



Kasowitz and Mishcon de Reya Comment on Tirana Mayor Erion Veliajâ??s Year in Detention: For 365 Days and Counting, Mayor Veliaj Suffers Denials of Due Process Rights and Apparent Political Persecution

Descrizione

COMUNICATO STAMPA â?? CONTENUTO PROMOZIONALE

TIRANA, Albania, Feb. 10, 2026 /PRNewswire/ â?? Today marks the one-year anniversary of Mayor Erion Veliajâ??s unjust and unlawful detention by the Special Structure Against Corruption and Organized Crime (â??SPAKâ??) in Albania. Over the past 365 days, Mayor Veliajâ??s case has become the prime example of Albaniaâ??s overuse and abuse of pre-trial detention. Mayor Veliaj has been detained despite a clear absence of evidence that he is a flight risk, would obstruct justice, or would or could re-commit the alleged crimes of which he had been accused.

In the past year, Mayor Veliajâ??s case has emerged as a glaring example of how nascent democracies like Albaniaâ??s can trample on an individualâ??s basic due process rights through a flawed political persecution.

Recently, SPAK prosecutors have argued that Mayor Veliajâ??s continued detention in jail is justified because he relied on U.S. counsel to advocate for him when it became obvious that he could not feasibly do so himself. This is not due process; it is punishment for advocacy and a blatant violation of his right to defend himself.

â??From day one, this case has been a political persecution marred with outrageous abuses of due process. Today marks a full year of this continuing injustice,â?? said Daniel J. Fetterman, a partner in the law firm of Kasowitz and one of Mayor Veliajâ??s international counsel. â??Mayor Veliajâ??s case has all of the earmarks of a political show trial and his treatment falls well below any acceptable U.S. and European standards of fairness, due process, and justice.â??

But there are signs that Mayor Veliajâ??s treatment isnâ??t going unnoticed. In November of last year, the Constitutional Court rejected the Municipal Councilâ??s attempt to remove Mayor Veliaj from office, affirming his mandate and ensuring that he remains the Mayor until 2027. Albanian media outlets have identified the punitive nature of SPAKâ??s approach to Mayor Veliaj, calling it a â??repressive

mentalityâ?• akin to a â??new Chinese revolutionâ?• that relies on sponsored propaganda to justify civil rights abuses. Foreign outlets, like the EU Reporter, have echoed similar sentiments, observing the â??slow unravelling of Albaniaâ??s justice systemâ?• in a case that â??shows clear signs of political motivationâ?• falling â??well short of European standards.â?• And in December, the Albanian Ombudsman â?? the Peopleâ??s Advocate â?? issued a report finding that the security measures governing Mayor Veliajâ??s medical treatment in detention were unreasonable and violated his privacy.

Notably, the international community has publicly recognized the flaws in Mayor Veliajâ??s ongoing pre-trial detention. 76 Mayors and Representatives of the â??B40 Balkan Cities Networkâ?• who hail from political parties and backgrounds across the ideological spectrum â?? issued a joint letter denouncing the detention of Mayor Veliaj. They adopted a finding in the 2025 Venice Commission Report of the Council of Europe that â??the use of pretrial detention against sitting mayors constitutes a serious risk to democratic governanceâ?• because it â??effectively disenfranchises citizens by sidelining their chosen representatives without due process.â?•

Mayor Veliajâ??s detention must end. Continuing to detain Mayor Veliaj and denying him fundamental due process rights like the ability to review the evidence against him betrays Albaniaâ??s democratic promise, casts serious doubt on the progress of its reforms, and may jeopardize its EU accession goals.

Global leaders, democratic organizations, and the media should continue to keep the spotlight on this injustice and demand Erion Veliajâ??s immediate release from pre-trial detention.

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