

INNOVATIVE ALLIANCE OF
SOUTH EAST EUROPE



IASSEE–RISE · THE ALBANIAN RENEWAL (RINISJA SHQIPTARE)

Albania's Constitutional Continuum and the Case for Direct Democracy

The theoretical foundation of the Albanian Renewal: why the 1998 constitutional cycle must close, and why citizen sovereignty is the only durable corrective to state capture

Theoretical companion to Documents 1–5 of the citizens' initiative

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose. This paper is the theoretical foundation of the Albanian Renewal. Documents 1–5 set out what the citizens’ initiative proposes and how it will be carried out; this paper explains why a new, citizen-written constitution founded on direct democracy is the only durable solution for Albania.

Diagnosis. For thirty-five years Albania has had pluralism, elections and alternation in government, yet the same pattern has returned: posts, tenders and licences distributed by loyalty, anti-corruption gains reversed — most recently by the 2024 amnesty of persons convicted by the Special Anti-Corruption courts — and the loss of about 780,000 residents between the 1989 and 2023 censuses.

Core thesis. Responsibility for corruption and for the breach of the laws and of the Constitution is personal: it lies with those who governed, not with the citizens who approved the 1998 Constitution in good faith. But the order in which they governed gave them impunity. Whoever holds the power to choose who governs is eventually captured by the network doing the choosing, and the 1998 order — together with the amendments the parties later made without asking the people — leaves that power with party leaderships: they control candidate lists, majorities and appointments, and only Parliament can amend the Constitution (Article 177). Citizens may seek a referendum (Article 150), but it can only repeal a law, not annul it, and the budget, taxes and the financial obligations of the state are excluded (Article 151) — precisely where patronage operates.

Why reform from within fails. Electoral alternation, parliamentary amendment, EU conditionality and institutional vetting all depend on the consent of the actors they are meant to correct. Iceland (2010–2013) shows the result: a citizen-drafted constitution approved by voters and then buried by the old parliament.

The solution. A new constitution drafted by a commission of non-partisan constitutional jurists and experts, reviewed in public by citizens selected by lot and approved by the people in a binding referendum, resting on three principles: open the choosing (selection on merit and in public for transitional bodies; open candidacy thereafter, without any party’s permission); return the final word to citizens (binding referendums with a veto over major laws, amendments and the budget; recall of any senior official); make the state visible (real-time publication of every contract, salary and fund; patronage a constitutional offence, and patronage parties dissolved by the courts on evidence).

The lawful route. Popular sovereignty (Article 2) and the citizen-initiative referendum (Article 150) express the will of the people; the new constitution enters into force only through the Constitution’s own revision procedure, including Article 177, and approval by the people in a binding referendum. The opinion of the Venice Commission is requested as a legal safeguard against annulment, not as an authority over a decision that belongs to the Albanian people alone. The Central Election Commission organises the vote under international observation; Albanian citizens abroad vote by post, as they did for the first time in 2025.

The transition — two phases. First the government, then the constitution. Phase 1, now: the resignation of the government and the formation of a technical government with a limited mandate, without any parliamentary party, by peaceful and lawful means, as demanded by the peaceful protest led by the Kuvendi Kombëtar Qytetar. Phase 2: the constitutional process. A 75-member Transitional Leading Board (35 resident, 5 seats for leaders of citizen protest movements, 35

diaspora) is selected before the referendum — open application by every Albanian citizen, deep vetting, and selection of the best candidates by a commission of non-partisan intellectuals — but holds no state power until a “YES” vote. It then provides a 15-member Caretaker Technical Government and a 3-member Executive Council with no Prime Minister, under a fixed, non-renewable mandate that ends when the new institutions take office. No MP or minister of the last 36 years may apply.

The request to partners. An international guarantee, not an international imposition: the European Union, the United States, Switzerland, the Council of Europe and the OSCE are asked to observe, review and accompany a decision that belongs to the Albanian people alone.

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A note on this document

Documents 1–5 of the Albanian Renewal set out the petition, the new constitution, the white paper, the international filing package and the transition plan. They state what the initiative proposes and how it will be done. This paper states why. It is the theoretical argument beneath the whole package: why Albania's difficulties have survived every change of government, why the correctives available inside the 1998 order cannot repair them, and why a new constitution founded on direct democracy, drafted by non-partisan experts and approved by the people, is the only durable solution. It does not excuse those who governed: responsibility for corruption and for the breach of the laws and of the Constitution is personal.

It replaces the February 2026 discussion paper *Albania's Constitutional Continuum and the Imperative of Structural Reinforcement*. That earlier paper diagnosed the same structural problem but proposed reinforcing the existing order. The analysis carried out since — and the design of the petition documents — led to a firmer conclusion: the existing order cannot be reinforced into health, because the power to reinforce it lies with the very structures that need correcting. Where this paper and Documents 1–5 differ, this revision and the Joint Founding Declaration of 3 October 2026 govern; Documents 1–5 will be aligned with them.

This revision of 9 October 2026 takes account of written comments received on the September text. Eight points were changed: the personal responsibility of those who governed is stated plainly; the Venice Commission is asked only for a legal opinion and given no authority over the decision; decentralisation is placed within a unitary state and has nothing to do with the Swiss cantons; the constitutional text is drafted by experts and reviewed by citizens; judges are chosen on merit, not by popular vote; the paper concerns Albania alone; the section on historical method has been removed; and the order of steps is set out in two phases — first the resignation of the government and a technical government, then the constitutional process. An annex shows how each proposal is to be implemented.

I. The Argument in Brief

Albania's political crises are usually read through elections, parties and personalities. This paper does not excuse those who governed: responsibility for corruption and for the breach of the laws and of the Constitution itself is personal, and those responsible must answer for it before the courts. Its thesis is that the constitutional order allowed them to act without being corrected by citizens. For thirty-five years pluralism has existed, elections have been held and governments have alternated, yet the same pattern has returned — posts, tenders and licences distributed by political loyalty, anti-corruption gains reversed, and the country emptied of its people. The resident population fell from 3,182,417 at the 1989 census to 2,402,113 at the 2023 census, a documented loss of about 780,000 people, 429,628 of them since 2011 alone.

What made this possible is a single design flaw repeated across Albania's constitutional history: **whoever holds the power to choose who governs is eventually captured by the network doing the choosing.** Under the 1998 order that power sits with party leaderships, which control candidate lists, parliamentary majorities, appointments and — through the two-thirds rule of Article 177 — the constitution itself. Citizens can change which party governs. They cannot change the rules by

which every party governs. The citizens who approved the 1998 Constitution in good faith, after the tragedy of 1997, are not to blame: the later amendments that concentrated power further — such as those agreed between the two largest parties in 2008, which opened the way to elections on closed party lists — were adopted by the parties in Parliament without asking the people.

Reform from inside this order fails for a structural reason: every corrective depends on the consent of the actors it is meant to correct. Electoral alternation replaces one leadership with another drawn from the same system. Constitutional amendment requires the captured majority to vote against itself. External conditionality produces gains that a domestic majority can later reverse, as the 2024 amnesty of persons convicted by the Special Anti-Corruption courts showed.

The only durable solution is to move the decisive powers out of reach of any network. That is what direct democracy does. The Albanian Renewal proposes a new constitution, drafted by non-partisan constitutional jurists and experts, reviewed in public by citizens selected by lot and ratified directly by the people in a binding referendum, resting on three principles:

1. **Open the choosing.** Members of transitional bodies are selected in public and on merit — by a commission of non-partisan intellectuals, after deep vetting, with a public lot only among candidates of equal standing; in the new order candidacy is open to every qualified individual without any party's permission.
2. **Return the final word to citizens.** Binding citizen-initiative referendums, a popular veto over major laws, constitutional amendments and the budget, and recall of any senior official.
3. **Make the state visible.** Real-time publication of every public contract, salary and fund, with patronage declared a constitutional violation.

The route is lawful, peaceful and internationally observed: popular sovereignty (Article 2) and the citizen-initiative referendum (Article 150) of the Constitution in force express the will of the people, and the new constitution enters into force only through the Constitution's own revision procedure, including Article 177, and approval by the people in a binding referendum. The Constitutional Court reviews the route; the Venice Commission is asked only for its legal opinion, as a safeguard against annulment. The European Union, the United States and Switzerland are invited to observe from the first step. Nothing enters into force without the people's vote.

The order of steps matters. The first priority, shared with the Kuvendi Kombëtar Qytetar and the peaceful protest, is the resignation of the government and the formation of a technical government with a limited mandate, without any parliamentary party, by peaceful and lawful means. The constitutional process follows. The initiative does not open every question at once: one step at a time, so that the country is led out of crisis, not into disorder.

II. The Structural Question

Political systems often look stable until their incentive imbalances compound. The question this paper asks is not which party should govern Albania, but a prior one:

Does the constitutional order give citizens themselves the power to correct those who govern — or only the power to choose among them?

A system that offers only the second power is a representative system without a citizen corrective. It can function where parties are internally democratic, where the state administration is professional and where courts are insulated. Where those conditions are missing — as they were in Albania in 1991 and remain in large part today — representation without correction becomes a mechanism for reproducing the same governing network under changing labels. The rest of this paper examines that proposition historically, empirically and theoretically, and draws the conclusion the petition documents act upon.

III. The Historical Continuum (1878–2026)

Albania’s constitutional history is short, interrupted and repeatedly shaped from outside. Read as a sequence rather than as isolated episodes, it shows a consistent pattern: moments of opening followed by concentration, and no period in which citizens held a corrective of their own.

Period	Structural pattern
1878	The Congress of Berlin redistributes Albanian-inhabited lands among neighbouring states; the League of Prizren forms in response. Constitutional life begins under fragmentation and external pressure.
1912–1913	Independence is proclaimed at Vlorë; the great-power settlement of 1913 leaves large Albanian populations outside the new borders. The state is born weak and dependent on external guarantors.
1924	The reformist government of Fan Noli attempts democratic modernisation and is overthrown within six months. Executive consolidation follows under Ahmet Zogu, first as president, then as king.
1945–1991	One-party dictatorship eliminates pluralism, private property and every citizen corrective; isolation deepens institutional insulation.
1991–1998	Pluralism returns. The 1997 collapse of the pyramid schemes and the ensuing unrest reveal a state unable to protect its citizens.
1998–2026	The 1998 Constitution, ratified by referendum, restores representative democracy but leaves the decisive powers — lists, majorities, appointments and amendment — with party leaderships.

This continuity matters. It reveals pattern, not accident: each opening was either interrupted or absorbed, because none placed a durable instrument of correction in the hands of citizens.

IV. Fragmentation and the Price of Centralisation

Fragmentation is not only territorial; it is institutional. When a state is born under external pressure and with its population dispersed, concentration of executive power is easily mistaken for stability. Each concentration is justified by an emergency — external threat, internal disorder, economic collapse — and each outlives the emergency that justified it.

Over time this produces a political culture in which the strong centre is treated as the natural form of the state and the citizen as its subject. The Albanian Renewal answers this within one state. Albania is and remains a unitary state — one people, one language, one territory. Decentralisation means that power and budgets descend to the existing units of local self-government, the municipalities and the twelve counties, and that the citizen, not the centre, holds the final word over local affairs.

Where the initiative's documents use the word “canton” — in Albanian always after the word for municipality, as “Bashki (Kantone)” — it means only such a unit of local self-government. It has nothing to do with the Swiss cantons. Switzerland was formed by cantons that already existed as separate communities, several of them with their own language, which joined together into one confederation; Albania is one state, with one people and one language, and was never formed in that way. Its units of self-government may be the twelve counties of today, or more or fewer, as citizens decide. No unit may secede, and no part of the territory may be given a sovereign or exclusive status — no state within the state and no zone closed to Albanian citizens.

The legal basis already exists: the European Charter of Local Self-Government, which Albania has ratified but never applied in full. The mechanism is there; the parties have deformed it, and local office-holders have resisted oversight in the name of local autonomy. That is why the new design keeps prosecutors and police under the central control of SPAK and publishes every local budget in real time: decentralisation must not become capture by local strongmen. Decentralisation is not a weakening of the state; it is the removal of the single point at which the state can be captured.

V. 1924: The Interrupted Experiment

The government of Fan Noli (June–December 1924) is remembered as Albania's first serious attempt at democratic modernisation. Its programme — land reform, administrative reform, modernisation of the state — was ambitious; its institutional base was thin. It came to power through upheaval rather than through a stable constitutional process, postponed the elections that might have given it a durable mandate, and was removed by force with foreign backing within months.

The lesson is instructive and it is structural. Good intentions at the top are not a constitution. A reform that depends on the virtue and survival of a particular leadership ends when that leadership ends. What was missing in 1924 — and what has been missing since — was an architecture in which the people themselves hold the power to adopt, defend and correct the rules. The Albanian Renewal is designed precisely so that it does not depend on any leader, including its own initiators.

VI. 1945–1991: Total Concentration

The communist regime represented the logical end-point of the concentration pattern. It removed pluralism, private property, freedom of movement and every mechanism through which citizens could correct power. Isolation — political, economic and eventually total — deepened the insulation of the governing structure from any external check.

Its most enduring legacy, however, was not the formal system, which fell in 1990–1991, but the networks of loyalty and control that operated it. The initiative's central historical claim is that these

networks were never dismantled: after 1991 they were recycled through the successor parties and re-established themselves inside the new pluralist institutions.

VII. 1991–2026: Pluralism Without Citizen Sovereignty

The post-1991 order restored electoral competition and, in 1998, a constitution ratified by referendum. These were real achievements. But the architecture that emerged is party-centred rather than citizen-centred. Four features define it:

- **Party gatekeeping of candidacy.** Access to parliament runs through lists controlled by party leaderships, so the power to decide who may govern sits with a small number of people.
- **Amendment reserved to Parliament.** Under Article 177 only one-fifth of the members of the Assembly may initiate a constitutional revision, and adoption requires a two-thirds majority (94 of 140). Citizens have no initiative of their own over the constitution. Every revision since 1998 has been negotiated between the parties in Parliament, at times with international support, and none has widened the powers of citizens.
- **A narrow citizen referendum.** Article 150 allows 50,000 voters to seek the abrogation of a law — a referendum can repeal a law for the future, but cannot annul an unconstitutional or anti-national law — or to ask for a referendum on an issue of special importance, but Article 151 excludes, among other matters, the budget, taxes and the financial obligations of the state — precisely the fields in which patronage operates.
- **Oversight dependent on partisan dynamics.** Prosecutorial and judicial independence, though strengthened by the vetting process and the creation of SPAK, remain exposed to the parliamentary majority, which can legislate around them.

The result is an order that permits drift without rupture. Citizens can replace a government; they cannot correct the system that produces every government. The narrow door of Article 150 is the only one the 1998 text leaves partly open to citizens — and the Albanian Renewal walks through it lawfully, asking the Constitutional Court (Article 152) to review the route and the Venice Commission for its legal opinion and claiming no unilateral right. That the door is so narrow is itself the proof of this paper's thesis.

VIII. The Evidence of Capture

The diagnosis does not rest on the initiative's assessment alone. The public record of the institutions Albania seeks to join describes the same structure:

- **Reform with reversals.** The European Commission's 2024 report records the near-completion of judicial vetting (794 of 805 cases closed at first instance) and real results by SPAK — but also a broad amnesty that fully pardoned 40 persons convicted by the Special Anti-Corruption courts and reduced the sentences of 65 others, together with continued attempts at political interference in the judiciary.
- **Corruption-prevention gaps at the top.** GRECO's Fifth Round Evaluation documents the absence of integrity plans for ministers, weak rules on conflicts of interest and lobbying, political advisers operating without transparency, and integrity risks in the State Police.

- **A foundational plunder.** The 1996–1997 pyramid schemes, with nominal liabilities of roughly USD 1.2 billion — around half of GDP — collapsed and triggered unrest that cost about 2,000 lives. It set the template of three decades in which power served the strong rather than the citizen.
- **The verdict of emigration.** Between the 2011 and 2023 censuses Albania lost 429,628 residents (–15.2%), principally through emigration. A country that empties on this scale is producing evidence about its system, not merely losing a political debate.

Recent appeals by members of the diaspora to foreign governments and institutions belong to the same evidence. They show that citizens no longer believe domestic correctives can work. The right answer is not to discourage such appeals but to channel them into a lawful, monitored process whose end-point is that citizens hold the correctives themselves. That is the purpose of Document 4.

IX. A Theory of Capture: Whoever Chooses Is Captured

Why does the same pattern survive changes of government, of party and of law? The answer lies in the structure of choice. In any political system some person or body decides who may hold power: who is on the list, who is appointed, who is promoted, who wins the tender. That decision is the most valuable asset in the state. Wherever it is concentrated, organised networks will invest in controlling it, because controlling the choosers yields control of everything the chosen then decide.

Classical democratic theory understood this. Aristotle observed that filling offices by lot is characteristic of democracy and filling them by election is characteristic of oligarchy — not because elections are illegitimate, but because an electoral contest managed by organised factions tends to return the organised. Modern political economy describes the same mechanism as regulatory and state capture: concentrated, organised interests prevail over diffuse, unorganised citizens whenever the decision point is small enough to be reached.

Albania’s post-1991 experience follows the accumulation model that this analysis predicts:

Phase	Dynamic
1. Democratic reset	A new order opens; competition is real; networks reorganise around the new decision points.
2. Advantage consolidation	Control of lists, appointments and procurement converts electoral victory into durable structural advantage.
3. Legitimacy contest	Elections, courts and institutions become arenas of permanent dispute; each side regards the other’s victory as illegitimate.
4. Structural imbalance	Correctives are neutralised; citizens exit — through abstention, protest or emigration.

Without interruption, accumulation compounds. The decisive insight follows directly: **the problem cannot be solved by choosing better people, because whoever does the choosing becomes the new target.** It can only be solved by making every choice open, merit-based and verifiable — and by giving citizens a standing power to correct outcomes after the fact.

X. Why Reform Within the System Cannot Succeed

Four correctives are usually proposed for Albania. Each has been tried; each fails for the same structural reason — it depends on the consent or survival of the actors it is meant to correct.

Corrective	What it promises	Why it fails structurally
Electoral alternation	Voters remove a bad government.	The replacement is selected by the same gatekeeping system; the network changes label, not structure.
Constitutional amendment (Art. 177)	Parliament repairs the rules.	Requires a two-thirds majority of the actors who benefit from the rules to vote against themselves.
External conditionality	EU and partners reward reform.	Gains are real but reversible by a domestic majority — as the 2024 amnesty of SPAK-convicted persons showed.
Institutional vetting	Clean the courts and prosecution.	Necessary but insufficient: the majority can legislate around cleaned institutions or starve them of resources.

The Icelandic experience of 2010–2013 illustrates the trap in its purest form. A citizen process produced a new constitutional draft, approved by roughly two-thirds of voters in an advisory referendum — and the existing parliament, which retained the final word, never adopted it. **Any reform that must pass back through the captured institution for approval will be blocked by it.** The Albanian Renewal draws the lesson: the constitutional process begins only after the captured government has resigned, the vote of the people in a binding referendum is the decisive act, and a parliament that disregarded a clear popular decision would answer for it before citizens and before Albania’s partners.

XI. Why Direct Democracy Is the Only Durable Solution

If the root problem is the concentrated power to choose, and if every internal corrective depends on those who hold that power, then the solution must place the decisive powers where no network can capture them: with citizens as a whole. Direct democracy is not an ideological preference here; it is the only design that answers the structural diagnosis. Its logic rests on three principles.

1. Open the choosing: merit, not patronage

Where a body must be filled without an election — above all during the transition — its members must not be chosen by parties or by any closed circle. Every Albanian citizen, at home or abroad, may apply on self-assessment; every applicant is deeply vetted; and a commission of non-partisan intellectuals selects the best candidates, on merit and on their record of service to the country, against criteria published in advance. A public lot is used only among candidates of equal standing,

so that no one can be hand-picked. The vote is not the right instrument everywhere: where qualification and expertise are needed, verifiable merit decides, because a popular vote there ends in populism and drowns the competent. In the new constitutional order the same principle takes the form of open candidacy: every citizen who meets objective criteria may stand, in any electoral college, without any party's permission. No party can monopolise access to power because no party controls the door.

2. Return the final word to citizens

Binding citizen-initiative referendums give the people a veto over major laws, constitutional amendments and the national budget — the very subjects the 1998 Constitution withholds from them. Constitutional recall allows any senior official to be removed by the people through an expedited procedure. These instruments change behaviour even when unused: an official who knows that a decision can be overturned by citizens has far less reason to serve a network against them. Switzerland's experience shows that the mere availability of the optional referendum pushes legislators toward broad consensus.

3. Make the state visible

Capture depends on opacity. Real-time publication of every public contract, official salary and fund, open contracting with disclosed beneficial ownership, and the constitutional prohibition of patronage turn corruption from a hidden transaction into a visible violation. Transparency is the precondition for the other two principles: citizens cannot correct what they cannot see.

Together these principles produce what representative reform cannot: a system in which betrayal of the public interest is not merely forbidden but structurally difficult, quickly visible and correctable by citizens themselves. Citizens are not to blame if many of them do not yet demand this: governments have centralised every process in their own hands and blocked the democratic education of the people. Open, non-partisan civic education is therefore part of the initiative from the first day.

XII. The Architecture of the New Constitution

The new constitution is not a repair of the 1998 document but a sovereign restart of the state, drafted by non-partisan experts, reviewed by citizens and ratified directly by the people. It rests on five pillars — sovereignty of the people, criminalisation of patronage, compulsory meritocracy, decentralisation within a unitary state and citizen correctives — and translates them into the following architecture (set out in full in Documents 2 and 3):

- **Executive — a Governing Board of three.** The single Prime Minister, the principal point of capture, is replaced by three members elected directly on non-partisan lists, with the chair rotating annually (*primus inter pares*).
- **Legislature — 100 seats, all elected.** Four open electoral colleges: 60 general, 15 science, culture and academia, 15 education, and 10 for the diaspora, elected by the diaspora itself. All citizens vote in every other college with equal weight; the colleges determine who may stand, not who may vote. Mandates last four years, subject to recall.

- **Judiciary — chosen on merit, not by popular vote.** Judges of the Constitutional Court and the High Court are selected through open competition by an independent qualification commission, with published scores and reasons, deep vetting and long, non-renewable mandates. Judges are not elected by popular vote: where qualification is required, merit decides, not the ballot. Citizens hold the judiciary to account through full transparency of appointments and decisions. The Prosecutor General becomes independent and protected from political interference.
- **Decentralisation within a unitary state.** Self-government rests on the existing municipalities and twelve counties, with fiscal self-government and real-time publication of every local budget; local prosecutors and police chiefs remain under the central control of SPAK so that decentralisation does not become capture by local strongmen. No unit may secede or receive a sovereign or exclusive status. A Council of Senior Experienced Persons (over 60, after vetting) provides citizen advisory chambers and community mediation.
- **Citizen correctives.** Binding referendums, recall of any senior official, real-time fiscal transparency, and citizen juries selected by lot.
- **Pluralism protected, patronage outlawed.** There is no blanket ban on parties: freedom of political organisation is protected in line with Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Copenhagen criteria. Patronage parties are ended by law rather than by decree: patronage is a constitutional offence; a party proven in court to operate a patronage network is dissolved; illegally acquired party assets are confiscated; public funding of parties ends; and open candidacy removes their monopoly on access to power. Candidacy is barred for life after conviction by final judgment or a “non grata” declaration; party financing is fully transparent and business money is excluded from campaigns.

XIII. Comparative Lessons

The Albanian Renewal adapts proven instruments rather than inventing untested ones. The purpose is adaptation, not imitation.

- **Athens.** The first democracy filled most of its offices by lot, using the kleroterion, precisely to prevent factions from capturing them. Sortition is the oldest democratic instrument, not a novelty.
- **Switzerland.** The optional referendum (50,000 signatures) and the popular initiative for constitutional amendment (100,000 signatures), held on fixed voting days several times a year, show that direct democracy can coexist with stability and prosperity. Its seven-member Federal Council with an annually rotating presidency is the model for the collegial executive. Its cantons are not a model for Albania: they were separate communities, several with their own language, that joined together, whereas Albania is one state, one people and one language.
- **Ireland.** Citizens’ assemblies selected by lot (2012–2014 and 2016–2018), supported by expert advisers, deliberated on constitutional questions and led to referendums that settled issues the party system had avoided for decades.

- **Iceland.** The citizen-drafted constitution of 2010–2013 shows the method works — and shows the fatal flaw of returning the draft to the old parliament. The Albanian design is built around avoiding that trap.
- **United States.** Around twenty states allow recall of state officials, and many allow citizen initiatives, demonstrating that recall and initiative operate within a stable constitutional republic.

XIV. The Road to the New Constitution

The legal route

The will of the people is expressed through popular sovereignty (Article 2) and the citizen-initiative referendum (Article 150) of the Constitution in force. The new constitution enters into force only through the Constitution's own revision procedure, including Article 177, and approval by the people in a binding referendum, subject to the prior review of the Constitutional Court (Article 152) and the limits of Article 151. No unilateral right is claimed. The opinion of the Venice Commission is requested at the outset — as a legal safeguard that protects the initiative from annulment, not as an authority over a decision that belongs to the Albanian people. The Central Election Commission is asked to register the initiative, verify signatures transparently and in real time, guarantee equal media access, remove the penalising quorum and enable diaspora and electronic voting.

Participation runs on two deliberately separate tracks. Track 1, the civic petition, is open to all Albanian citizens, at home and in the diaspora, and demonstrates the popular will. The initiative concerns Albania alone; every other people decides on its own constitution. Track 2, the formal initiative, consists of signatures verified by Albanian citizens to request the vote. Only the referendum decides.

Two phases: first the government, then the constitution

Phase 1 — now. The first priority is the one set by the peaceful protest: the resignation of the government and the formation of a technical government with a limited mandate, without any parliamentary party, achieved by peaceful and lawful means — through the resignation of the Prime Minister or a motion of no confidence in the Assembly. The constitution cannot come before the end of a government that has captured the institutions. Phase 2 — the constitutional process, which begins once the technical government is in office and follows the arc below; the months are counted from that point. How the Phase 1 technical government relates to the Transitional Leading Board will be set out jointly with the Kuvendi Kombëtar Qytetar in Document 5.

The 24-month arc

1. **Mobilisation (months 0–3):** gathering signatures for a constitution designed by the people, not the parties.
2. **International observation (months 1–6):** request for the opinion of the Venice Commission and for observation by the European Union, the United States and Switzerland.
3. **Constitutional drafting (months 3–9):** a commission of non-partisan constitutional jurists and experts drafts the new text in public; a citizens' assembly selected by lot, together with

civil society, local government and the diaspora, reviews it and proposes amendments. In the same period the members of the Transitional Leading Board are selected and vetted as a designated civic body, without any state power.

4. **Binding ratification (months 9–12):** national referendum organised by the Central Election Commission under international observation; a “YES” vote completes the constitutional procedure and brings the new constitution into force, whose transitional provisions end the mandate of the old parliament and give the already-selected Board its legal mandate. The Caretaker Technical Government is formed only after the vote.
5. **Decentralisation (months 12–18):** local self-government in the existing municipalities and counties, under the European Charter of Local Self-Government, and establishment of the Council of Senior Experienced Persons.
6. **The new state (months 18–24):** first national elections on the basis of merit and integrity.

Governing the transition without a new network

The most serious objection to any transition is that it installs an unelected power. The Albanian Renewal answers it by applying the principle of Section XI to the transition itself: no party and no closed circle chooses who governs it; every selection is open, on merit and verifiable.

Designate first, empower after

The Board cannot organise the referendum from which its own authority derives, and the initiative does not ask it to. The sequence is instead:

1. **Designation before the vote.** The 75 members of the Transitional Leading Board are selected before the referendum — after open application, deep vetting and assessment by the commission of non-partisan intellectuals. Until the vote they are a civic body with no state power, so every citizen knows in advance exactly who would lead the transition.
2. **Scrutiny of the vote, not control of it.** The designated Board seeks accreditation from the Central Election Commission as a domestic observer, runs a parallel vote count at polling stations, supports the diaspora postal vote and campaigns openly for “YES”.
3. **A lawful referendum.** The Central Election Commission organises the vote under the observation of OSCE/ODIHR and with the opinion of the Venice Commission, with the safeguards the initiative demands published in advance.
4. **Empowerment by the people.** The transitional provisions of the ratified constitution name the already-selected Board as the transitional authority. Its mandate begins the moment “YES” is declared; the Caretaker Technical Government is then selected from it. No gap is left in which the old parliament could intervene.

Organising a binding vote outside the lawful framework would expose the whole initiative to annulment and deprive it of international recognition. This sequence avoids that risk while ensuring that the future transitional authority is visible, tested and watching the vote before it holds any power.

Composition of the transitional bodies

Body	Seats	How it is filled
Transitional Leading Board	75 (40 resident, 35 diaspora)	Open application on self-assessment by every Albanian citizen, at home or abroad; deep vetting of every applicant; selection of the best candidates by a commission of non-partisan intellectuals, on merit and on their record of service to the country, against published criteria; public lot only among candidates of equal standing. 35 resident and 35 diaspora seats, and 5 resident seats for leaders of citizen protest movements, each pool with ranked reserves.
Caretaker Technical Government	15 (8 resident, 7 diaspora)	Selected from Board members vetted for each portfolio, by sector competence; a member selected suspends their Board seat.
Transitional Executive Council	3	Lot among the 15, with no quota; equal competences, rotating chair, no Prime Minister, no deputy ministers.

The five movement seats recognise the citizens who carried the protest against state capture, without letting any party or leader hand-pick them. Every organiser who meets objective criteria — a public record of organised civic protests — and signs the public declarations below enters a separate pool; the five are selected from it by the same commission, on the same merit criteria, with their own reserves and the same deep vetting as everyone else. If only five qualify, all five are seated through the same open process.

The same exclusions and declarations apply to all 75 seats. The following may not apply: persons who served as members of the Kuvend or as ministers during the last 36 years; current members of parliamentary parties; holders during that period of senior party office, a mayoralty or a politically appointed agency post; close relatives of members of parliament or ministers of that period; persons with a final conviction or a pending corruption indictment; persons who, personally or through close family, held state contracts or concessions in the last ten years; owners or controllers of media outlets; and persons shown to have collaborated with the former State Security, as verified with the Authority for the Information on Former State Security Documents. Former party members may enter if they publicly declare when they left.

Every applicant also publicly discloses all sources of funding for their civic or political activity, domestic and foreign, over the past ten years — anyone funded by a political party, or whose funding was conditional on partisan activity, is excluded — and signs a public declaration: to uphold the dissolution of the old parliament upon a “YES” vote; not to endorse or serve, during the transition, any party that held seats in the Kuvend in the last 36 years; to reject violence; and to consent to publication of their vetting results. Vetting includes an asset and lifestyle check of the applicant and close family to the standard of judicial vetting.

Selection is held in public: the criteria, the members of the commission, the scores and the reasons for each decision are published, and any lot among candidates of equal standing is drawn before a notary and under international observation. Any vacancy passes to the next reserve in the published ranking of the same pool — never to a name chosen by anyone.

The Caretaker Technical Government is formed only after the referendum. Its authority derives from the constitution ratified by the people, not from any emergency regime. Its mandate is fixed, non-renewable and bounded by a published list of prohibitions: it may not extend itself, use state resources for any party, appoint relatives or loyalists, privatise national assets, sign long-term strategic contracts or interfere with courts, prosecution or media. It audits and stabilises the institutions, guarantees continuity of public services, prepares an honest vote, and ends automatically when the institutions of the new constitution take office. Anyone who wishes to stand in the first elections resigns at least three months before polling day. A body that cannot choose even one of its own members is not a new power network.

XV. Risks and Safeguards

Direct democracy carries real risks. The design addresses each explicitly:

Risk	Safeguard
Populist or majoritarian misuse	Signature thresholds; prior constitutional review of every referendum question; fundamental rights protected by the ECHR placed beyond referendum; opinion of the Venice Commission.
Legislative overload and voter fatigue	Fixed voting days grouped several times a year, as in Switzerland; thresholds calibrated to population.
External or financial manipulation	Fully transparent financing, no business or foreign money in campaigns, real-time signature verification, international observation.
Competence of transitional bodies	Merit selection by a commission of non-partisan intellectuals, deep vetting, sector-matched portfolios, career civil-service leads in every ministry.
Entrenchment of the transition	No state power before the vote; fixed, non-renewable mandate after it; published prohibitions; automatic dissolution; resignation three months before standing.
Hand-picked or captured seats	Open application; published criteria, scores and reasons; public lot only among equals; published reserves; full disclosure of funding; asset and lifestyle vetting.
Local capture after decentralisation	Prosecutors and police under central SPAK control; real-time fiscal transparency at every level; no unit may secede or receive a special status.
Fragmentation of the state	Albania remains a unitary state; no unit may secede; no sovereign or exclusive zones; decentralisation does not follow the Swiss model.
Disorder from opening every question at once	Two phases: first the resignation of the government and a technical government, then the constitutional process, one step at a time.

XVI. Strategic Implications for the Western Alliance

Albania is a NATO ally and an EU candidate country. Its alignment with the West depends on internal stability, institutional predictability and resilience against capture — including capture by

foreign interests that exploit weak, opaque institutions. The Albanian Renewal serves each of these directly.

- **For the European Union**, it places the rule of law, fundamental rights and democratic institutions — the fundamentals cluster of accession — under the protection of citizens rather than of a parliamentary majority that can reverse them.
- **For the United States**, it offers a partner whose institutions cannot be captured by any single network, whose procurement is transparent to investors, and whose anti-corruption commitments do not depend on the goodwill of whoever currently governs.
- **For the region**, a stable and transparent Albania strengthens economic cooperation with Kosovo and with all its neighbours — while each people decides on its own constitution, by its own vote.

External anchoring and internal architecture are complements, not substitutes. External partners guarantee that the process is lawful and free from manipulation; the new constitution guarantees that its results cannot later be reversed. That is why the initiative asks its Western partners not to replace the Albanian people's decision, but to observe, review and accompany it.

XVII. Conclusion: From Captured Representation to Citizen Sovereignty

Elections change governments. Constitutions shape incentives. For thirty-five years Albania has changed governments without changing incentives, and its citizens have answered by leaving.

The history reviewed here shows a single recurring flaw: power to choose concentrated in a few hands, and no instrument by which citizens can correct those hands. Every reform that has left that flaw in place has been absorbed by it. The flaw cannot be repaired by the institutions it has captured; it can only be removed by the citizens it has excluded.

That is why the Albanian Renewal proposes not reinforcement but a sovereign restart. Those who governed must answer for what they did; citizens must hold the means to prevent it from happening again. First the captured government must go; then comes a constitution drafted by non-partisan experts, reviewed in public by citizens and ratified by the people in a binding referendum, governing through open candidacy, a collegial executive, a judiciary chosen on merit, local self-government within a unitary state and the standing citizen powers of referendum, recall and transparency — reached by a lawful, peaceful and internationally observed route.

The last and strongest defence of democracy lies not in the promises of the next politicians, but in the hands of the citizens themselves.

Read the full set of documents at iasee-rise.org and sign at iasee-rise.org.

Annex: How the Proposals Are Implemented

Each step, when it takes place, its legal basis and who acts:

Step	When	Legal basis and who acts
Resignation of the government; technical government with a limited mandate, without any parliamentary party	Phase 1 — now	Freedom of peaceful assembly (Article 47); resignation of the Prime Minister or a motion of no confidence in the Assembly. The peaceful protest led by the Kuvendi Kombëtar Qytetar; the Assembly; the President.
Collection of signatures	Phase 2, months 0–3	Article 150 and the law on referendums. Citizens sign on the official forms; the Central Election Commission verifies.
Legal opinion of the Venice Commission	Months 1–6	Opinions are requested by states and Council of Europe bodies; the initiative asks the Albanian authorities and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to request one.
Review of the route	Before any vote	Article 152. The Constitutional Court.
Drafting of the new constitution	Months 3–9	A commission of non-partisan constitutional jurists and experts drafts; a citizens’ assembly selected by lot reviews and proposes amendments; all sessions are public.
Selection of the Transitional Leading Board	Months 3–9	Joint Founding Declaration of 3 October 2026. Open application; deep vetting; selection on merit by a commission of non-partisan intellectuals; public lot only among equals.
Adoption	Months 9–12	Article 177 and a binding referendum. The Assembly and the people; the Central Election Commission under OSCE/ODIHR observation.
Decentralisation within a unitary state	Months 12–18	European Charter of Local Self-Government and the new constitution. Municipalities and counties; prosecutors and police under SPAK.
First elections under the new constitution	Months 18–24	The new constitution. The Central Election Commission.

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