



Name: Sali Berisha
Former President

Nationality:
Albanian

DOB: 15.10.1944

Address/Residence:
Albania

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background:

1. Sali Berisha served as Albania's President from 1992 to 1997 and Prime Minister from 2005 to 2013.
2. Berisha was also chairman of the Democratic Party of Albania from 1991 to 1992 and again 1997 to 2013.¹
3. USA Designation "Non Grata" 19.5.21² - *"..Due to his involvement in significant corruption. In his official capacity as Prime Minister of Albania in Particular, Berisha was involved in corrupt acts, such as misappropriation of public funds and interfering with public processes, including using his power for his own benefit and to enrich his political allies and his family at the expense of Albanian public's confidence in their government institutions and public officials. Furthermore his own rhetoric demonstrates he is willing to protect himself, his family members, and his political allies at the expense of independent investigations, anticorruption efforts and accountability measures. With this designation, I am reaffirming the need for accountability and transparency in Albania's democratic institutions, government processes and the actions of Albanian public officials".*

¹ [Sali Berisha - Wikipedia](#)

² [Public Designation of Albanian Sali Berisha Due to Involvement in Significant Corruption - United States Department of State](#)

Research

4. Sali Berisha was Albania's first democratically elected president from 1992 to 1997. His rule was marked by human rights violations and claims of election rigging³.
5. Berisha fell from power in 1997 after fraudulent pyramid schemes swallowed several hundred millions of dollars from the Albanian population. The government had failed to warn people over the investments or properly supervise the schemes, which ended in turmoil and led to significant public disorder^{4 5}.
6. Berisha returned to power as prime minister after his centre-right Democratic Party won the general elections in 2005 on an anti-corruption campaign. Despite never being formally charged, his term in office was marked by several scandals involving his own family members.
7. For example, Berisha has been accused of funnelling money into his daughter's law firm⁶. Alongside her associate Flutura Kola, Berisha's daughter Argita Malltezi set up three law firms: Malltezi & Kola, Kola & Associates and Malltezi & Associates. These firms shared an office and a growing list of profitable clients. They became key solicitors to multinationals looking to invest in Albania's growing economy e.g. via large-scale infrastructure and energy projects that in some cases were worth more than \$1 billion.⁷
8. Former clients allege that Malltezi used her family connections and personal influence to secure favourable arrangements. For example, many of Malltezi's clients obtained government licences and permits with Berisha's personal endorsement. Malltezi denies all wrongdoing and it should be noted that she successfully sued two MPs for defamation when they alleged that she had abused her family ties in this way.⁸
9. A key client of Malltezi's was Bosnian-British businessman Damir Fazlic, who had worked as an election adviser for Berisha during his successful 2005 campaign. In October 2008 the Albanian prosecutors' office launched a money laundering investigation against Fazlic.⁹
10. The investigation revealed Fazlic's involvement in a series of suspicious

³ [US Bars Former Albania PM Berisha Over 'Corrupt Acts' | Balkan Insight](#)

⁴ [The Pyramid Crisis in Albania Examined \(theculturetrip.com\)](#)

⁵ [US Bars Former Albania PM Berisha Over 'Corrupt Acts' | Balkan Insight](#)

⁶ [Albania Ex-PM's Daughter Takes Legal Route to Riches | Balkan Insight](#)

⁷ [Albania Ex-PM's Daughter Takes Legal Route to Riches | Balkan Insight](#)

⁸ [Albania Ex-PM's Daughter Takes Legal Route to Riches | Balkan Insight](#)

⁹ [Albania Ex-PM's Daughter Takes Legal Route to Riches | Balkan Insight](#)

property transactions and share transfers worth millions of euros, which were brokered by Malltezi and utilised a complex network of offshore companies.¹⁰
11

11. Specifically, it is alleged that Malltezi acquired land for Fazlic on the edge of an energy park in Durres's Porto eRomano area. Fazlic paid more than 4 times the market value for the land. Shortly after, Berisha used his position as Prime Minister to adjust the energy park's borders to include Fazlic's new land – meaning its value rose from €1.2m to €4.7m in value instantly.

12. Malltezi and her associates may have earned as much as €1.2m from this transaction.¹² Fazlic's subsequent plans to re-develop his land to include oil and gas facilities means his total earnings could amount to tens of millions.¹³ This indicates that the inner circle around Berisha earned millions of euros from suspect land deals.

13. Despite this, the 2008 investigation was ultimately dropped when Bosnian and Cypriot authorities refused Albanian requests for information. This occurred alongside intense political pressure on the prosecutor's office from Berisha.¹⁴ The investigation against Fazlic angered the Albanian prime minister, who described him as a "family friend" and as such, untouchable.¹⁵ It is alleged that Berisha may have assisted Fazlic flee Albania following prosecutors' summons for Fazlic to appear for questioning.¹⁶

14. There is evidence to suggest that Berisha benefitted from his connections to Fazlic. For example, minutes from a meeting in 2006 between an American telecoms company and Fazlic regarding a lucrative telecoms contract with the state-owned Albania Telecoms company indicate the US firm was asked to provide a \$1m payment to the Democratic Party.¹⁷

15. Overall, this evidence strongly suggests that Berisha used his position of power to engage in corruption and criminal behaviour, for both his personal gain and that of his inner circle. He then protected them from investigation when evidence of criminality came to light.

Links to criminal groups:

16. Berisha's association with his daughter's law firm and relationship with Damir

¹⁰ [Fazlic and Lazarevic's Albanian Shale Gas Venture | Balkan Insight](#)

¹¹ [Albania Ex-PM's Daughter Takes Legal Route to Riches | Balkan Insight](#)

¹² [Berisha's inner circle won millions from dubious land deals - Reporter.al \(www-reporter-al.translate.google\)](#)

¹³ [Berisha's inner circle won millions from dubious land deals - Reporter.al \(www-reporter-al.translate.google\)](#)

¹⁴ [The daughter of the former Prime Minister of Albania follows the 'legal' path towards wealth - Reporter.al \(www-reporter-al.translate.google\)](#)

¹⁵ [The daughter of the former Prime Minister of Albania follows the 'legal' path towards wealth - Reporter.al \(www-reporter-al.translate.google\)](#)

¹⁶ [Damir Fazlic: Controversial Deal Broker | Balkan Insight](#)

¹⁷ [Albanian Telecoms Deal Cost '\\$1m to Buy Off Politicians' | BIRN SOURCE](#)

Fazlic was only one part of a portfolio of corruption allegations that the former Prime Minister faced. There is also evidence that Berisha is closely linked to organised crime in Albania.

17. Berisha lost the 2013 parliamentary elections to Socialist leader Edi Rama (Current Prime Minister). Berisha resigned as head of the Democratic Party but remained a powerful figure in the party. He still commands a strong following and remains an MP but was expelled from the party on 9.9.21¹⁸ following the US designation¹⁹.

Lulzim Basha former DP leader had excluded (expelled) Sali Berisha from the PD's parliamentary group following designation. Sali Berisha retaliated by rallying his supporters and calling a meeting of the National Assembly the party's highest body.

7,600 members voted to dismiss Lulzim Basha as leader as well as all party leadership appointed by him. This reversed all decisions taken by PD leadership since Berisha's expulsion thus reinstating Berisha within Parliamentary group he was excluded from. Following this – Sali Berisha established a Refoundation group that then tried to reclaim PD's headquarters as their own.

18. As part of Berisha's efforts to remove the then-Democratic Party leader Lulzim Basha, in January 2022 Berisha supporters tried to violently seize the Party's headquarters.²⁰ The Democratic Party accused Berisha of using criminal groups to lead the attack on their headquarters and incite violence²¹, and provided video footage²² showing that the violent protest organised and attended by Berisha²³ also involved several figures known to UK law enforcement agencies.

19. Video footage of an earlier incident on 21 December 2021 shows Berisha being accompanied by Fation Dauti into the Democratic Party's headquarters. Dauti has been excluded from the UK due to significant links to criminality.²⁴ When Berisha is prevented from entering a meeting room at the headquarters, Dauti is shown to violently kick in the meeting room's doors on behalf of Berisha.^{25 26}

¹⁸ [Tirana Court Ratifies PD National Assembly Initiated by Berisha - Exit - Explaining Albania](#)

¹⁹ [Sali Berisha is expelled from the parliamentary group of the Democratic Party of Albania - Daily News \(txtreport.com\)](#)

²⁰ [Opposition party supporters in Albania clash over leadership | News | Al Jazeera](#)

²¹ [Albanian Daily News](#)

²² [Albanian Daily News](#)

²³ [Protest called by Berisha turns violent in front of the Democratic Party HQ - A2 CNN | English Edition \(a2news.com\)](#)

²⁴ [Fation Dautai: Suspected Albanian crime boss named - Exclusive | UK | News | Express.co.uk](#)

²⁵ [VIDEO/ Berisha 'invades' PD headquarters, kicks the door of the meeting room: We will communicate to The Oblast, dare not oppose us - Albanian \(shqiptarja.com\)](#)

²⁶ [Berisha: Fation Dauti, who kicked the PD headquarters today, was side by side at the time of the tent! He keeps armed men in the PD, threatened me - Albanian \(shqiptarja.com\)](#)

20. Dauti was excluded from the UK on the basis of National Crime Agency (NCA) intelligence that he was a leader of an Albanian criminal network involved in cocaine importation, cannabis production, people smuggling and money laundering. The NCA viewed him to be capable of extreme violence, and UK judges accepted that he should be excluded from the UK on the basis that he presented a "serious threat to public security and safety".²⁷
21. **BERISHA regained the chairmanship of the Democratic Party on 22 May 2022. However, he lacks the support of the Democratic Party's parliamentary group and his membership (and therefore leadership) of the Party is subject to an ongoing legal challenge**
22. **This evidence shows that Berisha has clear links to organised crime groups and criminals who present a threat to public safety both in Albania and the UK. Berisha is willing to use these links to further his own political ambitions.**

Assessment

23. **We recommend that Sali Berisha is excluded from the UK on the grounds that his presence here is non-conducive to the public good. Evidence suggests that Berisha was involved in significant corruption as Prime Minister of Albania, as well as the misappropriation of public funds, interference with public process, and the enrichment of political allies through abuse of power in office. Additionally, Berisha is linked with organised crime groups and criminals who present to public safety in both Albania and the UK. We assess that there is therefore sufficient evidence to meet the threshold for exclusion.**
24. **Berisha's exclusion from the UK would support action by the US, who declared Berisha as "persona non grata" in 2021 due to his involvement in significant corruption.**
25. Berisha's exclusion from the UK can be considered reasonable, proportionate, and consistent in tackling the links between politically exposed persons in Albania and organised criminal gangs.

²⁷ [Fation Dautai: Suspected Albanian crime boss named - Exclusive | UK | News | Express.co.uk](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1484841/fation-dautai-suspected-albanian-crime-boss-named)