



CANADIAN HELLENIC CONGRESS
ΕΛΛΗΝΟΚΑΝΑΔΙΚΟ ΚΟΓΚΡΕΣΟ
CONGRÈS HELLÉNIQUE CANADIEN

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December 17, 2023

Via electronic mail:
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Mr. Olivér Várhelyi
Commissioner, Neighbourhood and Enlargement

European Commission
Rue de la Loi/ Weststraat 200,
1049 Brussels, Belgium

Subject: Mayor-elect Fredi Beleri and Albania's accession bid to the EU

Dear Commissioner Várhelyi,

As Canadians of Hellenic descent – and by extension members of the European Union (EU) – we are appalled with your desire to push for the second phase of the EU accession negotiations with Albania.

As you know, the EU was founded on values such as human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and rule of law. Prime Minister Edi Rama's regime does not respect these values. In fact, his regime repeatedly acts contrary to these values, which are the cornerstone of the EU's foundation.

Since May 2023, Fredi Beleri, the ethnic Greek mayor-elect of the town of Himara in southern Albania, has been jailed on allegations of vote buying. By many accounts, including remarks by Albania's former Prime Minister, Sali Berisha, in Albanian Parliament and media, these allegations are bogus, politically motivated and orchestrated by the Rama regime. It has also been reported in the press that the alleged witnesses have now changed their stories.

If this had occurred in any country where the rule of law prevails, Mr. Beleri would have been released from jail and have taken the mayor's oath of office. Unfortunately, justice and the rule of law are not adhered to, nor are they part of the political culture of the Albanian regime.

This is a travesty, and you, Commissioner, along with the rest of the members of the EU want this country to be a part of a European family; a family based on many, long-standing fundamental values? We view this as a farce and can only presume that the EU has not learnt from past mistakes.

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The Canadian Hellenic Congress is a national democratic communal institution that represents, advances, advocates and promotes the interests and concerns of Canadians of Hellenic descent and Hellenism in general. The Congress is the national voice of Hellenes and their communities and/or organizations across Canada.



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Montreal, December 17, 2023

Mr. Olivér Várhelyi, Commissioner – EC

Subject: Mayor-elect Fredi Beleri and Albania's accession bid to the EU

Commissioner, there can be no doubt that Mr. Beleri has been discriminated against because he is a member of the ethnic Greek minority, and his human and political rights have been violated. These violations are contrary to the EU's values and to international law.

Before you, Commissioner, and the rest of the EU move forward with the second phase of the discussions on the accession process, Fredi Beleri should be released from the bogus detention.

Commissioner, you should strongly encourage the Albanian regime to stop trivialising the judicial system for political and personal gain. It is no secret that Mr. Beleri's detention is fueled by corrupt land deals – advanced by the Rama regime and its associates – that would see the ethnic Greek minority lose their homes and properties.

The EU must stop turning a blind eye on human and political rights violations for the sake of political expediency and at the risk of bringing a country that would not respect the rule of law nor the rights of its ethnic-Greek minority into the EU family.

It is time for the EU to stop being wishy-washy on such matters, to take a firm stand and demand that Mr. Beleri be released from jail and allowed to take his duly-elected office and duties, before going forward to the second phase of Albania's accession process; otherwise the democratic process is meaningless, and the EU will once again opt for political expediency over abuses of human and political rights.

Sincerely,

Dr. Theodore Halatsis
President

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