



Weekly Briefing

**North Macedonia political briefing:
Non-confidence motion filed against
the President of the Assembly
Gjorgjioska Marija Adela**

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Non-confidence motion filed against the President of the Assembly

Summary

The President of the Assembly Talat Xhaferi featured prominently in the political squabbles that dominated the political space in May. By the end of the month, the parliamentary group of VMRO-DPMNE and the coalition “For the Renewal for Macedonia”, filed a non-confidence motion against him. Several scandals involving the Speaker preceded these actions. They all took place against the backdrop of the opposition’s attempts to paralyze the Parliament. Although the motion is not expected to pass, it still represents an intensification of the attempts by the opposition to trigger early elections.

On the 12th of May, an audio recording was leaked in which Speaker Talat Xhaferi can be heard shouting and cursing at parliamentary officials. Following the release of the recording, opposition party VMRO-DPMNE described the behavior of the President of the Assembly as scandalous and demanded his immediate resignation. “This audio recording of Xhaferi’s primitivism is a proof of why SDSM and DUI must go into opposition and why there must be early parliamentary elections an hour sooner,” said a VMRO-DPMNE representative.¹ The incident with the audio recording took place only several days after VMRO-DPMNE announced that they will be conducting what they described as an “active blockade” of Parliament. Effectively the announcement meant that they will attempt to paralyze Parliament by using filibustering tactics to stall the work of the legislature unless the government changes its mind and agrees to talks on holding snap elections.² However, the opposition party also added that they will support those bills, which they deem to be in people’s interests, such as measures that would raise wages or protect living standards. The party announced that they will also use additional tactics, including street blockades and mass protests in an attempt to secure

¹ Speaker Talat Xhaferi shouts and curses at parliamentary officials, after the released recording, VMRO-DPMNE demands immediate resignation, available at

<https://telma.com.mk/2022/05/12/spikerot-talat-dzhaferi-vika-i-pcue-po-sobraniskite-sluzhbenici-po-pushtenata-snimka-vmro-dpmne-bara-ostavka-vednash/> published on 12.05.2022, accessed on 01.06.2022

² Seeking Snap Polls, North Macedonia Opposition Aims to Paralyse Parliament, published on 10.05.2022, available at <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/05/10/seeking-snap-polls-north-macedonia-opposition-aims-to-paralyse-parliament/> accessed on 10.06.2022

early elections. It is these developments that caused a rise in the political temperatures inside the Parliamentary Assembly throughout the month of May, causing several incidents in the process.

Less than 2 weeks later the Speaker became embroiled in another incident. MPs from the opposition parties complained that Xhaferi had locked the doors of the plenary hall so that MPs could not enter and apply for a discussion on the agenda item. "Contrary to the Rules of Procedure, the Assembly hall has been locked several times during the day so that the MPs who are accidentally outside it can not enter the hall and register to speak. This is not a democratic decision. This is a shame, this is violence," Bojan Stojanovski, MP from VMRO-DPMNE explained on Facebook.³ Similarly, Dimitar Apasiev, MP from the political party "Levica" exclaimed: "With the locking of the MPs in the plenary hall of the Assembly, Talat (Xhaferi) not only committed a crime, but also completely lost the credibility to lead the parliament! Out of a total of 120 MPs, five are needed to start the interpellation procedure. The two MPs of the Left are available. Three more heroes are wanted and the process should start" Apasiev wrote in a Facebook post.⁴ But the cabinet of the Speaker of the Assembly thinks the opposite, accusing the opposition of undermining democracy while arguing that it is entirely constitutional to lock the doors of the parliament during nominal voting. "The doors of the parliament were locked so that the parliament employees can count the numbers of MPs who are attending the session, in order to determine whether there's a quorum for the voting", argued the press office of the parliament speaker.

In a press statement VMRO-DPMNE reiterated that "elections must take place be an hour sooner, so that this shame never happens again."⁵ MPs from the party called for the scheduling of a session of the Committee on Rules of Procedure and Mandate-Immunity Issues, to discuss

³ Xhaferi enters from one scandal into another, published on 26.05.2022, available at <https://www.dw.com/mk/%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B0%D1%82-%D1%9F%D0%B0%D1%84%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B8-%D0%B2%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%B3%D1%83%D0%B2%D0%B0-%D0%BE%D0%B4-%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B4%D0%B0%D0%BB-%D0%B2%D0%BE-%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B4%D0%B0%D0%BB/a-61938739> accessed on 10.06.2022

⁴ Apasiev is looking for "three more" heroes for Xhaferi's interpellation, available at <https://fokus.mk/1apasiev-bara-trojtsa-junatsi-za-interpelatsija-na-dhaferi/>, published on 26.05.2022, accessed on 05.06.2022

⁵ Ibid

possible sanctions for the violation of the Code of Ethics by Xhaferi. Then on the 30th of May, the parliamentary group of VMRO-DPMNE and the coalition “For the Renewal for Macedonia”, informed that they had filed a non-confidence motion against Parliament Speaker Talat Xhaferi. “This motion is a result of the chaos that is happening in the Parliament, and is under the direction of Xhaferi and as a result of the more frequent violation of the Rules of Procedure, as well as the arbitrariness that Xhaferi implements in the legislature, which seriously endangers the reputation of this institution”, said Nikola Micevski, coordinator of the parliamentary group of VMRO-DPMNE and the Coalition “For the Renewal of Macedonia”.⁶ Micevski urged all parliamentarians to support it. However, as he added, if the ruling majority doesn’t accept it, it will prove it backs the improper conduct of the Speaker. According to the opposition, Xhaferi should put the motion on the agenda of a plenary session, instead of, as it was stressed, hiding it in a drawer. “If he thinks he works responsibly, he should provide arguments in front of the whole public,” Micevski added. SDSM, however, adhered to the stand that Xhaferi didn’t violate the Rules of Procedure.⁷ The following day, Xhaferi’s cabinet informed that the interpellation had been received, after which the Speaker will act in accordance with the deadlines and procedures provided by the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly. The interpellation should be put on the agenda of the next session of the Assembly, after the expiration of 15 days from the day of submitting the answer to the Members of Parliament. If there is no answer within the deadline, the no-confidence motion is put on the agenda of the next session of the Assembly.⁸

⁶ Non-confidence motion against Talat Xhaferi filed: There have never been as many scandals and humiliations in the Parliament as there are now, published on 30.05.2022, available at

<https://english.republika.mk/news/macedonia/non-confidence-motion-against-talat-xhaferi-filed-there-have-never-been-as-many-scandals-and-humiliations-in-the-parliament-as-there-are-now/> accessed on 01.06.2022

⁷ VMRO-DPMNE Files No-Confidence Motion Against Xhaferi, published on 30.05.2022, available at

<https://skopjediem.com/2022/05/31/vmro-dpmne-files-no-confidence-motion-against-xhaferi/> accessed on 10.06.2022

⁸ According to the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly of the Republic of Northern Macedonia (Article 45 paragraph 3), the interpellation is submitted to the President of the Assembly, who immediately submits it to the one to whom it is addressed and to the Members of Parliament. The subject to whom the interpellation has been placed has the right to submit a written answer to the set interpellation to the President of the Assembly, no later than 15 days from the day of receipt of the interpellation. (Article 46) The interpellation is placed on the agenda of the next session of the Assembly, after the expiration of 15 days from the day of submitting the answer to the Members of Parliament. If the answer is not submitted within the deadline determined in Article 46 of these Rules of Procedure, the interpellation is put on the agenda of the next session of the Assembly. (Article 47) Pursuant to Article 49 paragraph 1 of the Rules of Procedure, the search after the interpellation lasts one working day, until the list of registered MPs is exhausted, and a decision is made no later than 24.00, reads the statement from Xhaferi’s Cabinet.

The Parliamentary Reports show that the efficiency of the Parliament is decreasing from year to year. For example, throughout 2018, Parliament held a total of 48 plenary sessions, of which 39 were completed and 9 remained unfinished. According to the duration, the sessions lasted 84 days, i.e. 358 hours and 35 minutes. From January to December 2019, 49 sessions were held, of which 37 were completed and 12 unfinished. The sessions had a total duration of 82 days, i.e. 406 hours. In 2020, efficiency was on a downward trend, due to the Covid-19 epidemic, but also the dissolution of parliament due to elections, which in the period from August to December held 29 sessions, of which 12 completed and 17 unfinished. The sessions had a total duration of 45 days, i.e. 250 hours and 35 minutes, almost twice less than the previous year. In 2021, when there was only a one-month break due to the local elections, the Assembly held the same number of sessions as in the previous year, when it worked for only five months.⁹

Beyond its decreasing efficacy, the events in the Macedonian Parliament, represent symptoms of the underlying political processes and the deeper maladies affecting the political system as a whole as well as the weak legitimacy of the current unelected Government. Although the no-confidence-motion is not expected to pass, it still represents an intensification of the attempts by the opposition to trigger early elections. Such attempts are unlikely to subside. In fact, as domestic challenges (such as the rising energy prices and inflation) and external obstacles (the ongoing Bulgarian EU blockade) continue to diminish the already weak standing of the current Government, early elections may become a realistic possibility sooner rather than later.

⁹ Xhaferi enters from one scandal into another, published on 26.05.2022, available at <https://www.dw.com/mk/%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B0%D1%82-%D1%9F%D0%B0%D1%84%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B8-%D0%B2%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%B3%D1%83%D0%B2%D0%B0-%D0%BE%D0%B4-%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B4%D0%B0%D0%BB-%D0%B2%D0%BE-%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B4%D0%B0%D0%BB/a-61938739> accessed on 10.06.2022