European Elections monitor

The opposition (Left) wins the general elections.

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Translated by Helen Levy

Results

Confusion reigned in the evening of the general election on 23rd June in Albania, since both the right in office led by the Alliance for Employment, Well-Being and Integration, a coalition comprising the Democratic Party (PDSH) of outgoing Prime Minister Sali Berisha and 24 other parties, as well as the leftwing opposition led by the Alliance for a European Albania, a coalition of 38 parties (including the Socialist Movement for Integration (LSI) of Ilir Meta) led by the Socialist Party (PSSH) and Edi Rama, were claiming victory. Finally on 26th June outgoing Prime Minister Berisha acknowledged his defeat.

Turnout totalled (53.52%) and was higher than that registered during the previous general election on 28th June 2009 (50.77%). However, no official result has been announced yet.[1]

Again many incidents were recorded during the election. Gjon Pjeter Gjoni, an LSI member was shot dead near the polling station in Laç, a town that lies 40km to the north of Tirana. Three other people, including a Democratic Party candidate, were injured.

The international community had warned the Albanian authorities however and had encouraged them to ensure that the general elections ran in a democratic manner. «Albanian leaders are jointly responsible for creating the conditions so that the election results could be accepted by all,» warned European Commissioner for Enlargement and the Neighbourhood Policy Stefan Füle. «These general elections will be a test for the smooth running of Albania's democratic institutions and its progress on the path to the European Union,» declared Catherine Ashton, the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy «I am encouraging the political leaders to avoid any activity for short term political gain that might affect the development of Albania negatively either in the mid or long term» indicated Eugen Wollfarth, head of the OSCE's mission in Albania.

8,153 observers, including 564 foreigners, were responsible for monitoring the election. The OSCE observers' mission concluded that «the atmosphere of mistrust between the two main political parties affected the electoral environment». The murder in Laç «as well as other isolated violent incidents marred the beginning of the election.» «In comparison with the elections in 2009 and 2011 little progress has been made. But the elections were free,» noted one OSCE manager Roberto Battelli.

During the last general election on 28th June 2009 the Socialist Party refused to acknowledge the victory of the Democratic Party, whilst the PDSH leader Sali Berisha deemed that they had been «the best elections ever organised in Albania». The socialists boycotted parliament for nearly a year before taking up their seats after mediation by the European Parliament.

The smooth running of the general elections was a condition set for Tirana's rapprochement with the European Union. Brussels has already twice refused to grant Albania official candidate status after it first applied in April 2009. Last October Brussels asked Tirana to reform its legal system and the civil service and also to complete parliamentary procedure rules before it could consider becoming an official candidate to join the EU. On 30th May the Assembly of the Republic of Albania, the only chamber in Parliament, adopted three bills (new parliamentary regulation, reform of the status of civil servants and the appointment of the judges in the Supreme Court).

The future Prime Minister will have a difficult time in implementing the numerous economic reforms which are vital to this country, the poorest in Europe. The governor of the Albanian central bank Ardian Fulani warned

1. *http://result.cec.org.al/Results.aspx?UnitID=1&IsPS=0&Turnout=0&LangID=2*

the authorities about the sharp rise in public spending, which over the first four months of the year had doubled in comparison with those recorded during the same period in 2012. The budgetary deficit of the first four months of 2013 totals 9.8% whilst revenues only increased by 0.3%. The unemployment rate officially lies at 14% in Albania but according to many analysts it in fact lies at around 40% of the working population. Finally according to the IMF corruption and the black economy is said to absorb 60% of the Albanian GDP.

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