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**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION KEY DOCUMENTS**

# **ALBANIA**

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**RDS-IND**

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION SERVICE**

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## 1. Preface

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- i This Country of Origin Information (COI) Key Documents has been produced by Research, Development and Statistics (RDS), Home Office, for use by officials involved in the asylum/human rights determination process. It provides general background information about the issues most commonly raised in asylum/human rights claims made in the United Kingdom. The COI Key Documents includes information available up to 27 March 2007.
- ii The COI Key Documents is an indexed list of key reports, papers and articles produced by a wide range of recognised external information sources. It does not contain any Home Office opinion or policy.
- iii For Home Office users, the COI Key Documents provides direct electronic access to each source referred to in the document, via a link on the source numbers in the index and list of sources. For the benefit of external users, the relevant web link has also been included, together with the date that the link was accessed.
- iv As noted above, the documents identified concentrate mainly on human rights issues. By way of introduction, brief background information on Albania is also provided. Please note, this background material is not intended to provide a summary of the material contained in the key documents listed.
- v This COI Key Documents and the documents listed are publicly disclosable.
- vi Any comments regarding this COI Key Documents or suggestions for additional documents are very welcome and should be submitted to the Home Office as below.

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fact that such a review has been undertaken, nor any comments made, should be taken to imply endorsement of the material. Some of the material examined by the Panel relates to countries designated or proposed for designation for the Non-Suspensive Appeals (NSA) list. In such cases, the Panel's work should not be taken to imply any endorsement of the decision or proposal to designate a particular country for NSA, nor of the NSA process itself.

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## 2. Background information on Albania

**Full Country Name:** The Republic of Albania

**Area:** Total area approximately 27,748 sq. km

**Population:** 3.5 million (est)

**Capital City:** Tirana

**People:** Albanian 95%, Greeks 3% and others 2% (Vlachs, Roma, Egyptians, Montenegrins, Macedonians and Bulgarians (1989 est). Estimates of the minority populations vary widely between different interlocutors and there is a general absence of reliable statistics.

**Languages:** Albanian (Tosk is the official dialect), Greek, others.

**Religion(s):** Sunni Muslim (70%), Albanian Orthodox (20%), Roman Catholic (10%) (est)

**Currency:** Lek [ALL]

**Major Political Parties:** Socialist Party, Democratic Party, New Democrat Party, Social Democratic Party, Republican Party, Socialist Movement for Integration.

**Government:** Parliamentary democracy

**Head of State:** President Alfred Moisiu

**Prime Minister:** Dr Sali Berisha (Democratic Party)

**Foreign Minister:** Besnik Mustafaj

**Membership of International Groupings/Organisations:** United Nations, South East Europe Cooperation Process, Organisation for Co-operation and Security in Europe (OSCE), Council of Europe (COE), World Trade Organisation (WTO) (FCO Country Profile: Albania, last updated 17 April 2006) [4a]

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### GEOGRAPHY

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Country Profile on Albania, updated 17 April 2006, noted "Albania lies on the eastern Adriatic coastline, bordered by Montenegro to the north, Serbia/ Kosovo to the north east, Macedonia to the east, and Greece to the south and south-east." [4a]

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### RECENT HISTORY

Europa World Online, accessed 20 March 2007, stated that:

"On 28 November 1912, after more than 400 years of Turkish rule, Albania declared its independence under a provisional Government. Although the country was occupied by Italy in 1914, its independence was re-established in 1920. Albania was declared a republic in 1925 and Ahmet Beg Zogu was elected President; proclaimed King Zog I in 1928, he reigned until he was forced into exile by the Italian occupation of Albania in April 1939. Albania was united with Italy for four years, before being occupied by German forces in 1943; the Germans withdrew one year later." [1a]

The BBC Country Profile on Albania, updated 22 November 2006, reported "After World War II, Albania became a Stalinist state under Enver Hoxha, and remained staunchly isolationist until its transition to democracy after 1990. The 1992 elections ended 47 years of communist rule, but the latter half of the decade saw a quick turnover of presidents and prime ministers." [7a]

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## RECENT EVENTS AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The FCO Country Profile on Albania, updated 17 April 2006, noted:

“In March 1992 the Democratic Party (DP) led by Sali Berisha won the parliamentary elections. Berisha became President and was re-elected in May 1996. The 1996 elections were criticised by international observers for violations of the electoral law and for Government-instigated intimidation. In January 1997, anti-government demonstrations erupted in the south of Albania following the collapse of a number of pyramid financial schemes. Riots spread across the country and insurgents gained control of many towns in the Southwest. Protesters called for the resignation of President Berisha and for the return of their money. Over 13,000 refugees fled to Italy during the crisis. The state armouries were attacked and an estimated 550,000 small arms looted: some were smuggled out of the country, but 120,000 had been collected and destroyed by 2001.

“The Parliamentary general election that took place on 24 June 2001 was followed by a further 3 rounds in July. Though long and drawn out, these elections were peaceful and produced a decisive victory for the ruling Socialist Party. On 21 August Ilir Meta was nominated for another term as Prime Minister. A report on the elections by the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), published in October, drew attention to a number of flaws and instances of manipulation in the elections, but concluded that such shortcomings were not sufficient to have affected the overall result. Berisha has continued to dispute the result, and a further Democratic Party boycott of Parliament lasted until 29 January.

“On 24 July 2002 President Alfred Moisiu, a consensus candidate, elected by parliament, was sworn in. On 25 July Pandeli Majko resigned as Prime Minister. A Presidential decree named Fatos Nano as his successor.

“The latest Parliamentary elections were held on 3 July 2005. After a lengthy appeals process and re-runs in three of the 100 constituencies, the results were announced on 1 September (in total, there are 140 seats in Parliament, the additional 40 are allocated on a party basis). The leader of the Democratic Party, former President Dr Sali Berisha, was then invited to form a new government. In early November 2005, the OSCE/ODIHR released their final report on the elections and noted that although Albania had enjoyed its first peaceful transfer of power since the end of single party politics, there were still shortcomings to be addressed.” [4a]

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## ECONOMY

**GDP:** US\$ 7.5 billion (2004)

**GDP per head:** US\$ 2385 (2004)

**Annual Growth:** 5.9% (2004)

**Inflation:** 2.9% (2004)

**Major Industries:** Cement, Oil, Chromium, nickel, copper, hydroelectric power.

**Major trading partners:** Italy, Greece, Germany, Bulgaria, Turkey, Macedonia [4a]

**Exchange rate:** £1 = 185.309 ALL (as at 20 March 2007) (XE.com, accessed 20 March 2007) [24]

On the economy of Albania, the FCO Country Profile, dated 17 April 2006, further stated:

“Albania is one the poorest countries in Europe. Since 1990, the economy has struggled to recover from the distortions of the communist regime, the impact of the move to a market economy and the 1997 crisis. Energy is an increasing problem, with chronic low water levels in the reservoirs on which hydro-electric production depends. The maintenance of law and order remains a major problem in Albania. There are high levels of organised crime and corruption.” [4a]

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## HUMAN RIGHTS

The USSD 2006 Country Report on Human Rights in Albania stated:

“The government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were significant problems in several areas. Arrest and pretrial detention conditions continued to be an area of great concern with cases of abuse, violence, and inhuman conditions reported. Police corruption and impunity continued to be a problem. There were societal killings and an atmosphere of fear in some areas due to traditional blood feuds. Societal violence and discrimination against women and children were a problem, as was trafficking in persons. Societal discrimination against homosexuals, Roma, and Balkan-Egyptians also continued.” [2a]

In their 2006 Annual Report on Human Rights, the FCO noted in their overview of Albania that although it is party to several international agreements on human rights, Albania continued to have difficulty implementing legislation and reform in some areas. [4b] (p141)

Amnesty International’s (AI) 2006 Annual Report, covering events from January – December 2005, expressed the following concerns in Albania:

- Torture and ill-treatment
- Police impunity
- Conditions of detention
- Violence against women
- People trafficking [11a]

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### 3. Index to key source documents

(KB users - click source number to access document directly)

<b>KEY FACTS AND GEOGRAPHY</b>	<b>[1a]</b>	Europa World Online, Location, Climate, Language, Religion, Flag, Capital (accessed on 20 March 2007) <a href="http://www.europaworld.com/pub/">http://www.europaworld.com/pub/</a>
	<b>[1a]</b>	Europa World Online, Country Statistics (accessed on 20 March 2007) <a href="http://www.europaworld.com/pub/">http://www.europaworld.com/pub/</a>
	<b>[2a]</b>	United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2006: Albania <a href="http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78797.htm">http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78797.htm</a>
	<b>[2c]</b>	United States Department of State, Background Note: Albania, last updated October 2006 <a href="http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3235.htm">http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3235.htm</a>
	<b>[4a]</b>	Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile: Albania, last updated on 17 April 2006 <a href="http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&amp;c=Page&amp;cid=1007029394365&amp;a=KCountrypProfile&amp;aid=1018696633488">http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&amp;c=Page&amp;cid=1007029394365&amp;a=KCountrypProfile&amp;aid=1018696633488</a>
	<b>[7a]</b>	BBC, Country Profile: Albania, last updated on 22 November 2006 <a href="http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1004234.stm">http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1004234.stm</a>
	<b>[10a]</b>	Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), The World Factbook Albania, last updated on 15 March 2007 <a href="https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/al.html">https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/al.html</a>
<b>MAP</b>	<b>[6a]</b>	UNHCR, Map of Albania <a href="http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/3dee189b4.pdf">http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/3dee189b4.pdf</a>
<b>HISTORY</b>	<b>[1a]</b>	Europa World Online, Recent History (accessed on 20 March 2007) <a href="http://www.europaworld.com/pub/">http://www.europaworld.com/pub/</a>
	<b>[2a]</b>	United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2006: Albania <a href="http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78797.htm">http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78797.htm</a>
	<b>[2c]</b>	United States Department of State, Background Note: Albania, last updated October 2006 <a href="http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3235.htm">http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3235.htm</a>
	<b>[4a]</b>	Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile: Albania, last updated on 17 April 2006 <a href="http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&amp;c=Page&amp;cid=1007029394365&amp;a=KCountrypProfile&amp;aid=1018696633488">http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&amp;c=Page&amp;cid=1007029394365&amp;a=KCountrypProfile&amp;aid=1018696633488</a>
	<b>[7a]</b>	BBC, Country Profile: Albania, last updated on 22 November 2006 <a href="http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1004234.stm">http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1004234.stm</a>

<b>HISTORY CONT'D</b>	<b>[7b]</b>	BBC Timeline: Albania, last updated on 14 March 2007 <a href="http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1004984.stm">http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1004984.stm</a>
	<b>[22a]</b>	Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2006: Albania <a href="http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&amp;year=2006&amp;country=6906">http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&amp;year=2006&amp;country=6906</a>
<b>POLITICS AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS</b>	<b>[1a]</b>	Europa World Online, Government and Politics (accessed on 20 March 2007) <a href="http://www.europaworld.com/pub/">http://www.europaworld.com/pub/</a>
	<b>[2a]</b>	United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2006: Albania <a href="http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78797.htm">http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78797.htm</a>
	<b>[2c]</b>	United States Department of State, Background Note: Albania, last updated October 2006 <a href="http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3235.htm">http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3235.htm</a>
	<b>[4a]</b>	Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile: Albania, last updated on 17 April 2006 <a href="http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&amp;c=Page&amp;cid=1007029394365&amp;a=KCcountryProfile&amp;aid=1018696633488">http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&amp;c=Page&amp;cid=1007029394365&amp;a=KCcountryProfile&amp;aid=1018696633488</a>
	<b>[7a]</b>	BBC, Country Profile: Albania, last updated on 22 November 2006 <a href="http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1004234.stm">http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1004234.stm</a>
	<b>[7b]</b>	BBC Timeline: Albania, last updated on 14 March 2007 <a href="http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1004984.stm">http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1004984.stm</a>
	<b>[8a]</b>	Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Response to Information Request – Albania National Front Party, 16 November 2006 <a href="http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/index_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&amp;gotorec=450659">http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/index_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&amp;gotorec=450659</a>
	<b>[11a]</b>	Amnesty International (AI) report 2006: Albania, covering events from January to December 2005 <a href="http://web.amnesty.org/report2006/alb-summary-eng">http://web.amnesty.org/report2006/alb-summary-eng</a>
	<b>[22a]</b>	Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2006: Albania <a href="http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&amp;year=2006&amp;country=6906">http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&amp;year=2006&amp;country=6906</a>
	<b>[22c]</b>	Freedom House, Nations in Transit 2006: Albania <a href="http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=47&amp;nit=389&amp;year=2006">http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=47&amp;nit=389&amp;year=2006</a>
	<b>[25a]</b>	International Helsinki Federation (IHF) for Human Rights Annual Report 2006 – Albania <a href="http://www.ihf-hr.org/documents/doc_summary.php?sec_id=3&amp;d_id=4255">http://www.ihf-hr.org/documents/doc_summary.php?sec_id=3&amp;d_id=4255</a>

<b>HUMAN RIGHTS - GENERAL:</b>	<p>[2a]</p> <p>[4a]</p> <p>[4b]</p> <p>[5a]</p> <p>[6c]</p> <p>[11a]</p> <p>[22a]</p> <p>[22c]</p>	<p>United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2006: Albania <a href="http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78797.htm">http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78797.htm</a></p> <p>Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile: Albania, last updated on 17 April 2006 <a href="http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&amp;c=Page&amp;cid=1007029394365&amp;a=KCountrypProfile&amp;aid=1018696633488">http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&amp;c=Page&amp;cid=1007029394365&amp;a=KCountrypProfile&amp;aid=1018696633488</a></p> <p>Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Human Rights Annual Report 2006 <a href="http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/hr_report2006.pdf">http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/hr_report2006.pdf</a></p> <p>Human Rights Watch (HRW), Albania Country Page, accessed on 22 March 2007 <a href="http://www.hrw.org/doc?t=europe&amp;c=albani">http://www.hrw.org/doc?t=europe&amp;c=albani</a></p> <p>UNHCR, Albanian Constitution, 21 October 1998 <a href="http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rsd/rsddocview.pdf?tbl=RSDLEGAL&amp;id=3ae6b5dd0">http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rsd/rsddocview.pdf?tbl=RSDLEGAL&amp;id=3ae6b5dd0</a></p> <p>Amnesty International (AI) report 2006: Albania, covering events from January to December 2005 <a href="http://web.amnesty.org/report2006/alb-summary-eng">http://web.amnesty.org/report2006/alb-summary-eng</a></p> <p>Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2006: Albania <a href="http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&amp;year=2006&amp;country=6906">http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&amp;year=2006&amp;country=6906</a></p> <p>Freedom House, Nations in Transit 2006: Albania <a href="http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=47&amp;nit=389&amp;year=2006">http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=47&amp;nit=389&amp;year=2006</a></p>
<p><b>HUMAN RIGHTS – SPECIFIC ISSUES:</b></p> <p><b>(IN ADDITION TO GENERAL REPORTS ABOVE, INFORMATION ON THE FOLLOWING ISSUES IS PROVIDED IN THE DOCUMENTS LISTED BELOW)</b></p>		
<b>ARREST AND DETENTION – LEGAL RIGHTS</b>	[2a]	<p>United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2006: Albania <a href="http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78797.htm">http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78797.htm</a></p>
<b>BLOOD FEUDS</b>	<p>[2a]</p> <p>[8b]</p> <p>[8e]</p>	<p>United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2006: Albania <a href="http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78797.htm">http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78797.htm</a></p> <p>Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Response to Information Requests – Protection available to persons targeted in blood feuds from government, police, 22 September 2006 <a href="http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/index_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&amp;gotorec=450550">http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/index_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&amp;gotorec=450550</a></p> <p>Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Response to Information Requests – Possibility of those involved in blood</p>

<b>BLOOD FEUDS CONT'D</b>		feuds to relocate, 13 September 2006 <a href="http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rii/index_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&amp;gotorec=450536">http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rii/index_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&amp;gotorec=450536</a>
<b>CHILDREN</b>	[1a]	Europa World Online, Education (accessed on 20 March 2007) <a href="http://www.europaworld.com/pub/">http://www.europaworld.com/pub/</a>
	[2a]	United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2006: Albania <a href="http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78797.htm">http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78797.htm</a>
	[2d]	United States Department of State, Trafficking in Persons Report, September 2006 <a href="http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2006/65988.htm">http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2006/65988.htm</a>
	[11a]	Amnesty International (AI) report 2006: Albania, covering events from January to December 2005 <a href="http://web.amnesty.org/report2006/alb-summary-eng">http://web.amnesty.org/report2006/alb-summary-eng</a>
	[15a]	Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, Global Report 2004: Albania <a href="http://www.child-soldiers.org/document_get.php?id=885">http://www.child-soldiers.org/document_get.php?id=885</a>
	[20a]	UNICEF, Albania Background (accessed on 23 March 2007) <a href="http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/albania_background.html">http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/albania_background.html</a>
	[20b]	UNICEF Albania (accessed on 23 March 2007) <a href="http://www.unicef.org/albania/">http://www.unicef.org/albania/</a>
	[22a]	Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2006: Albania <a href="http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&amp;year=2006&amp;country=6906">http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&amp;year=2006&amp;country=6906</a>
	[25a]	International Helsinki Federation (IHF) for Human Rights Annual Report 2006 – Albania <a href="http://www.ihf-hr.org/documents/doc_summary.php?sec_id=3&amp;d_id=4255">http://www.ihf-hr.org/documents/doc_summary.php?sec_id=3&amp;d_id=4255</a>
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