

POLISIS academic interviewed on Al-Jazeera, on the escalating political crisis in Albania

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Dr Gëzim Alpion (</staff/profiles/government-society/alpion-gëzim.aspx>), Lecturer in Sociology in the Department of Political Science and International Studies was interviewed by presenter Sohail Rahman on the 27 January 2011 edition of Inside Story.

It is a country that has endured political instability, corruption and poverty for much of the past two decades.

Its latest crisis sees Sali Berisha, the conservative prime minister, facing growing opposition from Socialists who accuse his government of abusing its power and rigging elections in 2009.

Tensions between the two sides have been mounting for months and erupted into violent clashes last week in the capital Tirana. Three people were shot dead and more than 150 protesters injured at an opposition rally.

The Socialists, led by Edi Rama, are demanding early elections. But Berisha has bluntly rejected that and accused the Socialists of trying to stage a coup.

The EU, which Albania hopes to join one day, has urged the two leaders to resolve their differences peacefully. But what is behind the current crisis and is it really just a personal power struggle between two men who, according to some reports, have to bus their supporters in from the countryside to attend their rallies?

Guests interviewed on the programme included Muhamed Veilu, the UK correspondent for the Albanian TV channel Top Channel; Sam Vaknin, a former economic advisor to Macedonian, Czech, Yugoslavian and Serb governments; and **Gezim Alpion**, a lecturer in sociology at the University of Birmingham.

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See the video on the Al-Jazeera website (<http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/insidestory/2011/01/2011129104355928576.html>)

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