

Albanian Opposition Accuses Government of Vote Buying

83,000 Invalid Votes

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exit.al - Albanian opposition parties have accused the government of Edi Rama of vote buying in the April 25 general elections.

The Democratic Party published what it claimed to be screenshots of conversations in a Whatsapp group purportedly showing how senior officials of the Ministry of Infrastructure allegedly legalized illegal buildings in exchange for votes for the Socialist Party.

The alleged evidence was reported to the Special Prosecution on April 12 by the PD, including accusations against Minister Belinda Balluku, her advisor Laureta Omeri, chief of cadaster agency Elira Gogo and several other officials of vote buying.

Despite the early report, "the prosecution did nothing to stop, prevent or condemn this clear criminal scheme of vote buying in exchange for legalization of houses," [?] Gazmend Bardhi of the PD stated on Friday.

Minister Balluku denied accusations and said the opposition had no evidence of vote buying. The published Whatssapp conversations didn't even mention the buying of votes, she said.

"I saw no vote buying, no sentence on exchange for votes, but just people who took care of families in the process of legalization [of buildings]," [?] she told Euronews Albania.

Oerd Bylykbashi of the PD accused the government of misusing earthquake relief funds to buy votes in Durres, Tirana, Kavaja, Kamez, Lezha, Rogozhina, Vora, Kruja, Lac and Miredita.

He said the government illegally changed the classification of earthquake damages in order to pay residents more money in exchange of votes. In the last two months ahead of elections until two days before the election day, the government disbursed €40 million to families damaged by the earthquake, according to Bylykbashi.

"The Durres Municipality disbursed €6 million for the reconstruction process only during the last week ahead of elections. This amounts to 89 times more than what it allocated in the last 15 months," [?] he said on Sunday.

In their reaction, the Durres Municipality denied accusations of vote buying. It said that 4,294 families were disbursed reconstruction funds in 2021, and 10,697 families in 2020.

Endrit Brahimllari of the Socialist Movement for Integration accused the ruling majority of committing a "electoral massacre" [?] on April 25. He listed a number of irregularities, which they have reported to the Special Prosecution.

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