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ARTIKULLI

TITULLI	Erion Veliaj seeks suspension of new territorial map: Any change should be consulted with citizens
ADRESA	https://albeu.com/english/erion-veliaj-seeks-suspension-of-new-territorial-map-any-change-should-be-consulted-with-citizens/1035628/
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KOHA

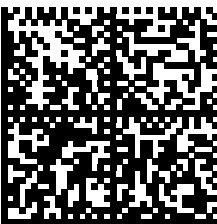
KAPUR NGA NE	1 tetor 2026, 11:37:30 UTC <i>Dritarja jonë e pasigurisë: ± 300 s — intervali me të cilin e kontrollojmë këtë burim.</i>
DEKLARUAR NGA PORTALI	1 tetor 2026, 11:35:18 UTC <i>Koha e deklaruar vjen nga pala që po vlerësohet. Ora jonë nuk preket prej saj, dhe të dyja shfaqen këtu të ndara.</i>

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ZINXHIRI I PROVËS

KJO HYRJE	4ec3e6748b88f307e5ac8ceffaa83b15a6baa8889b9eaf7fe5edcee4ef53d8c8
E MËPARSHMJA	—
RRËNJA MERKLE	—
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Erion Veliaj seeks suspension of new territorial map: Any change should be consulted with citizens



The arrested mayor of Tirana, Erion Veliaj, has openly come out against Prime Minister Rama regarding the proposed territorial reform. In a letter addressed to the Assembly, Veliaj has requested the suspension of the final review of the draft law and has stated that any change should first be consulted with citizens.

According to Veliaj, the consultation should take place at a stage when the results can also lead to a revision of the territorial solution.

He also requests the publication of the consultation methodology, the information made available to citizens, participation and expressed positions, as well as how these positions have been reflected or the reasons for not reflecting them.

Veliaj has emphasized that for the municipality of Tirana, conditions must be created for the full development of the institutional process, including the opinion of the mayor, informed review by the Municipal Council, and genuine consultation with citizens.

Finally, the mayor requests that it be explicitly determined that the competence of municipal councils to reorganize administrative units is limited within the territory of the municipality and does not include changing external boundaries or transferring territory from one municipality to another.

Letter addressed to the Assembly:

There are moments in the exercise of a public mandate when the duty to the institution, to the law, and to the citizens who have entrusted you with their vote naturally align. But there are also moments when respecting this duty requires saying clearly what you think, even when your opinion is not necessarily the easiest to hear for the

të fundit /



Erion Veliaj kërkon pezullimin e hartës së re territoriale: Çdo...



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ARTIKULL JOETIK?

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people with whom you have shared and continue to share the same political responsibility.

I consider this letter to be such a moment.

I am responding to the request that has been forwarded to me through the administration of the Assembly, within the framework of the procedure initiated by the group of proposing deputies, as the representative of a community that has directly given me the mandate to represent it and to serve it until the end of that mandate.

I am part of a political majority that has undertaken the modernization of the Albanian state, the reform of institutions, and bringing the country closer to European standards. It is precisely for this reason that I believe we have a greater responsibility: our reforms should not be measured only by our ability to pass them, but by our ability to make them sustainable, institutionally functional, and legitimate.

I do not have a principled opposition to the revision of the administrative-territorial map. Demographic, economic, and social changes can make such a revision necessary. But administrative-territorial reform is not the drawing of a new map. It affects local autonomy, democratic representation, the exercise of the mandate of elected bodies, municipal competencies and functions, local finances, citizens' access to services, and the constitutional relationship between the citizen and the government they elect closest to themselves.

The Constitution has placed local governance on two foundations: decentralization of power and local autonomy. When it comes to changing territory, Article 108, paragraph 2 does not give the legislator unlimited discretion. The division must be based on common economic needs and interests and historical tradition, while boundaries cannot be changed without first obtaining the opinion of the population residing within them.

It is these premises that precede my opinion.

These constitutional guarantees must also be read in harmony with the European Charter of Local Self-Government, which constitutes a fundamental standard for the protection of local self-government. The Charter requires that local authorities be consulted, at the appropriate time and in the appropriate manner, on matters that directly and specifically affect them, and that changes to territorial boundaries not be made without prior consultation of the affected communities. This means that consultation cannot serve to legitimize ex post a predetermined territorial solution; it must take place at a stage when the opinion of the community and of local institutions can genuinely influence the content of the reform.

The draft law proposes the transition from 61 to 46 municipalities. It provides that the municipality, as the basic unit of local governance, consists of "cities," that cities have a special legal status, and that the organization and representation of the municipality will be based on the proportional representation of constituent cities according to population. So we do not have merely a new map, but a new institutional architecture: municipality, city, and administrative unit or villages.

Here we do not have merely a new model that remains to be completed in the future, but a direct contradiction with the law in force on local self-government. Article 6 of Law No. 139/2015 defines that the municipality consists of administrative units and that these latter consist of cities and/or villages. Article 1, paragraph 2 of the draft law overturns this hierarchy: the municipality consists of cities, while cities consist of administrative units and/or villages. So, while the law in force builds the structure Municipality–Administrative Unit–City/Village, the draft law builds the structure Municipality–City–Administrative Unit/Village.

This contradiction cannot be left to be resolved after the approval of the map. Even more so when the draft law itself declares that the special legal status of the city will be regulated by the law on the organization and functioning of local government, while the law that currently regulates precisely this field places the city in an opposite legal position. For this reason, the amendment of Law No. 139/2015 is not presented as an eventual adjustment after the reform, but as a condition of the normative coherence of the very model being proposed.

We cannot decide the boundaries today and tomorrow decide how the territory we created today will be governed. It is the public function, local democracy, and the interest of the community that must determine the optimal territory, and not the predetermined territory that subsequently imposes on the legislator the functions, institutions, and representation.

This is not merely a choice of good administrative policy, but the logic upon which Law No. 139/2015 itself was built. Article 86 of that law links administrative-territorial reorganization with economic and social interests, tradition, culture, traditional ties, and other local values, but above all with the purpose of achieving at a higher level the functions benefiting the local community. So, the law in force also conceives territory as an instrument for the better exercise of functions, and not functions as a consequence that must later adapt to a predetermined territory.

The explanatory report and accompanying documents mention deputy mayors for cities, integrated service counters, mobile services, public transport, participatory budgeting, performance reporting, as well as measures for the transfer of assets, obligations, budgets, and employees. However, these guarantees have not been included in the provisions of the draft law. An explanatory report cannot replace the legal norm. The elements that condition the functioning of the new map must be translated into clear, binding, and enforceable provisions.

Law No. 139/2015 is not a technical law for municipal administration. It defines autonomy, subsidiarity, bodies, functions, competencies, financing, and the central–local relationship. The law itself defines subsidiarity as the exercise of functions and competencies at the level of governance closest to the community, taking into account the nature of the task, efficiency, and economy. It also defines that the mission of self-government includes governance as close as possible to citizens, recognition of the different identities of communities, the delivery of services according to their needs, and the comprehensive participation of the community.

Therefore, the question that requires an answer from you is: Can we first determine the territory and only then

decide the model of self-government that will function upon it?

My assessment is that these two processes must be at least simultaneous. Before the final approval of the map, its consequences on competencies, functions, financing, representation, administrative organization, and service delivery must be clear. Otherwise, the map will not be the product of the self-government model, but the self-government model will be forced to become the product of the map.

This issue becomes even more concrete in light of Article 92 of Law No. 139/2015, which requires that units created or affected by reorganization function normally "according to this law," guaranteeing the continuity of basic functions and services. If the new draft law changes the territorial structure, creates a new legal status for the "city," and provides for a new logic of representation, then it must be clear, before the entry into force of the new map, how these changes will function within or through the amendment of the basic law on local self-government. Otherwise, a gap is created between the new map and the legal regime that must make it functional.

Special clarification is also required regarding the relationship between Article 3 of the draft law and Article 92, paragraph 1, of Law No. 139/2015. The draft law provides for the continuation of the functioning of bodies elected in 2023 until the constitution of new bodies in 2027, while the law in force provides for partial elections when reorganization with boundary changes creates new units or brings incompatibility with the continuation of the mandate of the majority of councilors. The regime to be applied must be explicitly determined, as well as how, during the transitional period, competencies will be exercised, revenues will be administered, and services will be financed in the affected territories.

Article 108, paragraph 2 establishes as material criteria needs, common economic interests, and historical tradition. For this reason, for each merger or boundary change, the following must be demonstrable: the concrete need that justifies it; the common economic interest; the historical, geographical, and social connection; the impact on access to services; the financial and administrative impact; the impact on representation; the preservation of community identity; as well as the proportionality between administrative efficiency and the proximity of governance to the citizen.

The proponents themselves have identified as objectives of the reform the preservation of local identity and the balance between efficiency and proximity to the citizen. These cannot remain merely political objectives of the explanatory report. They must become demonstrable criteria for every concrete territorial change and the same standard of evaluation for every proposed territory.

For the Municipality of Tirana, the draft law has direct consequences, because it provides for the inclusion of the administrative unit "Rinas" in its territory. Before the Municipality of Tirana can provide a full and well-argued opinion, it must be provided with a specific assessment of the affected population and territory, the competencies and services to be transferred, assets and obligations, the impact on local revenues and expenditures, personnel, territorial planning, and the continuity of public services.

From the forwarded documentation, it appears that the legislative initiative belongs to the group of proposing deputies and that the administration of the Assembly has carried out its forwarding for the collection of opinions. This institutional distinction must be preserved, but the main issue is the order in which the special territorial reorganization procedure is being conducted.

Article 89 of Law No. 139/2015 provides that the proposal for reorganization, for each specific case, is submitted to the Assembly together with the economic, social, cultural, demographic, and administrative reasons, the opinion of the population of the units being reorganized, the relevant maps, and the manner of regulating financial issues and obligations. In the present case, the draft law has been drafted and submitted with the new division, tables, maps, and corresponding solutions, while the opinion of the population is requested after this solution has been formulated.

Even the report accompanying the draft law presents the collection of the population's opinion as a process that will be completed before the final review in plenary session. This shows that the population's opinion has not been part of the material upon which the territorial solution was initially built, but is intended to be attached to it at a later stage.

Such a sequence creates the risk that consultation will be reduced to a formal procedure to complete the documentation of an already finalized project, instead of serving as a genuine process for the formation or modification of the territorial solution. To avoid this consequence, it must be proven that the consultation takes place on still open alternatives, that citizens are given complete information about the consequences of the change, and that the results of the consultation can lead to the revision of the map, the tables, and the content of the draft law.

Article 90, paragraph 3, of Law No. 139/2015 grants local bodies a period of 60 days from receipt of the proposer's request to express their opinion. The documentation forwarded to the Municipality also provides for the 60-day deadline. Respecting this deadline is essential, but the deadline alone does not solve the problem of sequencing: the consultation must have a real possibility to influence a solution that has not been treated as irreversible.

The Constitution does not require merely informing citizens. Article 108, paragraph 2, requires that boundaries not be changed without first obtaining the opinion of the population. The word "first" defines a preliminary condition and not a formality that can be fulfilled after the territorial solution has been finalized. The same sequence is reflected in Article 89 of Law No. 139/2015, which includes the opinion of the population among the elements accompanying the proposal when it is submitted to the Assembly.

Consequently, the consultation must be informed, comprehensive, documented, and conducted at a stage when the territorial alternative is still genuinely open. The affected territory and population. the reasons for the change.

the consequences on representation, services, finances, and properties, the manner of consultation, participation, expressed positions, and how they have been taken into consideration must all be made known. Without these elements, the collection of opinion risks remaining merely a formal confirmation of a decision already made.

The forwarded documentation requests the reasoned opinion of the Mayor, the review and institutional position of the Municipal Council, including alternative positions, as well as the organization of population consultation by the Municipality. The Mayor and the Council are different bodies, with distinct legitimacy and competencies. The Council must have the opportunity to become acquainted with the institutional opinion of the Mayor and to take it into consideration, without being bound by it, before finally forming its own position.

In the case of the Municipality of Tirana, there exists an institutional circumstance that the Assembly cannot overlook. In the procedure initiated by the proponents and forwarded through the Assembly, the Municipality of Tirana has been requested, as part of the same process, to present the reasoned opinion of the Mayor and the position of the Municipal Council, as well as to organize the consultation of the population. These are not three disconnected formalities, but complementary elements of the formation of the institutional position and the collection of the community's opinion.

The Mayor should have had the opportunity to present his opinion before the Council, while the Council, without being in any way bound by it, should have had the opportunity to take it into consideration during the formation of its own position. This has become objectively impossible. The Mayor is under a measure that prevents the normal exercise of his mandate, and the request to enable his participation in this process has been refused by SPAK.

Thus, an institutional contradiction is created. The Assembly requires the exercise of a function by the elected local body, while the effect of a measure taken within the competencies of another state body makes the effective exercise of this function impossible. The consequence does not affect only the Mayor; it undermines the completeness of the Council's position and of the process through which the Municipality must organize and convey the opinion of citizens, which Article 108, paragraph 2, of the Constitution requires before changing boundaries.

The draft law also provides that the organization and representation of the municipality be based on the principle of proportional representation of constituent cities according to population. If the "city" becomes the reference unit for the composition of the municipality's representative body, then there is direct intervention in the manner in which citizens' votes are translated into political representation.

The Constitution determines that the councils of basic units are elected by general, direct elections with secret ballot and that the right to elect local bodies is linked to permanent residence in the territory of the respective unit. Therefore, before approving the new principle, the following must be clarified:

What is the "city" for electoral purposes? Are territorial representation zones created within the municipality? How is equality of the vote preserved among citizens residing in different cities? How are residents of villages and administrative units represented? And above all, can the principle of representation be determined today, while the legal and electoral mechanism for its realization is left to a future legislative intervention?

These issues cannot be left solely to future electoral legislation, because the territorial draft law itself is determining today the principle upon which representation will be built. When the law that determines territory simultaneously determines the territorial reference unit for political representation, it must be predictable in its consequences on equality of the vote and the representation of constituent communities.

The draft law provides that the Municipal Council may change the naming, territorial extent, and boundaries of constituent administrative units and their subdivisions, with final approval by the Council of Ministers. The formulation must explicitly determine that this competence is exercised only for internal reorganizations that do not change the external boundary of the municipality and do not transfer territory from one municipality to another.

Law No. 139/2015 recognizes competencies for updating administrative-territorial maps on the basis of the law in force on territorial division. The technical or cartographic updating of a boundary determined by law is not the same as the legal change of territorial extent. The draft law must clearly separate these two cases and must not allow a competence for internal organization to be interpreted as a competence for changing boundaries between municipalities.

If the transfer of territory from one municipality to another is intended, such a change must be carried out by a special law and in full compliance with Article 108 of the Constitution and the procedure provided for in Law No. 139/2015. The decision of the Municipal Council and the approval of the Council of Ministers cannot replace this procedure.

All these issues are ultimately linked to a fundamental requirement of the rule of law: predictability and legal certainty. A reform that simultaneously changes territory, the internal structure of municipalities, and the principle of representation of their communities must be complete and implementable from the moment of approval. The determination of elements without which the legal, institutional, financial, and democratic consequences of the proposed map cannot be fully assessed today must not be left to future legislation. The more fundamental the reform, the higher the standard of clarity and normative coherence must be.

For all these reasons, I assess that the draft law, in the form and at the procedural stage in which it has been forwarded to me, does not yet offer all the necessary guarantees and normative elements for the approval of a reform of this constitutional importance. In particular, the drafting and submission of the territorial solution before obtaining the opinion of the population creates the risk that consultation will be conducted as a subsequent

formality and not as a process that genuinely influences the content of the reform. This position does not constitute opposition to the need to review territorial organization, but a demand that the reform be complete, coherent, genuinely consulted, and constitutionally sustainable.

Before the continuation of the process and the final approval of the new map, I consider it necessary that:

Dear ladies and gentlemen deputies,

I cannot say today, on behalf of the citizens of Tirana, whether they are for or against the proposed map. This is precisely what the constitutional procedure must determine, through a consultation that is not conducted to formally confirm a ready-made solution, but to give the affected population a real opportunity to influence it. The Mayor can give his opinion, the Municipal Council can give its own, the proponents can argue the reform, and the Assembly exercises legislative competence; but none of these institutions can replace the opinion that the Constitution reserves for the affected population itself.

I was elected to serve the citizens of Tirana until the end of my mandate. This responsibility does not become smaller when its exercise becomes more difficult. On the contrary, it is precisely in these moments that it is proven whether a public mandate is understood as a position that temporarily belongs to its holder, or as a

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