

Sali Berisha is the pro-Western, pro-American, and democratically nominated candidate for Prime Minister of Albania. A staunch anti-communist and lifelong defender of Western democratic values, Berisha has served on the board of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation. His wife, likewise committed to public service, has served on the board of Autism Speaks. Charismatic and widely respected across Albania, Berisha remains one of the country's most influential political leaders.

Yet despite his popular support, Berisha's ability to campaign and participate freely in the electoral process has been obstructed by politicized legal proceedings and institutions aligned against him. Troublingly, these efforts have been reinforced by the United States government through a decision made by then-Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who imposed sanctions under Section 7031(c) via an opaque and extrajudicial process. This process—devoid of transparency, adversarial challenge, or meaningful appeal—has functionally barred a leading democratic candidate from engaging with voters, including members of the Albanian diaspora in the United States.

Berisha deserves a full and permanent lifting of the sanctions imposed by Secretary Blinken. However, with Albania's elections set for May 11th, time is of the essence. While the formal process for revoking the designation unfolds, the Trump Administration should act swiftly to grant Berisha a temporary or restricted visa, enabling him to visit the United States and campaign among his constituents in the Albanian-American community and to plead his case to the Trump Administration for a full lifting of sanctions.

Statement of Facts

1. The Democratic Party of Albania has nominated former Prime Minister Sali Berisha as its candidate for Prime Minister in the upcoming national elections.¹
2. For the first time in Albania's history, Albanians living abroad are being granted the legal right to vote in national elections.²
3. The United States is home to a significant Albanian diaspora, particularly in states such as New York, Michigan, and Illinois.³
4. Former Prime Minister Sali Berisha is currently prohibited from traveling to the United States due to sanctions imposed under Section 7031(c) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act.⁴
5. These sanctions were implemented in May 2021 by then-Secretary of State Antony Blinken, citing allegations of "significant corruption" during Berisha's time in office.⁵
6. The designation under Section 7031(c) is made through an internal State Department process and is not subject to judicial review or adversarial contest, nor does it require the publication of detailed evidence. **No evidence has ever been presented to support Blinken's claims of corruption.**⁶
7. The sanctions have politically benefitted Edi Rama, the current Prime Minister and head of the Socialist Party of Albania, who remains a close political rival of Berisha.⁷
8. Edi Rama has developed personal and political relationships with various global figures, including Alexander (Alex) Soros, the current chair of the Open Society Foundations and son of George Soros. Public records and social media posts confirm this association.⁸

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9. Since the imposition of U.S. sanctions against Berisha, Albania has faced growing international concern over corruption and organized crime. The Global Organized Crime Index and several investigative reports have referred to Albania as experiencing characteristics of a “narco-state.”⁹
10. The Democratic Party of Albania has formally requested that the U.S. issue a restricted visa or waiver to allow Sali Berisha to campaign among Albanian-Americans, particularly in light of their new electoral enfranchisement.¹⁰
11. Denying Berisha access to the United States would prevent him from engaging with a newly enfranchised Albanian electorate abroad, raising concerns about equitable democratic participation for all candidates.¹¹

Endnotes

1. “Democratic Party Re-elects Sali Berisha as Party Leader,” Balkan Insight, July 2022.

‘Make Albania Great’: Opposition Chief Plots Return with Trump-Style Campaign”
[April 2025](#)
2. “Albania Approves Voting Rights for Diaspora,” EURACTIV, October 2020.
3. U.S. Census Bureau; “Ethnic Groups in America: Albanian Americans,” Migration Policy Institute.
4. U.S. Department of State, “Public Designation of Sali Berisha under Section 7031(c),” May 2021.
5. Ibid.
6. Congressional Research Service, “Foreign Assistance: Restrictions Under Section 7031(c),” 2021.
7. “Rivalry Between Rama and Berisha Intensifies,” Reuters/Balkan Insight coverage of Albanian elections.
8. Alexander Soros’s verified social media accounts; Open Society Foundations public profiles.
9. Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, “Global Organized Crime Index 2023 – Albania”; OCCRP reports.
10. Democratic Party of Albania press releases; VOA Albanian-language reporting.
11. International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES); OSCE election monitoring guidelines.

Further Reading:

How the State Department Pushed Albania from Democracy to Narco-State “As combating corruption was a major issue, the Obama administration and U.S. Agency for International Development ([USAID](#)) supported the Special Structure against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK). It was a good idea, poorly executed. Just as Recep Tayyip Erdoğan took over the

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banking auditing bureau to shut down his adversaries, so too did Rama weaponize SPAK. His prime target? Berisha and his supporters.

Enter [Yuri Kim](#), a career diplomat who became the U.S. ambassador to Albania in 2020; it was her first ambassadorial post. She embraced Rama, [literally](#) and figuratively, openly favoring Rama and belittling the Democratic Party and the opposition, famously [telling](#) Berisha to “eat grass.” Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s ideological animosity toward the center-right, Kim’s partisanship, and USAID Administrator Samantha Power’s willingness to allow Rama to turn SPAK into a political weapon combined into a disastrous decision by the State Department to sanction Berisha and his family persona non grata and revoke their visas to the United States.” [\(1945\)](#)

Blinken Acts as Agent of George Soros in the Balkans “Secretary of State Antony Blinken faces international court after interfering in Albanian politics. The Biden Administration has again stumbled its way into creating an international fiasco, this time it’s Secretary of State Blinken leading the charge of interference in election politics...Congressman Lee Zeldin (NY-1), a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, recently confronted Secretary Blinken on his sudden sanctioning of Berisha. Secretary Blinken conveyed little confidence when asked for justification, stating “I don’t have anything to share.” While Blinken offered platitudes of follow-up for the Committee, no such information, or evidence, has been submitted. The circle-back saga continues.” [\(American Center for Law and Justice\)](#)

Albania lawfare? How Biden aided Soros’s favorite narco-state “Two years later, however, on May 19, 2021, Blinken slapped Berisha with one of the single most severe penalties a secretary of state can inflict: *persona non grata*. Blinken said Berisha, as premier, had been ‘involved in corrupt acts, such as misappropriation of public funds and interfering with public processes, including using his power for his own benefit and to enrich his political allies and his family members at the expense of the Albanian public’s confidence in their government institutions and public officials.’ Nine days later, Yuri Kim, Biden’s ambassador to Albania, met and talked with officials at Albania’s Special Structure against Corruption and Organized Crime, or SPAK. SPAK runs a court system founded in 2019, an outgrowth of 2016 Albanian justice reforms partially funded and wholly endorsed by the Obama administration and the Soros family’s Open Society Foundations. Kim posted that SPAK was “committed to delivering justice and ensuring no one is above the law. ... Whether for corruption, organized crime, or elections, the time of impunity is coming to an end.” [\(Washington Examiner\)](#)

Entirely In Camera Determination Exempt From Adversarial Contest and Without Appeal “Several members of our delegation questioned Ambassador Kim and her country team members closely about the decision to ban Berisha from the United States and the timing of the decision seeking...Ambassador Kim and her staff assured us the evidence supporting the determination *This material is distributed by Continental Strategy on behalf of the Democratic Party of Albania. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, D.C*

was substantial, but firmly communicated that they could not share any of it. They also acknowledged that the process was an entirely in camera determination exempt from adversarial contest and without appeal. This is highly unusual, if not unique, in U.S. jurisprudence.” ([The Council of American Ambassadors](#))

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