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## **ALBANIA PROTESTERS DEMAND PRIME MINISTER EDI RAMA'S RESIGNATION**

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Deutsche Welle (26 May 2018)

Angry protesters in the Albanian capital Tirana marched along the city's Martyrs of the Nation Boulevard on Saturday chanting "Rama go." Some hurled stones at the premier's office building and the interior ministry.

"Albanians are protesting against the government's ties to organized crime and trafficking, which is undermining the future of Albania and now European integration efforts," Democratic Party leader Lulzim Basha told The Associated Press.

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Basha said that "hundreds of thousands" of people participated in the anti-government march, which lasted for two hours.

There were reports of clashes between police and protesters. Ardi Veliu, the national police chief, said 11 officers were wounded while trying to keep protesters away from government offices.

The opposition also accuses Interior Minister Fatmir Xhafaj of supporting his brother who turned himself in to Italian authorities to serve a 2002 drug trafficking sentence. Xhafaj denies these allegations.

"No politicians should be guaranteed impunity," Basha told the rally participants on Saturday.

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Albania's EU bid

The Democrats, who lost last year's parliamentary election by a huge margin, say the incumbent government is proving to be an obstacle to Albania's European Union bid. The Balkan nation, which has been a NATO member since 2009, is expecting to start EU membership talks next month.

Last month, the European Commission recommended that the EU launch membership talks with Albania and Macedonia. The EU believes that Albania and Macedonia, which were granted EU candidate status in 2014 and 2005, respectively, have made enough progress to warrant the start of accession talks.

Any prospective members must make sweeping reforms to secure their entry to the bloc.

EU diplomatic chief Federica Mogherini said the recommendation "is an encouragement to these countries to continue on the path of reforms."

Hailing the announcement, Prime Minister Rama said the commission's backing shows that the tiny West Balkan country has "at last come out of a crossroad between the past and the future."

<http://www.dw.com/en/albania-protesters-demand-prime-minister-edi-ramas-resignation/a-43941193>

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