

Public Statement of Civil Society Organizations in Albania

January 24th, 2025

Following the detention and expulsion from Serbia on January 22, 2025, of 14 activists and civil society representatives, including two colleagues from Albania—Edlira Lilaj from HELP Organization and Gazmir Memaj from the Mary Ward Loreto Foundation—we express our deep concern and strongly condemn this unacceptable act, which gravely undermines democratic values, fundamental rights, and freedom of movement. This action, labelled as a 'security threat,' is unjustifiable and lacks any foundation in democratic or legal standards.

We commend the response of Albania's Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, which held a meeting with the Serbian Ambassador in Albania, calling for a review of this decision and ensuring that similar incidents do not occur in the future. Moving forward, we encourage the Ministry to prioritize this matter, swiftly pursue an official response from the Serbian government, and issue a diplomatic note to guarantee that such actions are not repeated.

Such events serve as a ringing bell for the European Union and the integration process of candidate countries, highlighting that respect for fundamental rights and European standards remains a significant challenge in the region. The lack of progress in these areas not only jeopardizes membership aspirations but also threatens the democratic future and stability of these countries.

These incidents signal a concerning decline in democratic standards and emphasize the urgent need for stronger engagement from the EU and its institutions to clearly link progress toward membership with the protection of civic space and human rights. This is essential to ensure a democratic and unified future for the entire region.

Civil society is the backbone of a functioning democracy. Incidents like this harm the democratic space and regional and European cooperation, undermining our collective efforts for a fairer and freer society.

We stand in full solidarity with our colleagues. Our collective support is vital to protecting democratic space and creating a safe environment for all activists.

Supporting Organizations:

1. Partners Albania for Change and Development
2. Aarhus Information Centre
3. Acli Ipsia in Albania
4. Active Mobility
5. Albania Community Assist
6. Albanian Center for Family Development
7. Albanian Center for Population and Development (ACPD)
8. Albanian Disability Rights Foundation (ADRF)
9. Albanian FORUM of Shkodra Lake
10. Albanian Legal and Territorial Research Institute A.L.T.R.I
11. Albanian Local Capacity Development Foundation

12. All Together for the Integration of Roma
13. Alpin Association
14. Alternative Student Organization
15. AlternativePro
16. Association Women farmers Tregan
17. Association Mountain Areas Development Forum
18. Association for Psycho-Social and Cultural Development of Children and Youth,
Elbasan
19. Association With You For You
20. Aulona Center
21. Balkan Investigative Reporting Networkwa – BIRN Albania
22. Beyond Barriers Association (BBA)
23. Center “Epoka e Re”
24. Center “Genesis”
25. Center “TIRC”
26. Center Durrësi Aktiv
27. Center for Development and European Integration
28. Center for Economic Development &International Relations
29. Center for Education and Social Advancement
30. Center for Gender Justice in Albania
31. Center for Legal Civic Initiatives
32. Civil Society Development Center
33. COD Partners
34. Consulting and Development Partners
35. Diakonia Albania Foundation
36. Different and Equal
37. Dimension Human
38. Drini Times
39. Eco Mind
40. Ecotourism Association
41. Emanuel Mission Foundation
42. Erasmus Network Tirana ESN
43. European Movement Albania
44. Fisheries Management Organization
45. Free Speech Forum
46. Gender Alliance for Development Centre (GADC)
47. GO2 Albania
48. Hand to Hand Against Nation Apathy - H.A.N.A
49. Help Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe e.V Albania
50. Impact Incubator Foundation
51. Initiative for Social Change (ARSIS)
52. Institute for Change and Leadership in Albania (ICLA)
53. Investigating Agency Stop Crime
54. Jonathan Center
55. KS Factor Association
56. Local Action Group Integration
57. National Association For Life – SHKEJ
58. Network Albania

59. Open Mind Spectrum Albania (OMSA)
60. Horizon Again Organisation
61. Pastoral Values Association - National Property
62. People and Ideas Association
63. Prosperity with Integrity Center
64. Resource Environmental Center – Albania (REC Albania)
65. Resources in development Association
66. Roma Active Albania
67. Save the Children Albania
68. Science & Innovation for Development SCiDEV
69. Social Advocacy Center
70. Social Contract Institute (SCI)
71. Society for Democratic Culture
72. The Albanian Women Empower Network—AWEN
73. The Association “Social Center for Helping People in Need” Fushë-Arrëz
74. The Business and Professional Women's Association of Albania
75. The Door Center
76. Together for Life
77. Tomorrow Starts Today
78. Transport Association
79. Center “Trokitja”
80. United Nations Association Albania
81. Vatra Psycho-Social Centre
82. Voice of Roma
83. Women in Integration Association
84. Women in Public Service Center
85. Women's group "Artisans of Vau Deja"
86. Young Professionals Network
87. Youth Center Arka
88. Youth Movement for Democracy, Puka
89. DoArt
90. Co-Plan, Institute for Habitat Development
91. Association Papa Xhovani XXIII Community
92. Academy of European Integration and Negotiations
93. Mary Ward Loreto
94. Institute for Development, Research and Alternatives
95. Institute for Strategic Development
96. Albania Institute for International Studies
97. Counseling Line for Women and Girls (CLWG)
98. Counseling Line for Men and Boys
99. Korça Physical Benefit Association
100. Association of Nature and Tourism
101. Streha Center
102. Ray of Light Association
103. Center Progress and Development
104. Child Rights Centre Albania (CRCA) / ECPAT Albania
105. Amfora Centre
106. ALO 116-111 Albania

107. Pink Embassy
108. National Youth Congress
109. Albanian Coalition for Education (ACE)
110. Association of the Blind Lezha
111. SOS Children's Villages Albania
112. "Light Steps" Women's Center
113. YMCA Shkodra
114. WellPoint
115. Tirana Legal Aid Society (TLAS)
116. National Federation of Municipal Forests and Pastures
117. Environmental Center for Development Education and Networking (EDEN)
118. Youth Voices Network
119. Act for Society
120. Tree of Life Foundation
121. The Flower Initiative
122. New Bridges Organisation
123. Tirana Regional Development Agency
124. For the Benefit of the Community Organisation, Elbasan
125. Embroiderers Association
126. Education Center LUNAH
127. Wikimedians of the Albanian Language
128. International Association for Solidarity (SHIS)
129. Act Think Centre
130. Shenjeza Center
131. Project Hope
132. Observatory for Children's Rights
133. Vlora Regional Development Agency
134. The Alliance Against LGBT Discrimination
135. Shelter "Edlira Haxhiymeri"
136. Joscelyn Foundation
137. Opportunity Balance and Overcoming
138. Visit Gjirokastra
139. Institute of Romani Culture in Albania
140. Association Useful to Albanian Woman
141. Association Multifunctional for Culture, Education and Development
142. Center Other Vision Elbasan
143. The center for Protection of the Natural Ecosystems in Albania (EcoAlbania)
144. Center for Innovation and Sustainable Finance
145. Global Care Albania
146. Artizanet 2022
147. Civil Rights Defenders
148. Youth Act Center
149. World Vision Albania
150. "Dorcas Aid International" Albania
151. "Help the Life" Association
152. "Environment, Waters, Forests" Association