

STATEMENT *

Political parties must seriously commit to nominating only Candidates of high moral and professional integrity for the Assembly of Albania, and to conducting a fair, responsible, and substantive electoral campaign

March 12, 2025, marks the deadline for already registered election contestants for the May 11, 2025, Elections for the Assembly of Albania to submit their multi-name candidate lists¹ to the Central Election Commission.

The country is at a crucial moment for strengthening democracy and the rule of law. **These elections are not merely a routine electoral process but a test of the credibility of institutions, political parties, and the political class as a whole.** This is especially significant as Albania has begun negotiations for European Union (EU) membership, with several chapters already opened.

The integrity of the electoral process is one of the most critical tests for a country opening EU accession chapters. **It is a key indicator for the EU** that the candidate country is serious about its commitment to democratic principles and the rule of law. If a country fails to organize fair elections, **it risks slowing down or even suspending negotiations** and losing support for its membership bid.

One of **the most fundamental aspects** of ensuring public trust in the electoral process is the quality of candidates proposed by election contestants.

Political parties, as institutions seeking the trust of citizens to govern the country, must demonstrate unwavering commitment to the **integrity of the individuals they present to voters as candidates for the Parliament.**

Given the current electoral phase, **it is vital for Albania's future in the EU that no political force includes in its candidate lists individuals with problematic legal backgrounds or ties to such individuals, or those involved in activities that undermine public trust, individuals under the influence of persons subject to decriminalization laws, former collaborators of the communist-era State Security,² individuals expelled from the justice system through vetting processes or who have avoided vetting, and those who have violated or are in conflict with the law in Albania's partner countries.**

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¹ A total of 53 Political Parties are registered with the [Central Election Commission](#), most of which are united in [three pre-election Coalitions](#).

² Political parties can be informed and assured about the purity of the candidates' profile at the Authority for Information on the Files of the Former State Security, based on Article 30 of [Law No. 45/2015](#) "On the right to information on the files of the former State Security of the People's Socialist Republic of Albania".

The complete integrity of every candidate seeking the votes of Albanian citizens on May 11 must be a fundamental criterion - non-negotiable for political interests or electoral calculations - for any party participating in the elections.

The inclusion of individuals with a problematic past in conflict with the law, or those closely associated with or influenced by them, undermines public trust in the democratic process, hinders responsible and transparent governance, and **could cause serious delays and obstacles** in Albania's EU accession process.

International reports on Albania have consistently highlighted **concerns regarding the influence of money from organized crime and corruption in public life**.

The 2024 U.S. Department of State International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR) highlights the impact of criminally derived funds, noting that a significant portion of money laundering in Albania occurs through illicit activities such as drug trafficking, government contract fraud, and tax evasion.³ Criminal actors often launder their proceeds by investing in real estate and various businesses.

Furthermore, the report mentions cases where former high-ranking officials have been investigated and charged with corruption and money laundering, **illustrating concerning links between politics and organized crime**.

Similarly, the **European Commission's 2024 Progress Report** underlines Albania's challenges in fighting corruption and money laundering, emphasizing the need for a more systematic and effective approach to combat these phenomena. This includes strengthening preventive mechanisms, financial investigations, and asset confiscation measures.⁴

For Albania to progress toward meeting European governance and rule-of-law standards, **it is crucial that political parties take full responsibility for the selection of candidates offered to Albanian voters**. Any tolerance of individuals with questionable integrity betrays the country's and citizens' interests and hinders the development of a genuine and healthy democracy.

Moreover, it is essential that the **electoral campaign** – which should be conducted within the legally prescribed period - **be characterized by well-prepared programs based on concrete and actionable policies**.

Unkept promises, empty rhetoric, and a campaign based solely on stirring voters' emotions, without rational foundations not only ignores the dignity of citizens but also damages the seriousness of the electoral process and public trust in democratic institutions.

Election contestants **must present clear and well-argued plans addressing key national challenges**, including the economy, employment, healthcare, education, and the rule of law, while avoiding populist and unrealistic promises aimed merely at securing votes without a clear strategy for implementation.

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³ United States Department of State - Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, [International Narcotics Control Strategy Report - Volume 2: Money Laundering](#) (March 2024): "Most money laundering in Albania is linked to drug and human trafficking, government contract fraud, tax evasion, and smuggling. Albania's largely cash-based economy, weak border controls, and weak customs enforcement facilitate a black market for smuggled goods. Criminals launder proceeds through real estate purchases, construction projects, virtual assets, and other business development projects.", page 46.

⁴ European Commission, [Progress Report for Albania 2024, SWD\(2024\) 690 final](#) (October 2024).

Additionally, it is crucial for election contestants **to include in their electoral platforms issues and candidates from the Albanian diaspora, minority groups, and vulnerable communities.**

In this spirit, KRIIK calls on registered political parties **to include only individuals of high moral and professional integrity in their candidate lists.**

A preliminary filtering of candidates by political parties, ensuring that **only candidates of integrity are presented - mandated through free and democratic decision-making processes within the parties** - would strengthen public trust in the Albanian Parliament, the political system in general, and particularly in the responsibility and democratic functioning of political parties.

Furthermore, KRIIK **calls on all political parties and potential candidates to seriously prepare and engage in an electoral race that is fair, responsible, and fully compliant with legal requirements.** The campaign should be substantive, focused on the real needs of citizens and the challenges facing the country, and free from narrow electoral interests or campaign techniques aimed at maximizing votes without realistic governance objectives.

Tirana, on 5 March 2025!

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

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