

PUBLIC STANCE *

Addressing the misuse of state resources in the Electoral Reform, essential for guaranteeing the Integrity of Elections in the country

Tomorrow, February 6, 2024, the Ad Hoc Parliamentary Committee for the Electoral Reform will hold the first consultative session or *the discussion table with some of the representatives of the Organizations that work on electoral matters*. This session is in implementation of the work calendar approved in the online meeting¹ of January 26, 2024, in which attended the majority of the members of the Committee.

The Coalition for Reforms, Integration and Consolidated Institutions (KRIIK) has closely followed the work of this Committee, as well as the work of the Assembly of Albania in general, and has publicly expressed a series of stances through which it has expressed its deep concern for the abnormal and dysfunctional way the parliament is working, and especially that of the Ad Hoc Parliamentary Committee for the Electoral Reform, highlighting the necessity for the manifestation of political maturity and the development of the responsibilities assumed by the leaders of the Assembly of Albania, Parliamentary Political Parties, Parliamentary Groups and every Member of the Assembly, especially those who are part of the Electoral Reform Committee. KRIIK has also **brought to the attention of the above stakeholders that in their commitments and decision-making they represent the citizens of the Republic of Albania and their will**. That their every decision-making should be responsible and visionary, in full respect of the best interest of the citizens and the European democratic future in the country, as well as in respect of the freedoms and constitutional rights of the citizens.

In this context, at the beginning of the autumn parliamentary session, KRIIK has publicly asked the Members of the Ad Hoc Parliamentary Committee to show maturity and accept the failure of this Committee, proposing its closure and encouraging the Assembly to constitute another Committee, with a functional formula for its composition, as well as with a clear and complete work program, in line with the proposals sent, for efficient operation, complete transparency and meaningful and true inclusion of all stakeholders, political and non-political.

After more than a year of interruption, **this Committee has the same composition, including members who are no longer MPs²**, and operates on a **limited scope**

¹ - Co-chairman of the Committee Mr. Damian Gjikhuri: "... As you have been informed, with the resumption of work we also discussed the workplan, a plan that includes all the points that address the recommendations of ODIHR. The topics are comprehensive, but at the same time leave room for any kind of collaboration or any kind of proposal that can come from any direction in terms of the topics listed there. ...", minutes (2:03 – 2:27) of the video recording of the session of [The meeting of the Ad Hoc Electoral Reform Committee dated 26.01.2024](#), (in Albanian).

- Co-chairman of the Committee Mr. Enkelejd Alibeaj: "... Yes, we have agreed and proposed to all members of the Committee also a work calendar, which also takes into account the time segment of the Reform Committee's continuation. ...", minutes (10:48 - 11:03) of the video recording of the session of [The meeting of the Ad Hoc Electoral Reform Committee dated 26.01.2024](#), (in Albanian).

² Former deputy Mrs. Grida Duma continues to be a member of the Committee, while she left her mandate in November 2022.

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approved³ by the Parliament of Albania, limited only to addressing the recommendations of ODIHR for the Parliamentary Elections of April 25, 2021, and **not explicitly including the ODIHR recommendations after the Local Elections of May 14, 2023.**

This situation puts the **Committee in frivolous positions**, questioning the will to perform a real reform. A will deliberately left to be addressed at the last moments, in close agreement and for narrow party interests, not understanding that the Electoral Reform should only benefit the citizens and ensure a functional democracy only in their interest. The Members of the Committee in this engagement must manifest integrity and only represent the interests of their constituents, spokespersons of the will of the people, and not act merely as representatives of political parties that establish the rules of the election competition, with the aim of ensuring advantages for themselves or their respective parties.

What is even more concerning is that the revised work-plan of the Committee does not include any amendments aiming to address **abuse of state resources and the undoing of the system of mass patronage established in a capillary way throughout the state administration**, which carries in itself forms of intimidation and vote direction, phenomena that in case of substantive non-addressing create illegal advantages or predetermine the outcome of an election process, nullifying any other regulation that can be made for the process, be it the electoral system.

Local stakeholders and international partners have repeatedly called for the Committee's work to start, the principles on which it should be based, as well as addressing, among other things, abuse of state resources.

The ODIHR in a statement dated January 23, 2024 emphasized the necessity of a comprehensive process as well as the main priorities that the expected Reform should include, which should focus on **"...preventing the misuse of public resources and vote-buying, ensuring the secrecy of the vote, safeguarding media freedom, and increasing the effectiveness of the election administration."**⁴

In this context, KRIIK brings to the attention of all political and non-political stakeholders, including institutional stakeholders, domestic and international, and especially the Deputies, that the Local Elections of May 14, 2023 suffered from a number of problems similar to previous election rounds, but a number of negative phenomena, seriously affecting the integrity of the elections, deepened further.

Of those, **the use of state resources and public office for electoral advantage is particularly emphasized.**

³ [Decision no. 12/202, dated 10.02.2022 "On the establishment of the Special Parliamentary Committee for the implementation of the electoral reform" \(in Albanian\)](#) - " II. The Committee is tasked with drafting legislative changes for the electoral reform, in particular dealing with the recommendations of OSCE/ODIHR reports for the elections of April 25, 2021 and for the previous unaddressed elections, the recommendations of the institutions responsible for the elections, of the parliamentary political parties and non-profit organizations."

⁴ [ODIHR appreciates the renewed commitment to the electoral reform in Albania](#)

"... We urge all parties to commit to open and inclusive consultations in the months ahead, ensuring that the resulting reforms improve the election process for the benefit of all Albanians.

It is of crucial importance to set practical and realistically achievable goals that focus on implementing ODIHR's previous recommendations and addressing the shortcomings noted during past elections, in line with international standards. Major priorities include preventing the misuse of public resources and vote-buying, ensuring the secrecy of the vote, safeguarding media freedom, and increasing the effectiveness of the election administration. ...", published on 23.01.2024.

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The use of state resources and public office for electoral advantage undermines the foundations of the democratic system by severely damaging equality, undermining citizens' trust in the institution of elections and eliminating the very logic of voting as an institution, as it violates the spirit of the Copenhagen Document which emphasizes the fundamentals of free elections as essential for the protection of fundamental human rights, as well as the duty of states to protect the institution of elections⁵.

The use of state resources or public office for electoral advantage is not a new phenomenon in Albanian elections, they have been used consistently by the party or individuals in power, both in central and local elections. That being the case, this phenomenon was one that was directly addressed by the 2020 legal changes that followed the Political Agreement of June 5 of that year.

Addressing the use of state resources takes on an even higher importance, if it is considered that one of the aspirations of the Political Agreement of June 5, 2020 is the depoliticization of the electoral administration at all levels until the next parliamentary elections, which are expected to be held in the spring of 2025.

In the current conditions of the misuse of state resources, the administration and the public office, and the extreme politicization of the administration, this aspiration seems further than ever and extremely dangerous for the integrity of the elections in the country, if it will be applied without substantial changes in the legislation and without a new mentality in its implementation.

The integrity of elections, beyond being a purely technical issue and related only to the electoral process, or even to the outcome of the elections itself, fundamentally affects the quality of a country's democracy, trust in the institutions resulting from the elections, the quality of life and the safety of citizens.

If the electoral process lacks integrity, in essence, **citizens lose the opportunity to hold public elected officials accountable and replace them** if the performance is not up to par, **nullifying the electoral process, directly endangering the democratic system and sowing the seeds of autocracy**.

Such a situation is not limited **to negative consequences for the specific country where it occurs, but endangers regional and international stability**; as unequivocally demonstrated recently by the catastrophic situation of violation of human rights and human suffering in Ukraine, created after the unprovoked attack by the Russian Federation, a country in which serious violations of integrity of elections have been observed for years.

Despite the acceptance of the negative phenomenon of the use of state resources by political actors, which also brought its addressing in the legal framework of 2020 with priority, not only it **continued to be present**, as in the elections of April 2021, March 2022 and May 2023, but there was also an increasing trend, taking place in the last elections, **performed openly, in clear defiance of the law and the institutions tasked with enforcing it, especially by high-level political officials**, who have the major responsibility of acting as role models for the behavior of the entire public administration.

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⁵ Paragraph 5.4. of the Copenhagen Document requires states to commit that there will be a "clear separation between the state and political parties; in particular, political parties will not merge with the state".

The problem was further deepened by failure to be followed up properly⁶, including by appropriate and unequivocal sanctioning by the CEC, of observed or reported cases⁷, from closing without any serious argumentation of some issues⁸ considered openly in violation of the law, according to KRIIK, or even delaying the examination of some cases in violation of any procedural deadline⁹.

⁶ The administrative investigation and decision-making process related to complaints about the use of public resources in the campaign was slow, especially in the first three months after the mechanism came into force. The absence of immediate reaction by the CEC to the reported violations allowed them to continue, violating the primary goal of the law, preventing and undoing the negative effect that the use of state resources for electoral purposes can cause on equality in the electoral contest and on the voters themselves.

⁷ In the judgment of KRIIK, the State Commissioner of Elections and the CEC administration showed a very tolerant approach to public administration and especially to senior officials, manifesting almost timidity in holding them accountable in relation to the implementation of the legal regulatory framework aiming to prevent use of state resources and public office for electoral advantage. The above was also evidenced in the Committee for Complaints and Sanctions, in relation to those cases that managed to arrive there, concluding to a considerable extent in a decision-making based on a narrow reading of the law and overlooking the true purpose of the legal framework.

⁸ Some of the cases where the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Ministers and the Mayor of Tirana, brought to attention below:

- *Denunciation no. 448 ID*, forwarded by KRIIK to CEC on 18.05.2023, via the [17th monitoring report \(in Albanian\)](#), where a visit of the Mayor of Tirana (simultaneously a candidate) was denounced, accompanied by the political leader of the SP for Unit no. 14 of the Municipality of Tirana Mr. Plarent Ndreca, in a newly built nursery in this area. This activity in the judgment of KRIIK based on the evidence forwarded to the CEC was an unreported activity that clearly constituted use of state resources in the function of the electoral campaign. Through [Decision no. 741 dated 28.03.2023 \(in Albanian\)](#), the SEC closed the administrative investigation on the grounds that the funds used for the construction of the daycare were not newly made available, the employees of the daycare (educators and children as well) were not obliged to participate, the mayor was fulfilling his duties and therefore there is no reporting obligation, etc.

- *Denunciation no. 348 ID*, forwarded by KRIIK to CEC on 24.04.2023, [through the 14th monitoring report \(in Albanian\)](#), where the speech with clear electoral content of the Mayor of Tirana (simultaneously a candidate) was denounced at the meeting of the Council of the Municipality of Tirana on 19.04.2023, using his position and the institution in the function of the electoral campaign. Through [decision 799 dated 10.10.2023 \(in Albanian\)](#), the SEC closed the administrative investigation on the grounds that the members of the municipal council are representatives of political parties, and their right to express opinions of a political nature is not prohibited.

- *Denunciation no. 403 ID*, forwarded by KRIIK to CEC on 8.05.2023, [through the 16th monitoring report \(in Albanian\)](#), where a meeting of the Prime Minister Mr. Edi Rama, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, at the same time Political Leader of the Dibra District of the Socialist Party, Mrs. Belinda Balluku and the Minister of Health and Social Protection, Mrs. Ogerta Manastirliu, with the doctors and nurses of Klos and Mati. The activity, except that it was not reported, based on the evidence forwarded to the CEC, was an activity that clearly constituted the use of state resources in function of the electoral campaign. Through [Decision no. 740 dated 28.08.2023 \(in Albanian\)](#), the SEC decided not to establish the violation and carrying out the administrative investigation with the reasoning that the institution responsible for the report, the Ministry of Health, had problems accessing the interface, while the activity was entirely institutional despite the presence of the political leader of the district, Mrs. Balluku.

⁹ Complaints not yet reviewed by the Central Election Commission:

- [Denouncement no. 10 of KRIIK \(in Albanian\)](#), registered with no. 446 ID at the CEC, forwarded by the KRIIK to the CEC on 11.05.2023, where the organization and development of concerts during or in connection with the electoral rallies by the political entities: Socialist Party, Coalition We Win, as well as their candidates for mayor of Tirana Municipality, Mr. Erion Veliaj and Mr. Belind Kelliçi, were denounced.

- *Denunciation no. 447 ID*, forwarded by KRIIK to CEC on 18.05.2023, via the [17th monitoring report](#), where the breaking of electoral silence by some election contestants was denounced through active paid posts on social networks during election day, as well as public statements broadcast on television during election day.

- [Denouncement no. 12 of KRIIK \(in Albanian\)](#), forwarded to the CEC on 22.07.2023, where it was denounced the breaking of the electoral silence through the broadcast in the media of electoral activities of the Socialist Party in the Municipality of Rrogozhina.

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The problem was also deepened by the passivity of the Civil Service Commissioner towards the behavior of the public administration and the phenomena that carried the publicly denounced cases, applying the legal framework superficially and only for appearances, as well as ignoring the essence of its implementation.

Also, an inherent influence in the deepening of this problem was the failure, with a full political will, by the majority of the Task Force set up by Decision of the Council of Ministers.¹⁰, task force which KRIIK publicly requested from the Council of Ministers¹¹ since January 2023, as a necessary act to help address legal shortcomings, and moreover as an act of clear expression of the political will of the majority to stop at all costs the misuse of state resources, public office, and state authority for electoral purposes.

As a logical consequence, law enforcement yielded to the lowest levels of administration, normalizing a partisan behavior and violation of democratic principles and the law, that is diametrically opposed to the behavior that should have the administration of a country that aspires to be part of the European Union.

In its [Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions](#) on the May 14 Elections, KRIIK assessed that "...the Albanian state and the decision-making political class failed to organize an election process which is built for the citizens and around the interests of the citizens, failing to guarantee that the latter could vote on May 14 in a free and uninfluenced manner.", assessment which reflects to a considerable extent the abuse of state resources, in addition to other negative phenomena observed.

Likewise, the OSCE/ODIHR International Monitoring Mission, in the Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions, assessed the misuse of public resources as one of the three most important concerns, along with pressure on the administration and vote buying.¹² Not only that, but ODIHR's treatment of this phenomenon in the content of the report is extremely concerning in relation to the reaction and behavior of the highest officials in the country¹³.

¹⁰ [Decision no. 234 dated 20.04.2023](#) (in Albanian) of the Council of Ministers "On taking measures and monitoring the activity, behavior or use of human, financial and logistical resources of the state administration, during the electoral process for the local elections of 2023".

¹¹ "... In the conditions of the insufficiency of the current legal framework to completely prevent the misuse of the administration for electoral advantage, as well as the urgent need for the expression of a clear political will to undo previous negative practices, KRIIK calls on the Prime Minister of Albania H.E.. Edi Rama, at the same time leader of the majority and Chairman of the Socialist Party to, in line with previous practices, promote and approve a Decision of the Council of Ministers which will complete the missing elements of the current legal regulatory framework and foresee the undertaking of concrete steps for the complete prevention of this phenomenon, including, among other things, the limitation of issuing by-laws that can be perceived to be used for electoral purposes for the period up to the election day. ...", pg. 6, [Public Stance of KRIIK "Avoiding abuse of state resources as well as correct and impartial behavior of the public administration employees, essential for ensuring the intact will of the citizen in exercising the right to vote"](#), date 16.01.2023.

¹² [Final Report of the ODIHR Election Observation Mission for Local Government Bodies of 14 May 2023](#), in his Executive Summary, second paragraph on page no. 1, refers to its Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions: "Cases of misuse of state resources at central and local levels, claims of pressure on public-sector workers and voters, and allegations of vote buying were of concern."

¹³ "... According to the Electoral Code, the authorities cannot propose or approve decisions providing social benefits to the population within four months before election day and until the formation of a new government. However, the Commissioner publicly stated that the respective provision was only applicable to parliamentary elections.

Such a narrow and formalistic interpretation, reflecting the letter rather than the spirit of the law, did little to guarantee a level playing field. As a result, the national executive took numerous decisions to provide social benefits to the population, which was viewed by several ODIHR EOM interlocutors as a misuse of administrative resources. Besides a 31 March decision to provide a bonus of 5,000 Albanian Leks (some

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KRIIK notes with concern that **abuse of state resources for electoral advantage has extended beyond the classical ways, also to influencing voters through private companies that direct the vote of their employees or even intimidate them**, in exchange for public contracts or other benefits; or offering financial benefits to the media in exchange for unconditional positive coverage for the party in power, using the media simply as re-broadcasters of messages that come pre-prepared by the press offices of institutions or political parties, generally of the party in power, without any editorial filter.

The corruption of private entrepreneurs or the media in this way complicates the phenomenon further, by damaging the system of the market economy and free enterprise, and deforming the mission of the media, in addition to the governing system.

The above makes the situation extremely alarming by extending electoral corruption, which is inextricably linked to corruption in general, and calls for a swift and decisive intervention to restore the system of accountability that should characterize a democratic country, aspiring to become part of the European Union.

The integrity of the elections includes all the elements of the electoral process, but above all the spirit and behavior of all the actors in a society, primarily the institutional and political ones, in fulfilling the internationally accepted standards for democratic elections, principles which are embodied in the Albanian legal framework and which must be faithfully embodied in the secondary regulatory framework, as well as, especially, be unequivocally manifested in the spirit of law enforcement by all institutional actors.

EUR 44) to pensioners, the government took over ten decisions in April to increase the salaries of various categories of public employees, such as teachers or firefighters. In addition, Mr. Rama on several occasions conditioned future government support to municipalities on the election results. On 2 May, the DPRC appealed to the Special Prosecutor's Office Against Organized Crime (SPAK) considering those statements as threats and requesting a criminal investigation of such statements made by Mr. Rama throughout the campaign. The ODIHR EOM observed a pattern in all regions where local authorities engaged in extensive activities such as local infrastructure repairs, distribution of food, or offers of short-term employment, including for national minority communities.

Besides Mr. Rama, all but one government ministers, who also did not stand as candidates, prominently participated in the SP campaign, with a different minister for each region of the country. Often, no clear distinction was made between their official and campaign activities. Several ODIHR EOM interlocutors expressed concerns that the CEC did not react to such type of activities promptly, which further reinforced the SP's advantage during the campaign. While the CEC imposed sanctions on local administrations for misuse of administrative resources for campaign purposes, sanctions were not applied at the central level of the government.

Legal provisions related to the campaign, including those against misuse of administrative resources, should be reviewed to remove ambiguities and ensure a level playing field. The authorities, including the election administration and law enforcement bodies, should treat all election contestants equally.

The ODIHR EOM received a number of credible reports about cases where municipal employees were told to support or vote for the SP or were warned against supporting the opposition.⁷⁶ On 24 March, the DPRC requested the SPAK to open a criminal investigation concerning the distribution and use of the application 'Aktiv1st' launched by the SP in 2022. The DPRC alleged that the application is used within the SP-controlled public administration to ensure that subordinate public employees endorse the activities of the SP, its leaders and party-affiliated officials on social networks. The SP publicly denied these claims. ODIHR EOM interlocutors confirmed on various occasions that the application was in use across municipalities and was perceived as a tool to raise and promote the SP's profile on social networks, often upon guidance from relevant SP-affiliated superiors.

Law enforcement bodies should make all efforts to identify and independently investigate all allegations of electoral violations, including vote-buying, pressure on voters and misuse of administrative resources, in a thorough, timely and transparent manner. Voters should be systematically informed about applicable mechanisms for reporting violations, including protection for whistle-blowers and safeguards against repercussions. ...". [Final Report of the ODIHR Mission to Observe the Local Elections of May 14, 2023](#), pages 15-16.

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A legal framework, no matter how perfect on paper, is null when it is implemented disconnected from the spirit with which it was written, as KRIIK has observed on more than one occasion when addressing cases of the use of state resources by the Committee Central Elections in the last local elections¹⁴, or, even worse, when it is intentionally implemented in a truncated manner.

KRIIK expresses its deep concern for the context in which the electoral processes take place in the country and, especially, **for the lack of reflection on the part of the actors, particularly the majority, leading to the further deepening of the negative practices created.**

In such a situation, adding to the deep crisis in which the Albanian opposition finds itself since at least September 2021, the loss of morality and the meaning of the election campaign which took place for the yet another consecutive election in a complete lack of respect for citizens, incites further uncertainty and loss of hope in the institutions and in the democratic system itself, which seems to be one of the reasons for the low turnout in the May 14 elections, especially among young people.

Now that the importance of electoral reform has returned to the attention of public opinion, in anticipation of the 2025 parliamentary elections, we note with concern that there does not seem to be any reflection on the major damage to the civil and political rights of Albanians or the damage committed against the public interest.

Instead, we see the same approach and language used both by the majority, which considers the last elections as the best ever conducted and denies any problems, as well as by the opposition, which considers them as an electoral massacre, further deepening the extreme political polarization.

The above is in line with previous attitudes during post-election situations by the political establishment, not enabling a real process of dialogue and effective reform in the interest of citizens and democracy in the country.

In this very challenging situation for democracy, the law and the rule of law, where the lack of legitimacy and morality dictates the entire behavior of the authorities, KRIIK considers vital critical, visionary and impartial civic engagement. Among the actors who play a role in guaranteeing the integrity of the elections, including the international ones who observe and evaluate its compatibility with the domestic legal framework and international standards, an essential role can and should be played by actors and non-political and non-partisan civic groups. .

The evaluation of the process in an independent, impartial and professional manner in all its components by domestic civil society, as well as its reflection in an impartial and truthful manner by the media, is essential both to guarantee integrity, as mentioned above, but also to increase public confidence in this process, under the assumption that the process fulfills the conditions.

Beyond assessing the process, the role of civil society can and should extend to contributing to improve it, either while the process is underway or after it has been completed. The recommendations of civil society, in this spirit, should be well-thought-

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¹⁴ See KRIIK recommendation for the Central Election Commission (CEC), "[On the urgent interaction between the governing bodies of the CEC for the further prohibition of the abuse of state resources through the urgent amendment of Decision no. 9 dated 24.12.2020 of the Regulatory Committee](#)" (in Albanian), published on April 26, 2023.

out, well-argued and based on the observed problems, addressing them specifically. Presentation of general findings, which are not based on data, and their analysis in a static and clichéd language; assessment that is not based on clear criteria (specifically in the domestic legal framework or accepted international standards for democratic elections, which are the criteria to evaluate the integrity of the elections); or not highlighting the major problems, with a visionary approach of the negative effects that these bring, and focusing on cases disconnected from the context and second-hand problems, inevitably bring recommendations disconnected from reality that do not address the real problems, or that do not address them in their essence.

In this gloomy, even alarming situation, for the quality of democracy and respect for human rights, when politicization has captured almost every cell of society, on the verge of capturing the state, the expected electoral reform (which the current legislature of the Assembly has completely failed to address until now, in an apparent lack of will to improve the legal framework for elections) will have to follow a radically different process from previous ones, if it is to produce a genuine reform of the legal framework, which addresses the issues at their core and not the symptoms, through minor or partial interventions.

Apart from a more thorough addressing of the problem of using state resources for electoral advantage, other major challenges that the expected reform will have to address are the right of Albanians living abroad to vote near their place of residence; the three decisions of the Constitutional Court¹⁵ that are still to be addressed, or the establishment of a totally independent electoral administration, in accordance with the aspirations of the Political Agreement of June 5, 2020.

In addition to the above, it is also essential to address the problems related to party and campaign finance, those related to internal democracy of political parties, as well as the possibility of referendums in practice, interventions that go beyond the legal framework for elections and imply amending also other legal acts¹⁶.

In order for the reform to produce a legal framework that aims to guarantee the integrity of elections, in the full sense of the term, **KRIIK reiterates, in line with the consistent position held since at least 2012, that it should be:**

(1) in-depth – to tackle all aspects of the electoral process and aim and guarantee the integrity of the elections, instead of focusing only on some problematic elements, producing again a series of partial amendments that lack vision;

(2) transparent – any discussions at the recommendation table should be completely transparent to all interested stakeholders and the general public, and not to base the reformation process on narrow political agreements between the main political actors; and

¹⁵ - [Decision no. 28, 30.06.2021 \(V-28/21\)](#) (in Albanian) of the Constitutional Court "Repeal of point 3 of Article 163 of the [Electoral Code...](#)", a point which conditions the reordering of candidates according to the preferential votes received upon reaching a threshold.

- [Decision no. 31, dated 4.10.2021](#) (in Albanian) of the Constitutional Court has decided "The repeal, as incompatible with the Constitution, of the second sentence of point 1 of article 162 of the Electoral Code, as amended, in the part that equates candidates proposed by voters with candidates proposed by political parties or a coalition of political parties".

- [Decision no. 38 dated 09.12.2022 \(V-38/22\)](#) (in Albanian) of the Constitutional Court found a violation of the constitutional right to vote of Albanian citizens with permanent residence abroad in the elections for the Assembly, due to the legal gap and obliges the Assembly of Albania to fill the legal gap within one year (December 9, 2023).

¹⁶ Like the Law on Political Parties or a special law on Referendums.

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(3) inclusive - all interested stakeholders who can provide a contribution, both political and not, domestic or international, should become part of public consultations and their contribution be taken into consideration and examined seriously.

An essential and active role, in the judgment of KRIIK, **should be played by international stakeholders, especially by the country's strategic partners in the journey towards the values of Euro-Atlantic democracy**, who can provide the necessary expertise, **as well as encouraging political support for local actors, and guarantees that the reform process will fulfill the above criteria**, again in the spirit of international cooperation for strengthening democracy and preserving the rights and requirements of the Copenhagen Document.

The Assembly of Albania and parliamentary political actors should find the path of political dialogue, returning the normal functioning of the parliament, updating its Decision on the Ad Hoc Electoral Reform Committee, making it functional and completing it with achievable objectives necessary for the 2025 parliamentary elections, and others necessary to be followed and addressed in the future, in function of a complete and in-depth reform as mentioned above.

In conclusion, **KRIIK appeals to all other actors** that can contribute to the reformation of the legal framework, whether international or domestic, including **civil society organizations, the media, representatives of the academic world, etc.**, to maintain a **critical and constructive attitude, seeking a comprehensive dialogue process, as well as to be actively involved in the process of consultations and providing recommendations for reforming the legal framework that regulates and guarantees integrity of elections in the country.**

Tirana, on February 5, 2024!

****This PUBLIC STANCE is published in Albanian and in English.
The Albanian version is the only official document.***

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