

**PARTIAL ELECTIONS  
FOR THE MAYOR OF HIMARA  
4 AUGUST 2024**

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

Following the continuous commitment of more than a decade, in cooperation with a consolidated Network of renowned Local Partner Organizations, with the aim of improving and ensuring the Integrity of the Electoral Process in the country, **The Coalition for Reforms, Integration and Consolidated Institutions (KRIIK), monitored on a voluntary basis<sup>1</sup>** the process of the Partial Elections for the Mayor of Himara of 4 August 2024.

Throughout the pre-election period, a team of experts followed the political and institutional situation in which the elections were held, as well as continuously observed the preparation and administration of the election process by the Central Election Commission (CEC).

The team of experts also conducted observation missions in the Municipality of Himara, meeting with the Commission of Election Administration Zone (CEAZ) and with the two mayoral candidates.

On election day and during the vote counting, eight activists of KRIIK observed **the voting process in 32 Voting Centers (VC) and the situation outside them; and the activity of the Commission of Election Administration Zone during the process of distribution of election materials, election day and counting of votes<sup>2</sup>, as well as the vote counting process.** KRIIK will continue to follow the remaining stages of the process, including possible complaints or appeals.

The Partial Elections for the Mayor of Himara were held after the Central Election Commission decided, on 5 July 2024, to declare invalid<sup>3</sup> the mandate of the Mayor of Himara, Mr. Dhionisios (Alfred) Beleri. The decision came after on 25 June 2024, the Court of Appeals for Corruption and Organized Crime upheld the decision of Special Court of First Instance for Corruption and Organized Crime of 5 March 2024, declaring Mr. Beleri guilty on the charge of active corruption

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<sup>1</sup> On Election Day, eight activists of KRIIK and Partner Organizations were engaged in the field: Vlora Youth Center (QRV) and Power of Hope, Trust and Change - Gjirokaštër.

<sup>2</sup> Two observers observed the activity of the CEAZ during the distribution of election materials, the election day and the counting process, as well as the work of the vote counting groups during the counting process.

<sup>3</sup> [Decision no. 69, dated 05.07.2024](https://kqz.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/VendimKSHZ_2024_69_Per-shqyrtimin-e-vlefshmerise-se-mandatit-te-Kryetarit-te-Bashkise-Himare-z.-Dhionisios-Alfred-Beleri-propozuar-nga-koalicioni-BF.docx.pdf), of the State Election Commissioner *"For the review of the validity of the mandate of the Mayor of Himara, Mr. Dhionisios (Alfred) Petro Beleri, proposed by the electoral entity Coalition Together We Win"*, for the Elections for Local Government Bodies on May 14, 2023".

in the elections, thus making it a subject to the law "On guaranteeing the integrity of persons who are elected, appointed or exercise public functions", also called the "Decriminalization Law"<sup>4</sup>.

Mr. Beleri was mandated by the Central Election Commission as Mayor of Himara on 25 May 2023<sup>5</sup>, after winning the 14 May elections, as a candidate proposed by the "Together We Win" Coalition. However, he never took the oath to the office, as he was arrested two days before election day on charges of active electoral corruption and held in custody throughout the trial, despite his repeated requests for a special permission to take the oath as mayor. Mr. Beleri and the electoral subjects who supported him in these elections have considered the process against him politically motivated and directly inspired by the Prime Minister, Mr. Edi Rama, who a few days before the arrest of Mr. Beleri attacked him personally in electoral meetings in Himara<sup>6</sup> and in television interviews<sup>7</sup>. The arrest before election day and detention of Mr. Beleri during the period that the case against him was examined in court also brought a tension in the international relations between Albania and Greece, since Mr. Beleri also holds Greek citizenship, in addition to the Albanian one, while he is also a member of the ruling party in Greece, New Democracy<sup>8</sup>, tension which was also reflected in the European Parliament<sup>9</sup>.

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During the period after the elections of 14 May 2023, until the election day on 4 August, the Municipality of Himara was initially led by the former mayor, Jorgo Goro, who was also a candidate of the Socialist Party in the 14 May Elections and lost. Mr. Goro was arrested by order of SPAK (Special Structure Against Corruption and Organized Crime) on 23 March 2024 on the charge of abuse of office for the alienation of some properties. He resigned as Mayor of Himara a few days later, on 27 March 2024. Since March, the Municipality of Himara has been run by two interim mayors<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> [Law no. 138/2015, dated 17.12.2015](#), "To guarantee the integrity of the persons who are elected, appointed or exercise public functions".

<sup>5</sup> [Decision no. 611, dated 25.05.2023](#), of the State Election Commissioner, "For granting the mandate of the Mayor of Himara, Vlora District, Mr. Dhionisios (Alfred) Petro Beleri, proposed by the electoral subject Coalition "Together We Win", for the Elections for Local Government Bodies on May 14, 2023".

<sup>6</sup> [Klan News](#), "Rama attacks the "BF" candidate in Himara: Ignorant. Illiterate in Greek, wood in Albanian", dated May 6, 2023.

<sup>7</sup> [RTV Clan](#), "Fredy Beleri reacts live on "Opinion", Rama answers: Go away, miscreant!", dated May 11, 2023.

<sup>8</sup> During the time he was in custody, Mr. Beleri ran for deputy in the European Parliament on the list of the New Democracy Party, currently in power in Greece, winning this election. Mr. Beleri was granted permission by the prison authority, allowing him to participate in the opening session of the European Parliament, where he was sworn in as a member of this Parliament on July 16, 2024, and then returned to Albania to serve the rest of his sentence, expected to end by October of this year.

<sup>9</sup> See the [Resolution of the European Parliament](#) of July 12, 2023, on Albania's Progress Report for 2022, point 36: "The European Parliament [...] Expresses its concern at the arrest of the new mayor of Chimara, Freddy Beleris, on the eve of the municipal elections in May, which both violated the presumption of innocence and prevented the mayor-elect from taking office, as he remains imprisoned to this day; underlines that this matter is linked to overall respect for fundamental rights, the pending issue of the properties of members of the Greek ethnic minority in the municipal area and the accusations of encroachments by the State;"

<sup>10</sup> With the resignation of Mr. Goro, on March 29, 2024, was elected by the votes of 15 members of the Municipal Council of Himara as Interim Mayor Mrs. Blerina Balaj. The meeting in which she was elected was accompanied by tensions, where citizens of Himara entered the Municipal Hall and demanded that the Prefect of the Vlora District at the time, Mr. Vangjel Tavo, currently candidate of the Socialist Party for Mayor, leave the hall.

On June 5, 2024, Ms. Balaj resigned after about two months in office. She was replaced by Mr. Arqile Bollano, who, according to the media, is also under investigation by SPAK for alienation of properties.

To remove the mandate of Mr. Beleri, the State Election Commissioner held two hearings, on 4 and 5 July 2024. In the first one, on July 4, the lawyer of Mr. Beleri requested for the latter to be present for the removal of his mandate and to be able to speak. After the presented arguments and discussions, the State Election Commissioner accepted the request and the presence of Mr. Beleri in the session held a day later, on July 5, 2024. In the session of July 5, Mr. Beleri and his legal representative, as well as the legal representative of the Electoral Subject Coalition "Together We Win", claimed that the decision to remove his mandate could not be taken by the Central Election Commission, since the powers of the latter had ended at the moment it mandated him as Mayor of Municipality of Himara and that the measure to remove the mandate could not be taken for convictions received after being mandated, despite the fact that the criminal offense for which he was convicted was subject to the decriminalization law<sup>11</sup>.

In the judgment of the State Election Commissioner (SEC), these claims were "...contrary to the very essence of the law on decriminalization and were not based on a logical interpretation of the law as a whole"<sup>12</sup>, as it does not make sense that the law which defines the criteria that prohibits someone from being elected or appointed to a certain office does not prohibit holding and exercising this office if the person is convicted of one of the criminal offenses described in this law. Based on this comprehensive interpretation of the decriminalization law, the State Election Commissioner decided to declare invalid and the premature termination of the mandate of the Mayor of Himar, Mr. Dhionisios (Alfred) Beleri.

**While questions are raised about the way of setting the CEC in motion, in the opinion of KRIIK, the interpretation made by the SEC is correct.**, as all other legal provisions that can be brought for resolution are far from the essence of the case of Mr. Beleri.

The process of official announcements of the institutions regarding the removal of the mandate of Mr. Beleri was carried out within a few hours on the same day that the CEC made the decision to declare his mandate invalid<sup>13</sup>. On the same day, the President of the Republic announced the decree for the date of Early Elections for the Mayor of Himara, for August 4, 2024<sup>14</sup>. The President's decree was issued without waiting for the expiration of the 30-day deadline within which, according to the State Election Commissioner's Decision, the decision could be appealed to the Appeals and Sanctions Commission (ASC), an appeal which was made by Mr. Beleri within the deadline, on August 3, 2024. Also, unlike in previous elections, the President of the Republic did not consult with the political parties regarding setting the date of the elections, a normal practice

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<sup>11</sup> See the parties' claims at [the decision of the State Election Commissioner](#).

<sup>12</sup> [Decision no. 69, dated 05.07.2024](#), of the State Election Commissioner "For the review of the validity of the mandate of the Mayor of Himara, Mr. Dhionisios (Alfred) Petro Beleri, proposed by the "Together We Win" electoral entity Coalition, for the Elections for Local Government Bodies on May 14, 2023", page 7.

<sup>13</sup> On July 5, 2024, after the decision by the State Election Commissioner to announce the mandate of Mr. Beleri invalid, the Secretary General of the Council of Ministers, Mr. Ęngjell Agaçi addressed the CEC with official letter No. 3746 prot, date 05.07.2024 requesting information about the decision-making of the CEC. In response, on the same day, the General Secretary of the Central Election Commission forwarded to the Council of Ministers Decision no. 69, dated 05.07.2024 of the SEC, for declaring the mandate of Mr. Beleri invalid. On the same day, Mr. Agaçi addressed the President of the Republic with official letter no. 3753 prot, dated 05.07.2024, notifying the latter of the vacancy created in the Municipality of Himara and requesting the announcement of early elections.

<sup>14</sup> The President of the Republic on the same day, with [Decree no. 244](#) dated 05.07.2024, announced August 4, 2024 as the date of early elections for the Mayor of Himara.

followed continuously by the President before setting the date of any electoral process. Both of these elements were strongly criticized by the Democratic Party<sup>15</sup>, which considered the entire process of declaring the mandate of Mr. Beleri and the appointment of the election day as an indication that the election date was set in advance, and that there had been a coordination between the institutions involved in this process (CEC, Council of Ministers and Presidency) to fulfill a personal will of Prime Minister Rama for setting the date of the Elections.

KRIIK deems that the decision of the President of the Republic **to set the election date before the expiration of the legal deadline for appeal is in violation of the law**. Also, **setting the date of the elections without prior consultation with the political parties is considered unacceptable**, as despite it not being a genuine legal obligation, it is a consolidated practice, in line with the political balancing of the administration of the electoral process, which increases the legitimacy and credibility by contestants and citizens in the process. On the other hand, comparing the dynamics of setting the election date for the Mayor of Himara with that of the Mayor of Kukes<sup>16</sup>, a process during which the deadlines provided for in the Constitution were openly violated by the same institutions involved (the Council of Ministers and the Presidency), **strong doubts arise that the President of the Republic, in coordination with the Council of Ministers, has acted in accordance with the electoral calculations of the Socialist Party while decreeing the date of elections**, placing strong questions on the constitutional principle<sup>17</sup> that the President of the Republic represents the unity of the people, standing above the political parties.

For its part, the Institution of the President of the Republic reacted regarding the decree of the date of the elections, reasoning that the President is set in motion by notification, and is not the body that ascertains the vacancy, as it does not consider the procedure that preceded it, nor is an instance of administrative appeal<sup>18</sup>. **This, in KRIIK's opinion, is an approach based on a very narrow reading of the law.**

**Setting the earliest possible date for holding elections also raises questions about the correct approach and accountability** that the President's Institution should manifest regarding the fulfillment of the standards of the electoral process that would be offered to the citizens of Municipality of Himara. Consultation only with the State Election Commissioner, ignoring other political and institutional actors, was insufficient, which **resulted in a series of problems that affected the standard and quality of this minor electoral process.**

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<sup>15</sup> Mr. Gazment Bardhi, Chairman of the Parliamentary Group of the Democratic Party, in a public reaction wrote *"What a shame for the President of the Republic who openly violates the Constitution and the law by decreeing elections without an enforceable decision yet for the invalidity of the mandate of the elected mayor of Himara. Today's theater, coordinated between Edi Rama and a general turned soldier, is an assassination attempt against the rule of law, which shows the political annihilation of the institution of the President of the Republic. Today's decision of the CEC is not yet enforceable without the expiry of the appeal period. (...)"*.

<sup>16</sup> See the [Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions of KRIIK for the Partial Elections for the Mayor of Kukës](#), dated September 25, 2023, page 2.

<sup>17</sup> [Constitution of the Republic of Albania](#), article 86, paragraph 1.

<sup>18</sup> Albanian Telegraphic Agency *"Elections in Himara, Presidency: "August 4, after we were notified of the vacancy": "... In a response to the media, the Presidency clarifies that 'the President of the Republic set the date of the elections after being officially notified of the created vacancy. The President of the Republic is not the body that determines the vacancy, as it does not take into consideration the procedure that preceded it, nor is it an instance of administrative appeal. The President is set in motion by notification. In the Albanian legal system, there is only one legal way to move the President of the Republic, in the case of vacancies in the local government. This route is the route of notification by the Council of Ministers. The President has only 48 hours to consider the case. By-elections are held according to a strict legal calendar. The legal deadlines are binding", the Presidency emphasized. ..."*

Mr. Beleri appealed the President's Decree on setting the date of the elections before the expiration of deadlines for appeals to the Administrative Court of the First Instance in Tirana, also requesting the suspension of the electoral process until a final decision by this court, as a measure to secure the lawsuit. The Party Union for Human Rights filed the same lawsuit to the same Court. The court combined both cases into one and with the decision made on 30 July 2024, it rejected the request for the annulment of the Presidential Decree, paving the way for the continuation of the election process.

The decree of the date of the elections by the President before the expiration of the deadline for appealing and the subsequent lawsuit for the suspension of the Presidential Decree brought a stalemate in the election process, since as a result of two votes against by members of the Regulatory Commission, this failed to adopt two essential decisions for the electoral process, which required a qualified majority, the decision to adopt the procedural deadlines for the electoral process<sup>19</sup> and the decision on the approval of the technical characteristics of the ballot papers<sup>20</sup>. The failure to adopt the decisions were appealed to the Electoral College at the Tirana Court of Appeal by the Socialist Party, and the Court adopted them instead<sup>21</sup>.

**In addition to the deadlock created in the election process, this situation once again highlighted the politicization of the CEC's Regulatory Commission.** This politicization was visible during the voting of the members of the Regulatory Commission, clearly divided according to the official lines of the political parties that proposed them in this position, as well as in the rhetoric used by the members of the Regulatory Commission during the meetings where these decisions were discussed, but also in the following meetings.

Eleven political parties registered in the elections<sup>22</sup>, ten of which gathered in the pre-election coalition "Together We Win"<sup>23</sup> proposing as a candidate Mr. Petraq Gjiguria. The Socialist Party presented as a candidate Mr. Vangjel Tavo.

According to preliminary reports from the CEC, about 37.6% of the voters registered in the Municipality of Himara voted on election day. With the end of the counting process, the candidate of the Socialist Party, Mr. Vangjel Tavo is expected to be declared Mayor of Himara, by winning 5,022 votes (or 58.6%), while the candidate supported by the Coalition "Together We Win" Mr. Petraq Gjiguria received 3,545 votes (or 41.4%).

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<sup>19</sup> [Decision no. 2, dated 09.07.2024, of the Regulatory Commission, "For the approval of some procedural deadlines related to the partial elections for mayor in the municipality of Himara, which will take place on August 4, 2024".](#)

<sup>20</sup> [Decision no. 3, dated 19.07.2024, of the Regulatory Commission, "For the approval of some technical characteristics of the ballots for the partial elections for Mayor in Himar Municipality, dated August 4, 2024".](#)

<sup>21</sup> [Notice Decision-making of the Socialist Party of Albania Electoral College](#), date 17.07.2024.

[Notice Decision-making of the Socialist Party of Albania Electoral College](#), date 22.07.2024.

<sup>22</sup> Socialist Party; Republican Party; Democratic Party; New Democratic Spirit; Party Union for Human Rights; Freedom Party; National Front Party; Democratic Party; Environmental Agrarian Party; Democratic National Front; and the Albanian Democratic Union Party.

<sup>23</sup> Republican Party; Democratic Party; New Democratic Spirit; Party Union for Human Rights; Freedom Party; National Front Party; Democratic Party; Environmental Agrarian Party; Democratic National Front; and the Albanian Democratic Union Party.



The Partial Elections for the Mayor of Himara on August 4, 2024, **were held in a charged political climate, while the opposition continues to accuse the ruling majority** and its exponents of deep-seated corruption and ties to organized crime.

Shortly before the partial elections for the Mayor of Himara, on 11 June 2024, the Court of Appeals of Tirana decided not to accept the appeal made by Mr. Enkelejd Alibeaj regarding the decision of the Court of First Instance, of 25 March 2022 for the registration of the acts of the National Assembly of the Democratic Party of December 2021. This decision brought the recognition *de jure* of Mr. Sali Berisha as chairperson of the Democratic Party, after more than two and a half years of court proceedings at several levels, including in the Supreme Court<sup>24</sup>.

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During the election period for the elections in Himara, **The Socialist Party and the opposition reached a political agreement to present together a draft law that would address the obligation of the Albanian Assembly to fulfill the decisions of the Constitutional Court** in relation to the elections. Specifically, the obligation to complete the Electoral Code to enable the voting of Albanian citizens living abroad, the change of the electoral threshold formula so that candidates within the lists can benefit from the reordering as a result of preferential votes, and the legal threshold for independent candidates. The draft law for these decisions was adopted by the Assembly of Albania in its last ordinary session for the current Session of the Assembly, on 26 July 2025.

Beyond these minimalist changes, which were imperative obligations, dictated by the respective decisions of the Constitutional Court<sup>25</sup>, fulfilled too late, **the political class failed again, as a result of a deliberate lack of political will, to undertake a comprehensive electoral reform, contrary to the recommendations of the OSCE/ODIHR and domestic stakeholders**<sup>26</sup>. This last-minute agreement prompted accusations from the former Chairperson of the Democratic Party, Mr. Lulzim Basha, for an agreement between the Democratic Party and the Socialist Party, including the undertaking of joint steps to undo the achievements in the fight against corruption and organized crime.

During the period leading to the August 4 elections, **The Parliament of Albania has undertaken a number of controversial steps, which raise strong concerns about attempts to place under political control independent institutions, media, civil society, and justice bodies**, including the establishment of two Ad Hoc Parliamentary Committees, for the fight against corruption and

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<sup>24</sup> Former Chairman of the Democratic Party, Mr. Lulzim Basha has expressed that he will appeal to the Supreme Court regarding this decision, while the deputies who have supported him throughout this period, including the former interim Chairman of the Democratic Party during the Elections for Local Government Bodies of 2023, Mr. Enkelejd Alibeaj, have resigned from the Parliamentary Group of the Democratic Party.

<sup>25</sup> - [Decision of the Constitutional Court no. 28](#) date 30.06.2021; regarding the quotient that limited the reordering of candidates according to preferential votes;

- [Decision of the Constitutional Court no. 31](#), dated 04.10.2021, regarding the national threshold for independent candidates;

- [Decision of the Constitutional Court no. 38](#), dated 09.12.2022, regarding the vote of voters living abroad.

<sup>26</sup> For more, see KRIIK's Statement "[The lack of will for dialogue and open political compromise, an unacceptable and completely harmful approach to undertaking vital reforms in the interest of Albanian citizens and a functional democracy in the country](#)", date July 24, 2024.

to address disinformation<sup>27</sup>, as well as for the establishment of a parliamentary subcommittee to control the Supreme State Audit<sup>28</sup>.

The Electoral Code contains some provisions regarding partial elections; however, some issues remain unaddressed and are regulated through by-laws of the Central Election Commission.

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As mentioned above, the Regulatory Commission failed to adopt the procedural deadlines and the duties for other institutions, so this decision was finally taken by the Electoral College, on July 18, 2024.

During the period before election day, The State Election Commissioner adopted 78 decisions and one order, the Regulatory Commission six decisions, two of which were adopted by the Electoral College, while the Appeals and Sanctions Commission two decisions<sup>29</sup> which refer to a complaint filed with the CEC.

The elections were administered by the Central Election Commission (CEC), a Commission of Election Administration Zone (CEAZ no. 88) and 36 Voting Center Commissions (VCC). The administration of the technical aspects of the process by the Central Election Commission was efficient.

CEAZ no. 88 in the Municipality of Himara was established by decision of the SEC<sup>30</sup>, in compliance with legal deadlines. The CEAZ consisted of seven members, three proposed by the Democratic Party<sup>31</sup>, three proposed by the Socialist Party<sup>32</sup>, and one proposed by the Freedom Party<sup>33</sup>. The Secretary of CEAZ was proposed by the Socialist Party<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> Ad Hoc Parliamentary Committee "[For the deepening of reforms for good governance, the rule of law and anti-corruption for Albania 2030 in the European Union](#)" and Ad Hoc Parliamentary Committee "[To coordinate and supervise all institutional actions to combat disinformation and other forms of foreign interference in the country's democratic processes](#)".

<sup>28</sup> [Draft decision on the establishment of the Subcommittee "On Public Sector Audit"](#).

<sup>29</sup> For more see the decisions published in the section [Acts of the CEC](#).

<sup>30</sup> [Decision no. 87, dated 15.07.2024](#), of the State Election Commissioner, "On setting up and calling the first meeting of the Electoral Administration Zone Commission no. 88, Municipality of Himara, for the partial elections for Himara Mayor, dated August 4, 2024".

<sup>31</sup> [Decision no. 86, dated 15.07.2024](#), of the State Election Commissioner, "For the appointment of members of CEAZ no. 88, Municipality of Himara, proposed by the Democratic Party of Albania, for the partial elections for Himara Mayor, dated August 4, 2024".

<sup>32</sup> [Decision no. 83, dated 15.07.2024](#), of the State Election Commissioner, "For the appointment of a member of CEAZ no. 88, Municipality of Himara, for the partial elections for Mayor of Municipality of Himara, dated August 4, 2024" and [Decision no. 85, dated 15.07.2024](#), of the State Election Commissioner, "For the appointment of members and the secretary of CEAZ no. 88, Municipality of Himara, proposed by the Socialist Party of Albania, for the partial elections for Himara Mayor, dated August 4, 2024".

<sup>33</sup> [Decision no. 84, dated 15.07.2024](#), of the State Election Commissioner, "For the appointment of a member of CEAZ no. 88, Municipality of Himara, proposed by the Freedom Party, for the partial elections for Himara Mayor, dated August 4, 2024".

<sup>34</sup> [Decision no. 85, dated 15.07.2024](#), of the State Election Commissioner, "For the appointment of the members and the secretary of CEAZ no. 88, Municipality of Himara, proposed by the Socialist Party of Albania, for the partial elections for Himara Mayor, dated August 4, 2024".

**The CEAZ functioned in a collegial manner, but not in a procedurally regular manner<sup>35</sup>.** From verbal communication with representatives of the CEC, the decision-making was not forwarded to the Central Election Commission, in violation of legal obligations. Even in this process, despite the brief time of engagement, there were changes<sup>36</sup> in the composition of the CEAZ.

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The membership of the Voting Centers Commissions had the same configuration of political representation as the CEAZ. The membership of the VCCs was completed within the legal deadlines by the CEAZ, but **high number of changes of commissioners by electoral subjects** until the last moment, even until election day, **remains a major problem**, which, also due to the lack of training from the late appointment, **directly affects the performance of the VCCs** during the election day, as was observed in a number of polling stations.

There were 23,074 voters on the list of voters, of which 385 were first time voters. The list of voters was generated by the General Directorate of Civil Status (GDCS) within the legal deadlines<sup>37</sup>.

**The lists of voters were not displayed either on the premises with free access for the public in the Municipality or in the premises of the Voting Centers**, contrary to the law. On election day, voter lists were displayed in some polling stations, **but not in all**.

On 15 July 2024, the Central Election Commission adopted the appointment of the technical auditor and his assistant, to verify the integrity of the voter lists<sup>38</sup>. The report<sup>39</sup> of the auditor raises major concerns about potential voter movement for electoral purposes during the pre-election period<sup>40</sup>. According to it, 311 voters were added to the final list, who had changed their residency between the elections of 2023 and 2024. The date of the movement of these voters is unclear, **but the tendency is very doubtful, given that the movements were made between the two electoral processes**. The majority of voters who have changed their place of residence are from the municipalities of Tirana and Vlorë (90 and 68 respectively).

Another problem noticed by the technical auditor is the presence in the voter list of 157 voters from the same family tree **who vote in different voting centers, unlike what is provided in such cases by the Electoral Code**.

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<sup>35</sup> The members of CEAZ did not respect the meeting and opening hours of CEAZ. According to the communications of the representatives of KRIIK with CEAZ and the administration of the CEC, this is due to their private engagements during the summer season, as well as engagements in the electoral campaign.

<sup>36</sup> [Decision no. 158, dated 01.08.2024](#) of the State Election Commissioner, "For the release and appointment of the secretary of the CEAZ no. 88, for the partial elections for the mayor of Himara, dated August 4, 2024".

<sup>37</sup> The Civil Status extract was generated by the General Directorate of Civil Status on July 10, 2024. This extract was the first and the last one generated, as only one such extract is generated in partial election processes.

<sup>38</sup> [Decision no. 82, dated 15.07.2024](#) "For the appointment of the technical audit for the supervision of the process of drawing up the voter lists, for the elections for the mayor of Himara, Vlorë district" and [Decision no. 100, dated 22.07.2024](#) "For the appointment of the technical audit assistant for the supervision of the process of drawing up voter lists, for the elections for Mayor of Municipality of Himara, Vlorë District, dated August 4, 2024".

<sup>39</sup> [Report of the auditor Laert Kraja](#) on the verification of actions in the database of the National Register of Civil Status, dt. 26.07.2024.

<sup>40</sup> [Report of the auditor Laert Kraja](#) on the verification of actions in the database of the National Register of Civil Status, dt. 26.07.2024.



Regarding this problem, two members of the Regulatory Commission requested in a public session to the State Deputy Commissioner of Elections as well as the CEC administration to officially address the GDCS to receive more detailed information. The Deputy Commissioner sent an official request to the GDCS<sup>41</sup>, which responded<sup>42</sup> on 2 August. The GDCS clarified<sup>43</sup> that the problem, related to the 157 voters of the same family tree who vote in different VCs, **happened because of the very short time available to the GDCS**, which has been unable to fix this issue. However, according to the answer, these voters vote in the same building, although in different polling stations. Regarding the individuals who transferred their residency to the Municipality of Himara during the last year, the data was made available to the CEC in the same letter<sup>44</sup>.

Referring to these data, as per the document that the GDCS sent to the CEC, what stands out is that, while most of the residency transfers are in small numbers and spread over a period of almost a year, only in four working days, between the announcement of the election date (July 5) and the day when the list of voters was generated (July 10), were registered 30% of the total transfers; 93 voters out of 311 in total<sup>45</sup>. This unnatural figure, immediately after the election date's announcement, is a strong indication of a coordinated transfer of voters, with the aim of influencing the election outcome.

On 23 July 2024, the candidate of the Coalition "Together We Win", Mr. Petraq Gjukuria, reported to the Special Prosecution Against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK) the candidate of the Socialist Party, Mr. Vangjel Tavo and 13 other people. According to media sources, the report referred to the movement of residence of these persons<sup>46</sup>.

In a television interview on 31 July 2024<sup>47</sup>, Mr. Tavo admitted that some of the persons reported to SPAK, who have changed their residence, are his family members, while he claimed that he had no knowledge of this fact, or of other persons who changed their residence. In addition to the aforementioned report, the candidate of the Coalition "Together We Win", through a video made public on 31 July<sup>48</sup>, called on SPAK to investigate the candidate of the Socialist Party, not only for the voter movement but also for the public statement<sup>49</sup>, that there were almost 600 property certificates in the office, ready to be distributed.

**A major problem in the August 4 election was the inability to vote for voters with expired identification documents.** On the day of the elections, a problem known even before by the political parties and the CEC itself was made public, which was related to a remarkably high

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<sup>41</sup> Request for Information no. 2243 prot. date 29.07.2024.

<sup>42</sup> [Letter no. 8649/1](#) prot. dated 02.08.2024 of the Ministry of the Interior.

<sup>43</sup> For more see [GDCS's response](#) addressed to the Central Election Commission.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> 15 on July 5, 18 on July 8, 30 on July 9, and 30 on July 10.

<sup>46</sup> Transferred voters from Dropulli to Himara, [Tavo is reported to SPAK](#).

<sup>47</sup> A2 CNN, ["EXCLUSIVE! Vangjel Tavo Speaks for A2CNN! I will win with over 1,000 votes, otherwise I will not accept the mandate!"](#), date July 30, 2024 (min. 6:45).

<sup>48</sup> Syri TV, ["Petro Gjukuria calls on SPAK to investigate Tavo: Tavo admitted that he brought voters to Himara"](#), dt. 31.07.2024.

<sup>49</sup> Interview of Mr. Tavo in [the show "Now with Erla" on Euronews](#), minute 1:46, where Mr. Tavo says "(...) We are talking about these within two months since SAC started working in Himara, 1,226 property certificates have been distributed and another 600 are ready at the office, so there are 1,826 certificates. (...)".

number of voters who did not have a valid identification document on the day of the elections, as documents had expired.

This issue was publicly articulated during the preparation of the election process by the member of the Regulatory Commission at the CEC, Mr. Muharrem Çakaj, who at the public meeting on July 29, 2024, publicly raised this issue calling for reflection on it. He asked the administration of the CEC<sup>50</sup> to address the Ministry of the Interior and to coordinate to take the appropriate measures to solve this problem. Also, the State Election Commissioner publicly admitted in a public statement<sup>51</sup> on the day of the elections that this problem is present, but that the CEC has no competence and there was no official request from the political parties to address the Ministry of the Interior.

This is a problem, which was also present in the elections of 2021 and 2023. But in these processes, with the raising of the problem by the political parties and the CEC itself, the Albanian government through a decision of the Council of Ministers extended the period of validity of identification documents<sup>52</sup>, giving every citizen the opportunity to exercise the right to vote. No such step was taken in the August 4 Elections; neither proactively by the Council of Ministers itself, nor by the CEC and the political parties to immediately institutionalize the solution to this problem with the announcement of the date of the elections.

In the judgment of KRIIK, **the constitutional active suffrage rights prevail over any technicality found as a reason not to adopt a normative act for the extension of the validity of IDs.** Moreover, for more than three election rounds, this relief measure for citizens had become a positive practice that was undertaken with good will by state institutions, based precisely on the obligation and constitutional principles. **The inappropriate timing of these elections and the well-known problem, even in previous elections, of expired documents should have served as a sufficient indication to set in motion in advance from the President of the Republic,** at least for setting the date of the elections in the final limit of the period provided by the law and encouraging the competent institutions to undertake an awareness campaign for citizens, as well as set in motion **the CEC, the political parties contesting the election, or the Ministry of Interior** to initiate the adoption of an act by the Council of Ministers that would extend the validity of documents.

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<sup>50</sup> Meeting of the Regulatory Commission dated 29.07.2024 [video](#) minutes 19, or [record](#) page no. 9.

<sup>51</sup> [\[that\] Conference](#) of Mr. Celibashi from Himara on August 4, 2024: "It is true that there are about 6,000 voters whose identification documents have either expired or will expire today. The same thing happened in the last elections, but at that time there was a decision, and they were allowed to vote. Why, for these elections, a decision was not made by the Council of Ministers through a normative act to extend the validity of identity cards, as you can understand, I cannot say. We have made this communication every time there has been an official request from political parties on this matter. In this case, we have not had any announcement or official request from the political parties, in the last few days we have had a concern raised informally. There has been no communication with the government or the Ministry of the Interior about the problem with expired identity cards."

<sup>52</sup> - [The government makes the decision](#), the validity period of identity cards is extended, parliamentary elections April 25, 2021.

- "May 14 elections", [The government postpones the deadline for ID cards](#).

The election campaign started before the deadline set by the Central Election Commission, for both candidates<sup>53</sup>.

**The ruling majority used state resources and other privileges that come from being in power for electoral advantage throughout this campaign as well.** In particular, the candidate of the Socialist Party, Mr. Vangjel Tavo, who had long been announced informally that he would be the candidate of this party for Mayor of Himara<sup>54</sup> was appointed Prefect of Vlora District in March 2024. Thus, **while holding pre-campaign electoral meetings as a candidate for mayor, Mr. Tavo was also the Prefect of the Vlora District.**

Throughout the election campaign, the candidate of the Socialist Party also benefited from the support of various public officials, including the deputy Prime Minister, Mrs. Belinda Balluku<sup>55</sup>, the Minister of Tourism, Mrs. Mirela Kumbaro and the Mayor of Vlorë, Mr. Ermal Dredha<sup>56</sup>.

KRIIK deems that **the candidate of the Socialist Party, Mr. Tavo, used his official position as Prefect of Vlora District and the institutional support of the majority in power for electoral advantage, significantly distorting the equality in the electoral race.**

One of the main topics of the campaign of the candidate of the Socialist Party, Mr. Tavo, was **solving property problems.**

In this matter **there was a clear coordination between the state institutions and the campaign of the candidate Tavo, giving him an advantage in the electoral race.**

During May and June 2024<sup>57</sup>, Prime Minister Rama distributed ownership certificates to the residents of the Municipality of Himara, **using these institutional events to campaign prematurely for Mr. Tavo**, who accompanied him in these meetings.

Moreover, at least one of these events<sup>58</sup> was present, in a central position, also **the General Secretary of the Socialist Party and the Political Coordinator of this party for the Vlorë District, Mr. Blendi Klosi**, who currently does not hold any state institutional position, **giving these activities a clearly political tone.**

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<sup>53</sup> - A2CNN, "[Petro Gjokuria starts the campaign in Himara: He will implement Fredi Beleri's program](#)", dt. 17.07.2024:

- Real Story, "[Vangjel Tavo - Interview in Real Story with journalist Sokol Balla, a message and promise for all citizens of Himara](#)", dt. 11.07.2024.

<sup>54</sup> According to an article published in the Greek newspaper Kathimerini on dt. January 2, 2024 ([see the article](#), in Greek), Prime Minister Rama had asked Mr. Tavo to be interim mayor of the Municipality of Himara until the trial against Mr. Beleri was concluded, and if Mr. Beleri would be declared guilty, to be the candidate of the Socialist Party for Mayor of Himara in the partial elections that would follow.

<sup>55</sup> The presence of Mr. Tavo in the inspection of a public investment where Deputy Prime Minister Balluku and Minister Kumbaro were also present (See the [post](#) on the official Facebook page of candidate Tavo regarding this inspection). While this was an institutional event, where two members of the Government inspected a public work, Mr. Tavo was present in his capacity as Prefect, but in the meantime, he had started the electoral campaign. The candidate of the Socialist Party, Mr. Tavo used his official position as Prefect of Vlora District and the institutional support of the majority in power for electoral advantage, distorting the playing field.

<sup>56</sup> The latter, in a significant part of the campaign, was located in Qeparo actively campaigning for Mr. Tavo.

<sup>57</sup> - ABC News Albania, "[Rama distributes 437 property titles in Himara: Who says the oligarchs took your land is a lie](#)", dt. May 24, 2024.

- Shqiptarja.com, "[Rama distributes property certificates: Himara cannot become a playground forever! Tavo, Vangjel for work, Dule for fighting](#)". date June 28, 2024.

<sup>58</sup> See the video of ABC News Albania, "[Rama distributes 437 property titles in Himara: Who says the oligarchs took your land is a lie](#)". dt. May 24, 2024.

**Mr. Tavo was introduced by the Prime Minister as the person who was tasked by him to solve the ownership problems of the residents of Municipality of Himara, coordinating the application process with the State Agency of the Cadaster (SAC), while he was District Prefect<sup>59</sup>. During the official campaign, Mr. Tavo continuously used as one of the main points of his discussion the solution of ownership problems for the residents of Himara, despite his claims that this was not part of his electoral program. Being charged with the task of solving property problems as a Prefect, a unique task given to Mr. Tavo, and which, as far as is publicly known, has not been assigned to other prefects of the country, or prefects who were in this position before Mr. Tavo, while this was subsequently used as a main topic of the election campaign, in KRIIK's judgment constitutes use of the Prefect's public office for the electoral advantage of the candidate Tavo during the campaign<sup>60</sup>.**

The official campaign was calm and without any recorded incident. In general, the campaign methods were close meetings with voters.

Mr. Tavo had a higher presence in the central media. The campaign messages were focused on the problems of the local community, from both candidates, while the international relations between Greece and Albania were also discussed. The campaign was mainly conducted by local representatives of the electoral subjects, while the participation of political representatives at the central level in campaign meetings, although present, did not diminish the profile of local candidates. Mr. Vangjel Tavo was accompanied to several electoral meetings by the Vlorë District Deputy, Mr. Vullnet Sinaj, while Mr. Petraq Gjiguria from the chairperson of the Party Union for Human Rights and Deputy Mr. Vangjel Dule, and other political exponents of the participating parties of the "Together We Win" Coalition<sup>61</sup>.

The representatives of "Together We Win" Coalition claimed that there have been numerous and organized attempts to intimidate public servants and voters in general.

**KRIIK also received credible claims about use of the administration in the election campaign and organization by the majority in directing the vote in a capillary way, through patronage, which was also manifested on the day of the elections by groups of people who tried to direct the vote in an organized manner in the vicinity of polling stations.**

During the entire period of the election campaign, three activities were reported on the CEC interface, which were held by institutions at the central or local level, in the area of the Municipality of Himara.

There is no monitoring report published on the official website of the CEC by the monitor appointed<sup>62</sup> by the CEC.

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<sup>59</sup> See [the video](#), min. 11:50.

<sup>60</sup> Especially this finding, considering that this is a serious problem in this area, and for which the previous Mayor of Himara is already accused by SPAK.

<sup>61</sup> MPs Flamur Noka, Agron Gjekmarkaj, etc.

<sup>62</sup> [Decision no. 109, dated 23.07.2024](#) of the State Election Commissioner "For the selection of the monitor for the elections for the Mayor of Himar Municipality, dated August 4, 2024".

KRIIK notes that **the issue of not preliminarily verifying the monitors by the CEC and the selection of individuals who are not residents of the to be monitored continues<sup>63</sup>**, making it objectively difficult or even impossible for the monitors to fulfill the duties assigned by the law. **The electoral silence seems to have been respected by the electoral subjects, but there was news in the media<sup>64</sup> for breaking it** from the candidate of the "Together We Win" Coalition.

In addition, some media broadcast material on the electoral campaign on Saturday, a problem for which KRIIK filed a complaint<sup>65</sup> with the Central Election Commission.

Likewise, the practice of giving interviews or public by candidates on election day continued<sup>66</sup>, which in itself constitutes electoral campaign, since their very presence in the media is necessarily related to and indirectly constitutes campaigning.

The Audiovisual Media Authority monitored 25 televisions and submitted six daily monitoring reports to the CEC. The monitoring methodology, same as in previous elections, was only quantitative. The monitoring tables contain only the minutes dedicated to each subject, but there is no data on the tone of the coverage, which makes it impossible to make an accurate judgment on the impartiality of the media in the coverage of the campaign. **There is still no report dated August 3, by which it can be judged about the observance of election silence by the audiovisual media, nor a summary report.**

Another problem is that the monitoring started only from 27 July 2024, with the start of the official campaign, while the candidates conducted interviews with the media before, in line with them starting top campaign early<sup>67</sup>.

Referring to AMA monitoring reports, it appears that media interest, whether local or national, has been low, especially in the first two days of the campaign.

In general, the highest coverage has been in dedicated shows, where the candidates have been interviewed. Also, according to these data, electoral subjects have broadcast a small number of advertisements in audio-visual media, but some **local media<sup>68</sup> aired commercials outside the allowed hours.**

The CEC did not conduct any public session for reviewing the AMA monitoring reports leading up to the election day.

**Overall, the extensive media coverage of the election day and its issues is very positively evaluated.**

Regarding advertising on other platforms, KRIIK monitored the advertising library of the company Meta, which includes political ads on the social platforms Facebook and Instagram, no ads related to the campaign for the Partial Elections in Himara were observed.

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<sup>63</sup> In this case, the monitor is a resident of Saranda Municipality.

<sup>64</sup> - Shqiptarja.com, ["The opposition candidate, Gjiguria, breaks the electoral silence in Himara, continues the campaign on 'Facebook' even today"](#), dt. 03.08.2024.

- Sot.com.al, ["The Democratic candidate for Himara breaks the electoral silence, makes posts on social networks and then deletes them"](#), dt. 03.08.2024.

<sup>65</sup> [Denunciation No. 2](#) - Regarding the breaking of election silence by some media.

<sup>66</sup> Euronews Albania, ["Dule shocks: Absurd election process in Himara"](#), dt. 04.08.2024.

<sup>67</sup> On July 11, 2024, Mr. Vangjel Tavo gave an [interview](#) on ABC News television, where he was presented as a candidate of the Socialist Party.

<sup>68</sup> TV 6+1 Vlora and Blue TV.



KRIIK notes that there was commitment to monitoring the elections in Himara by local organizations, but not by international actors. CEC accredited 102 domestic observers<sup>69</sup> and only three international observers, the latter all from the Embassy of Greece in Tirana.

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**Election day was quiet and generally uneventful.** The main problems were related to **the presence of unauthorized persons near the polling stations<sup>70</sup>; low level of preparation of VCC members<sup>71</sup>, photographing of the ballot paper<sup>72</sup>, cases of organized transportation of voters<sup>73</sup>, family voting<sup>74</sup> or failure to mark voters before they had voted<sup>75</sup>.**

Voting centers were opened late in some of the polling stations observed by KRIIK at the opening<sup>76</sup>. In VC 4565, the codes of the stamps with which the ballot box was sealed were not noted in the minutes of the opening of the voting center.

KRIIK observers noted various levels of preparation and knowledge about the process on the part of the commissioners; in some areas, mainly rural, the level of knowledge and preparation was significantly low.

According to the members of the CEAZ, and the representatives of the CEC who carried out the training of the commissioners, **the presence of polling station commissioners in the trainings conducted was very low**, which, in combination with their change at the last moment, may be one of the main factors for their lack of knowledge and inadequate preparation.

Even in this election, as in previous elections, **the presence of unauthorized persons in the vicinity of the voting centers is noted as extremely problematic.**

The presence of these persons near the polling stations is illegal<sup>77</sup>, while it **clearly affects the will of the voters**, as voters may feel intimidated to participate or vote freely under such conditions of being constantly controlled and under surveillance.

In a considerable number of cases, **unauthorized persons** who stood near the polling stations **were equipped with lists**, while in others, mainly in small villages, they did not have one because

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<sup>69</sup> Of which 37 long-term observers, 20 short-term observers, 45 media representatives.

<sup>70</sup> VC 4589 Himara, VC 4585, 4585/01 in Dhërmi, VC 4566 Borsh, as well as in the vicinity of the Voting Centers of the villages of Vranisht and Qeparo.

<sup>71</sup> Problems present mainly in rural areas.

<sup>72</sup> In VC 4593/00 Vranisht, when the observers arrived at the VC, a voter tried to photograph the vote inside the secret room but was stopped by the commission members who were alerted by an opposition observer. The voter, whose cell phone was initially kept by the VCC, put pressure on the members of the commission, as well as on the observer who signaled the attempt to photograph the vote. Afterwards, the voter was escorted out of the premises of the school where VC 4593/00 is located, by other voters, and the members of the commission gave his mobile device to one of his family members.

<sup>73</sup> In the area of Palasa.

<sup>74</sup> VC 4591/01 and VC 4590 in Himara, VC 4562/1 Shën Vasil, VC 4588/00 - Himara village where family voting was banned by members of the VCC, VC 4580 in Pilur, etc.

<sup>75</sup> VC 4563/01 Lukovë, VC 4565 Piqeras.

<sup>76</sup> QV 4560 Nivicë, QV 4581 Qeparo, QV 4579 Palasë.

<sup>77</sup> Order no. 72 dated 02.08.2024 "On the implementation of some rules for the persons present in the territory of the election facilities where the voting centers are located, for the partial elections for the Mayor of Himar Municipality on August 4, 2024".

the community is small, and they know each other better. This allowed them to have complete information on the people who appeared to vote.

This situation combined with **the information that VCC members or political observers in them gave about voters**, made it possible for the representatives of the political parties to have complete information about who was present to vote and who was not, **this is an open violation of the Electoral Code as well as the priority recommendations of the OSCE/ODIHR.**

Another element, which seems to have been applied by the commissioners in these elections to support this mechanism, was **direction from the commissioners of voters to sign the list of voters, even though they were identified through the Electronic Identification Device (EID).** According to the law, the voter signs the list of voters only if he is on this list and it was not possible to identify him through the EID<sup>78</sup>.

Cases were observed when **a person helped more than a voter to vote**, while the corresponding statements were not completed<sup>79</sup>.

**The Electronic Identification Device operated normally in all VCs observed, with some minor issues that were quickly resolved.**

However, in many of the polling stations observed, voters signed the voter list after identifying themselves, even in those cases where the EID was used, they did not sign the sheet generated by the device.

KRIIK Observers noted **a very high number of voters who were either not marked at all or were marked after voting, contrary to the procedures**<sup>80</sup>.

In many cases, polling stations' premises were in a worn condition, unsuitable to perform the function of a polling station.

Meanwhile, in a high number of polling stations **posters explaining the voting procedures or introducing the candidates were missing.**

The voting process ended at 19:00 according to the legal provision.

The process of submitting election materials to the CEAZ started around 19:30 and ended around 23:00, while the counting process started around 1:00 am.

**The delivery of election materials to the CEAZ proceeded orderly.**

In addition to the observers of the election contestants, the counting process was followed by the candidates themselves, as well as representatives of the political parties, SP, DP and PUHR, as well as three representatives of the Embassy of Greece.

During the counting process, there was an increased presence of representatives and observers from the electoral contestants both inside the Vote Counting Center and outside it, however, no issues to note.

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<sup>78</sup> Regarding this issue, the representatives of the CEC who conducted the training said that the commissioners were trained and instructed not to force voters to sign the list of voters if they were identified by the EID.

<sup>79</sup> VC 4562 Lukovë, VC 4595 Hore Vranisht, VC 4588/01 Himara Village.

<sup>80</sup> VC 4563/01 Lukovë, VC 4588/1 Himara Fshat, VC 4565 Piqeras, etc.

The counting process generally proceeded quickly and correctly. It closed around 06.40 am, on Monday 5 August 2024.

Throughout the day of the elections and the counting of votes, a high presence of support staff from the Central Election Commission was observed in the assistance of the CEAZ and VVCs, and even of its senior officials, in the judgment of KRIIK unjustifiable for the normality that must follow an electoral process, moreover partial.

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**Tirana, on 5 August 2024!**

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