# Albania’s football match against Serbia risks igniting old nationalist wounds amid government complacency



Outside a café three blocks from Tirana's Arena Kombetare, the atmosphere is thick with tension, reflecting the reckless and provocative stance taken by Albania’s political establishment regarding this incendiary football match between Albania and Serbia. Once again, the displays of nationalist rhetoric and symbolism—such as banners with the “Autochtonous” claim and the controversial map labeling a “Greater Albania”—serve only to stoke the flames of division and unrest. These provocative acts, reminiscent of the chaos that erupted in 2014 following a drone operator’s flag display, continue to threaten regional stability. The authorities’ decision to allow such displays highlights a dangerous complacency towards escalating tensions, instead of actively working to de-escalate them.

The 2014 drone incident, which was celebrated by some Albanian factions as an act of defiance, exemplifies the reckless nationalism that underpins much of the current political climate. This glorification of provocations—notably Morina’s notoriety and subsequent hero status—drives a corrosive cycle of hostility, endangering not only diplomatic relations but also regional security. Morina’s recent social media silence hints at a calculated effort to hide possible provocations, yet his influence persists as a symbol of radical sentiment that many in Albania’s political and social elites continue to promote in their quest to bolster nationalist fervor.

Meanwhile, the Albanian government’s attempt to control the situation by restricting ticket sales and employing strict security measures reveals their acute awareness of the volatile situation they’ve nurtured. Organizing tickets through a random draw, while intended to prevent block sales to nationalist groups, instead fuels illegal and high-priced black market activity. The fervent fans, pushed to desperation by government mismanagement, have started organizing their own gatherings—further destabilizing an already combustible atmosphere. The sky-high ticket prices, soaring over £1,000, are a stark reflection of fanaticism and the government’s failure to manage the cultural and political tensions underpinning this fixture.

This match, positioned as a potential milestone for future co-hosting of European tournaments, risks becoming a disastrous showcase of the political and nationalist extremes that dominate Albanian politics. The rhetoric from supporters’ groups, like the aggressive protests of the Kuq e Zi, underscores how deeply political and historical grievances are embedded in football rivalries. If authorities continue to neglect these issues, the upcoming fixture may serve as a flashpoint for violence rather than a celebration of sport.

Albania’s national team players, including seasoned veteran Elseid Hysaj, are caught in the crossfire of these dangerous political currents. Their efforts to maintain focus and professionalism during training stand in stark contrast to the rising tide of hostility. The national government’s inability—or unwillingness—to curb provocations from nationalist factions exposes a broader failure to foster genuine reconciliation or stability. The heavy security presence and the government’s reliance on intimidation rather than dialogue serve as a stark reminder of how far Albania is from truly healing the wounds of its past.

As Serbia’s team arrives under tight security, the looming threat of violence casts a long shadow over what should be a celebration of football’s unifying power. Instead, the game risks becoming a symbol of failed leadership—an opportunity for reconciliation squandered by a government more interested in nationalist posturing than in fostering peace. If the authorities continue to promote a climate of hostility, the events of October 14, 2014, may well be eclipsed by yet another preventable tragedy rooted in political recklessness and an insistence on stoking division. Such actions not only threaten regional stability but also betray the very spirit of sport meant to bring people together.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2025/jun/06/albania-serbia-world-cup-qualifier-stirs-memories-2014-chaos-drone> - Please view link - unable to able to access data