
EU CALLS ON ALBANIA OPPOSITION TO END PARLIAMENT BOYCOTT

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The Washington Post (12 April 2017)

The European Union called on Albanias opposition Wednesday to end its parliament boycott and take part in launching justice reforms, considered key to the countrys integration efforts with the 28-nation bloc.

EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini and Enlargement Commissioner Johannes Hahn issued a joint statement telling Albania that starting the justice reforms was a crucial step for the country to join the European Union.

They said the political debate should take place inside the parliament, according to democratic practices.

The justice reforms approved last year has been hampered by the opposition boycott of parliament, which needs to create the vetting bodies that will evaluate the backgrounds of judges and prosecutors. The opposition says those bodies could be subject to manipulation.

Opposition Democratic Party leader Lulzim Basha on Wednesday accused senior diplomats in Tirana, without naming them, of supporting efforts by Prime Minister Edi Rama to put the justice system under the ruling partys control.

Since mid-February, Democrats supporters have blocked the main boulevard in Tirana, the capital, with a tent in front of Ramas office, saying they will boycott the June 18 parliamentary election because they claim the government will manipulate the vote with drug money.

The justice reforms were approved unanimously last year and prepared with assistance from EU and U.S. experts. Albania must improve its corrupt justice system before Brussels will allow the country to start membership negotiations.

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By Llazar Semini | AP

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Statement by Federica Mogherini and Johannes Hahn on the latest developments in Albania

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