 from Counting group No. 2, 13 contested votes which after the assessment the CEAZ decided that 12 votes were valid and 1 vote was invalid.

The contestation of the boxes resulted in delays on the votes counting process and for almost 2 hours no votes were counted. CEAZ chairperson asked the interruption of the counting process."