Home Office
UK Border Agency

ALBANIA

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION (COI) REPORT

COI Service

30 March 2012

SECURING OUR BORDER CONTROLLING MIGRATION

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Preface

i This Country of Origin Information (COI) Report has been produced by the COI Service, United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA), for use by officials involved in the asylum/human rights determination process. The Report provides general background information about the issues most commonly raised in asylum/human rights claims made in the United Kingdom. The main body of the report includes information available up to 29 February 2012. The 'Latest News' section contains further brief information on events and reports accessed from 01 March 2012 to 30 March 2012. The report was issued on 30 March 2012.

ii The Report is compiled wholly from material produced by a wide range of external information sources and does not contain any UKBA opinion or policy. All information in the Report is attributed, throughout the text, to the original source material, which is made available to those working in the asylum/human rights determination process.

iii The Report aims to provide a compilation of extracts from the source material identified, focusing on the main issues raised in asylum and human rights applications. In some sections where the topics covered arise infrequently in asylum/human rights claims only web links may be provided. It is not intended to be a detailed or comprehensive survey. For a more detailed account, the relevant source documents should be examined directly.

iv The structure and format of the Report reflects the way it is used by UKBA decision makers and appeals presenting officers, who require quick electronic access to information on specific issues and use the contents page to go directly to the subject required. Key issues are usually covered in some depth within a dedicated section, but may also be referred to briefly in several other sections. Some repetition is therefore inherent in the structure of the Report.

v The information included in this Report is limited to that which can be identified from source documents. While every effort is made to cover all relevant aspects of a particular topic it is not always possible to obtain the information concerned. For this reason, it is important to note that information included in the Report should not be taken to imply anything beyond what is actually stated. For example, if it is stated that a particular law has been passed, this should not be taken to imply that it has been effectively implemented unless stated. Similarly, the absence of information does not necessarily mean that, for example, a particular event or action did not occur.

vi As noted above, the Report is a compilation of extracts produced by a number of information sources. In compiling the Report no attempt has been made to resolve discrepancies between information provided in different source documents though COI Service will bring the discrepancies together and aim to provide a range of sources, where available, to ensure that a balanced picture is presented. For example, different source documents often contain different versions of names and spellings of individuals, places and political parties, etc. Reports do not aim to bring consistency of spelling but to reflect faithfully the spellings used in the original source documents. Similarly, figures given in different source documents sometimes vary and these are simply quoted as per the original text. The term 'sic' has been used in this document only to denote incorrect spellings or typographical errors in quoted text; its use is not intended to imply any comment on the content of the material.

vii The Report is based substantially upon source documents issued during the previous two years. However, some older source documents may have been included because they contain relevant information not available in more recent documents. All sources contain information considered relevant at the time this Report was issued.

viii This Report and the accompanying source material are public documents. All Reports are published on the UKBA website and the great majority of the source material for the Report is readily available in the public domain. Where the source documents identified are available in electronic form, the relevant weblink has been included, together with the date that the link was accessed. Copies of less accessible source documents, such as those provided by government offices or subscription services, are available from COI Service upon request.

ix Reports are published regularly on the top 20 asylum intake countries. Reports on countries outside the top 20 countries may also be produced if there is a particular operational need. UKBA officials also have constant access to an information request service for specific enquiries.

x In producing this Report, COI Service has sought to provide an accurate, up to date, balanced and impartial compilation of extracts of the available source material. Any comments regarding this Report or suggestions for additional source material are very welcome and should be submitted to COI Service as below.

Country of Origin Information Service
UK Border Agency
Lunar House
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Croydon, CR9 2BY
United Kingdom
Email: cois@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk
Website: http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/policyandlaw/guidance/coi/

INDEPENDENT ADVISORY GROUP ON COUNTRY INFORMATION

xi The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency to make recommendations to him about the content of the UKBA's COI material. The IAGCI welcomes feedback on UKBA's COI Reports and other COI material. Information about the IAGCI's work can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's website at http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/country-information-reviews/

xii In the course of its work the IAGCI reviews the content of selected UKBA COI documents and makes recommendations specific to those documents and of a more general nature. A list of the Reports and other documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI or the Advisory Panel on Country Information (the independent organisation which monitored UKBA's COI material from September 2003 to October 2008) is available at http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/country-information-reviews/

xiii Please note: it is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any UKBA material or procedures. Some of the material examined by the Group relates to countries designated or proposed for designation to the Non-Suspensive Appeals (NSA) list. In such cases, the Group'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. The IAGCI can be contacted at:

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Website: http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/country-information-reviews/

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Latest News

EVENTS IN ALBANIA FROM 01 MARCH 2012 TO 30 MARCH 2012

The Latest News section provides a non-exhaustive selection of significant events since 01 March 2012. Further information may also be available from the list of useful sources below.

The Home Office is not responsible for the content of external websites.

26 March Albania's prime minister rebuked a Cabinet member Monday for saying that people planning to join the country's first-ever gay pride celebration "should be beaten with batons." Prime Minister Sali Berisha called the remarks by Deputy Defense Minister Ekrem Spahiu "unacceptable." Albania passed a law in 2009 allowing same-sex weddings but there is still widespread homophobia in the small Balkan nation. This is the first time the gay community has felt safe enough to march but the minister's comments have been seen as stoking possible violence.

Associated Press
Albanian PM rebukes minister for anti-gay remark
http://www.dailybulletin.com/news/ci_20258585/albanian-pm-rebukes-deputy-minister-over-gays
Date accessed 28 March 2012

25 March The Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) published on 20 March a report on its visit to Albania in May 2010. CPT reported that, despite the vast majority stating that they had been correctly treated by the police, a significant number of those interviewed, including many juveniles, claimed that they had been subjected to ill-treatment during the arrest or questioning by police officers. As examples they indicated slapping, punching, kicking or sustaining truncheon blows.

NewEurope Online
Council of Europe inspects torture in Albania
http://www.neurope.eu/article/council-europe-inspects-torture-albania
Date accessed 28 March 2012

23 March The first gay parade to be organised in Albania will be held in Tirana on May 17 amid controversy. The event is organised by the Albanian gay and lesbian movement and will be held on the occasion of the International Day Against Homophobia. Albanian homosexuals will parade in central Tirana calling for an end to discriminations against them. The country's deputy Defence Minister and leader of the Legality Movement party, Ekrem Spahiu, urged the police to blow participants with truncheons. . .

AGI.it
Albania deputy minister challenges gay parade participants
http://www.agi.it/english-version/world/elenco-notizie/201203231744-pol-ren1070-albania_deputy_minister_challenges_gay_parade_participants

Date accessed 24 March 2012

21 March The prosecutors association accused the Minister of Justice, Eduard Halimi, of misinforming parliament and violating the constitution. "We are concerned by the constant attacks of the minister of justice on prosecutors and we denounce as untrue the conclusion of the inspection report of the ministry that was leaked to the media." The Ministry leaked a report to the local media, claiming that after an inspection, it had uncovered problems in the work of prosecutors, while recommending disciplinary measures and the dismissal of 59 prosecutors. If the recommendations of Minister Halimi are followed by the general prosecutors' office, one-third of the prosecutors of Albania would be struck off.

BalkanInsight
Albania Justice Minister Accused of Breaching Constitution
http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/albania-prosecutors-pan-minister-of-justice
Date accessed 24 March 2012

20 March Data published by the World Health Organization, WHO, show that Albania has the lowest number of doctors per capita in the region. According to the WHO Health for All Database Albania has only 115 doctors per 100,000 citizens. The country with the highest number of doctors in the Balkans is Bulgaria, with 369 doctors per 100,000 citizens. The World Bank is running a project to strengthen Albania's health system, which has seen limited structural reform in the past two decades. Restructuring and organizational reforms have lagged behind actions in most other countries of the region.

BalkanInsight
Albanians Short of Doctors, WHO Says
http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/albanians-have-lowest-access-to-healthcare-in-balkans
Date accessed 24 March 2012

15 March Prosecutors in Lezha on Tuesday indicted eight poll commissioners for rigging the elections in the commune of Dajc on May 8, 2011. The eight suspects "are accused of abuse of power and falsifying documents and the results of the elections," the General Prosecutor's office said. According to the indictment, the eight commissioners falsified signatures and cast ballots for 109 voters who were not present on Election Day - mostly emigrants who do not reside in Albania. The indictment comes as parliament is discussing amendments to the criminal code, which will increase penalties for those found guilty of electoral fraud.

BalkanInsight
Eight Indicted for Fraud in Albanian Elections
http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/eight-indicted-for-fraud-during-albania-s-local-elections
Date accessed 24 March 2012

12 March An Albanian court on Monday sentenced 19 people to prison for a series of explosions at an ammunition disposal factory that killed 26 people, but angry relatives of the victims insisted the punishments were far too lenient and that top government officials have avoided justice. Some 300 more people were injured and 5,500 nearby homes damaged or destroyed in the explosions on March 15, 2008, at the disposal factory in Gerdec, near Tirana, the capital.

Associated Press
Albanian officials jailed over deadly blast
http://www.dailybulletin.com/news/ci_20155514/albanian-officials-jailed-over-deadly-blast
Date accessed 13 March 2012

11 March Albanian President Bamir Topi accused Prime Minister Sali Berisha of having close ties to the old Communist regime, calling him to explain his political past. A rift between the president and the prime minister, who were both members of the Democratic Party, started in late February when Topi rejected to sign into a law a 2009 lustration bill, rendered unconstitutional in early 2010 by the country's Constitutional Court. Topi served as Berisha's party deputy chairman before being elected President in 2007, but his relationship with prime minister severely deteriorated due to government's constant attacks on the general prosecutor and judges dealing with corruption trials involving some cabinet ministers.

NewEurope Online
Topi and Berisha part their ways
http://www.neurope.eu/article/topi-and-berisha-part-their-ways
Date accessed 12 March 2012

8 March Albanian women plan to rally on Thursday in front of parliament on International Women's day to demand greater respect for quotas on women in politics. Women's representation in political life of Albania remains relatively low. Of 140 MPs, only 23, or 16 per cent, are women.

BalkanInsight
Albanian Women Demand Action on Gender Quotas
http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/albanians-plan-rally-for-gender-quotas-in-politics
Date accessed 8 Mar 2012

USEFUL NEWS SOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

A list of news sources with Weblinks is provided below, which may be useful if additional up to date information is required to supplement that provided in this report. The full list of sources used in this report can be found in Annex E – References to source material.

AlertNet (Thomson Reuters) http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/index.htm?news=all
British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) http://news.bbc.co.uk
Cable News Network (CNN) http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/?fbid=i0gUtrVnUAy
Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) http://www.irinnews.org/

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REPORTS ON ALBANIA PUBLISHED OR ACCESSED BETWEEN 01 MARCH 2012 AND 30 MARCH 2012

THE HOME OFFICE IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CONTENT OF EXTERNAL WEBSITES.

Council of Europe www.coe.int
Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings Recommendation CP (2012)1on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by Albania adopted at the 7th meeting of the Committee of the Parties on 30 January 2012
http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/4f71b3e42.pdf
Date accessed 30 March 2012

Council of Europe www.coe.int
Report to the Albanian Government on the visit to Albania carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) from 10 to 21 May 2010 [CPT/Inf (2012) 11]
http://www.cpt.coe.int/documents/alb/2012-11-inf-eng.htm
Date accessed 30 March 2012

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Background Information

1. GEOGRAPHY

1.01 In its Country Profile for Albania, accessed on 10 January 2012, Europa World Plus noted:

"The Republic of Albania lies in south-eastern Europe. It is bordered by Montenegro to the north, by Kosovo to the north-east, by the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYRM) to the east, by Greece to the south and by the Adriatic and Ionian Seas (parts of the Mediterranean Sea) to the west.… The national flag (proportions 5 by 7) is red, with a two-headed black eagle in the centre." **[1a] (Location, Climate, Language, Religion, Flag, Capital)** Tiranë (Tirana) is the capital other principal cities being Korçë (Koritsa), Durrës (Durazzo), Berat, Elbasan, Lushnjë, Shkodër (Scutari), Kavajë, Vlorë (Vlonë or Valona), Pogradec and Fier. The area of the country is 28,748sq km." **[1a] (Area and Population)**

1.02 The same source stated that:

"The language is Albanian, the principal dialects being Gheg (north of the Shkumbin River) and Tosk, which is spoken in the south and has been the official dialect since 1952. Islam is the predominant faith, but there are small groups of Christians (mainly Catholic in the north and Eastern Orthodox in the south)." **[1a] (Location, Climate, Language, Religion, Flag, Capital)** The United States Department of State (USSD) Background Note: Albania, dated 30 August 2011 and accessed 4 January 2012 stated that the religions were Muslim (Sunni and Bektashi) 70 per cent, Albanian Orthodox 20 per cent, and Roman Catholic 10 per cent. **[2a]**

See Paragraph 1.03 et seq which discusses the religious demographic breakdown further.

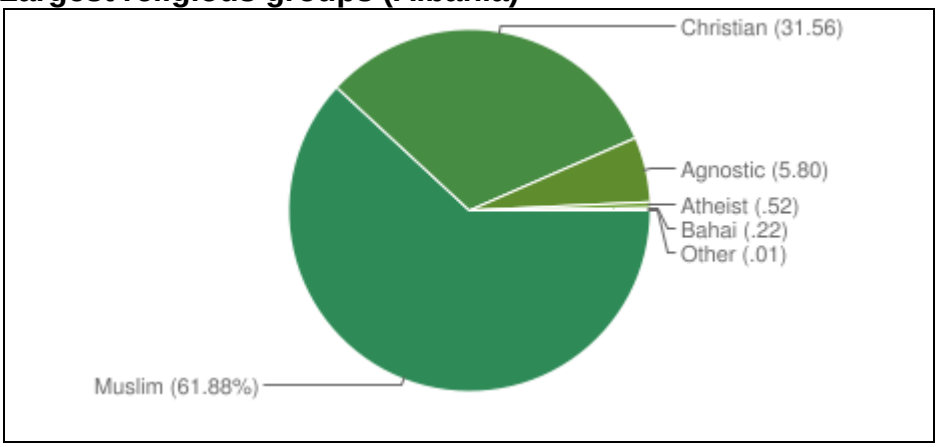
1.03 The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) in its Evaluation of the Country of Origin Information Report on Albania, May 2011, reported that:

"… the shares cited for different religious groups are not accurate. The last population census which included questions of religious participation or membership was in 1939 (or 1942 depending on sources). …, they leave no room for the group that has seen perhaps the biggest relative increase (from almost zero) in its size in the last two decades in Albania, the Christian Protestants, who are spread around the country. Moreover, there are also groups of atheists and agnostics who are not accounted for by these statistics. Considering the legacy of 23 years of official abolition of religion during the communist years (in 1967), the existence of the latter two cannot be dismissed, yet statistics on them are again missing. A question on religious and ethnic belonging is planned to be included in this year's (2011) population census, initially scheduled for April 2011 but now postponed for October or November 2011 because of controversies raised by various groups in the country surrounding precisely these two questions, but especially that on ethnicity." **[86a] (p20)**

1.04 Preliminary Results of the Population and Housing census in Albania were published in December 2011. **[50b]**

1.05 The Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA) in its Albania National profile, 2010 illustrated the religious breakdown as follows:

Largest religious groups (Albania)



Source: The Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA) - Albania National Profile. **[89a]**

See Freedom of religion

1.06 The USSD Background Note: Albania, dated 30 August 2011 and accessed 4 January 2012 reported that the population (2011est.) was 2,994,667 with a population growth rate (2011 est.) of 0.267 per cent. These comprised the following ethnic groups (2004 est., Government of Albania): Albanian 98.6 per cent, Greeks 1.17 per cent, others 0.23 per cent (Vlachs, Roma, Serbs, Montenegrins, Macedonians, Balkan Egyptians, and Bulgarians). **[2a]**

See Ethnic groups

1.07 Preliminary Results of the Population and Housing census in Albania, published in December 2011, gives a total population of 2,831,741. **[50b] (p17)**

1.08 As recorded by Europa World Plus "For the purposes of local government, Albania is divided into 12 counties (qarqe —also called prefectures), 36 districts (rrethe), 65 municipalities and 309 communes." **[1a] (Constitution and Government)**

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MAPS

1.09 Map showing the main cities and towns of Albania. (United Nations Cartographic Section: Map no. 3769 rev.6, dated June 2004). **[10a]**

1.10 Map showing the main cities, towns and prefectures of Albania. (http://mappery.com/maps-Albania) **[11a]**

For further maps of Albania, see Relief Web's Map Centre **[12a]** and European Country of Origin Information Network (http://www.ecoi.net/albania/maps). **[13a]**

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2. ECONOMY

2.01 The World Bank, in its Country Brief 2010, updated October 2010, stated that:

"Albania's poverty rate was reduced from 25 per cent to 12 per cent between 2002 and 2008, one of the highest rates of poverty reduction in the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region. Despite the current slowdown induced by the global financial crisis, Albania is nevertheless poised to resume its high growth rates gradually, being one of the few countries avoiding recession in 2009." **[6a]**

2.02 The European Commission, in its 'Commission Opinion on Albania's application for membership of the European Union' dated 9 November 2010, generally evaluated the economy in the following terms:

"There is a broad consensus in Albania on the fundamentals of economic policy as well as a track record in the implementation of economic reforms. Albania achieved a degree of macroeconomic stability sufficient enough to allow economic operators to make decisions in a climate of predictability. The macro policy mix in the past years has been appropriate, generating growth rates exceeding 5% and activity, although slower, remained positive in 2009 despite the crisis. Inflation has remained low. The free interplay of market forces has been developing through privatisation. Prices and trade have been mostly liberalised. Notable progress has been achieved in facilitating market entry. The banking system has rapidly expanded as a result of privatisation and the entry of foreign players. State aid has been reduced. The share of trade and investment integration with the EU remained high.

"However, fiscal consolidation has been reversed recently and the high level of public debt remains a source of macro-financial vulnerability. A narrow export base and public investment have led to a significant and persistent current account imbalance. The existence of widespread informal work arrangements continues to severely distort the labour market and unemployment remains high and stood at 13.8% in 2009. Access to finance remains a challenge to small enterprises. Weaknesses in the rule of law hamper the business environment and ownership transfer and recognition of property rights remain a serious problem. The education system remains unable to equip the labour force with the skills needed by the changing job market. Infrastructure requires further investment and institutional and regulatory steps are needed to ensure a reliable energy supply. The informal economy remains an important challenge." **[8a] (p49)**

2.03 The CIA World Factbook, updated on 17 February 2012, recorded that:

"Albania, a formerly closed, centrally-planned state, is making the difficult transition to a more modern open-market economy. Macroeconomic growth averaged around 6% between 2004-08, but declined to about 3% in 2009-11. Inflation is low and stable. The government has taken measures to curb violent crime, and recently adopted a fiscal reform package aimed at reducing the large gray economy and attracting foreign investment. Remittances, a significant catalyst for economic growth declined from 12-15% of GDP to 9% of GDP in 2009, mostly from Albanians residing in Greece and Italy. The agricultural sector, which accounts for almost half of employment but only about one-fifth of GDP, is limited primarily to small family operations and subsistence farming because of lack of modern equipment, unclear property rights, and the prevalence of small, inefficient plots of land. Energy shortages because of a reliance on hydropower - 98% of the electrical power produced in Albania - and antiquated and inadequate infrastructure contribute to Albania's poor business environment and lack of success in

attracting new foreign investment needed to expand the country's export base. FDI is among the lowest in the region, but the government has embarked on an ambitious program to improve the business climate through fiscal and legislative reforms. The completion of a new thermal power plant near Vlore has helped diversify generation capacity, and plans to upgrade transmission lines between Albania and Montenegro and Kosovo would help relieve the energy shortages. Also, with help from EU funds, the government is taking steps to improve the poor national road and rail network, a long-standing barrier to sustained economic growth. The economy is bolstered by annual remittances from abroad representing about 15% of GDP, mostly from Albanians residing in Greece and Italy; this helps offset the towering trade deficit. The agricultural sector, which accounts for over half of employment but only about one-fifth of GDP, is limited primarily to small family operations and subsistence farming because of lack of modern equipment, unclear property rights, and the prevalence of small, inefficient plots of land. Energy shortages because of a reliance on hydropower, and antiquated and inadequate infrastructure contribute to Albania's poor business environment and lack of success in attracting new foreign investment needed to expand the country's export base. The completion of a new thermal power plant near Vlore has helped diversify generation capacity, and plans to upgrade transmission lines between Albania and Montenegro and Kosovo would help relieve the energy shortages. Also, with help from EU funds, the government is taking steps to improve the poor national road and rail network, a long-standing barrier to sustained economic growth." **[4a] (Economy-overview)**

2.04 The FCO, in its Country Profile on Albania, last reviewed 27 February 2012, reported that:

"Albania is one of the poorest countries in Europe. Since 1991, the economy has struggled to recover from fall of Europe's harshest communist regime, the impact of the move to a market economy and the 1997 collapse of pyramid investment schemes. However, Albania's economy has improved substantially over recent years – albeit from a very low base, (with average annual growth rates of 6% over the 2004-8 period) and was only one of two European countries to experience positive growth in 2009 …

"Privatisation is ongoing, but has been completed in small and medium sized enterprises. The service (58% 2006 est.) and agricultural sectors (23%) drive growth. Only around 10% of Albania's GDP is generated by exports. Of those exports, around 85% go to the EU. Overseas remittances play an important role, contributing about US$800 million in revenue to the Albanian economy." **[3a](Economy)**

2.05 The exchange rate as of 31 January 2011 was £1 Sterling (GBP) = 159.46 Albanian Lek. (OANDA Currency Converter) **[5]**

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS – 2011 TO 2012

2.06 The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) in its Commentary on the March 2011 Country of Origin Information (COI) report on Albania, May 2011, stated that:

"The decree regulating public holidays has been changed several times since 1992 thus bearing the stamp of one ruling party/coalition or another. The latest one was in late December 2010 adding one additional day to public holidays: 8 December, declared as Youth Day in memory of the December 1990 students' demonstrations.

Otherwise, religious days (with the exception of Nevruz) may change each year according to the lunar calendar … Therefore, official public holidays for 2011 were:

"1 & 2 January (New Year), 14 March (Summer Day), 22 March (Nevruz), 24 April (Orthodox and Catholic Easter), 1 May (International Labour Day), 30 August (Greater Bajram), 19 October (Mother Tereza's Beatification), 6 November (Lesser Bajram), 28 November (Independence Day), 29 November (Liberation Day), 8 December (National Day of Youth), and 25 December (Christmas Day)." **[86a] (p33)**

2.07 The Bank of Albania gave the 2012 Official Bank Holidays Schedule:

January 1 and 2 - New Year's Day
March 14 - Summer Day
March 22 - Nevruz Day
April 8 - Catholic Easter
April 15 - Orthodox Easter
May 1 - International Worker's Day
August 19 - Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan)
October 19 - Mother Teresa Beatification Day
October 25 Eid al-Adha (Feast of Sacrifice)
November 28 - Flag and Independence Day
November 29 - Liberation Day
December 8 - National Youth Day
December 25 - Christmas Day

(Bank of Albania) [96a]

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3. HISTORY – 1912 TO 2009

The section provides a brief history of Albania. More detailed information on Albania's history can be found on The Federal Research Program of the Library of Congress: A Country Study: Albania **[14a]**

3.01 The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) reported in its Albania Country Profile, updated 27 February 2012, that:

"Albania came under Ottoman rule in the 15th century. This ended in 1912 during the first Balkan War … Later that year Albania declared independence. Independence was recognised by the Great Powers, including Great Britain, a year later. Albania retained its independence at the end of World War I and became a member of the League of Nations.

"In the mid-1920s Ahmed Zog, a chieftain from the Gheg people of northern Albania, took control of the country.… In 1939 … Albania was annexed, and spent the majority of the war under Italian and later German control. However, as their grip on Albania loosened towards the end of the war, increasing swathes of the country fell to Albanian partisans. With support from Tito's Yugoslav Communist Party, Enver Hoxha and his communist supporters entered the liberation struggle, defeated their rivals and gained effective control of the country." **[3a] (History)**

3.02 The Freedom House report, Freedom in the World – 2011 (Albania), published 12 May 2011, stated that:

"Ruling from World War II until his death in 1985, communist dictator Enver Hoxha turned Albania into the most isolated country in Europe. The regime began to adopt more liberal policies in the late 1980s, and multiparty elections in 1992 brought the Democratic Party (PD), led by Sali Berisha, to power. Continuing poverty and corruption, along with unrest after the collapse of several vast investment scams, resulted in the election of a new government led by the Socialist Party (PS) in 1997.

"Former president Berisha returned to government as prime minister after the PD won the 2005 parliamentary elections. While the poll was not free from fraud, it was praised for bringing Albania's first post communist rotation of power without significant violence. In 2007, the parliament elected PD candidate Bamir Topi as the country's new president.

"Berisha's government was plagued by allegations of corruption and abuse of office in 2008, including a case stemming from a weapons depot explosion that killed 26 people and destroyed hundreds of homes that March. Nevertheless, the PD secured a narrow victory in the June 2009 parliamentary elections. The ruling party took 68 seats in the 140-seat parliament and eventually formed a coalition government with four smaller parties that collectively held seven seats. The PS, in opposition with 65 seats, boycotted the new parliament when it convened in September, and mounted a series of street protests to demand a fraud investigation and a partial ballot recount. Berisha countered that the courts had approved the results and the PS had exhausted its legal appeals.

"The standoff continued throughout 2010 despite a series of mediation efforts by the president and European representatives. The PS finally named a deputy parliament speaker and committee members in June, but it continued to mount protests and block legislative votes that required a three-fifths majority. The deadlock threatened various reform efforts linked to Albania's application for European Union (EU) candidacy, and EU officials warned that further progress was needed before candidate status could be granted. Nevertheless, a visa-free travel agreement with the bloc took effect in December." **[9d]**

See also sections on Women and Ethnic groups

3.03 The Freedom in the World - 2010 report noted that:

"Albania was formally welcomed into NATO in April 2009, and later that month it filed its application to join the European Union (EU), with which it already had a Stabilization and Association Agreement. However, EU accession remained uncertain and would not come before 2015." **[9a]**

See paragraph 4.05

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4. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS: JANUARY 2010 TO FEBRUARY 2012

4.01 It was reported in a BBC News report dated 23 February 2010 that:

"A UN expert has said Albania is holding up inquiries into reports that Serbs captured during the 1998-99 Kosovo war were butchered for their organs there. UN special rapporteur Philip Alston said the Council of Europe, Serbia and the EU authorities in Kosovo were all investigating the reports. He called on Albania to allow an independent inquiry. Albanian PM Sali Berisha has dismissed the allegations as fiction and says they have already been investigated." … **[15a]**

The report continued:

"Last year, Albania rejected a Serbian request for an investigation into the alleged abductions and killings. Speaking to reporters in the Albanian capital Tirana, Mr Alston said the authorities in Albania strongly believed that the allegations were "politically motivated and absolutely without any foundation". "On this basis, none of the efforts to investigate have received meaningful co-operation on the side of the government of Albania." His own inquiries in Albania had met with a "game of bureaucratic and diplomatic ping pong", said Mr Alston, who is the UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial executions. "The bottom line is that the issue is definitely stalled," he added. "All Albanian officials I have met with consider the claims, charges of killings, as ridiculous," he said. "If it is ridiculous, in order to get rid of this issue, make available a proposal for an independent investigation and offer genuine co-operation." **[15a]**

4.02 The New York Times recorded in a news report dated 30 April 2010 that:

"Tens of thousands of people thronged the main square of the capital, Tirana, on Friday, vowing to stay there until the government allowed a partial recount of an election the opposition says involved vote-rigging. The conservative Democrats, led by Prime Minister Sali Berisha, narrowly won the June 28 [2009] general election, but the opposition Socialists have been boycotting Parliament for months, demanding the recount of ballots in several districts. The government has called that demand illegal." **[16a]**

See also section on History - 1912 to 2009 et seq.

4.03 Reflecting further moves to bolster Albania's entry to an enlarged European Union (EU) EUbusiness.com (accessed 8 January 2011) reported that:

"Leaders of Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo on Saturday [26 June 2010] said they had established a 'free-movement' zone between their states as a sign of their readiness for further European integrations. The move, which would enable citizens of the four Balkan countries to travel through their territories without visas, has demonstrated our maturity for wider integration processes." **[19a]**

See also sections on Economy and History - 1912 to 2009 et seq.

4.04 According to a New York Times report dated 8 November 2010:

"The European Union decided on Monday [8 November] to lift visa requirements next month for travellers from Albania and Bosnia who have biometric passports with a digitally recorded photograph. The move is intended to encourage democratic reforms in the Balkan nations, but the bloc warned that restrictions would be re-imposed if rules on border controls and passport security were abused. Anti-immigrant sentiment is on the rise in Europe and asylum policies are strained by an influx of refugees …Some European governments feel that because of corruption and weak institutions, Albania

and Bosnia, which would like to join the union, cannot cope with issues likes illegal immigration and drug trafficking." **[16b]**

See also sections on Economy, History - 1912 to 2009 and Exit and Return

4.05 EUobserver.com, in an article, Albania is refused EU candidate status; dated 10 November 2010 stated that:

"… the effectiveness and stability of democratic institutions is not sufficiently achieved. Parliamentary institutions and procedures do not function properly. As a result, parliament does not exercise effective oversight and control over the government and its scrutiny of legislative development is weak." **[90a]**

See paragraph 3.03

4.06 The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) reported in its Albania Country Report dated 12 November 2010 that:

"In mid-September the junior coalition partner, the Socialist Movement for Integration (SMI), proposed a reshuffle of its members in the government. The SMI called for the removal of the economy minister, Dritan Prifti, from his post and nominated as his replacement the party's leader, Ilir Meta, who was to be succeeded in his post as foreign minister by Edmond Haxhinasto. The proposed changes were accepted by the Prime Minister, Sali Berisha, within a few days, and on September 17th the new ministers were sworn in.

"The first cabinet reshuffle since the government was formed in September 2009 was driven primarily by developments within the SMI. … Mr Meta explained the changes on the grounds of the need for him, as the SMI's leader, to be more involved in domestic affairs ahead of the local authority elections scheduled for May 2011. Mr Prifti's removal was preceded by a wave of accusations against him, with the opposition claiming that he had improperly profited from the sale of shares in a company. … However, Mr Prifti's dismissal may have had more to do with the rift between him and Mr Meta, which became public soon afterwards.

"Following his enforced resignation, Mr Prifti said that he would continue to support and remain an active member of the SMI, but only a month later he left the party and declared that he would back the opposition in parliament.

"Explaining the reasons for his resignation, Mr Prifti said that he had been subjected to pressures from his party over tender procedures, and over the granting of licences and concessions. Some of Mr Prifti's claims about the involvement of police officers in fuel smuggling are currently being investigated by prosecutors." **[7a] (The Political Scene)**

4.07 Balkaninsight, in an article, Albania Hit by Video Corruption Scandal, dated 12 January 2011 stated that:

"Prosecutors launched a corruption probe on Wednesday after the broadcast of a videotape allegedly showing Deputy Prime Minister Ilir Meta and former minister of economy Dritan Prifti discussing corrupt deals… The transcripts of the videotape, the authenticity of which has not been verified, allegedly show Meta asking the former Minister of Economy Dritan Prifti to intervene over a hydropower plant concession tender, naming an alleged recompense by a businessman of a seven per cent stake

and €700,000 bribe… Meta, who is the LSI head and at the time of the recording served as deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs, also allegedly brags in the videotape about influencing a Supreme Court trial over the same hydro-power plant concession… Meta is overheard saying that because he is on good terms with Chief Justice Shpresa Becaj after having hired her daughter as a diplomat at an embassy, he can influence the decision of the court. He then asks Prifti to keep the affair quiet because he is afraid the prosecutor's office might open an investigation if it learns about it… In a press conference on Wednesday, Meta denied any wrongdoing and said that he was "intervening in the name of a business because after an Appeals Court ruling in favor of the company, it was being stalled by the ministry of economy," then headed by Prifti… He added that the video was "a disgusting political bluff that was made by organised crime as blackmail against me"'. **[91a]**

See Corruption and Judiciary-independence

4.08 Southeast European Times (SETimes.com), in an article, Meta scandal prompts calls for a fair investigation, dated 17 January 2011 stated that:

"Meta… has resigned his posts in the current cabinet following the broadcast of a video that purportedly shows him trying to rig a public tender… Announcing his move on Friday (January 14th), two days after the footage was aired, Meta said he wished to face justice as an independent citizen and not as an official with government duties… He denied any wrongdoing and lashed out at political rivals, whom he accused of staging the scandal." **[72d]**

See Corruption

4.09 The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) reported in its Albania Country Report dated 10 February 2011 that:

"The political tension caused by the disputed results of the parliamentary election in June 2009 escalated into violence when four anti-government protesters were shot dead apparently by the Republican Guard, which protects senior officials during an opposition demonstration outside the prime minister's office on January 21st. The demonstrators, some of whom clashed with the police, were demanding the resignation of the government, which they accused of ballot rigging and corruption. … The leader of the opposition Socialist Party of Albania (SPA), Edi Rama has been demanding the formation of a new technical government that would prepare a fresh election. He has said that the SPA is ready for a political dialogue under international auspices. However, he has also said that he will call for further demonstrations, despite concerted calls by the EU and the US for a suspension of the protests because of concern about a possible recurrence of violence. The prime minister, Sali Berisha, has dismissed the calls for an early election and has insisted on an investigation into the events of January 21st, which he described as an attempted coup d'état.

"The accusations levelled against Ms Rama followed her move to initiate an investigation into the killings of the demonstrators and her issuing of arrest warrants against six members of the Republican Guard, including its four senior commanders, on the grounds that they had overstepped their authority. In an unprecedented development, the police, with the public backing of Mr Berisha, refused to execute the arrest warrants. After a two-week stand-off, the guardsmen handed themselves in. The tensions between the government and other institutions of the state intensified with the parliamentary commission calling on Mr Topi, Ms Rama and Mr Shaqiri to testify at its

public hearings. The commission also asked mobile telephone companies for their records relating to the telephone conversations of these three officials although only prosecutors have the legal authority to make such a request". **[7b] (The Political Scene)**

See Police – paragraph 10.02

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4.10 The EIU February report continued:

"Apart from accusing Mr Rama of being behind the organised violence at the demonstration, Mr Berisha ratcheted up political tension by claiming that the second stage of the alleged planned coup against his government also included the president, Bamir Topi, who was Mr Berisha's deputy as leader of the ruling Democratic Party of Albania (DPA) before his election as head of state; the prosecutor-general, Ina Rama (no relation to the SPA leader); and the head of the State Intelligence Service (SIS), Bahri Shaqiri. In an attempt to provide evidence of these officials' alleged involvement in the events surrounding the demonstration, an extraordinary parliamentary session was held on Sunday January 23rd, which only the ruling coalition attended. The session set up a parliamentary commission to investigate the activity of state institutions in "the criminal events of January 21st that were intended to violate institutions and topple the constitutional order.

"A senior EU official, Miroslav Lajcak, visited the capital, Tirana, twice to make it clear to the Albanian authorities and the opposition that Albania's further EU integration would be put at risk if they failed to resolve the political crisis through constructive dialogue and by letting the proper independent institutions carry out their duties without pressure from politicians." **[7b] (The Political Scene)**

Floods in Albania - 2010

4.11 The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), in Disaster Assistance at a Glance, dated 6 December 2010 reported that:

"In January 2010, heavy rains and melting snow caused flooding in the Shkoder and Lezha regions of northern Albania. Floodwaters submerged or isolated nearly 2,500 houses and led to the evacuation of more than 5,300 individuals, according to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). A landslide closed a road in the affected area, and roads, bridges, water supply, and agriculture infrastructure sustained damage. An estimated 6,000 people in the flood-affected areas refused to evacuate and abandon livestock; as a result, authorities forced evacuations in some areas, according to local news sources. As of January 13, water continued to rise in affected areas, and additional rain and snow were expected through the spring.

"Beginning on November 25, heavy rains in northern Albania caused severe flooding in the Shkoder and Lezhe regions and the floodplain between Lezhe and the Adriatic Sea. On December 6, large dams in the north were releasing water at average rates of nearly 1,500 cubic meters per second, resulting in additional flooding downstream. As of December 6, floods and mudslides had reached the cities of Fushe-Kruja and Derven in Kruja District, Durres Region. According to the Government of Albania (GoA), floodwaters covered approximately 34,500 acres of land and isolated or damaged more than 7,200 houses, leading to the evacuation of approximately 14,500 residents, mainly in the country's north. In addition, floods damaged roads, bridges, and water and power

infrastructure. On December 6, the U.S. Embassy in Tirana reported that the GoA had declared a state of emergency and requested international assistance." **[17a]**

Precise mapping of the affected areas can be found at The Center for Satellite Based Crisis Information (ZKI) **[18a]**

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5. CONSTITUTION

5.01 Europa World Plus, accessed 7 September 2010, noted that "Under the Constitution adopted in November 1998, legislative power is vested in the unicameral Kuvendi Popullor (People's Assembly). The Kuvendi Popullor, which is elected for a term of four years, comprises 140 deputies, 100 of whom are directly elected in single-member constituencies." **[1a] (Constitution and Government)**

5.02 The Preamble upholds the determination to build a social and democratic state based on the rule of law; to guarantee fundamental human rights and freedoms with a spirit of tolerance and religious coexistence. It pledges protection for human dignity and individuals as well as the prosperity of the whole nation. **[20a]**

5.03 A full text of the constitution can be viewed at Albanian Constitution. **[20a]**

See also Political system, Judiciary and Citizenship and Nationality

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6. POLITICAL SYSTEM

6.01 The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), in its country profile last reviewed on 27 February 2012, accessed 28 February 2012, stated that:

"Albania is a parliamentary democracy. The Albanian Constitution was adopted by referendum on 22 November 1998 and came into effect shortly afterwards. The Constitution sets out the basis for an executive consisting of the President and Council of Ministers, a parliamentary assembly, and a judiciary including the Constitutional Court and High Court.

"The President is elected for a 5-year term by a three-fifths majority of Members of Parliament. No president may serve more than 2 terms in office. The current incumbent is President Bamir Topi who took over from President Alfred Moisiu in July 2007. The President is the constitutional Head of State but, in practice, has limited powers.

"The Council of Ministers performs the main executive functions of government and includes the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and line ministers. The Prime Minister is appointed by the President but must be approved by Parliament, and is usually the leader of the largest party in the governing coalition. The current Prime Minister is Sali Berisha." **[3a] (Politics-constitution)**

6.02 Europa World Plus, accessed 12 December 2010, noted that:

"Parties receiving 2.5% or more of the votes cast, and party coalitions obtaining 4.0% or more in the first round of voting, are allocated further deputies in proportion to the number of votes secured, on the basis of multi-name lists of parties or party coalitions. …The representative organs of the basic units of local government are councils, which are elected by direct election for a period of three years. The Council of Ministers appoints a Prefect as its representative in each of the 12 counties." **[1a] (Constitution and Government)**

6.03 The Freedom House, Freedom in the World - 2011 report noted that:

"International observers of the 2009 parliamentary elections hailed improvements in a number of areas, but also cited problems including media bias, abuse of state resources, political pressure on public employees, and flaws in the tabulation process. Under a new electoral code passed in late 2008, the unicameral, 140-member Kuvendi Popullor (People's Assembly) was elected through proportional representation in 12 regional districts of varying size. All members serve four-year terms …"

"Despite their sharp, personality-driven rivalry, the two major political parties, the PD and the PS, ran on nearly identical platforms and pledges of EU integration. They also cooperated in 2008 to pass the new electoral rules, which, as expected, strongly disadvantaged smaller parties. Minor parties held some 40 seats after the 2005 elections, but this fell to just seven seats—split among four parties—in 2009." **[9d]**

6.04 The US State Department 2010 Human Rights Report: Albania (USSD Report 2010), published on 8 April 2011, stated:

"The constitution and law provide citizens the right to change their government peacefully, and citizens exercised this right in practice through periodic elections based on universal suffrage. … Political parties operated without restriction or outside interference." **[2f] (Section 3)**

See Political affiliation et seq.

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Human Rights

7. INTRODUCTION

7.01 The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in the Western Balkans Policy Review 2010, September 2010 stated that:

"…Albania was the least prepared for a transition from Communist totalitarianism to a genuine pluralistic democracy and a market economy. It faced a serious moral and spiritual crisis, with large segments of the population having lost hope in their country's future and desperately looking for ways to flee abroad.

"Yet despite these serious odds, Albania has undergone radical political, social and economic transformations and it has made great strides in building a functioning procedural democracy and institutionalising democratic freedoms." **[29a] (p45)**

7.02 The Review paper continued:

"Although it has achieved remarkable progress in its political, economic and social transformation, Albania still faces significant challenges and its democracy can be described as a 'work in progress.' As the European Commission noted in its most recent annual progress report (October 2009) **[8b]**, much remains to be done to strengthen the rule of law, intensify the struggle against organised crime and corruption, ensure the proper functioning of state institutions, respect the independence of the judiciary and improve conditions for media freedoms." **[29a] (p49)**

OBSERVANCE OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

7.03 The European Commission in its Analytical Report, Commission Opinion on Albania's application for membership of the European Union, 9 November 2010, stated that:

"Respect for human rights and the protection of minorities are enshrined in the Constitution and in a number of legislative provisions. Albania has ratified most human rights instruments; these are part of the internal judicial system and are directly applicable after publication in the Official Journal. Albania joined the Council of Europe in 1995, and ratified the European Convention on Human Rights in 1996. To date, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has delivered 29 judgments concerning Albania. The Court mainly found breaches of the right to a fair trial within a reasonable time, the right to an effective remedy and the right to peaceful enjoyment of possessions. As of September 2010, there were 287 cases pending before the ECtHR regarding Albania." **[8a] (p24)**

See Judiciary

7.04 The report also stated that:

"As regards the promotion and enforcement of human rights, the Office of the Ombudsman (the People's Advocate) is the main domestic human rights institution. It has played an active role in monitoring the human rights situation in the country, and has contributed to enhancing the accountability of state institutions. The Ombudsman is elected by parliament by qualified majority. Due to the ongoing political stalemate,

election of the new Ombudsman has been pending since February 2010. The main fields in which the Ombudsman has intervened relate to property disputes, police abuse, undue length of judicial proceedings, non-enforcement of judgments in civil cases and unfair dismissals. He has also repeatedly expressed particular concern over inadequate conditions in prisons, pre-trial detention centres and police stations, corruption in the judiciary and difficult living conditions of the Roma minority. The Ombudsman's recommendations are insufficiently put into practice by government institutions. **[8a] (p24)**

7.05 Concerns, raised by Amnesty International in their 2010 Report (covering 2009) included:

"Women increasingly reported domestic violence and sought legal protection, although many later withdrew complaints. There were arrests and convictions for the trafficking of women for forced prostitution. Some detainees in police stations and prisons alleged torture or other ill-treatment. Detention conditions in police stations and many prisons were often very poor, despite some improvements in the treatment of prisoners. Adult orphans were denied their legal right to adequate housing." **[26b]**

7.06 The US State Department 2010 Human Rights Report: Albania (USSD Report 2010), released on 8 April 2011, noted:

"There were reports that police severely beat and mistreated suspects during interrogation and detention. Some cases of physical mistreatment were reported in prisons. Police corruption and impunity persisted. Government corruption remained a serious and unresolved problem. Discrimination against women, children, homosexual persons, and minorities were problems. Trafficking in persons also remained a problem." **[2f] (introduction)**

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8. CRIME

8.01 The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) in its Albania country profile last reviewed: 27 February 2012, stated that:

"Although the current government have made the fight against high levels of organised crime and corruption a priority, limited success has been seen in both." **[3a](Economy)**

8.02 The United States Department of State, in its Country Specific Information for Albania dated 28 January 2011, noted that:

"Crime against foreigners is rare in Albania, as targeting foreigners is often viewed as too risky. Please exercise caution in bars and clubs in Tirana where violent incidents, some involving the use of firearms, have occurred in the past. Carjacking is a rare occurrence. Armed crime continues to be more common in northern and north-western Albania than in the rest of the country. Street crime does occur in Albania, particularly at night. …Vehicle theft is still one of the biggest problems in Albania. Pick-pocketing is also widespread." **[2e]**

Background information on organised crime and its impact can be found in The Albanian Organized Crime: Emergence of a Dynamic Organized Crime Network across the Euro-land. **[69a]**

See also Judiciary , Corruption and Trafficking

WITNESS PROTECTION PROGRAM

8.03 The Regional report on the implementation of UNICEF Guidelines on the protection of the rights of child victims of trafficking: Assessment of the situation in Albania, Kosovo and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 2010 reported that:

"A witness protection program is available in the Republic of Albania and regulated by Law. The Law N° 9205 of 15 March 2004 on 'the protection of witnesses and collaborators of Justice' has been enacted, and includes victims of trafficking through a specific reference to the criminal code in its article 2. In its article 16 provides: "In the shortest time possible and at any case not later than 15 days from the approval of the special protection measures, the Department for the Protection of Witness and the Justice Collaborators prepares the agreement for the application of the special protection measures and takes the measures for discussing and signing it by the witness, the justice collaborator and other protected persons (…)". Paragraph 4 of the same article pursues: 'In case of a minor, the approval and signing of the agreement is done by the parent or legal custodian appointed by law, by taking into consideration the highest interest of the child and also the limited legal capacity as provided by law.'

"However from April 2005 to 2008 there was only one case where a woman was involved in the witness protection program. The majority of the interviewees agreed on the fact that this law remains largely unimplemented and that the Albanian State today fails in its witness protection mission. As a paradox, before the entry into force of the law, the witness protection program was ensured by IOM and the OSCE. People trusted these institutions, but the responsibility was transferred when the law was adopted. Since then, victims - including children - refuse to testify against their alleged traffickers as they fear reprisal and do not trust police officers. This situation is raising many concerns in the light of the allegations that law enforcement agencies exercised pressure and made social assistance conditional to the collaboration of child victims of trafficking in the investigative and prosecution phases of the criminal proceedings." **[39b] (page 108)**

See Children - Childcare and protection Trafficking and Security forces - police

8.04 Freedom House, in Nations in Transit 2010, stated that:

"During 2009, Parliament passed laws related to legal aid and witness protection to improve the protection of citizens and witnesses in criminal trials. The law on legal aid is supposed to provide citizens with the right to legal defense, but has not yet been implemented and no budget has been allocated to support this." **[9b](p62)**

8.05 A shadow report to CEDAW, On the Situation of Women and Girls in the Republic of Albania, June 2010, prepared by a coalition of NGOs in Albania, stated that:

"Many NGO's also have publically complained for the difficulty that many victims have encountered to receive the appropriate health and legal documentation from the local and national authorities throughout Albania. In 2008 Albania approved a new law for free legal aid. Two years after the approval of the law none of the organisations offering free legal aid have been able to receive any funding from the responsible authorities. From many accounts women victims of violence in the family looking for free legal aid

haven't been able to enjoy the provisions of the law as the law hasn't been implemented by the Ministry of Justice and other legal-related." **[92a] (p15)**

See The Balkanisation of Politics: Crime and Corruption in Albania for background the political impact of organised crime. **[66a]**

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9. BLOOD FEUDS

9.01 A report, Albania: Information on blood feuds in Albania. How common are they at present? What is their legal status? What options are available to those involved? Compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 4 November 2011, quoted A UN Human Rights Council report, in a section headed "What is a blood feud?"…, which stated that:

"A blood feud generally begins with an argument, usually between two men whose families are neighbours or friends. The argument may have any cause: an accident, a perceived insult, a property ownership disagreement, a conflict over access to electricity, water or fuel, and so on. The argument escalates into a physical fight, and one man kills the other. The victim's family then feels that it is 'owed blood' by the killer's family. This debt and the related loss of honour can only be satisfied by taking the life of a member of the killer's family." (UN Human Rights Council (20 May 2010) Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Addendum: Preliminary note on the mission to Albania, p.3)" **[10h]**

THE CODE OF LEK DUKAGJIN

9.02 The International Center for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations (IMIR) in a report The Kanun in present-day Albania, Kosovo, and Montenegro, dated 2004, recorded that:

"The most common version of customary law among the Albanians is the Kanun of Lek Dukagjin. The Albanian Gegs inhabiting the territories north of the Shkumbin River had lived for long centuries in large clans observing the code of the Kanun – a primitive constitution regulating not only their community life, but also their private lives. The norms were passed on from generation to generation by an oral tradition and were decreed by the council of elders. It is considered that the Code was rationalised by despot Lek III Dukagjin (1410 – 1481). This code was compiled throughout the centuries chiefly by adding new norms. It was … published as late as 1933. The text was systematised into 12 sections – 'The Church', 'The Family', 'Marriage', 'The House, Cattle, and Property', 'Work', 'Loans', 'Pledge', 'Honour', 'Damages', 'The Kanun against Harm', 'The Kanun of Judgement', 'Exemption and Exceptions'." **[27a] (p2)**

9.03 The report continued:

"In some of its sections, the Kanun included an elaborate legal code trying to regulate blood feud (gjakmarrya) – a system of reciprocal "honour killings". According to the Code, if a man is deeply affronted, his family has the right to kill the person who has insulted him. However, by doing this, the family will become a target for revenge on the part of the victim's family. The victim's closest male relative is obliged to kill the murderer of his family member. The pattern of reprisal killings thus formed has been

passed on for generations of families … 'Blood is never lost', states the Kanun. The perpetrator is entitled to ask through the agency of a mediator – a well-respected member of the community, for a besa – a vow that no one would hurt him. Those who have not taken revenge, fall into social disgrace.

"The Code does not allow the murdering of women or children. The only place where blood should not be shed is the house of the marked victim. Because of the ruthlessness of blood feud, most of the houses in Northern Albania look like fortresses built of stone, with small apertures serving as windows. Even to date many Albanians shut themselves inside their houses where they remain isolated for life in order to escape from blood vengeance.

"Under the regime of Enver Hoxha, the Kanun in Albania was banned, but after 1991 it returned in a most brutal form not only in the North, but also in the South, and in the central parts." **[27a] (p2)**

9.04 For further information on Blood Feuds see the Research Directorate of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) issue paper Albania Blood Feuds, May 2008. **[13c]**

9.05 The US State Department 2010 Human Rights Report: Albania (USSD Report 2010), published on 8 April 2011, stated:

"During the year there were continuing reports of societal killings, including both generational "blood feud" and revenge killings. Such killings sometimes involved criminal gangs. According to the Interior Ministry, there were five blood feud-related killings during the year. However, NGOs reported 55 blood feud-related killings during the year. According to NGOs, fear of blood feud reprisals effectively imprisoned approximately 1,490 families their homes. The Court of Serious Crimes tried blood feud cases. The law punishes premeditated murder, when committed for revenge or a blood feud, with 20 years' or life imprisonment." **[2f] (Section 1)**

Although see also paragraph 9.13

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Statistics

9.06 The Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, in a Preliminary note on the mission to Albania (15–23 February 2010) stated that:

"There are deep discrepancies in the statistics concerning blood feuds and related killings. At one extreme, media reports have referred to hundreds of blood feud killings per year and thousands of children living in isolation. At the other extreme, according to Government statistics, such killings fell steadily from 45 in 1998 to one in 2009, while the number of isolated children ranges from 36 to 57 countrywide, of which 29 to 45 are in Shkodra. The variation depended on whether the sources were police, education or ministry officials. Families in isolation were estimated to be from 124 and 133 countrywide.

"The figures used by civil society groups also vary widely. One organization with extensive field operations notes that there have been significant reductions over the last five years and that there are currently only a few blood feud killings per year. They estimate not more than 350 families and between 80 and 100 children to be in isolation

nationally. However, another prominent organization estimates some 9,800 blood feud killings since 1991, dropping to a figure still in excess of 30 in 2009. By its calculations, there are 1,450 families and 800 children in isolation.

"My own carefully considered view is that the correct numbers are much closer to those provided by the Government, especially in relation to killings. The figures for isolation seem more likely to be an underestimation, but again, not by a large margin. This is not to say that the Government statistics are definitive. Their accuracy is qualified by inadequate data-gathering and recording techniques, and insufficient coordination. These problems were underscored by the inconsistency of various official figures provided to me. I am also not aware of any sustained Government effort to reconcile the competing statistics.

"Four factors account for the discrepancies among the various figures: definitional differences: underreporting; limited coverage of issues; and incentives to overstate" **[13d] (p4)**

9.07 On the question of statistics, the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB), in response to an enquiry on statistics and blood feuds, dated 15 October 2010, reported that:

"Several sources indicate that statistics regarding blood feuds in Albania vary widely … According to statistics posted on the website of the Albanian State Police (ASP), in 2007 there were a total of 94 murders, none of which were blood-feud related, while in 2008 there were 86 murders, 4 of which were blood-feud related. A presentation on state police activity for 2009 indicates that there were a total of 79 murders, 1 of which was motivated by blood feud, 1 by revenge, 6 by property disputes, and 52 by 'undetermined motivation'." **[13f]**

9.08 The same report stated that:

"The Committee of Nationwide Reconciliation (CNR)", Komiteti I Pajtimit Mbarëkombëtar) maintains that it is in the Albanian government's interest to state that blood-feud figures provided by NGOs are "artificially increased." In a 16 April 2010 letter sent to the UN HRC Special Rapporteur and posted on the CNR website, the CNR maintained that, in 2008, there were 29 murders motivated by blood feud and 32 by honour; and 31 blood-feud murders and 36 honour killings in 2009.

"On 19 September 2010 … the Chairman of the CNR provided the following statistics about the number of murders motivated by 'revenge and blood feud' and by 'honour':

Year	Revenge and blood feud	Honour
2008	38	42
2009	36	39
1 Jan-30June 2010	26	31

"The CNR Chairman explained that these statistics are gathered from the CNR's representatives in 2,800 villages, 32 districts and 16 regions of Albania, and that most of the information is provided confidentially by the families and persons in conflict. … In separate documentation provided to the Research Directorate, the CNR claims that

there were 10,000 murders for honour, blood feud and revenge between 1990 and 2009..." **[13f]**

9.09 The report further stated that:

"Statistics on the number of families who live in isolation out of fear of blood-feud reprisal also vary widely … **[13f]**

See section on Women – Honour killings

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Families in isolation

9.10 The IRB report of 15 October 2010 stated that:

"According to the UN Special Rapporteur, different government departments provided figures that range from 124 to 133 families in isolation across the country, with 36 to 57 isolated children as a result; most of whom – 29 to 45 – live in the northwest city of Shkodra. The AFCR Executive Director [Albanian Foundation for 'Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation of Disputes' (AFCR), a Tirana-based NGO which mediates approximately 8 to 10 blood-feud reconciliation cases annually] also said that most blood feuds occur in north-western Albania. He added that, according to information received by AFCR mediators, there are approximately 250 to 300 families involved in blood feuds, and that the average family size ranges between four and six members. The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) reports that it had been informed that there were 1,000 families who could not leave their homes to apply for identity cards or vote in the parliamentary elections of 28 June 2009 because of blood feuds. The CNR's statistics indicate that in 2009, there were a total of 1,480 families in hiding countrywide; this included 248 families in Shkoder, 200 families in Tirana, 179 families in Durres, and 138 families in Vlore." **[13f]**

9.11 A report, Information on effects on children of being sequestered indoors for four years in the context of blood feuds compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 11 February 2011, quoted a New York Times report of July 2008 **[16c]** in stating that:

"The National Reconciliation Committee, an Albanian non-profit organization that works to eliminate the practice of blood feuds, estimates that 20,000 people have been ensnared by blood feuds since they resurfaced after the collapse of Communism in 1991, with 9,500 people killed and nearly 1,000 children deprived of schooling because they are locked indoors. (New York Times (10 July 2008) In Albanian Feuds, Isolation Engulfs Families)." **[10b]**

9.12 The same report stated that:

"Several sources report that the Albanian government is providing educational assistance to the children of families isolated because of blood feuds through a program called 'Second Chance'. According to the head of the Shkodra school district … 41 such children in the region are receiving home schooling based on a curriculum approved by the Ministry of Education. The UN Special Rapporteur notes that the Second Chance program offers schooling only up to grade nine." **[10b]**

9.13 A SETimes.com article. Blood feuds keep hundreds of children from school in Albania, 13 October 2011, stated that:

"Due to ongoing vendettas, hundreds of children are forced to stay at home, or to hide with their families, and are unable to attend school." [More than 900 children in Albania] … can't go to school. Some of them work to help their families," Albanian Committee of Nationwide Reconciliation Chairman Gjin Marku told SETimes. Around 5,000 people in Albania are somehow affected by blood feud killings -- revenge killings by a victim's family against the killer's family, according to Marku.

"In a bid to educate these "trapped" children, the education ministry launched a programme called "Second Chance" this summer. Special classes are held three times a week, for ten hours a week. Lesson hours are 45 minutes long. However, it is impossible to assist all the children who are affected -- especially since the numbers from the vendetta associations and the numbers from the ministry greatly differ.

"But despite the good intentions of the programme, the students' psychological situation is grave and their education falls behind those attending regular school." **[72f]**

See also Children: education, Freedom of movement

See also Reconciliation committees (RCs)

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9.14 The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) in its Evaluation of the Country of Origin Information Report on Albania, May 2011, provided:

"Two cases reported in the local media (in Albanian) and one on the BBC news are presented below to illustrate the reality of this phenomenon in Albania today.

"The first, concerns the killing of 26 year old Dritan Prroni, in Shkodër in October 2010. According to the story reported in the Albanian daily 'Gazeta Shqip', five years earlier (September 2005) Dritan's paternal uncle who owned a bar in Shkodër had shot dead a 21 year old man called Sokol Njemza as both had a brawl in the bar under the influence of alcohol. After the event, all males of the Prroni extended family – including Dritan who was also 21 years old at the time – were sequestered indoors in their house in Shkodër for fear of revenge, while the killer went into hiding and is still on the 'wanted' list of the police. Both families originate in the Dukagjin region, the heartland of the Kanun of Lek Dukagjin. After five years of isolation, Dritan decided to defy the threat and started going out of the house, attending the local protestant church where he had become a pastor recently. Until October 2010 when the 21 year old brother of the murdered man (Sokol) hunted him down and shot him dead in one of the main streets of the city of Shkodër, in broad daylight, also wounding a passer-by in the process.

"The second case took place in March 2011. The Albanian daily BalkanWeb reported that Astrit Kurmemaj, who was serving his 20 years jail sentence for a murder he committed in April 2003, was on a short leave in March 2011 to visit his family in Shkodër. On the last day before he was due to return to prison, he was shot dead near his home. Police are looking for the killer, but suspect the case is a revenge/blood-feud case related to Astrit's victim of 2003. Astrit allegedly also killed his victim because of a blood feud after his brother had been killed some years earlier by a cousin of Astrit's

victim. Moreover, in January 2011 there was a failed attempt to kill Astrit's 16 year old son who also lived in Shkodër.

"The third case, although somewhat distant in time (2005), is presented here to illustrate the extent to which individuals will go to 'uphold their family's honour' by ensuring that the 'owed' blood is taken. In this story reported by the BBC, the brother of the victim of a killing came to 'avenge his brother's blood' in the UK, where he hunted down and then killed the young man who had allegedly committed the first murder in 2000 in a central town in Albania and who had subsequently fled the country and settled in the UK. As the second murder took place in the UK, this received some attention from the UK media at the time.

"In the post-communist years the killings often do not adhere to the tenets of the Kanun, but the latter is used as a tool to justify murder that may take place for a variety of reasons, at times involving rival gangs in cities and districts. Some of these allegations were part of the second illustrative case above. In a BBC report in 2005, Tonin Gjuraj, who was a university lecturer in the city of Shkodra and who had researched the issue of blood feud commented on the UK blood-feud related murder (third illustrative case in this review): 'Acts of revenge justified on the basis of the Kanun are often nothing more than common criminal offences in an area where law enforcement remains weak.' The impact, however, is the same in terms of isolating male members of the family and holding the (extended) family collectively responsible for a crime an individual has committed. As such, definitions of revenge or blood feuds often overlap, since they would both be considered as 'honour killing' of males. Clarissa de Waal, A Cambridge-based anthropologist who has also carried out research in northern parts of Albania, further elaborated in the same BBC report that: '…blood feuds were linked to a concept of "neighbourhood opinion" strong in Albanian communities… families often get involved in blood feuds because if they did not avenge their loss they would be perceived as cowards locally' and that '… in some cases killers have paid corrupt officials to secure freedom…'." **[86a] (p7)**

State protection

9.15 The Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, in a Preliminary note on the mission to Albania (15–23 February 2010) stated that:

"The blood feud phenomenon re-emerged at the end of the communist era and increased significantly with the 1997 breakdown in law and order. The absence of effective official responses to criminality encouraged the citizenry to revert to traditional mechanisms to obtain justice. Suggestions that the criminal justice system is still so inefficient and corrupt as to necessitate continuing resort to blood feuds to achieve justice appear, however, misplaced. While the justice system does suffer from serious weaknesses and considerable corruption, there is no evidence that a perceived law and order vacuum explains a continuing attachment to the practice of blood feuds." **[13d] (p5)**

See Section 19: Corruption

9.16 The IRB report dated 15 October 2010, reported that:

"Article 78 of Albania's Criminal Code, which was amended by Law No. 8733 in 2001, states that "[h]omicide committed for interest, retaliation or blood feud is punished by not less than twenty-five years or life imprisonment." Article 83/a, which was added to the Criminal Code in 2001, states that '[s]erious threat of revenge or blood feud to a

person or minor [causing them] to stay isolated is punished by fine or up to three years of imprisonment'. Sources indicate that there have been prosecutions in Albania for blood-feud-related murders." **[13f]**

9.17 The Special Rapporteurs' report, in considering the efforts made stated that:

"… in spite of efforts made, the government has had a limited impact on both limiting the cases of blood feuds and changing the mentality of local communities surrounding the phenomenon. The latter is particularly problematic because of the '… lingering notions that collective punishment is acceptable', 'notions which are utterly incompatible with the… human rights of all individuals'. In some cases '[A] number of interlocutors informed me that they had approached the Government for assistance to end their self-isolation through reconciliation, but the State did little in response". **[13d](p7)**

Although see also paragraph 9.04

9.18 The report continued:

"The UN Special Rapporteur states that there is a widespread perception in Albania that judges and prosecutors can be bribed to reduce charges or lower sentences in blood-feud-related murders. Two sources indicate that blood-feud-related crimes are often either not recognized or are purposely categorized as more ordinary crimes with lesser sentences … there have been several cases where perpetrators of blood-feud-related crimes have been released from jail after only one or two years.

"The Commission of the European Communities reports that judicial reform in Albania is at an 'early stage' and that the justice system functions poorly due to problems with 'independence, transparency and efficiency.' The UN Special Rapporteur similarly notes that the Albanian justice system has "serious weaknesses and considerable corruption." Global Integrity refers to the Albanian justice system as 'among the most criticized institutions in the country' and states that Albanian society perceives it to be 'very corrupt' in comparison with other government departments." **[13f]**

See also Judiciary and Corruption

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Reconciliation Committees (RCs)

9.19 The Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) of Canada, in response to an enquiry on the means by which reconciliation groups begin working on a case, dated 8 October 2010, stated that:

"… there are three main ways in which the reconciliation of blood feuds is initiated: First, a reconciliation group may go to a region that has problems with blood feuds and hold a meeting to explain their role, describe available options and generate interest. Second, the reconciliation group may contact members of feuding families who they believe are trustworthy to see if they would be interested in working with them. Third, individuals involved in blood feuds may approach a reconciliation group and ask for their assistance. The Professor noted that the process is often secretive because it is risky." **[13e]**

9.20 The report continued:

"The aim of the mediation is to establish the facts of the feud and to seek a negotiated solution which is acceptable to both parties. Although there can be a financial settlement (such as paying compensation to the bereaved or offended family), it is the social context - the negotiations undertaken by respected elders or mediation organizations - which is vital to the process of ending the feud.

"The 'besë declaration' is the traditional means of ending a blood feud following a negotiated settlement. It satisfies the honour of both parties and thus ends the cycle of retribution. The actual 'besë' is a solemn pledge made between the two families to end the blood feud. Unless both parties are willing to enter into negotiations, there is no prospect of achieving a 'besë declaration' and the feud will continue indefinitely or until all eligible males have either been killed or have fled the country." **[13e]**

9.21 An interesting commentary on the effect of blood feuds and the involvement of RCs can be found in 'Letter from Albania: The brutal custom of blood feuds, by Jeffrey White, 27 June 2008' **[28a]**

9.22 According to the European Commission Enlargement Strategy and Progress Report 2010: Albania dated 9 November 2010:

"The number of blood feud killings has decreased, due notably to better policing. Specific criminalisation of blood feuds and blood feud killings, the creation of specialised police units and the establishment of a high-level Coordination Committee have been important steps in this field. However, the incidence of these killings continues to result in the families concerned being self-isolated due to fear of reprisals, thus depriving children of basic rights such as inclusive education. … [S]everal NGOs have been active in this field, providing support to affected families and contributing to increased awareness of the need to eradicate this phenomenon. Collection of reliable data on blood feud killings is required in order to measure the extent of the problem and address it adequately. Community education, outreach and measures aimed at reconciliation of families are also needed." **[8a] (p25)**

9.23 The IAGCI report also stated that: "An understanding of the principles and meanings of blood feuds in the Albanian context are essential …. [and that] The COI Key Document Nov 2009 contained insightful information (pp.14-15) from key experts in the field, and we recommend that those continue to be used in conjunction with the 2012 COI report." **[86a] (p9)**

Attestation letters for blood feuds

9.24 The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, in a report, 'Albania: Attestation letters for blood feuds; issuing organizations; how letters are issued, processed and stored; whether issuing organizations are recognized by the government; whether the Committee of Nationwide Reconciliation (CNR) has the full authority, approved by the government and recognized by international organizations and institutions, to verify the authenticity of blood feuds; fees for mediation services; issuance of false attestation letters', dated 1 February 2012, stated that:

"In a statement prepared by the Albanian Ministry of Interior for the Research Directorate, an official indicated that some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Albania have issued certificates [or attestation letters] to people involved in blood feuds,

but these organizations do not have any "legal right" to issue such certificates (Albania 4 Jan. 2012). Similarly, in correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Executive Director of the Albanian Foundation for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation of Disputes (AFCR), an Albanian NGO established in 1995 for the purpose of conflict resolution and the promotion of tolerance and understanding, stated that some NGOs have issued attestation letters about blood feuds, but that they do not have any official authority to act in this capacity.

"The official of the Albanian Ministry of Interior indicated that the police, prosecution office, and the courts are the state institutions that handle blood feud problems, and that the courts and prosecution office are the only agencies authorized by the government to issue certificates related to blood feuds (Albania 4 Jan. 2012). Without providing details, the official indicated that these certificates can be issued after authorities "evaluate whether a case requires further legal protection or not" (ibid.). In contrast to the official's statement, two NGOs active in blood-feud mediation indicated that, to their knowledge, there are no governmental agencies that issue attestation letters about blood feuds." **[10i] (Section 1)**

9.25 The same report continued:

"Regarding the role of NGOs in mediating blood feuds, the Ministry of Interior official explained that NGOs operate in accordance with the Constitution and the 1999 Law on Mediation (Albania 4 Jan. 2012). The official specifically listed the Committee of Nationwide Reconciliation (CNR), the Mission of Feuds Reconciliation, the League of Missionaries of Peace, the AFCR and the Center for Justice and Peace as organizations active in blood feud mediation (ibid.). However, in response to a question about whether any NGOs are approved by the government to verify the authenticity of blood feuds, he noted that NGOs "do not duplicate the powers of the [c]ourt and the [p]rosecution [o]ffice" (ibid.).

"In contrast to the official, the Chairman of the CNR, in a correspondence with the Research Directorate, stated that the CNR is the "only organization recognized by the government and it has full authority, approved by the government to verify blood feuds and issue the attestation letters" (CNR 29 Nov. 2011). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the chairman of the CNR provided a recommendation letter dated 29 September 2009, which states that the Albanian Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities cooperates with the CNR and recommends "all local and international institutions" to contact the committee with regard to verification of the families in blood feuds (Albania 29 Sept. 2009). The letter further describes the CNR as a [translation] "leading forum of the associations and missions of reconciliation" that [translation] "protects the rights of the families affected by … blood feud[s] … and certifies all the issues related to the families in blood feuds," and keeps in its archives documents related to the families in blood feuds (ibid.)." **[10i] (Section 1)**

Issuance of Attestation letters by the CNR

9.26 The IRB report stated that:

"The Chairman of the CNR provided the following information on its procedures. The attestation letters are issued only after the verification of a blood feud and confirmation that it would be difficult to reconcile. The attestation letters are signed only by the chairman of the CNR, Mr. Gjin Marku. No one else is authorized to sign letters. The CNR creates a file for a particular blood feud, which includes a copy of the letter. The

file may contain information on the situation that caused the blood feud, contact details of individuals involved in the blood feud and notes on reconciliation attempts. All the files are stored in accordance with the Albanian Data Protection Act, in the main office of the CNR in Tirana (CNR 30 Nov. 2011)." **[10i] (Section 2)**

Purchase of False Attestation Letters

9.27 The IRB report, Albania: Attestation letters for blood feuds; … 1 February 2012, stated that:

"Various sources report that some NGOs have issued false documents about blood feuds (Albania 2 Dec. 2011; AFCR 16 Dec. 2011; Belgium 29 Nov. 2011, 4-8; Balkan Insight 5 Dec. 2011; ibid. 27 Oct. 2011; Kohajone.com n.d). In response to an increase in blood-feud related asylum claims in Belgium in September and October of 2011, the head of Belgium's Asylum and Migration Department reportedly claimed that behind the individual asylum seekers "is an entire organisation, networks that provide documents and fake papers in exchange for huge amounts of money" (qtd. in AFP 18 Oct. 2011). According to the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network's publication Balkan Insight, the Belgian official met with Albanian authorities to warn them about possible criminal networks (27 Oct. 2011).

"Balkan Insight found that some NGOs that claim to work for blood feud reconciliation "routinely sell families documents and certificates saying they could become victims of a fatal vendetta if they do not receive asylum …," even in cases in which no feud or murder exists (Balkan Insight 27 Oct. 2011). The reporter, who went undercover looking to buy a false attestation letter about involvement in a blood feud, was initially offered a certificate by Fran Nikolli, the general secretary of Mother Teresa's Missionaries for Peace, who created a fictitious story about a family targeting the journalist for revenge after an uncle, who was alleged to be a migrant worker in Greece, fatally shot a family member in response to a car accident (ibid.). Nikolli offered to sell such a certificate to the journalist for 250 Euros [343.338 Canadian dollars (CAD) (XE 29 Nov. 2011a)], while he claimed that, if the story had been "real," the price would have been 150 Euros [206.003 CAD (XE 29 Nov. 2011b)] (Balkan Insight 27 Oct. 2011). Moreover, Nikolli said that his organization had released approximately 220 similar certificates in August and September of 2011 (ibid.). However, according to the reporter, Nikolli backed out of issuing the certificate after the Albanian police began investigating his organization (ibid.). Gjin Mekshi, chair of the Shkodra-based "Nationwide Reconciliation Mission, 'Mother Teresa'," also offered to sell the journalist a similar document about the same "imaginary crime" for 200 Euros [274.771 CAD (XE 29 Nov. 2011c)]." **[10i] (Section 4)**

9.28 The report continued:

"Further, sources indicate that two local officials, the head of the town of Postriba and the mayor of Koplik, were indicted for issuing fake certificates about blood feuds. A police representative reportedly stated that the officials "had no legal framework on which to issue such documents and in most cases they are fakes, because the people who received them were not involved in any conflict or vendetta".

"A report by the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (Commissariat général aux réfugiés et aux apatrides) in Belgium cites information from the Albanian State Police report to the effect that the Association of

Peace Reconciliation Missionaries of Albania had also issued fraudulent attestation letters to people who were not involved in any blood feuds.

"The Albanian news agency KojaJone.com, Balkan Insight and the Albanian State Police report on police investigations into the activities of Gjin Marku, the chairman of the CNR, and Pashko Popaj, a member of the Association of Missionaries of Peace and Reconciliation of Blood Feuds, in issuing false documents about blood feuds (Albania 2 Dec. 2011; Balkan Insight 5 Dec. 2011; KojaJone.com n.d.). The Executive Director of AFCR stated that the CNR also has issued false attestation letters and that state authorities have initiated penal proceedings against the organization. According to the KojaJone.com,

[Translation]

"[t]he State Police declared that the two individuals are suspected of using their official positions to issue forged certificates to different people with the aim of applying and obtaining unfair asylum in some countries of Europe, thus committing the offense of falsification of documents. Police sources said that according to verifications and the information gathered by the Financial Crime Directorate at the Department of Organized and Serious Crimes of the State Police in cooperation with police counterparts showed that 55 year-old Gjin Marku, and Pashko Popaj issued forged certificates without legal basis to some citizens who do not appear to be in enmity or vengeance. Citizens were issued certificates in order to seek asylum in Belgium. … Following investigations conducted by police, it was discovered that Mr. Marku and Mr. Popaj issued forged certificates by making use of their official positions. Thus, the police sent materials against both individuals to the prosecutor for further investigation. (KojaJone.com n.d.)

"Similarly, the Albanian state-police press release indicates that the Financial Crime Directorate at the Department of Organized and Serious Crime of the State Police provided materials to the Prosecution Office against Gjin Marku and Pashko Popaj (Albania 2 Dec. 2011). Both individuals were reportedly suspected [translation] "of using their official position … to issue forged certificates to different people with the aim of applying and obtaining unfair asylum in some countries of Europe, thus committing the offense of forgery of documents according to article 186 of the Penal Code" (ibid.). According to the Criminal Code, the punishment for issuing falsified documents in an official capacity is imprisonment for up to seven years and a fine ranging from 200,000 lek [1881.06 CAD (XE 17 Jan. 2012a)] to two million lek [18793.44 CAD (XE 17 Jan. 2012b)] (Albania 2004, Art. 186)." **[10i] (Section 4)**

9.29 The IRB report also stated that:

"In addition, the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons in Belgium, in a report about falsified documents in Albania, notes that the Albanian television program "Fiks Fare," during a 27 October 2011 presentation, showed the president of the Peace Missionaries Union Albania, Pashko Toma, while being filmed with a hidden camera, accepting money for signing and stamping a document that was written by an '"undercover"' journalist. The president "explained to the journalist that he issues similar attestation letters to Albanians from all over the country and that his secretary knows what to do when she writes these kinds of documents".

"The same television program showed Gjin Marku, also being filmed with a hidden camera, accepting 300 Euros [392.144 CAD (XE 12 Jan. 2012)] in exchange for the issuance of an attestation letter and the creation of a "vendetta" file for a woman he met for the first time. According to the report,

[Translation]

"[s]he said that the documents were to be used by her brother to seek asylum in Great Britain. The documents were written without the Committee of Nationwide Reconciliation verifying the facts or acting as a mediator in this case. … Gjin Marku explained to the woman that her brother must say during a hearing that he has proof that he is still in danger. … The woman explained that actually the family [was] not involved in any vendetta, [but] Gjin Marku told her not to worry about it…. (ibid.)" **[10i] (Section 4)**

9.30 The IRB report continued:

"However, in correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Chairman of the CNR denied the allegations, claiming that they were part of a "political setup". Regarding the incident with the hidden camera, in a statement by the CNR, which was signed by the Vice-chairman of the CNR, the Chairman of the National Assembly of the Reconciliation Missionaries and the Secretary and Vice-chairman of the Assembly, and which the Chairman of the CNR provided to the Research Directorate, the authors maintain that the money was charged by the CNR to "cover logistics cost" and the certificate was issued based on the urgency of the case and the lack of time for verification in accordance with the CNR regulations. In earlier correspondence to the Research Directorate, the Chairman claimed that CNR representatives do not receive any money for their reconciliation efforts from families in blood feuds, but that families sometimes pay their travel expenses or accommodations." **[10i] (Section 4)**

9.31 The Committee of Nationwide Reconciliation issued a 'Memo' entitled, About the scenarios and political setups against the Committee of Nationwide Reconciliation to cover the reality of blood feuds and honor killings as well as the mafia connections with the Albanian state, 28 December 2011, which set out their position in more detail. **[97a]**

9.32 The IRB report, Albania: Attestation letters for blood feuds; … 1 February 2012, further stated that:

"Regarding falsified documents, in 22 November 2011 correspondence to the Research Directorate, the Chairman of the CNR warned that there have been several cases in which his signature has been forged and that he has advised international agencies to verify the authenticity of attestation letters directly with the CNR.

"The CNR claims that there are about 83 so-called "reconciliation associations" such as "League of missionaries of peace and national reconciliation, Mother Teresa Mission of Reconciliation, The Institute of Justice and National Reconciliation, House of Justice and Peace, House of Reconciliation and Peace, etc.". According to the CNR, some of those organizations have issued false attestation letters.

"The Albanian Ministry of Interior has reportedly established a task force to address the problem of counterfeit documents about blood feuds used by asylum seekers. Both the Albanian police director and the Minister of Interior have vowed to prosecute those who prepare such counterfeit documents.

"According to the report of the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons in Belgium, [translation] "considering … the extent of corruption in Albania, it is impossible to be sure about the level of corruption of certain organizations. As a consequence, the attempt of examining the authenticity of an attestation letter cannot be conclusive". The report also notes that although some organizations have issued fake attestation letters, [translation] "it does not mean that all attestation letters issued by those organizations contain false information" **[10i] (Section 4)**

9.33 In correspondence to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Albanian Ministry of the Interior set out the various charges laid and the individuals concerned. (**Annex E (Letter A)**

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10. SECURITY FORCES

10.01 The European Commission (EC), in its Commission Opinion on Albania's application for membership of the European Union dated 9 November 2010, noted that:

"Security forces in Albania are divided into three main categories: the armed forces, police forces and security services." **[8a] (p23)**

POLICE

10.02 The EC report continued:

"The police forces are composed of: the Albanian State Police, which is the national police force, tasked with the maintenance of public order and the fight against crime; the Municipal Police Forces, which serve under the authority of local government entities and the Republican Guard which is a constabulary force tasked with protecting government property and dignitaries and which has military status and powers of arrest. There are inspectorates within line ministries, the members of which have the attributes of Judicial Police officers (competent to identify and process violations of laws and reporting to the Public Prosecutor)." **[8a] (p23)**

See Recent developments – paragraph 4.10

10.03 The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB), in a response to an enquiry on structure and location of the police force, dated 19 September 2006, reported that:

"In July 2006 correspondence sent to the Research Directorate, the Justice and Home Affairs Coordinator of the European Commission delegation to Albania indicated that the Albanian State Police (ASP) is a centralized police force that functions under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior. … The Ministry of Interior was established in September 2005 when the Ministry of Public Order and the Ministry of Local Government and Decentralization merged. The ASP has twelve regional police directorates, each of which administers at least one police commissariat. Each police commissariat oversees several police stations and police border crossing posts. … an Organized Crime Directorate was created and the Internal Control Office was strengthened …

"The ASP's jurisdiction extends throughout the territory of Albania. However, police stations do not exist in all villages … small towns without their own police station are supervised by the nearest police station." **[13g]**

10.04 The US State Department 2010 Human Rights Report: Albania (USSD Report 2010), published on 8 April 2011, stated:

"Local police units report to the Ministry of Interior and are the main force responsible for internal security. Despite improvements in law enforcement training and management, police did not consistently respect the human rights of citizens during the performance of their duty and were not fully accountable to the rule of law. In some instances, police impunity was a problem. Police officers did not enforce the law equally and an individual's political or criminal connections often influenced enforcement of laws. Low salaries contributed to continued corruption and unprofessional behavior which remained impediments to the development of an effective civilian police force. During the year the ombudsman processed and completed complaints against police officers mainly on arrest and detention problems; the ombudsman resolved nearly one third in favor of the complaining citizen." **[2f] (Section 1)**

10.05 The USSD 2010 report also stated that in regard to torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment that while "The constitution and law prohibit such actions… police and prison guards sometimes beat and abused suspects and detainees. … Police sometimes used threats and violence to extract confessions." **[2f] (Section 1)**

See Security forces – Avenues of complaint , Torture and Corruption

MUNICIPAL POLICE FORCE

10.06 The Canadian IRB in a further response which concerned Municipalities with a municipal police force, dated 16 September 2004, stated that:

"Under the terms of Law No. 8224 for the Organization and Functioning of the Police of the Municipality and Commune, municipal police forces are mandated to perform functions that "serve the public order, tranquillity, and the progress of public works within the territory of the municipality or commune, [and] which are not under the competence of other state authorities in compliance with the provisions of this law" **[13h]**

BORDER POLICE

10.07 The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), in a report Internal Security Reform – Proceedings of the Budapest Working Group 2007, published 2008, stated that:

"The Border Police is responsible for the control of legal border crossing and for guarding the border. It is a constitutive part of the State Police. The Activity of the Border Police is based on the Constitution, in the law for the State Police, in international acts and agreements that regulate border issues and emigration, in which our state is part, in this law and other legal provisions. The Border Police has its own structure and personnel, which are approved by the Minister of Public Order (Interior)." **[82a] (p57)**

COAST GUARD

10.08 The DCAF Internal security report, 2007, also stated that:

"The aim of the creation of the Coast Guard is the implementation of legality at sea. The Coast Guard is subordinate to the Ministry of Defence and is part of naval districts, which are subordinate to the Command of Naval Forces. The Coast Guard co-acts with state or private institutions and subjects that have interests in the sea.' The main functions of the Coast Guard in relation to border control are:

"Prevention and exertion of control on the illegal border passing of navigating vehicles, of goods and people;

"In internal waters, the Coast Guard offers help and cooperates with the Border Police, with captains, ports and other state institutions." **[82a] (p57)**

The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), report Internal Security Reform – Proceedings of the Budapest Working Group 2007, published 2008 outlines reforms undertaken by State and Border police. **[82a]**

ARMED FORCES

10.09 The European Commission report 2010 stated that:

"As regards the armed forces; the General Staff Headquarters, the Albanian Joint Forces Command, the Albanian Support Command and the Albanian Training and Doctrine Command are all under the purview of the Ministry of Defence. These all have military status and include a number of civilian employees." **[8a] (p23)**

10.10 In a Center for Strategic Leadership, U.S. Army War College issue paper Strategic Planning in the Albanian Armed Forces dated January 2009, the Albanian armed forces were considered thus:

"In 1993 the Albanian Army consisted of approximately 40,000 poorly trained personnel operating obsolete World War II and Korean War vintage equipment. The first step towards modernization was the establishment of a defense agreement with the United States. This agreement opened the American armed forces professional military education and training systems to Albanian students, and laid the groundwork for United States European Command (USEUCOM) supervised military to military exchanges. These U.S. programs combined with similar efforts by other NATO members support the Albanian Armed Forces (AAF) ongoing transformation to a smaller, more effective, well-trained, joint force capable of contributing to NATO operations. A major step in the AAF's transformation was the publication of The Military Strategy of the Republic of Albania in 2008. …The main goal of this Strategy is the fulfilment of the standards and requirements, as well as the related responsibilities for integration in the Euro Atlantic structures. This document represents a necessary first step in achieving the AAF's transformation goals by 2010." **[70a]**

See Albanian Military Forces for a simple inventory. **[71a]**

The Gërdec explosion - March 2008

10.11 AI's 2009 Annual Report, covering events of 2008, recorded:

"An investigation was initiated after an explosion in March [2008] at a depot where obsolete munitions were being dismantled. The Minister of Defence was dismissed and lost his immunity while several officials from the Ministry of Defence were arrested. The explosion resulted in 26 deaths, over 300 people injured and the destruction or damage of hundreds of houses. It also gave rise to allegations of corruption and irregular arms trading." **[26h] (p.1)**

10.12 The Freedom House report, Freedom in the World 2009, further stated:

"Berisha's government was plagued throughout 2008 by corruption scandals, including two involving Albania's Hoxha-era munitions stockpile. On March 15, a series of explosions at a weapons depot near Tirana killed 26 people, injured 300, and displaced some 3,000 others. Later that month, press reports implicated the leadership in an illegal scheme to export aging Chinese-made ammunition to Afghanistan as part of a U.S. government contract. Facing considerable international pressure, the parliament in June lifted the immunity of Fatmir Mediu, who had resigned as defense minister in March. In July, Prosecutor General Ina Rama filed murder charges against the head of Albania's arms-trading agency and two private contractors for the depot explosions. The death of a key witness in the export scandal in September fed the opposition's claims of a government cover-up, though an investigation later deemed the death accidental. Critics of two bills passed with government support in December said they would undermine judicial independence and hamstring the ongoing corruption probes." **[9e]**

10.13 The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) in its Evaluation of the Country of Origin Information Report on Albania, May 2011, stated that:

"By 2011, the trial is continuing as non-appearance of legal advisors for both the defence and the prosecution have dragged the process on in the last three years. Meanwhile, all those arrested have been released on bail or given home arrest orders, while the former Minister of Justice was reinstated as Minister of Environment." **[86a] (p27)**

See Corruption – paragraph 19.04 et seq

OTHER GOVERNMENT FORCES

INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

10.14 The European Commission report 2010 stated that:

"The security services are divided between the Internal Security Service, which is tasked with confronting national security threats, and the Military Intelligence Service, which deals primarily with external security threats. **[8a] (p23)**

10.15 The US Army Peacekeeping & Stability Operations Institute (PSKOI) in a paper Assessing Intelligence Capacity Building in Albania -1 July 2009 noted that:

"The intelligence community under the communist regimes of the Cold War was an instrument of internal repression and political control, focused on sustaining and protecting the autocratic rule of the communist state. Abuses of human rights by state security services were commonplace. Those abuses were largely directed and overseen by the intelligence organs of the state, which occupied the pinnacle of the state security architecture. With the overthrow of the communist regime in 1991,

political parties that had suffered from abuse at the hands of the communist-era "Organs of State Security" had an immediate and vested interest in reforming the intelligence organizations which orchestrated much of that abuse." **[74a]**

10.16 The Initiative for Peace building (IfP) in a report Security Sector Reform in Albania, June 2009 stated that:

"The secret police, known as Sigurimi in Albania, was the most important instrument through which the Communist Party maintained its power. The role and importance of Sigurimi to the communist regime cannot be overstated and was incomparable to the other security instruments, the police and military, which were under the surveillance of Sigurimi. Thus reform of the secret police was very important in order to break with the past. Similar to police reform, the legal reform of the intelligence service started in 1991. The law stated that the National Intelligence Service (NIS) would be a depoliticised institution, even though at that stage those working in the NIS were still the same personnel as during the communist period. This law provided the legal basis that regulated the functioning of the NIS until 1998. The first article of the law defined the scope of work of the NIS. The NIS would be under the authority of and report to the Council of Ministers about the security situation and for the way it has used the financial and material resources at its disposal. For any operation that infringes upon human rights, the NIS should receive permission from the general prosecutor." **[73a] (p23)**

10.17 The same report continued:

"The election of the new president in 2002 finally led to the dismissal of the head of the NIS. At the same time a parliamentary investigative commission was initiated to examine the constitutionality and legitimacy of NIS activity. The work of the committee focused its investigation on eavesdropping and surveillance with regard to the opposition and the involvement of the NIS in the murder of opposition MP Azem Hajdari, as well as claims of abuse of funds. The case was then taken to the general prosecutor on embezzlement charges, which were eventually dismissed y the court. After the appointment of the new head of the NIS, there have been no more accusations by the opposition against the intelligence service." **[73a] (p24)**

10.18 The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) reported in its Albania Country Report dated 10 February 2011 that:

"… [I]n July 2010, Mr Berisha's attempt to pass a new law on the State Intelligence Service' (SIS) was blocked by the SMI members of parliament. There were allegations that the law would limit the independence of the SIS from the government. The head of the SIS is Mr Bahri Shaqiri." **[7b]**

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS BY GOVERNMENT FORCES

TORTURE

10.19 The European Commission (EC), in its Commission Opinion on Albania's application for membership of the European Union dated 9 November 2010, noted that:

"Albania has taken measures to combat torture and ill-treatment by the police and prison staff, and to prosecute perpetrators. The country is party to the UN Convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and its optional protocol and it ratified the European Convention for the prevention of torture

and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in 1996. Following recommendations by the Ombudsman, a legal definition of the crime of torture was included in the Criminal Code (Article 86). Internal controls have been introduced within the prison system to prevent and detect cases of excessive use of force. Capacity-building training sessions have been delivered to prison staff, in cooperation with NGOs. In June 2010 the Directorate General for Prisons renewed the memorandum signed with certain NGOs granting them access to penitentiary institutions." **[8a] (p26)**

10.20 Amnesty International (AI), in 'Albania Human Rights, Human Rights Concerns', undated, stated that:

"Amnesty International remains concerned that torture and ill-treatment of detainees are common in Albania. Investigations into some complaints were started, but tended to be delayed and inconclusive. Detention conditions, particularly for remand prisoners held in police stations, remain harsh, although steps have been taken to reduce overcrowding. Domestic violence is widespread and significant reforms are needed to protect victims." **[26i]**

10.21 In its 2010 Annual Report for Albania, published 28 May 2010, AI stated that:

"Police and prison guards allegedly tortured or otherwise ill-treated detainees. In January the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture's report on its visit to Albania in June 2008 stated that "ill-treatment by the police… often appears to be related to an overemphasis on confessions during criminal investigations". The Committee had received allegations of serious ill-treatment in police stations in Korça, Pogradec and Elbasan, and at Korça remand centre. The authorities subsequently said that disciplinary measures had been taken against several officials at Korça remand centre.

"In April Edison Lleshi, aged 15 threw himself out of a window of the police station in Peshkopi, breaking a leg and sustaining other injuries. The Ombudsperson concluded that he did this after being beaten and threatened by police officers who had questioned him about a theft. Disciplinary measures were taken against seven police officers, and a criminal investigation was started against one of them." **[26b]**

10.22 While Freedom House reported in its Freedom in the World 2010 – Albania, 1 June 2010 country report that:

"Police reportedly engage in abuse of suspects during arrest and interrogation, and such ill-treatment is lightly if ever punished despite vigorous criticism from the country's human rights ombudsman. New prison facilities have been constructed, but inmates continue to suffer from overcrowding and lack of adequate medical treatment.

"High-level crimes associated with the Balkan wars of the 1990s have gone unpunished. In 2009, former security service commander Arben Sefgjini and three former colleagues were on trial for the 1995 torture and murder of a man who may have witnessed conversations between then president Berisha and Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milosevic about oil smuggling. Berisha fired Sefgjini as head of the tax service in January." **[9a]**

10.23 The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) in its Evaluation of the Country of Origin Information Report on Albania, May 2011, stated that:

"Further allegations of police abuse took place after the 21 January 2011 demonstrations, when police were reported to have beat individuals they arrested during the arrest and while in detention." **[86a] (p28)**

See Police , Prison conditions and Freedom of association and assembly

CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT OF SECURITY FORCES

10.24 The European Commission report of 2010 stated that:

"Civilian control over the armed and security forces and intelligence services is regulated by a comprehensive legal and policy framework including the constitution and laws regulating the different forces. Parliament is the highest authority for civilian control over armed and security forces and intelligence services. Other important institutions with control functions provided by law include the president, the prime minister, the High State Control, the Office of the General Prosecutor, the Ombudsman, and the General Inspector.

"Parliamentary oversight over the security sector is executed through several committees within parliament, with the Security Committee and the Laws Committee being the most relevant ones. They conduct periodic hearings of officials on security sector issues. However, the capacity of these committees and their legal powers to perform effective oversight functions in a system of checks and balances are insufficient. In addition, while political direction or the development of security policies is indeed within the remit of ministers, political interference with the security sector still exists and extends to the lower grades of the hierarchy. Overall, civilian control over the armed and security forces and intelligence services is regulated by a comprehensive legal and policy framework, … Parliamentary oversight over the security sector suffers from weaknesses and political interference." **[8a] (p23)**

See Police

See Security Sector Reform in Albania, June 2009 for further information on the security situation. **[73a]**

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11. MILITARY SERVICE

11.01 According to the CIA World Fact Book, updated 17 February 2012, the following is applicable:

"Military service age and obligation: 19 years of age (2004)

Manpower available for military service: males age 16-49: 622,379 females age 16-49: 660,715 (2010 est.)

Manpower fit for military service: males age 16-49: 622,379 females age 16-49: 660,715 (2010 est.)

Manpower reaching militarily significant age annually: male: 31,986 female: 29,533 (2010 est.) **[4a] (Military)**

11.02 An article in SETimes.com dated 28 August 2008; accessed 22 February 2011 stated that:

"Beginning January 1st 2010, Albania will no longer have compulsory military service. The initiative is part of the reforms required by NATO, which the country hopes to join after meeting the Alliance's requirements. Parliament passed a law last week to initiate the reform. The legislation falls under the programme launched by the Albanian armed forces -- with the help of the US Department of Defence -- to technologically upgrade and fully professionalise the military by 2010." **[72a]**

11.03 The Statesmans Yearbook, undated noted that:

"Since 1 Jan. 2010 Albania has had an all-volunteer professional army." **[85A]**

See Children - National law and policies on minimum ages

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12. JUDICIARY

12.01 The US State Department 2010 Human Rights Report: Albania (USSD Report 2010), published on 8 April 2011, stated that:

"The constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however, political pressure, intimidation, widespread corruption, and limited resources sometimes prevented the judiciary from functioning independently and efficiently. The politicization of appointments to the High and Constitutional Courts threaten to undermine the independence and integrity of these courts." **[2f] (Section 1)**

ORGANISATION

12.02 The USSD Report 2009 stated that:

"The judicial system is composed of district courts, the serious crimes court, military courts, and appellate courts. There is a High Court that hears appeals from the appellate courts, and a Constitutional Court that reviews cases involving constitutional interpretation and conflicts between branches of government and cases of individuals alleging denial of due process." **[2b] (Section 1)**

12.03 The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), in its November 2010 Country Report stated that there is no administrative court in Albania. A bill drafted in early 2009 failed to pass through parliament because of the failure of the main governing and opposition parties to reach a compromise on the electoral dispute. This prevented the adoption of the law. **[7a]**

See Freedom of political expression

12.04 Freedom House, in its Nations in Transit 2010 report, dated 29 June 2010 stated that:

"The effectiveness of the judiciary remains a problem. Court reorganization began two years ago with the abolishment of eight courts in outlying areas of the country; the premises were preserved and judges were flown in from central courts as needed. In January 2009, Minister of Justice Bujar Nishani issued a decision closing court

branches, with all sessions to be held instead at the central court building. This might have a negative impact on access to justice, as citizens are now obliged to travel long distances to have their cases adjudicated." **[9b] (p62)**

INDEPENDENCE

12.05 The USSD Report 2009 further stated that:

"The High Council of Justice has authority to appoint, discipline, and dismiss district and appeals court judges. The council consists of the president, the justice minister, the head of the High Court, nine judges selected by the National Judicial Conference, and three members selected by the parliament. Judges may appeal their dismissal to the High Court.

"On February 16, the Constitutional Court suspended and referred to the Council of Europe's Venice Commission for further review the controversial "lustration" law, which allows the dismissal from office of a wide range of officials who participated in "political processes" while serving in higher-level positions under the Communist government. Adjudication of these cases was to be addressed by an extrajudicial commission appointed by the government-controlled parliament. The law appeared aimed at achieving the government's partisan political ends. In October the Venice Commission ruled that the lustration law, as written, does not comply with the country's constitution." **[2b] (Section 1)**

12.06 Freedom House, in the Nations in Transit 2011 – Albania, 27 June 2011 report noted that:

"Guaranteeing rule of law and judicial independence remained a challenge for Albania in 2010. Judicial reform was still considered incomplete, and there was no progress in revising and adopting some of the most important laws, including the Law on National Judicial Conference, the Law on Judicial Administration, and the Law on Establishment of Administrative Court and Administrative Justices. !e overall political stalemate also negatively influenced the judicial-reform process. The parliament failed to approve the law on administrative courts and administrative disputes. The Constitutional Court and High Court began the process of replacing members; one third of the Constitutional Court and 4 out of 17 members of the High Court are to be replaced. So far, the parliament has rejected most of the candidates proposed by President Bamir Topi. Although the lustration law has not been officially implemented in Albania due to the constitutional concerns it raises, the spirit of the law served as the basis for the parliament's rejection of one of the candidates. … Albania's judicial framework and independence rating remains unchanged at 4.25." **[9c] (p52)**

See Opposition groups and political activists

FAIR TRIAL

12.07 The USSD Report 2009 stated that:

"The law provides for the right to a fair trial with defendants presumed innocent until convicted. The court system does not provide for jury trials. Prosecutors and defense lawyers present cases to a judge or panel of judges, and defendants have the right to access all evidence that prosecutors present to the judges. Defendants have the right

to appeal. The law mandates an alternative sentencing system for juveniles." **[2b] (Section 1)**

12.08 Freedom House, in the Nations in Transit 2010 – Albania, 29 June 2010 report noted that:

"Delays and poor functioning of the justice system were observed throughout the year. The HCJ is in the process of increasing the number of judges in larger district courts to solve the backlog of cases. Court reorganization, although considered a positive step in increasing the efficiency of the judicial process, is not always accompanied by thorough preliminary studies by the HCJ or the Ministry of Justice. State institutions set a bad example with regard to the execution of court decisions, and the lack of trust in enforcement agencies has forced many Albanians to bring their cases before the European Court of Human Rights." **[9b] (p51)**

12.09 The USSD Report 2010 stated that:

"There is a functional civil law system where citizens have access to redress; however, it was susceptible to corruption, inefficiency, and political tampering. These factors undermine the judiciary's authority, contribute to controversial court decisions, and lead to an inconsistent application of civil law. The Bailiff's Office is responsible for enforcing civil judgments. The law allows private bailiffs to enforce judgments, facilitating both private and public entities to help enforce rulings. However, complete and timely enforcement of court decisions remained elusive." **[2f] (Section 1)**

CRIMINAL CODE

12.10 A copy of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Albania can be accessed here. **[76a]**

CODE OF CRIMINAL PROCEDURE

12.11 A copy of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Albania appears here. **[76b]**

See paragraphs 4.07, 7.03 and Corruption

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13. ARREST AND DETENTION – LEGAL RIGHTS

13.01 The US State Department 2010 Human Rights Report: Albania (USSD Report 2010), published on 8 April 2011, stated that:

"The constitution and law prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention; however, there were some reports that police occasionally arbitrarily arrested and detained persons …

"The constitution requires that authorities inform detained persons immediately of the charges against them and of their rights. Police sometimes failed to inform citizens of their rights at the time of arrest. Under the law, police must immediately inform the prosecutor of an arrest. The prosecutor may release the suspect or petition the court within 48 hours to hold the individual further. A court must decide within 48 hours whether to place a suspect in detention, require bail, prohibit travel, or require the defendant to report regularly to the police. In practice prosecutors requested and courts routinely ordered detention in many criminal cases. However, courts routinely denied

prosecutors' requests for detention for well-connected, high-profile defendants. In many cases house arrest was granted and not enforced consistently; time spent under house arrest accrued toward prison time if a defendant was convicted.

"Courts must provide indigent defendants with free legal counsel. According to the AHC, police officers often failed to inform defendants of this right, and there were complaints by detainees that authorities did not provide them with defense counsel from the outset of their detention. The AHC and several NGOs offered free legal advice and advocacy services to indigent persons." **[2f] (Section 1)**

See Constitution Art.27 et seq. and Foreign refugees

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14. PRISON CONDITIONS

14.01 The US State Department 2009 Human Rights Report: Albania (USSD Report 2009), published on 11 March 2010, noted:

"The Ministry of Justice operated all detention facilities; however, the Ministry of Interior oversaw police detention facilities, which housed detainees for up to 48 hours after their arrest. After 48 hours, arrestees were placed under Ministry of Justice supervision." **[2b] (Section 1)**

14.02 Amnesty International in Concerns in Albania: January-June 2009, dated September 2009, reported that:

"The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) noted significant improvements to conditions in remand centres (although there was still overcrowding), as well as major investment in the construction of new detention facilities. However, the CPT was concerned that hardly any progress had been made to improve conditions in police cells, and that some detainees were still kept for up to a month in police custody, pending transfer to a remand centre, in cells that were very small, lacking in light and with poor hygiene. The CPT recommendations included the provision of better medical, dental and psychiatric care for detainees." **[26e]**

14.03 The Amnesty report continued:

"Despite such progress, many problems remained. The Ombudsperson carried out inspections in seven prisons and some 20 police stations, and concluded that conditions in many were below national and international human rights standards for the detention of prisoners, despite an EC-funded programme for penitentiary reform. In a series of reports and recommendations to the relevant authorities, the Ombudsperson drew attention in particular to overcrowding, lack of outdoor exercise, buildings in poor repair and poor hygiene, and called for the closure of Burrel prison, a dilapidated remnant of Albania's communist past. The prison authorities reportedly replied that it could not be closed for at least two years, until new prisons were built." **[26e]**

14.04 The US State Department 2009 Human Rights Report: Albania (USSD Report 2009), published on 11 March 2010, stated:

"In its January 21 report on conditions of detention in the country, the CPT delegation noted that, with the exception of provision of food, hardly any progress had been made at the time of its June 2008 visit to improve physical conditions of detention in police detention facilities. In particular it found that detention conditions at the Police Directorate General in Tirana were "totally unacceptable." It found all cells to be very small, in a poor state of repair and hygiene, and to have little or no access to natural light and fresh air. There were also reports of prison overcrowding. To alleviate overcrowding, the government opened five new prisons during the year and in April passed a probation law that allows those convicted of minor crimes to be released on a probationary basis. Nearly 80 former inmates participated in this program. In its January 21 report, the CPT delegation noted that some cells in the unit for female prisoners at Prison No. 313 in Tirana were severely overcrowded, with up to four prisoners held in a cell measuring seven square meters (75 square feet). This was the only facility in the country for female pre-trial detainees. In November, the government signed a memorandum with a local NGO to increase the size of the facility." **[2b] (Section 1)**

14.05 The USSD Report 2010 stated that:

"The government allowed local and international human rights groups, the media, and others to monitor prison conditions. The law provides for an ombudsman to implement the National Mechanism for Torture Prevention. The ombudsman also monitored prison conditions and acted on prisoner complaints. The ombudsman found that several facilities lacked the appropriate infrastructure and found instances of overcrowding. The ombudsman investigated allegations of corruption within the prison system and found corruption to be a serious problem. However, the ombudsman's term in office ended in March, and the parliament was unable to appoint a new ombudsman, leaving a gap which hindered the functioning of this office.

"During the year there were no reports that authorities held minors together with adults. In October 2009 the government opened the Juvenile Institute in Kavaje, which serves as a rehabilitation, correctional, and consultation center for juveniles.

"In 2009 authorities initiated 361 disciplinary proceedings against prison guards and officials." **[2f] (Section 1)**

See Human rights violations by government forces - torture , Foreign refugees and Medical issues-mental health

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15. DEATH PENALTY

15.01 The database Legislationonline, accessed on 22 February 2011 reported that:

"The death penalty has been abolished for all peacetime crimes but is retained for serious crimes committed in wartime or during a state of emergency. (Article 8(a) of the Military Criminal Code, Law No. 8003, 1955 as amended by Law No. 8991, 4 July 2002)

"The Military Criminal Code envisages the death penalty for a number of crimes if committed during a state of emergency or wartime (Articles 25, 26, 28, 34, 47, 50, and 77 of the Military Criminal Code)." **[75a]**

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16. POLITICAL AFFILIATION

FREEDOM OF POLITICAL EXPRESSION

16.01 The US State Department 2010 Human Rights Report: Albania (USSD Report 2010), published on 8 April 2011, stated:

"In June 2009 the country held parliamentary elections that the OSCE ODIHR election observation mission stated met most OSCE commitments but nevertheless "did not fully realize the country's potential to adhere to the highest standards for democratic elections." The observation mission specifically cited problems in administrative procedures with the vote count, "a highly polarized environment," biased media coverage, and procedural violations, such as proxy voting. ODIHR observers assessed voting positively in 92 percent of voting centers.

"At years end the political impasse that followed the June 2009 election continued. The SP, despite having certified the electoral results, boycotted parliament, called for investigations into alleged electoral fraud, and blocked key legislation requiring a parliamentary super majority, including the establishment of an administrative courts system. The parliament's work has been obstructed by the ongoing political impasse and neither the SP nor the government has shown a readiness to compromise and end the deadlock. As a result, the parliament was not fully functioning during the year, and the parliament approved almost no major legislative proposals.

"The country has two major political parties, the Democratic Party (DP) and the SP and many smaller parties. In the June 2009 elections, 34 parties campaigned freely throughout the country. Political party financing was largely opaque." **[2f] (Section 2)**

16.02 Freedom House in the Nations in Transit 2011 – Albania, 27 June 2011 report noted that:

"The governance climate in Albania in 2010 was marked by harsh disputes between the government and the main opposition Socialist Party (SP) over the transparency of June 2009 parliamentary elections. The government and the opposition were unable to resolve the controversy over the investigation of the elections, resulting in a significant slowdown of the country's reform process. !is political stalemate had direct implications on Albania's political development and conditioned the country's European Union (EU) integration process and prospects. The SP demanded an election investigation, and boycotted the parliament from September 2009 until February 2010, when the terms of 65 (out of 140) members were close to expiring. Even after the boycott, SP participation in the parliament was hampered by the SP deputies' "conditional relation," which meant they were absent from legislative voting until the election transparency issue was settled. The legislative agenda was seriously affected by this situation." **[9c] (p54)**

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

16.03 The USSD Report 2010 added:

"The constitution and law provide for freedom of assembly and association, and the government generally respected these rights in practice. The law requires organizers of

gatherings in public places to notify police three days in advance; there were no reports that police arbitrarily denied such gatherings. … The law prohibits the formation of any political party or organization that is nontransparent or secretive; there were no reports that the government used this provision against any group during the year." **[2f] (Section 2)**

16.04 The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI), in its Commentary on the March 2011 Country of Origin Information (COI) report on Albania, May 2011, stated that:

"A second issue which is important to keep in mind regarding this basic democratic freedom of the right of assembly is the widespread occurrence of what can be coined as 'coerced assembly'. This means that individuals employed in the public sector – which includes teaching, medical and social services, ministries and public companies – are put under pressure to attend election rallies of the ruling party at threat of being fired from their jobs. Personal communication with a number of such individuals employed in various levels of public service revealed that they are required to sign attendance lists, while photographic images and video film are used as proof of compliance. Those in the teaching profession are put under pressure to ensure that their students participate in the rallies while threats for student non-participation include their expulsion from school as a final measure.

"These tendencies were generally reported as practices during the 2009 general elections, as reported also in the Freedom in the World – 2010 (Albania), published 1 June 2010, which stated that:

'International observers of the 2009 parliamentary elections hailed improvements in a number of areas, but also cited problems including media bias, abuse of state resources, political pressure on public employees…'.

'The government generally does not limit academic freedom, although both students and teachers were reportedly pressured to support the PD ahead of the 2009 elections.'

"Such incidence has continued in the current local election campaign, but open reporting of such cases is rare because of fear from further intimidation. Local Albanian media, for instance, reported on the case of the secondary school's director for the commune of Petrela, near Tirana, who claimed to have been fired from his job because of refusing to follow instructions from his superiors to take disciplinary measures against his students who in their free time supported the campaign of the opposition candidate. These acts seriously limit an individual's freedom to willingly participate or not in an assembly." **[86a] (p14)**

OPPOSITION GROUPS AND POLITICAL ACTIVISTS

16.05 The Freedom House report, Freedom in the World – 2011 (Albania), published 12 May 2011, stated that:

"The opposition Socialist Party continued its boycott of the parliament through the first five months of 2010 and attempted to obstruct legislative activity thereafter as it pursued its demand for a recount of ballots from the June 2009 parliamentary elections. The standoff threatened to stall Albania's progress toward European Union membership, though a visa-liberalization agreement with the bloc took effect in December." **[9d]**

16.06 The Freedom in the World – 2010 (Albania), published 1 June 2010, stated that:

"Weak state institutions have augmented the power of crime syndicates, and Albania is reportedly a key transhipment point for drug smugglers. Traditional tribal law and revenge killings are practiced in parts of the north. In two high-profile crimes in 2009, Supreme Court judge Ardian Nuni was shot and seriously wounded in February, and PS lawmaker Fatmir Xhindi was assassinated by two gunmen in May. The cases remained unsolved at year's end, and Nuni reportedly sought asylum in the United States." **[9a]**

See Corruption and the Judiciary-Independence

EVENTS OF 21 JANUARY 2011

16.07 The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights went to Tirana, Albania, on 13-15 February 2011 in order to assess the human rights aspects of events in connection with a demonstration on 21 January during which four demonstrators were shot dead and a number of policemen and demonstrators were injured. His report dated 22 February 2011stated that:

"On 21 January 2011, soon after the demonstrators assembled in front of the Prime Minister's Office, violent clashes occurred between a group of several hundred people and the police located in front of the building.

"There are different and conflicting perceptions of what really happened and how the situation evolved and spiralled out of control. Political blocs offer contradicting accounts on the question of who provoked the outbreak of violence – the demonstrators or the police. According to the governmental authorities, the protest was staged by the opposition in order to overthrow the government by force, whereas the opposition maintains that it was the police who provoked the protestors almost immediately after the demonstration began.

"It seems clear that a group of demonstrators did commit violent acts against the police and the Guard of the Republic, by throwing stones and using sticks from banners to hit them. Some protesters also burnt cars parked close to the demonstration venue. In response, the police employed a variety of means such as truncheons, water cannons, tear gas and rubber bullets. As a result of violent clashes between demonstrators and police, dozens were injured on both sides.

"At a later stage during the demonstration, firearms were used by members of the Guard of the Republic. Four protesters died and several other persons sustained injuries caused by gunfire, which raises questions about the lawfulness and proportionality of the use of force." **[10g] (p3)**

16.08 The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI), in its Commentary on the March 2011 Country of Origin Information (COI) report on Albania, May 2011, stated that:

"The response to the anti-government protest on 21 January 2011 has been considered by numerous international human rights organisations such as AI as disproportionate. The response left four unarmed protesters dead while detaining 113 individuals including 19 minors. **[86a] (p13)**

"Other unpublished accusations suggest that detainees included individuals who happened to be passing by at the place of protest, not necessarily having participated in any way in it." **[86a] (p14)**

16.09 The Council of Europe report continued:

"The Prime Minister and the Minister of the Interior informed the Commissioner that the Guard of the Republic was entitled to use lethal force under specific circumstances once the security perimeter of government buildings was breached. While the Commissioner understood that all four killings in fact occurred outside the security perimeter of the Prime Minister's Office building, the Ministers maintained that there were attempts from the protesters to enter the yard.…

"According to the information provided by the Ombudsman's Office, all detainees were first brought to police stations and then transferred to pre-trial detention centres, since there would be overcrowding in the police detention facilities had the detainees be kept there. All detainees maintained that they had been subjected to ill-treatment during their arrest and during their transfer to the detention facilities. They further contended that although documents concerning their detention bore the signature of lawyers, and in the case of minors, of psychologists, they had not been provided with legal assistance in reality. All detainees noted that they had signed the documents in question under psychological duress. The Commissioner learnt that two detainees visited by the Ombudsman's Office had signs of ill-treatment on their persons at the time of the visit. Finally, certain detainees complained about their inability to have access to their family members." **[10g] (p3-4)**

16.10 CSIS Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in an article 'Albania' in the Western Balkans Policy Review 2010, September 2010 provides a helpful political overview since the demise of the Communist regime. **[29a] (p45)**

See Political system, Freedom of speech and media, Corruption and the Judiciary-Independence

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17. FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA

17.01 The US State Department 2010 Human Rights Report: Albania (USSD Report 2010), published on 8 April 2011, stated:

"The constitution and law provide for freedom of speech and of the press, and the government respected many of these rights in practice, however: there were reports that the government and businesses influenced and pressured the media.… The media were active and largely unrestrained, however; there were cases of direct and indirect political pressure on the media, including threats against journalists. At times political pressure and lack of funding constrained the independent print media, and journalists reported that they practiced extensive self-censorship. Political parties, trade unions, and other groups published newspapers or magazines independent of government influence." **[2f] (Section 2)**

17.02 Freedom House, in the Nations in Transit 2011 – Albania report of 27 June 2011, noted that:

"Albanian media have advanced technologically, but a lack of independence and transparency of financial resources continued to be concerns in 2010. The use of multimedia formats and the internet to provide information increased during the year. However, there was the risk of misuse of these developing forms of information dissemination due to the absence of a legal framework to provide proper regulation. Strong government ties to the former and current chairs of the National Council of Radio and Television (NCRT) showed that this institution was still far from being independent. Freelance journalism is not regulated and little practiced in Albania, increasing even further the dependence of journalists on media owners. !e public service broadcaster, Radio Televizioni Shqiptar (RTSH), remained underdeveloped in terms of technology and program content compared with private broadcasters. RTSH information programs were biased, providing excessive coverage to government activities or high political representatives while giving little space to other public actors. State-funded advertisements were limited to two or three media companies, constituting a near monopoly and shrinking the resources available to other media operators. **[9c (p51)**

17.03 The Freedom in the World – 2010 (Albania), published 1 June 2010, stated that:

"While the constitution guarantees freedom of expression, the intermingling of powerful business, political, and media interests inhibits the development of independent outlets. During the 2009 campaign period, most outlets were seen as biased toward either the PS or PD. Reporters have little job security and remain subject to lawsuits, intimidation, and in some cases physical attacks by those facing media scrutiny. Berisha routinely denigrates the media, and his government has placed financial pressure on critical outlets. In January, the authorities evicted a critical newspaper, Tema, from its offices in a state-owned building despite a court order to halt the action. In February, an editorial in a paper that was close to Berisha called for the murder of Mero Baze, Tema's publisher. Baze was allegedly beaten severely in November by oil magnate and Berisha associate Rezart Taci and his bodyguards, after the journalist accused Taci of tax evasion on his television show. Taci and two of his guards were subsequently arrested for the attack, and the case was pending at year's end." **[9a]**

17.04 The USSD Report 2010 stated that:

"In December [2010] businessman Rezart Taçi, who was accused of assaulting journalist Mero Baze in November 2009 for Baze's reporting on alleged corruption in the privatization of ARMO, the country's state-owned oil refinery, was acquitted. His two bodyguards were each fined 350,000 leks ($3,500)." **[2f] (Section 2)**

17.05 The report continued that:

"Various forms of media intimidation continued. Journalists continued to complain that publishers and editors censored their work, either directly or indirectly in response to political and commercial pressures. Many journalists complained that their lack of employment contracts frequently hindered their ability to report objectively.

"On November 14, a Gjirokaster correspondent of the daily Panorama newspaper was reportedly assaulted by two persons. The assailants reportedly told the reporter to stop writing in the newspaper. Before the assault, the reporter had printed an interview with an unnamed woman who reportedly worked in drug plantations in Lazarat. The reporter filed a criminal suit with the Prosecutor's Office. The case was ongoing at year's end.'

"'The investigative role of the media continued during the year. Leading broadcaster Top Channel's popular investigative satirical show, Fiks Fare, led to dismissals and criminal cases against corrupt public officials. In 2009 hidden camera footage led to the dismissal of former-minister of culture, youth, and sports Ylli Pango who was accused of sexual misconduct. On June 18, the Tirana District Court heard Pango's lawsuit and decided to fine the broadcaster 51 million leks ($500,000) for "harming the ex-minister's moral stature and causing anxiety and grief." The station appealed the ruling, and the case was pending at year's end." **[2f] (Section 2)**

17.06 The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), in Attacks on the Press 2009: Europe and Central Asia Developments: Albania, 16 February 2010 reported that:

"The independent daily Tema was abruptly evicted from its offices in a state-owned building in Tirana. Police barred staffers from entering the offices on January 8 on the orders of the Ministry of Interior, said Publisher Mero Baze, who noted that the newspaper had signed a 20-year lease in 2007. He said he believed the government had acted in retaliation for a series of articles published in fall 2008 that alleged high-level government corruption. (In December 2008, after the stories were published, Baze's car caught fire and exploded, the Tirana-based Albanian Media Institute reported.)" **[77a]**

17.07 In a report of 31 January 2011 linked to the violent anti-government protest, the independent online BalkanInsight stated that:

"A parliamentary commission set up by the ruling party will probe the phone records of four Albanian journalists accused of being conspirators in what it says was an attempt to overthrow the government. […] All four journalists are considered government critics." **[91b]**

INTERNET FREEDOM

17.08 The USSD Report 2010 noted that:

"There were no government restrictions on access to the Internet or reports that the government monitored e-mail or Internet chat rooms. Individuals and groups could engage in the peaceful expression of views via the Internet, including by e-mail. Access to the Internet increased rapidly during the year, but remained limited, particularly outside major urban areas. According to International Telecommunication Union statistics for the year, approximately 36 percent of the country's inhabitants used the Internet compared to 20.6 percent in 2009. Of those an estimated 80 percent were Internet users through mobile phones." **[2f] (Section 2)**

See Political affiliation

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18. HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS, ORGANISATIONS AND ACTIVISTS

18.01 The US State Department 2010 Human Rights Report: Albania (USSD Report 2010), published on 8 April 2011, stated:

"A number of domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human

rights cases. Government officials generally cooperated and responded to their views. During the year the government set up an agency for the support of civil society which has the mandate to allocate state funding to NGOs. In December 2009 a group of human rights NGOs collaborated to publish a human rights report on the country and plans to issue another in 2011." **[2f] (Section 5)**

18.02 Freedom House in Freedom in the World - Albania (2011) stated that:

"Independent NGOs function without restrictions but have limited funding and policy influence." **[9d]**

18.03 Freedom House in the Nations in Transit 2011 – Albania, 27 June 2011 report however, further noted that:

"Albania's civil society operates in a generally non-restrictive environment, but the sector faces many important challenges in developing its capacities, impact, and credibility in public life. The civic sector is mainly composed of small nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) concentrated in the capital, Tirana. Generally, these groups are founded around the main political, social, and economic issues of the country, with a modest but growing activism concerning lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights and environmental issues in 2010. Many civil society organizations (CSOs) are understaffed and struggle with weak organizational and management capacities. Financially, they depend almost exclusively on international funding and continue to develop fundamentally donor driven agendas. Over the past year, leading donors continued to reduce financial support in view of growing funding available from the EU, yet few organizations acquired the expertise and human resources necessary to apply for the latter." **[9c] (p57)**

18.04 The report continued:

"Civil society in Albania continues to play a limited role in the country's EU integration process. This mainly involves activities carried out independently from state authorities, such as communicating public opinion on the process and stimulating debate on the issues. But the country's civil society is not yet seen as a strategic partner of the government, and its expertise is generally not utilized in setting priorities or undertaking different tasks in the EU integration process. The country's fiscal regulatory framework for non-profit organizations remained unclear during the year. Existing Ministry of Finance provisions require the confirmation of tax-exempt status for NGOs. Although no such confirmations have been issued yet, NGOs continue not to pay taxes. !e Law on Public Financial Inspection, which was adopted in July and applies to NGOs as well, leaves ample room for arbitrary use of inspections based on a non-exhaustive list of criteria. Whereas the law leaves these inspections up to the discretion of state authorities, it does not provide sufficient guarantees for entities subjected to inspections. In 2010, these measures continued to generate a climate of pressure by state authorities on Albanian civil society." **[9c] (p59)**

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19. CORRUPTION

19.01 The European University Institute, in a working paper, RSCAS No 2006/18 – The Balkanisation of Politics: Crime and Corruption in Albania dated May 2006 stated:

"As we have already seen, political corruption is one of the most important problems in the country and influences its international position in a critical way. The competent organisations agree on this finding. … It is very hard to make a survey on such issues because there are few people who have correct understanding of what corruption is and are, consequently, able to answer accurately" **[66a] (p8)**

19.02 The US State Department 2010 Human Rights Report: Albania (USSD Report 2010), published on 8 April 2011, stated:

"The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption; however, despite several arrests of high-level local and central government officials, government corruption remained a major obstacle to meaningful reform. World Bank governance indices for 2009 indicated that corruption was a serious problem. According to a corruption survey released during the year, 91.8 percent of respondents think that corruption among public officials was either "widespread" or "somewhat widespread." Respondents to the survey stated that customs and tax officials, as well as doctors, were the most corrupt institutions and groups.

"The government prosecuted corrupt officials and managed complaints regarding corrupt police through the ombudsman and the Internal Control Service of the Albanian State Police. However, broad immunity provisions for judges, members of parliament, and other high level officials hindered the government's ability to prosecute high-level corruption. Immunity can only be lifted by parliament or by a High Council of Justice decision. The government's anticorruption task force against organized crime coordinated anticorruption activities. The prime minister headed the task force that included several ministers and heads of independent state-owned agencies, such as the public electricity company and representatives of the police and intelligence organizations." **[2f] (Section 4)**

THE JOINT INVESTIGATIVE UNIT TO FIGHT ECONOMIC CRIME AND CORRUPTION (JIU)

19.03 Global Security.org in Albania – corruption described JIU as:

"The Joint Investigative Unit to Fight Economic Crime and Corruption (JIU) investigated and prosecuted public corruption and other financial crimes, although its ability to investigate and prosecute corrupt judges, members of parliament, and other high officials was hampered by broad immunity from criminal prosecution granted by the constitution. The JIU was composed of the prosecutor general, the ministers of interior and finance, and the director of SHISH. The JIU used a team structure to concentrate capacity and foster communication necessary for effective investigations and prosecutions. The JIU received direct referrals from citizens.

"During 2009 the JIU prosecuted two former mayors of a commune near Tirana for a property fraud scheme. They were convicted of corruption, money laundering, and other charges along with three other officials and two citizens. The trial court imposed sentences ranging from three to six years in prison; however, the Court of Appeals subsequently reduced some of the charges and most of the sentences, cutting the longest sentence to three years." **[84a]**

See Security forces - Avenues of complaint

19.04 Freedom House, in the Freedom in the World – Albania (2011) report, dated 12 May 2011, stated that:

"Corruption is pervasive, and the EU has repeatedly called for rigorous implementation of anti-graft measures. Prosecutor General Ina Rama continues to pursue high-level cases with support from U.S. and EU officials, but Prime Minister Sali Berisha has refused to dismiss cabinet ministers tainted by indictments, and prosecutions are regularly thwarted by parliamentary immunity and unfavorable court rulings. Economy Minister Dritan Prifti was replaced in September 2010, but the government denied that his removal was related to the opposition's corruption claims against him. Albania was ranked 87 out of 178 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2010 Corruption Perceptions Index." **[9d]**

19.05 Freedom House in its Nations in Transit 2011 – Albania, 27 June 2011, stated that:

"Corruption remained deeply entrenched in all sectors of life in Albania, negatively affecting the country's economic and political development as well as the consolidation of democratic institutions. Surveys show that Albanian citizens are faced with bribery three times more often than the populations of neighboring states. On a positive note, efforts to complete the legislative framework to combat corruption increased in 2010. !e Albanian High Inspectorate for the Declaration and Audit of Assets (HIDAA) continued to expose conflict of interest cases and enforced asset declaration requirements. Yet, institutional capacities as well as political will to effectively fight corruption remained weak. Official immunity and a frequent lack of determination to see cases through to a verdict nourished the country's already widespread culture of impunity. Albania's corruption rating remains at 5.00." **[9c] (p52)**

Freedom House ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest level of progress and 7 the lowest. **[9b] (p52)**

19.06 The Council of Europe, in a report Project against Corruption in Albania (PACA), Technical Paper - Preliminary analysis on Albanian health system financing and corruption dated July 2010 stated that;

"There is a widespread perception that informal payments are the main type of corruption within the Albanian Health Care System. However, other types of corruption also exist. The SIDA Albania Anti Corruption Study (2008) distinguishes three different types of corruption:

"In the Albanian health sector, there seems to be three main manifestations of corruption: i) informal payments to doctors and nurses; ii) doctors' and nurses' misuse of power and iii) corruption in the procurement of drugs and equipment." **[52b] (p12)**

19.07 The report continued:

"Corruption in the health sector is not an isolated phenomenon, but occurs in other public structures causing a general service failure. Addressing irregularities such as informal payments, improving procurement and distribution of drugs and supplies, increasing staff salaries/wages and so on requires an integrated anti-corruption strategy and strong political backing.

"Any health reform to be undertaken has to take into consideration the existing informal payments, as gifts or as unofficial payments, made by own willingness or not. Recently the rules for formal payments from the uninsured persons are being enforced, this is supposed to decrease the informal payments, but at the same time this carries the risk

of excluding the poorest from health care service. Reforms should provide protection to the most vulnerable social groups, as poor, elderly, Roma and Egyptian minority, etc.

"Some of the current reforms undertaken or envisaged by the government are: the patient referral system; introduction of official fees; calculation of service costs; and digitalization and 'informatization' of the health care system." **[52b] (p14)**

See Medical issues , Opposition groups and political activists, Judiciary- independence

See Corruption in Albania, Perception and Experience, Survey 2009, Summary of findings, 2009 for further information. **[83a]**

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20. FREEDOM OF RELIGION

20.01 The US State Department 2009 Human Rights Report: Albania (USSD Report 2009), published on 11 March 2010, stated:

"The constitution and law provide for freedom of religion, and the government generally respected this right in practice. The predominant religious communities--Sunni Muslim, Bektashi Muslim, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic--enjoyed a greater degree of official recognition (for example, national holidays) and social status than some other religious groups. The government does not require registration or licensing of religious groups.

"The constitution calls for separate bilateral agreements to regulate relations between the government and religious communities. In October 2008 the government signed agreements with the Muslim, Orthodox, and Bektashi communities. The Catholic Church has had such an agreement with the government since 2002. VUSH, a Protestant umbrella organization, has asked to conclude a bilateral agreement. Among the advantages of having an agreement are official recognition of the community, prioritized property restitution, and tax exemptions. Government financial support and state-subsidized clergy salaries are to be implemented, based on a law on the financing of religious communities passed on June 5." **[2b] (Section 2)**

20.02 The US State Department, International Religious Freedom Report, July – December 2010, published 13 September 2011, stated that:

"By law the country is secular. According to the constitution, there is no official religion and all religions are equal; however, the predominant religious communities (Sunni Muslim, Bektashi, Orthodox, and Catholic) enjoy a greater degree of official recognition … based on their historical presence in the country.

"The government generally respected religious freedom in law and in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the government during the reporting period. … There is no law prohibiting the wearing of religious clothing or symbols. School principals have the right to set standards for "appropriate clothing," which at times included restrictions on public displays of religious symbols. During the reporting period, there were reports school officials prevented female public high school students wearing Islamic headscarves from attending classes.

"There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. No substantial acts of vandalism were reported." **[2c]**

See Geography

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21. ETHNIC GROUPS

21.01 The Encyclopaedia of the Nations, in its Albania – Ethnic groups, undated, stated that:

"Generally regarded as descendants of the ancient Illyrians, the Albanians make up about 95% of the population. Ethnic Greeks comprise as much as 3% of the populace. Other groups, including Gypsies, Vlachs, Bulgarians, and Serbs, make up the remaining 2%. The Albanians themselves fall into two major groups: the Ghegs in the north and the Tosks in the south, divided by the Shkumbin River." **[63a]**

See Geography

21.02 The US State Department 2010 Human Rights Report: Albania (USSD Report 2010), released on 8 April 2011, noted:

"There were reports of societal discrimination. As visible minorities, members of the Romani and Balkan Egyptian communities suffered significant societal abuse and discrimination. The law permits official minority status for national groups and separately for ethno-linguistic groups. The government defined Greeks, Macedonians, and Montenegrins as national groups; Greeks constituted the largest of these. The law defined Aromanians (Vlachs) and Roma as ethno-linguistic minority groups. In October the Council of Ministers approved the National Action Plan for the Roma and Egyptian Involvement Decade for the 2010-15 period. The total budget for implementing the five-year plan was expected to be nearly 2.5 billion lek ($23 million)." **[2f] (Section 6)**

21.03 Freedom House, in the Freedom in the World – Albania (2011) report stated that:

"Roma face significant social and economic marginalization, but other minorities are generally well integrated. In June 2010, an appellate court overturned a six-month jail sentence against an ethnic Greek mayor who had removed local road signs on the grounds that they did not include Greek translations. However, tensions flared in August over the death of an ethnic Greek man who was run down by a car after an argument with Albanian youths; several suspects were quickly arrested." **[9d]**

21.04 The USSD Report 2010 continued:

"The ethnic Greek minority pursued grievances with the government regarding electoral zones, Greek-language education, property rights, and government documents. Minority leaders cited the government's unwillingness to recognize ethnic Greek towns outside Communist-era "minority zones"; to utilize Greek in official documents and on public signs in ethnic Greek areas; to ascertain the size of the ethnic Greek population; or to include a higher number of ethnic Greeks in public administration.

"During the year government prosecutors continued to appeal the dismissal of charges against Vasil Bollano, the ethnic Greek mayor of Himara, who was found guilty of abuse of office, but whose conviction was overturned on appeal in June 2009. The court convicted Bollano of destruction of government property after he ordered the removal of several new road signs in the Himara district because they were written in Albanian and English but not Greek." **[2f] (Section 6)**

See The Unrepresented Peoples and Nations Organization (UNPO) - The Greek Minority in Albania, for further background. **[67a]**

See Citizenship and Nationality

Roma

21.05 The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), in Basic Facts on Roma – Albania, dated 28 August 2010, stated that:

"Roma in Albania are recognised as an ethnic-linguistic minority. Official sources say that there are about 1,300 Roma in Albania, however other sources estimate that there are up to 120,000 Roma in Albania; … Official censuses in Albania acknowledge the Roma. Romani communities are found all over the country; the largest are found in central and southeast Albania in regions like Tirana, Durresi, Elbasan, Fieri, Berati, Korca, Pogradeci, Bilishti, Gjirokastra, Delvina, Kruja, Shkodra, etc.…

"Government policies or initiatives on Roma: Albania joined the Decade of Roma Inclusion in 2008; within this framework the Government adopted a National Action Plan which focuses on education, employment and social protection, housing and infrastructure, health, social infrastructure and equal opportunities and cultural heritage … Roma in Albania live in poor conditions in settlements, lacking connections to basic infrastructure like water, electric and public services. There have been cases of forced evictions and instances in which Albanian authorities have discriminated against Roma in the provision of social services, social welfare payments, the provision of municipal infrastructure and health care." **[65a]**

21.06 The report continued:

"In accordance with the Law on Education, school attendance is mandatory for all children in Albania above the age of six. Unfortunately, many Romani children drop out of school before completing the eight years of mandatory schooling. … Romani families have difficulties accessing adequate healthcare. Only 76% of Roma, compared to 93% of non-Roma, have been immunised against polio, diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough. There are reports that Roma are sometimes forced to pay bribes to receive proper medical treatment. … Many Roma are unable to access employment in Albania due to low educational qualifications and discrimination. There are no elected Romani officials at the national level in Albania; or are there any known to have been elected at the local level." **[65a]**

21.07 The USSD Report 2010 stated that:

"Child marriage remained a problem in many Romani families and typically occurred when children were 13 or 14 years old." **[2b] (Section 6)**

See Children

21.08 The Minority Rights Group International stated on their website that:

"... discrimination is still widespread. In January 2005, the Tirana municipality demolished the homes of 18 Roma families comprising 150 persons, reportedly without warning, leaving them homeless in the middle of winter. The municipality demolished the homes, located in a settlement close to the Lana River, because they blocked its

territory regulation plan and were illegal. A similar case resulted in the eviction of 51 Roma families in June 2004." **[94a]**

Although this refers to a situation prior to the situation in 2004-2005, it is important in that it shows that little progress has been made in the way Roma are treated by local and central authorities in Albania, and that the problems of forced evictions continue.

21.09 The Sophia Echo, in a news report dated 17 March 2011, stated that:

"The ambassadors of the European Union and United States, along with the head of the OSCE office in Tirana, have called on Albanian authorities to investigate February 2011 incidents in which dozens of Roma families were forcibly evicted from their settlements in the centre of the capital city and were left homeless after their housing was set on fire.

"We note that these actions resulted in some serious injuries and the displacement of large numbers of people, including many children," the joint statement said." **[95a]**

21.10 The European Commission, in its Analytical Report, Commission Opinion on Albania's application for membership of the European Union, 9 November 2010, stated that:

"… the Roma community constitutes the most vulnerable minority group in Albania, facing widespread poverty, socioeconomic marginalisation and frequent discrimination, particularly regarding access to education, social protection, health, employment and adequate housing. Implementation of the national strategy has been slow, due to insufficient human and financial resources, inadequate coordination of all institutions involved at local and central level, and deficiencies in the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms". **[8A] (p32)**

See 'The Center of Documentation and Information on Minorities in Europe - Southeast Europe' **[64a]** and Minorities Rights International Group, World Directory of Minorities, Albania Overview for further background information on minorities in Albania. **[68a]**

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22. LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER PERSONS

LEGAL RIGHTS

22.01 The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA), ILGA Europe, accessed 22 February 2012, summarised the legal position thus:

"**Anti-discrimination:** Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity is prohibited in the areas of employment, and provision of goods and services.

Legal gender recognition of trans people: Albania has no administrative procedures for legal gender recognition.

Partnership recognition: Albania does not provide any legal recognition of same-sex partnerships.

Parenting rights: Neither joint nor second parent adoption is available to same-sex couples in Albania.

Criminal law on hate speech/crime: Laws on hate and violence do not refer to sexual orientation or gender identity and do not recognise sexual orientation neither gender identity as aggravating factor.

Freedom of assembly/Pride events: Pride events have never taken place /never been applied for.

Criminal law on age of consent: The age of consent is equal for all sexual acts." **[58a]**

22.02 The US State Department 2010 Human Rights Report: Albania (USSD Report 2010), released on 8 April 2011, noted:

"There are no laws criminalizing sexual orientation, and the law does not differentiate between types of sexual relationships." **[2f] (Section 6)**

22.03 The USSD Report 2010 continued:

"There were lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) organizations in the country. The groups operated without interference from police or other state actors. There were reports that individuals were beaten, fired from their employment, or subjected to discrimination due to their sexual orientation. Often these cases went unreported. NGOs claimed that police routinely harassed LGBT persons and transgender sex workers." **[2f] (Section 6)**

See Support services

22.04 PinkPaper.com in an article, Albania passes model law against discrimination dated 8 February 2010, reported that:

"Albania's Parliament banned discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity, last week. The law covers employment, housing, provision of goods and services, education and access to public places. It also specifically mentions health care, banking, transportation, entertainment and social protection. The vote was 71 to 0. Prime Minister Sali Berisha strongly backs the measure. 'It's a pretty strong law and covers both 'direct' and 'indirect' discrimination," said Tirana activist Mindy Michaels from the Alliance against Discrimination of LGBT… The measure establishes an independent Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination to monitor implementation of the law and accept and investigate complaints…Announcing support for the law last July [2009], Berisha also said that Albania will legalize same-sex marriage." **[61a]**

See paragraph 22.07

TREATMENT BY, AND ATTITUDE OF, STATE AUTHORITIES

22.05 Amnesty International's Concerns in Albania: January-June 2009, September 2009, September 2009 stated:

"On 17 May, the International Day against Homophobia, some 20 Albania NGOs and the Ombudsperson's Office issued an open appeal to the Albanian government, state

institutions, civil society, the general public and families to combine efforts to stop discrimination against people on the basis of their sexual orientation." **[26e] (p4)**

22.06 The USSD Report 2009 reported that:

"In June a man allegedly murdered his brother due to his sexual orientation. The murderer pled guilty and was sentenced to eight years in prison. In August four men were arrested in Durres for prostitution and engaging in public sexual activity. The men claimed police discriminated against them, since police officers often did not arrest female prostitutes and their clients when apprehended. Without an antidiscrimination law, societal discrimination based on sexual orientation was a constant. There were several informal reports of harassment, denial of service, and employment discrimination due to sexual orientation. For example, homosexual customers were sometimes denied service in bars and restaurants. There were reports of LGBT persons being harassed on the streets. They often did not report criminal or civil offenses committed against them from fear of economic and physical reprisals. LGBT persons are not a protected class under the law. NGOs claimed that police routinely harassed homosexual persons." **[2b] (Section 6)**

22.07 The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB), in a response to an enquiry on the situation and treatment of homosexuals, dated 28 September 2010, reported that:

"According to the LGBT Rights Activist, whether there is willingness to implement the anti-discrimination law remains questionable since Albanian laws are sometimes not implemented (10 Sept. 2010). She noted that the new legislation has not yet had an effect on the day-to-day lives of LGBT people in Albania, has not increased their sense of security, nor changed the possibility of discrimination in employment, housing, healthcare, or other sectors (LGBT Rights Activist 10 Sept. 2010).

"She stated that as of August 2010, the government had appointed the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, but that there was no office or supporting staff for the Commissioner (ibid.). She was not aware of any training sessions for police regarding the anti-discrimination law or LGBT rights (ibid.). Further information on government actions to implement the new legislation could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate." **[13i]**

22.08 The IRB report also stated that:

"Country Reports 2009 indicates that, according to NGOs, the police 'routinely harassed' homosexual persons (US 11 Mar. 2010, Sec. 6). Similarly, the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights reports that LGBT people have been subject to 'mistreatment' by police (Council of Europe 18 June 2008, No. 96). Freedom House notes that discrimination against homosexuals by law enforcement 'remains strong' (Freedom House 2010). A 2007 Balkan Insight article provides details on two cases in which homosexuals were subject to mistreatment by Albanian police (5 Dec. 2007). In one example, a member of the LGBT community stated that police officers dragged him away from a park and kicked him repeatedly while calling him a "faggot" (Balkan Insight 5 Dec. 2007). In another example, the Director of the Albanian Human Rights Group (AHRG), a non-profit and non-governmental organization (NGO) based in Tirana (AHRG n.d.), cited a case where a person was 'harassed and tortured by police' and prevented from attending school (Balkan Insight 5 Dec. 2007). The LGBT Rights Activist stated that LGBT people are still reluctant to go to the police with their problems

and view the police as a source of harassment rather than protection (LGBT Rights Activist 10 Sept. 2010)." **[13i]**

SOCIETAL TREATMENT AND ATTITUDES

22.09 The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender US Peace Corps Alumni website, in an article LGBT Advocacy in Albania dated August 2009, stated that:

"So what is the LGBT community in Albania like? The good news is that from a legal perspective, homosexuality in Albania became legal in1994. Therefore, Albanian gay or lesbian individuals cannot legally be imprisoned for their sexual orientation. However, do not be misled by the legality of homosexuality. Generally Albanians are sadly, deeply homophobic and generally never discuss the topic.

"The LGBT community in Albania is very underground and there are no gay bars in any city in Albania including the capital city, Tirana. It is very difficult to even find any information about the LGBT community there. Similar to many other developing countries, the term 'gay' is generally not used in Albania but instead it's 'men who have sex with men.' Although homosexuality exists in Albania, few individuals have a 'gay' identity …" **[60a]**

22.10 Pink Embassy, in its Shadow report: Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Community Situation in Albania, 2010' stated that:

"LGBT issues in the Albanian society remain a very sensitive taboo. Although the Albanian Constitution guarantees the rights and the freedoms of every individual, still LGBT community is facing discrimination and intolerance. In February 2010 the law 'On the Protection from Discrimination' was adopted by the Albanian Parliament, which is a significant step forward for eliminating the discrimination in Albania. Nevertheless, its complete implementation has yet to come and remains a concern for the civil society." **[62a] (p1)**

22.11 The Canadian (IRB), in the response to an enquiry on the situation and treatment of homosexuals, dated 28 September 2010, reported that:

"Media sources and human rights organizations indicate that there are high levels of homophobia in Albania (Human Rights Watch 16 Feb. 2010; The Human Rights Brief 3 Mar. 2010; Balkan Insight 5 Dec. 2007). Media sources report that the gay community has been primarily underground (BBC 30 July 2009; Reuters 5 Feb. 2010). In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate on 10 September 2010, an LGBT rights activist … stated that there are no gay clubs or neighbourhoods in Albania and that hardly anyone is public about being LGBT. According to Balkan Insight, an online publication produced by the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), most homosexuals in Albania do not reveal their sexual orientation, 'fearing that if it is discovered their safety will be endangered' (24 June 2010)." **[13i]**

22.12 The same report continued:

"According to human rights observers, LGBT people in Albania are subject to "intolerance, physical and psychological violence" (Balkan Insight 24 June 2010; Human Rights Brief 3 Mar. 2010; Council of Europe 18 June 2008, No. 96). … Balkan Insight similarly states that those who are open about their sexual orientation have faced job loss, threats and possible rejection from their families (5 Dec. 2007)." **[13i]**

SUPPORT SERVICES

22.13 The Canadian (IRB), in their response to an enquiry on the situation and treatment of homosexuals, dated 28 September 2010, reported that:

"According to the LGBT Rights Activist, services for LGBT people in Tirana are very limited; there are no social supports or counsellors and little assistance for people facing difficulty … According to the LGBT Rights Activist, there are no LGBT organizations outside Tirana, and the current LGBT organizations have little capacity to do outreach beyond Tirana (LGBT Rights Activist 10 Sept. 2010). She characterized the situation for LGBT people in these areas as "bleak" (ibid.). The LGBT Rights Activist expressed the opinion that someone facing threats because of his or her sexual orientation would have difficulty finding security in a different region or city of Albania (ibid.). In her view, Albania is a small country which is 'intensely social networked,' and people are identified by their accents and recognized through connections with their hometowns and families (ibid.). She believes that it would be difficult for someone to remain anonymous and find a way to make a living, since unemployment is high and most jobs are found through social connections rather than based on merit (ibid.). This information could not be corroborated by the sources consulted by the Research Directorate." **[13i]**

LESBIANS

22.14 The Pink Embassy report also noted that:

"Even though Albanian society sometimes viewed as somewhat tolerant towards lesbians and bisexual woman, the everyday reality has not shown this. Most lesbians have to hide their sexual orientation. The few that have the courage to be out and be physically affectionate towards one another in public spaces have experienced verbal and physical abuse and have been thrown out of bars or restaurants. Some of the main concerns of the lesbian and bisexual woman are:

"Family pressure: Because of Albanian traditions and the economic situation, most young and unmarried (to a man) lesbian and bisexual women live with their family. Due to social pressure, the fear of stigmatization and the fear of losing their families (by being thrown out of the house) most are not out. One of the main concerns of the lesbian and bisexual women is the pressure they face from the family to have a fiancé and get married. This social obligation intensifies with age. This pressure forces them to repress their sexual orientation and do what is more accepted by society. Some lesbians and bisexual women get engaged or married but continue having relationships with other women.

Discrimination in employment: Lesbians who do not conform to societal gender norms report that it is almost impossible to get a job.

Societal pressure and attitudes, combined with internal struggles with sexual orientation can combine to create difficult situations for lesbian and bisexual women. As mentioned earlier, some women cope with the social expectations and internal conflict by getting engaged and marrying men." **[62a] (p2)**

TRANSGENDER PERSONS

22.15 The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB), in a response to an enquiry: Situation and treatment of homosexuals; state protection and support services (2007-September 2010), dated 28 September 2010 stated that:

"According to the LGBT Rights Activist, transgender people face particular difficulties in Albania; the few people who are visibly transgender are regularly denied services and have few opportunities for employment other than prostitution." **[13g]**

22.16 Pink Embassy in its Shadow report, 2010 reported that:

"Testimonies of transvestites clearly show that they frequently receive death threats.

"On September 2009 a transgender, named Kristina was killed by a man who declared: "I took him for a woman, but it turned out to be a man and in the heat of the moment I killed him and I don't know what I did.

"This was the first case of killing a transgender woman in Albania and was a key fact that indicates the increasing of Transphobia, into Albanian society." **[62a] (p3)**

22.17 The same report listed various areas of concern such as:

"Psychological and physical violence systematically exercised on them not only by clients and homophobic people but by the police as well; Police have apparently used Kristina's murder as an excuse to persecute trans people and sex workers in the area.

Extreme poverty. They claim that they spend days without food due to lack of income.

Unemployment because of their gender identity forces them to work as sex workers.

Lack of housing. Most of them do not have a shelter since they cannot provide one. In cases they do afford an accommodation, people almost never rent them one;

Continuous persecution from society and lack of support by the public institutions;

Multiple discrimination: discriminated not only because of being transvestite but also racial discrimination due to being Roma.

Arrested and convicted without evidence, simply because of being transgender;

Media in many cases has not been professional in reporting cases of violence against transvestites.

No measures taken by governmental structures to address the needs of this community." **[62a] (p4)**

22.18 Pink Embassy in its Shadow report, 2010 reported that:

"In general, the LGBT Community in Albania faces a homophobic environment as well as the lack of state mechanisms to address their needs and problems. Consequently, they often become subject of discrimination while at times of physical or psychological violence. A movement of this community in Albania is developing and has begun to provide support for LGBT Community members, to advocate for their rights, and to empower individuals to protect their own rights and dignity. Still, the challenges are significant, both for individuals and for the movement, and committed work from LGBT

organizations, other civil society organizations, and from the Albanian government will be needed to transform the overall situation for lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women in Albania." **[62a] (p1)**

22.19 ILGA-Europe's Feedback on The European Commission's 2011 Progress Reports, 17 October 2011stated that:

"Albania was assessed to have made limited progress in implementing the antidiscrimination legislation. Although the office of the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination has been established and some awareness raising actions have been carried out, the Commission considers that the awareness of the provisions of the law remains low, in particular amongst professional groups. The Commission notes that LGBT community in Albania became more visible but that visibility has not led to substantial improvements in the situation of LGBT people as they continue to suffer discrimination and violence. The Commission recognises that transgender people are particularly targeted for violent attacks. It also highlights that homophobia is widespread in Albania including among public service professionals. **[99a]**

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23. DISABILITY

23.01 The US State Department 2010 Human Rights Report: Albania (USSD Report 2010), released on 8 April 2011, noted:

"The constitution and law prohibit discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities; however, employers, schools, health care providers, and providers of other state services sometimes discriminated against persons with disabilities. The law mandates that new public buildings be accessible to persons with disabilities, but the government only sporadically enforced the law. Widespread poverty, unregulated working conditions, and poor medical care posed significant problems for many persons with disabilities." **[2f] (Section 6)**

23.02 The Valdete Trust, a registered United Kingdom charity whose aim is to provide care for persons in Albania, irrespective of race, sex or religion suffering from muscular dystrophy or other degenerative conditions and to provide guidance and assistance for families and carers stated that:

"Albania is one if the poorest countries in Europe still struggling to overcome the legacy of 50 years of Communist oppression and isolation from the rest of the world. Part of this legacy is the inadequate resource available for the treatment and care of those with any kind of disability –physical or mental – and the social stigma attached to those who are disabled. Such people are often hidden away at home without opportunities for treatment, education or social development. Even when taken out, they find that disabled access to buildings and suitable toilets are the exception rather than the rule." **[87a]**

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24. WOMEN

OVERVIEW

24.01 The Japan International Cooperation Agency, in its Albania: Country Gender Profile – February 2010 reported that:

"In Albania, patrilineal and patrilocal social organization have dominated gender relationships in the private sphere. During the communist era, the Albanian state imposed another structure within the public sphere, one that promoted equal opportunities for men and women in education and the labour market. Women were given a number of key, high-level positions. As a result, literacy rates rose from low levels at the beginning of the communist regime to nearly 100 percent by 1989. Nonetheless, women in the communist regime had a double burden: at home they had complete responsibility for childcare and housework while men contributed much less; and women were expected to contribute at work as much time and effort as men. The socio-economic changes during 1990 highlighted several stereotypes of gender roles and the patriarchal nature. Still many women and men do not recognize gender discrimination as it is, but see it as a "way of life. … "While there is an increased understanding among decision-makers about the linkages between the advancement of gender equality and the realization of democratic governance there remains a lot to be done." **[23a] (p4)**

24.02 The report continued:

- There are 3.1 million people living in Albania; 49 percent are women
- More than half of Albania's population lives in rural areas - 57 percent of them women
- Poverty is more widespread in rural areas, where 4 out of 5 people are poor
- Unemployment affects 21 percent of women and 16 percent of men
- About 70 percent of employed women work in agriculture, 20 percent in the public sector, and about 10 percent in the private sector
- Only 18 percent of managers are women
- On average, a woman in Albania earns 20 percent less than a man
- Women occupy less than 10 percent of Albania's assembly seats, down from 30 percent in the 1970s
- More trafficked women come from Albania than any other country in southeastern Europe
- Widowed women and women living alone are 60 percent closer to the poverty line than households

Source: Japan International Cooperation Agency: Albania: Country Gender Profile – February 2010 [23a] (p5)

24.03 The US State Department 2010 Human Rights Report: Albania (USSD Report 2010), released on 8 April 2011, noted:

"In many communities, particularly those in the northeast, women were subjected to societal discrimination as a result of traditional social norms that considered women to be subordinate to men." **[2f] (Section 6)**

24.04 According to the OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index (accessed on 12 February 2012):

"The Albanian Constitution states that all individuals are equal before the law and that "no person will be unjustly discriminated against due to his or her sex". Legislation makes provisions for treaties to supersede national law and the parliament has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Article 18, 2003 CEDAW). Despite these signs of progress, Albanian society remains essentially patriarchal." **[21a]**

24.05 A Shadow Report on the Implementation of the CEDAW Convention in Albania - June 2010 prepared by the Gender Alliance for Development Center (GADC) in collaboration with a number of non-profit organisations stated that:

"Albania ratified the CEDAW Convention about seventeen years ago [Law 1769 of 9.11.1993] while its Optional Protocol adopted by the General Assembly in its 54th Session on 6 October 1999, which entered in force on 22 December 2000, was ratified in Albania a few years later, in 2003 [Law 9052 of 17.4.2003]. Pursuant to the Constitution of the Republic of Albania [Article 122/1], 'Any international agreement that has been ratified constitutes part of the internal juridical system after it has been published in the Official Journal of the Republic of Albania'. The official CEDAW text was first published in the Official Gazette **about 15 years after its ratification**. This happened on 15 October 2008 in Official Gazette No. 33 (a supplemental edition – for unpublished acts). Therefore, from 1993, the year of its ratification, CEDAW officially became an integral part of the juridical system in the country only on 30 October 2008 (i.e. fifteen days after publication in the Official Gazette)." **[22a] (p6)**

24.06 The Global Gender Gap Report 2011 was published by the World Economic Forum on 1 November 2011: it measured gender-based gaps in access to economic, educational, health and political resources and opportunities in 135 countries. Albania's ranking in the Gender Gap Index slipped from 91st place in 2009 to 78th place in 2011 (out of 135 countries). Within specific categories, relative access to resources/opportunities in Albania was assessed as follows:

Gender Gap Index 2011			**78** (out of 135 countries)			**0.675** (0.00 = inequality, 1.00 = equality)
Gender Gap Sub indexes	**Rank**	**Score**	**sample average**	**Female**	**Male**	**female to male ratio**
Economic Participation and Opportunity	**38**	**0.713**	**0.588**			
Labour force participation	82	0.73	0.68	56	76	0.73
Wage equality for similar work (survey)	2	0.82	0.65	_	_	0.82
Estimated earned income (PPP US$)	82	0.54	0.52	6172	11,327	0.54
Legislators, senior officials, and managers	_	_	0.26	_	_	_
Professional and	_	_	0.64	_	_	_

technical workers						
Educational Attainment	**87**	**0.981**	**0.928**			
Literacy rate	75	0.97	0.86	95	97	0.97
Enrolment in primary education	107	0.98	0.98	84	86	0.98
Enrolment in secondary education	90	0.98	0.90	73	74	O.98
Enrolment in tertiary education	1	1.00	0.86	23	15	1.57
Health and Survival	**135**	**0.927**	**0.956**			
Sex ratio at birth (female/male)	132	0.89	0.92	_	_	0.89
Healthy life expectancy	118	1.00	1.04	64	64	1.00
Political Empowerment	**99**	**0.078**	**0.185**			
Women in parliament	73	0.20	0.22	16	84	0.20
Women in ministerial positions	108	0.07	0.18	7	93	0.07
Years with female head of state (last 50)	52	0.00	0.16	0	50	0.00

Source: Global Gender Gap Report 2011, **1 November 2011: Albania. [24a]**

LEGAL RIGHTS

24.07 The Shadow Report of the Gender Alliance for Development Center (GADC) on the Implementation of the CEDAW Convention, June 2010 recorded that:

"In the period from the previous national report submitted to the CEDAW Committee (i.e. from 2003 to present) Albania has adopted new laws and made improvements to the existing ones, where alignment with CEDAW and other important international standards is evident. Worthy of mention are:

• Adoption of the Law "On Gender Equality in Society" [No.9970/24.07.2008] which, among other things, addresses the areas of labour and employment, and the adoption of the National Strategy on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence (NSGEDV), and its accompanying Action Plan, 2007-2010 (CMD Nr.913/19.12.2007);
• Adoption of the Law "On Measures against Violence in Family Relations" [No. 9669/23.12. 2006].
• The recent adoption of Law "On Health and Safety at Work" [No.10237/18.2.2010] which brings issues such as the protection of pregnant and lactating women from hazardous substances, hard working conditions more in line with CEDAW and EU standards;
• Adoption of the Law "On Protection from Discrimination" [No.10221/4.2.2010], which marks a concrete step forward and reinforces the law on Gender Equality. It includes the establishment of new independent mechanisms, such as the newly established

Office of the Commissioner for the Protection against Discrimination, which was not envisaged under the Law on Gender Equality." **[22a] (p8)**

24.08 The report also stated that:

"It has to be pointed out that the obligations deriving from ratified international instruments have not always been adequately implemented." **[22a] (p8)**

24.09 The USSD Report 2010 stated that:

"The law provides equal rights for men and women under family law, property law, and in the judicial system. Neither the law nor practice excluded women from any occupation; however, they were not well represented at the highest levels of their fields. The law mandates equal pay for equal work; however, the government and employers did not fully implement this provision." **[2f] (Section 6)**

24.10 The USSD Report 2009 stated that:

"The law prohibits prostitution; however, it remained a problem. The law prohibits sexual harassment; however, officials rarely enforced the law." **[2b] (Section 6)**

24.11 The Shadow Report continued:

"There is still lack of harmonisation among the various Albanian laws. Given that the legislation is still in process, sometimes there is lack of coherence or relation between them. This is the case with provisions of the Civil Code (which predates the Family Code by about nine years) and the Family Code provisions, especially as regards: the ability to act, matrimonial property regime, administration and representation between spouses, donations between spouses and joint ownership, inheritance, etc., as well as the harmonisation of the provisions of the law "On Entrepreneurs and Companies" with the FC and CC, etc., because these laws and their application cause infringements of women's rights. **[22a] (p53)**

POLITICAL RIGHTS

24.12 The US State Department 2010 Human Rights Report: Albania (USSD Report 2010), released on 8 April 2011, noted that:

"Overall, women were poorly represented at the national and local levels of government, despite commitments by the major political parties to increase their representation. After the June 28 [2009] elections, there were 23 women in the 140-seat parliament, an increase from nine in the previous parliament. These included the speaker and one woman on the Council of Ministers.

"The law mandates that women fill 30 percent of appointed and elected positions, and the electoral code provides that 30 percent of candidates should be women. However, not all parties followed the electoral code and many placed women's names in low spots on the ballot, virtually assuring that they would not win a seat in parliament under the country's regional proportional parliamentary system in which votes are allocated to candidates in order of their appearance on the ballot." **[2f] (Section3)**

24.13 The Freedom in the World 2011 report, published by Freedom House on 12 May 2011, stated:

"Women are underrepresented in most governmental institutions. A new 30 percent quota for party candidate lists helped to raise women's presence in the parliament to 23 seats in 2009, from 10 in 2005, though the quota rules contained a number of loopholes." **[9a]**

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

Family code (FC)

24.14 According to the OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index (accessed on 12 February 2012):

"Albania's Family code (FC), which is currently in review, generally provides a favourable level of protection to Albanian women. The legal age of marriage is 16 years for women and 18 years for men and the average age of marriage is close to the global average. Early marriage is not widespread in Albania, but does occur. A 2004 United Nations report estimated that 8 per cent of girls between 15 and 19 years of age were married, divorced or widowed. Despite the legislation in place, forced marriages are frequent. Polygamy is not a common practice in Albania.

"Albanian parents share more or less equal parental authority, as long as both spouses are alive and the couple stays together. If the father dies, Albanian custom typically awards custody of children to the paternal family, rather than to the mother. In the event of divorce, judges grant custody to men in four out of five cases. In rural areas, male domination is very prominent, both over the household and over women more generally." **[21a]**

24.15 The Shadow Report on the Implementation of the CEDAW Convention, June 2010 recorded that:

"… Albanian law lacks an instrument that provides for the interests of the wife and child/ren, in cases of donation contracts, which has led to their discrimination. The same can be said in relation to the relinquishing property rights by one of the spouses to a third person who is not the other spouse, or the child/ren, before the dissolution or termination of the marriage." **[22a] (p19)**

24.16 The Shadow Report further stated that:

"Economic discrimination goes beyond the area of labour relations. In this respect, the legislation is generally in line with the CEDAW, but its implementation in practice, and sometimes, the lack of clarity in certain provisions or the lack of awareness among women about their own rights, allow for women's discrimination in real life.

"Thus, while the Civil Code [CC] is generally in line with the contemporary standards laid down in the CEDAW and European documents, there is still room for improvement of technical and linguistic nature, in order to prevent and avoid discrimination situations in practice." **[22a] (p52)**

24.17 The Shadow CEDAW Report 2010 stated that:

"Women rarely apply for credit, because they are usually perceived as having a supporting role in business activities. In addition, the credit rating policies of many banks require the applicant to own capital, which very few women possess. Women's

property rights usually cease when the property is registered under the name of the husband." **[22a] (p54)**

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

24.18 The OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index, accessed 12 February 2012, stated that:

"The physical integrity of Albanian women is poorly protected. The Albanian Constitution does not contain any specific provisions regarding domestic violence, spousal rape, sexual harassment or female genital mutilation, although Albanian law does condemn these practices. Violence against women is very prevalent in Albania. Many men, especially in the northeast, still adhere to a traditional code (known as Kanun) that establishes the superiority of men over women." **[21a]**

24.19 The Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso (OBC), in an article dated 16 November 2011 stated that:

"From the information we can see that the violence comes in different forms: the emotional kind, the economical kind (particularly in urban areas), the physical kind (particularly in rural areas) and the sexual kind which is the most hidden form. The age groups which suffer most violence are girls and women between the ages of 18 and 23 years and between 37 and 45 years. The most vulnerable out of all the victims are those with disabilities, migrants, the Roma and women originally from rural areas." **[98a]**

RAPE

24.20 The USSD Report 2010 stated that:

"The criminal code penalizes rape, including spousal rape; however, victims rarely reported spousal abuse, and officials did not prosecute spousal rape in practice. The concept of spousal rape was not well established, and authorities and the public often did not consider it a crime. The law imposes penalties for rape and assault depending on the age of the victim. For rape of an adult, the prison term is three to 10 years; for rape of an adolescent between the ages of 14 and 18, the term is five to 15 years and, for rape of a child under age 14, the sentence is seven to 15 years." **[2f] (Section 6)**

24.21 The OECD Gender Index report records that:

"…women seldom press charges. According to ethnic Albanian values, rape is considered a dishonour to the families of the victims, who receive little support." **[21a]**

24.22 The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) its Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women dated 30 July 2010 stated that:

"The Committee recognizes the progress made by the Government in combating violence against women, including domestic violence and violence outside domestic relationships, such as rape and other forms of sexual violence, stalking and sexual harassment, inter alia, through the enactment of the Law on Measures against Violence in Family Relations, the adoption of the National Strategy and Action Plan on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence 2007-2010, the opening of the first government-run shelter for victims of domestic violence, and the establishment of a referral system of

cases of domestic violence. The Committee, however, remains concerned about the continued high prevalence of violence against women in Albania. It is particularly concerned that domestic violence is not appropriately sanctioned and criminalized, and that marital rape is not defined as a specific offence under the new Penal Code, about the high rate of suicides of female victims of domestic violence, about gaps in the Law on Measures against Violence in Family Relations and its implementation, and the lack of statistical data." **[13b] (p6)**

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

24.23 The United Nations in Albania website, accessed 12 February 2011, in outlining its program to assist the implementation of the governments NSGEDV strategy reported that:

"Through the support of the UN, INSTAT [Albanian Institute of Statistics] conducted the first national population-based survey on Domestic Violence in Albania (March 2009). The survey found that domestic violence against women and children is a widespread problem in families and communities throughout Albania. For example, of the 2,590 women surveyed, 50.6 per cent of surveyed women self-reported experiencing emotional abuse in their marriage or intimate, 39.1 per cent experienced psychological abuse, 31.2 per cent experienced physical violence, and 12.7 per cent experienced sexual violence. Depending upon the type of domestic violence experienced by women there were some significant differences based upon women's level of education, work status, age group, and marital status. There were also significant differences based between urban and rural areas and across districts. Among the 991 children surveyed, 57.7 per cent reported being physically battered by a family member. Moreover, this survey illustrates that battered women and children suffer physical injuries and serious health problems related to the violence, and the injuries often disrupt women's ability to work. These findings demonstrate that domestic violence has negative effects on the physical health and well-being of battered women and children, and the overall health and well-being of families and communities. In light of these findings, prevention of domestic violence should rank high on the national public health agenda of the Government of Albania." **[25a]**

24.24 Amnesty International, in a report Ending Domestic Violence in Albania – The Next Steps, dated March 2010 stated that:

"The Domestic Violence Law was adopted by the Albanian parliament in December 2006 and entered into force on 1 June 2007. The law was the result of a long campaign by a coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), resulting in a petition to the Albanian parliament signed by over 10,000 people. This civil law represented significant progress towards the prevention of family violence in Albania, in particular through the introduction of protection orders. …

"Since the introduction of the Domestic Violence Law, there has been a significant increase in reported incidents of domestic violence. In 2007 the police reportedly received 274 reports of family violence after the law came into force in June. Comparable figures exist for the first nine months of each subsequent year: between Protection orders January and September 2008, police registered 614 reports. By September 2009, some 993 cases had been reported. Both Albanian women's NGOs and the police interpret this increase as a greater willingness and confidence on the part of abused women to report domestic violence. Reports received by the police reflect only a very small proportion of the true number of cases of domestic violence.

The majority of women, particularly in rural areas, where the taboo against even talking about domestic violence remains strong, are still reluctant to report domestic violence to the authorities." **[26a] (p2)**

24.25 The same AI report stated that:

"Press reports suggest that relatively few complaints of domestic violence lead to criminal prosecutions, unless they result in death, serious injury or threats to life, in which case there is a duty on the prosecutor to initiate a prosecution. …

"According to a local NGO, in January 2008 there were 12 registered cases of attempted suicide by female victims of domestic violence in Elbasan district alone. In November 2009, the Kukës Counselling Centre for women and Girls reported five suicides and 13 cases of attempted suicide due to domestic violence in their district over the past two years. In December 2009, Petrit Goga was prosecuted for inducing his wife Mimoza to commit suicide, through repeated ill-treatment. According to reports in the daily newspaper Metropol his sister-in law, a witness at the trial at Tirana District Court, told the judge: "You know, sir, that all women in our country are beaten by their husbands. It's normal...Your husband comes home in a bad mood, or tired from work, and when he isn't pleased, he beats you. That's what Petrit did to his wife. He beat her late at night. He sometimes came home from work drunk. He bolted the door and then he would beat his wife." She told the judge that Mimoza had been beaten the night before she drowned herself. The judge asked her if her own husband beat her. "Well, you know the answer. It's pointless to tell you twice. I'm also beaten by my husband." **[26a] (p.14)**

AI concluded that:

"The fact that domestic violence has not been recognized as a specific criminal offence in Albania has serious consequences. It results in the continued violation of women's rights to physical and mental integrity and in some cases a violation of their right to life." **[26a] (p15)**

24.26 The USSD Report 2010 stated that:

"Domestic violence against women, including spousal abuse, remained a serious problem. During the year police reported cases of domestic violence and the government pressed charges in cases. The department of equal opportunities at the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunity covers women's issues, including domestic violence.

"The government did not fund specific programs to combat domestic violence or assist victims, although non-profit organizations provided assistance. NGOs reported that an estimated eight domestic violence hotlines operated. The hotlines, serving mainly the northern part of the country, each received approximately 25 calls per month from women reporting some form of violence. NGOs operated four shelters for battered women in Tirana, Vlora, Elbasan, and Gjirokaster. During the year NGOs and police noted a substantial increase in reports of domestic violence, primarily due to increased awareness of services and more trust in the police. According to government figures, there were 1,744 cases of domestic violence reported during the year, compared with 1,063 in 2009. Often the police do not have the training or capacity to deal with domestic violence cases.

"In many communities, particularly those in the northeast, women were subjected to societal discrimination as a result of traditional social norms that considered women to be subordinate to men." **[2f] (Section 6)**

24.27 The Freedom in the World 2011 report stated that:

"Domestic violence, which is believed to be widespread, is rarely punished by the authorities. Albania is a source country for trafficking in women and children, with the latter typically exploited as beggars in European countries. The EU reported in 2010 that the government has made an effort to combat the practice, but that more effective prosecutions were needed." **[9d]**

24.28 The Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso (OBC), in a report dated 16 November 2011 stated that:

"Domestic violence continues to be a serious problem in Albanian society with growing numbers of reported cases and victims. Most of the girl and women victims belong to the more disadvantaged social classes, have a lower standard of education and come from the rural areas. However, domestic violence is not confined to these social groups but regards the whole society regardless of the level of education or economic status.

"Official data from the work ministry shows that 1,998 cases were registered in 2010 and 1,217 cases in 2009.Running alongside this rise in the number of cases reported is the development of activities working to guarantee protection for victims and developing prevention strategies.2010 saw 1,230 requests to the local courts for "Immediate protection/restrictive orders" compared to only 841 requests the year before.

"On analysing the reported cases a recurrent factor has been revealed; that of one member of the family wanting to exercise their absolute power over the others. This usually concerns a husband's behaviour towards his wife or also parents' behaviour towards their children." **[98a]**

THE 2006 LAW

24.29 The OBC report considered the 2006 Law and continued:

"Regarding laws for protecting victims and preventing domestic violence, in 2006 Albania introduced a law on Measures for prevention of violence within families. This law was only passed in parliament following strong pressure from civilians including a petition signed by 20,000 people. The law covers two important aspects. First of all it defines which public institutions are competent in dealing with domestic violence. Secondly it grants the magistracy the power to put "protective and restrictive measures" into action in favour of the victims and against the violators.

"The law states that the violator is the one who is obliged to leave the house when an "order of protection" is issued although this is unfortunately not the case and the violator and victim continue to share the same space and the violence continues" affirms Sevim Arbama from the association 'Useful to Albanian Women'

"An effective application of this law remains a difficult hurdle to get over, starting from completing and drawing up the relevant laws and setting up a budget sufficient enough to put them into practice. It is a matter of fact that since the beginning of 2011 there have been more cases of women killed yet no guilty person in prison. This clearly

shows that the law is not working. The system and network of help finds obstacles in its way when trying to apply the law, plus there are no shelters for victims where they can start to rebuild their lives."Arbana explains.

"As shown by both official statistics as well as data gathered by independent world associations, cases of violence are in fact on the increase. This could also be seen as not completely negative data if we think it could be because people are finally starting to report cases and the problem is at last coming out into the open. However, we still cannot call this data reassuring." **[98a]**

See paragraph 24.07

24.30 The CEDAW, Concluding observations report further stated that:

"… the Committee is concerned about the legal and practical obstacles faced by women seeking redress for acts of discrimination based on sex and gender under the new legislative anti-discrimination framework, as well as the lack of counselling and legal aid services available to women, especially women belonging to ethnic and linguistic minorities, women in rural areas and women belonging to other disadvantaged groups. It is particularly concerned about complainant women bearing the burden of proof in cases of alleged discrimination on the grounds of sex, including in cases of sexual harassment at the workplace." **[13b] (p3)**

HONOUR KILLINGS

24.31 An article in Transcultural Psychiatry, Karo-Kari: A Form of Honour Killing in Pakistan dated December 2008, stated that:

"While generally categorized as unlawful, homicide has been justified under particular circumstances by some social and cultural groups. This includes the cultural sanctioning of premeditated killings of women perceived to have brought dishonour to their families, often by engaging in illicit relations with men. … Over the past decade, human rights groups have increasingly exposed various forms of gender-biased 'honour killing'. A number of countries have legislative positions that allow for partial or complete criminal defence against criminal charges on the basis of honour killing, including those of Argentina, Bangladesh, Ecuador, Guatemala, Turkey, Jordan, Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Iran, Israel, Peru, Venezuela and the Palestinian National Authority (UNCHR, 2002). Honour killings have continued to occur in countries where they have been explicitly outlawed, such as Albania, Brazil, India, Iraq, Uganda and Morocco, as well as in immigrant communities in Europe and North America (UNCHR, 2002)." **[46a] (p683)**

See also Amnesty International submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review Sixth session of the UPR Working Group, November-December 2009, 20 April 2009. **[26d]**

See Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada: Albania: Domestic violence, including legislation, state protection, and services available to victims; access to employment and housing for victims (2008-August 2011), 6 October 2011 **[10j]**

See Blood feuds, Trafficking and Crime –Witness protection program

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25. CHILDREN

OVERVIEW

25.01 The Albania 'Overview', on the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) website, accessed 21 February 2011, summarised the position of children in Albania:

"Albania has showed its commitment to its children by its early ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992, and it is working hard to realize the Millennium Development Goals agreed at the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000. The past two years have generated optimism about realization of child rights as real progress has been seen around the country. … The government recently initiated a process to update the national strategy on children and an action plan to implement it, based on child rights principles." **[30a] (Overview)**

25.02 The same source indicated that children face considerable difficulties in Albania. It observed that:

"Infant mortality rate is 18 per 1,000 live births. More than 95 per cent of children are immunized against ten vaccine-preventable diseases, 56 per cent of children aged between 3 and 6 have no access to pre-school education and only 60.3 per cent of households use adequately iodized salt.

"Albania is the 'youngest' country in Europe, with 40 per cent of the population 18 and younger. Children are generally getting healthier year by year, but the country still has the highest child and maternal death rates in Europe. Infant mortality rate and nutrition status are closely linked to poverty level. … Malnutrition is a serious concern affecting 22% of children. Although government action in health promotion and preventive care is improving, the primary health care system still suffers from limited resources, poor financing mechanisms, unreliable data and lack of standards and equipment. Health is especially poor in the north and in rural areas due to poverty and inadequate health facilities." **[30a] (The children)**

See subsection Health and welfare

25.03 Albania signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) on 26 January 1990 and it was ratified on 27 February 1992 entering into force on 28 March 1992. On 5 February 2008, Albania signed the Optional Protocol to the UNCRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, which was ratified on 5 March 2008 and the Optional Protocol on Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, signed on 9 December 2008 and ratified on 5 March 2008. (UN Treaty Body Database, accessed 22 February 2011) **[10c]**

Basic legal information

National law and policies on minimum ages

25.04 The Right to Education project (RTE), on its Albania country page recorded the following:

"Minimum age for the end of compulsory education

47. […] A child finishes obligatory education at the age of fourteen or fifteen years, depending on the age when he has started school.

388. The preparation of children to pursue compulsory 8-year education takes place while they go to kindergartens […] to which children aged 3-6 are admitted.

See 25.27 for update

396. Children pursue compulsory education after they attain the age of 6 years.

"Minimum age for admission to employment

48. Under Articles 98 and 99 of the Labour Code, children are admitted for employment at the minimum age of 16 years. Children aged 14-18 may be employed to do light work during school vacations. The Council of Ministers defines light work and establishes the working hours.

"Minimum age for marriage

47. […] Under the family law, any female who has attained the age of sixteen years and any male who has attained the age of eighteen years are entitled to marry.

"Minimum age for criminal responsibility

52. A child faces criminal responsibility for criminal offences after he attains the age of fourteen years, and for criminal transgressions after he attains the age of sixteen years." **[32a]**

"Minimum age for voting

Every Albanian citizen who has reached the age of 18 on or before the election date." (The electoral code of the republic of Albania, Accessed 22 February 2011) **[33a] (Article 9)**

25.05 The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, in 'The Child Soldiers Global Report 2008', undated, reported that the:

"Voluntary recruitment age was 18; that the compulsory recruitment age was 19 and that there were no reports of under-18s serving in the armed forces." **[35a] (p43)**

25.06 War Resisters' International (WRI) reported on 22 August 2008 that:

"From 1 January 2010, Albania will no longer have compulsory military service. The initiative is part of the reforms required by NATO, which the country hopes to join after meeting the Alliance's requirements." **[37a]**

See Military service

LEGAL RIGHTS

25.07 The US Department of Labor's 2008 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor, released 10 September 2009 stated that:

"The law sets the minimum age of employment at 16 years, at which time individuals may perform "easy jobs" not harmful to their health and growth … Children as young as 14 years may receive vocational training and may be employed during school holidays… Difficult jobs, those that pose danger to an individual's "health and personality," are prohibited for anyone under 18 years of age, as is work from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. … Those who employ persons under 18 years to work longer than 6 hours per day or who employ those 16 to 18 years of age to jobs that harm their health and growth are subject to fines." **[31a] (p4)**

"The law forbids forced labor by any person, except in cases of the execution of a judicial decision, military service, or for service during a state emergency or war. **[31a] (p5)**

See paragraph 26.06 and Military service

25.08 The US Department of Labor stated that:

"Intercourse with minor girls, child sex abuse, prostitution with minors, and child pornography are all prohibited, with fines and terms of imprisonment. The punishment for child prostitution in Albania is 7 to 15 years imprisonment. The law prohibits child trafficking with penalties of 7 to 15 years imprisonment. In January, the Penal Code was amended, which, according to ILO-IPEC, includes clear penalties for perpetrators of certain acts involving children, including trafficking, child labor, pornography, and maltreatment. According to USDOS, the Code now categorizes "exploitation of children for labor or forced services" as a penal crime." **[31a] (p5)**

See also Legislation of Interpol member states on sexual offences against children **[34a]**

25.09 UNICEF, in a media release dated 4 November 2010 stated that:

"Today the Albania Parliament approved the 'Law on the protection of the Rights of the Child', with 131 votes in favor. There were no objections or abstentions. It translates the CRC into domestic law and defines mechanisms for its monitoring. Chairpersons of the various involved parliamentary committees, the Minister of Social Affairs and the Minister of Education, as well as delegates from across the political spectrum took the floor in support.

Speakers noted that in passing of this law:

- Albania's moves forward in meeting its obligations towards CRC implementation;
- A recommendation of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child is being fulfilled;
- The rights of the child are now linked to specific institutional obligations." **[30c]**

25.10 The media release continued:

"The child rights law deal with the rights to good education, quality health services, social and legal services; prohibition of all forms of discrimination and abuses against children; justice for children; and effective data collection and information systems to track progress and inform policy related to children. " **[30c]**

25.11 The Albanian Coalition "All Together Against Child Trafficking" (BKTF), in a press release dated 5 November 2010 stated that:

"The approval of this law marks a significant achievement for the protection of the rights of all the Albanian children through a complete legal and institutional framework in accordance to the Albanian Constitution and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), The Law lays the ground for the establishment of the appropriate institutional mechanisms that will guarantee and ensure respect for the rights of children by the individual, the family, the state or other third party entities.

"The Law provides all the necessary measures for guaranteeing the survival, life and the development of the child through a coordinated approach amongst various child rights and child protection stakeholders. It is expected that this law will significantly improve the child protection system in Albania by institutionalizing the Child Protection Units as the apposite local level structures responsible for coordinating the provision of child protection services and case management, in collaboration with a number of multi-disciplinary actors. Child Protection Units have been successfully piloted over the last three years by civil society organizations and are already functioning in 13 municipalities and 4 communes around Albania." **[43a]**

For further information, see Child Rights Information Network (CRIN): Albania. **[36a]**

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

25.12 The USSD Report 2010 stated that:

"As in previous years, child abuse, including sexual abuse, occurred occasionally, although victims rarely reported it. In some cases children under the age of 18 engaged in prostitution. The penalties for the commercial sexual exploitation of children range from fines to 15 years' imprisonment. The country has a statutory rape law and the minimum age of consensual sex is 14. The penalty for statutory rape of a child under the age of 14 is a prison term of five to 15 years. The law prohibits making or distributing child pornography, and the penalties are a fine of one to five million leks ($10,000 to $50,000) and a prison sentence of one to five years." **[2f] (Section 6)**

See Legal rights, Trafficking and Blood feuds – Families in isolation

CHILD LABOUR

25.13 The US Department of Labor stated that:

"Children in Albania work as street or shop vendors, farmers or shepherds, vehicle washers, textile factory workers, or shoeshine boys. Children can also be found working as beggars and drug runners. In Bater, Bulqiza, Borje, and Klos, children 16 and 17 years of age work in chromium mines. The majority of children working on the streets are boys, and the majority of children working in factories are girls. In inspected factories, more than 70 percent of underage workers were girls." **[31a] (p4)**

See Legal rights

25.14 Regarding child labour, the USSD Report 2010 stated that:

"The law criminalizes exploitation of children for labor or forced services; however, the government did not enforce the law effectively. According to a CRCA estimate released during the year, more than 50,000 children under 18 years of age worked at least part time. The CRCA reported that the majority of child laborers worked as street or shop vendors, beggars, farmers or shepherds, drug runners, vehicle washers, textile factory workers, miners, or shoeshine boys. Research suggested that begging started at a young age--as early as four or five years old. The criminal code prohibits the exploitation of children for begging. Police generally did not enforce this law." **[2f] (Section 7)**

25.15 The same report continued:

"The law sets the minimum age of employment at 16 years and regulates the amount and type of labor that children under the age of 18 may perform. Children between the ages of 16 and 18 years old can work in certain specified jobs. The law provides that the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunity is responsible for enforcing minimum age requirements through the courts; however, there were no reports of enforcement. Labor inspectors investigated the formal labor sector, whereas most child labor occurred in the informal sector. Most of the labor inspections occurred in shoe and textile factories, and some instances of child labor were found in the course of these inspections. … The government, together with several NGOs and international donors, had some specific programs aimed at preventing illegal child labor." **[2f] (Section 7)**

25.16 The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI), in its Commentary on the March 2011 Country of Origin Information (COI) report on Albania, May 2011, stated that:

"… one of the worst instances of child labour was taking place in the ammunition dismantling factory in Gërdec and came to light only when the explosions took place in March 2008. Not only were some children illegally employed in the factory, whereby they were required to fulfil difficult daily work quotas, but other children were always around in this dangerous environment to help their parents with the work, thereby also handling dangerous items." **[86a]**

CHILDCARE AND PROTECTION

25.17 The US Department of Labor's 2008 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor, released 10 September 2009 stated that:

"Albania is a source country for children trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor. Albanian children are trafficked domestically and to Greece for begging and other forms of child labor. Roma and Egyptian children are at greatest risk for trafficking. Reports indicate that street children may be involved in forced prostitution." **[31a] (p4)**

25.18 The NGO, End child prostitution child pornography and trafficking of children for sexual purposes (ECPAT International), in a report dated September 2009 stated that:

"In Albania, due to the strengthening of law enforcement agencies via trainings, coordination has improved among government agencies." **[38a] (p46)**

25.19 The USSD Report 2010 stated that:

"Displaced and street children remained a problem, particularly Romani children, who made up 90 percent of street children. Street children begged or did petty work; some migrated to neighboring countries, particularly during the summer. These children were at highest risk of internal trafficking and some became trafficking victims." **[2f] (Section 6)**

25.20 The Mario Project, in an Observation report: Exploitation of Albanian children in street situation in Kosovo, December 2010, stated that:

"After the 1999 Kosovo war, a new phenomenon of Albanian children in street situations moving from Albania to Kosovo was noticed. These children and their families, who migrate to Kosovo mainly for begging or collecting metals purposes face challenging socio-economic situations that compound their further marginalization, social exclusion and deprivation from proper child protection and access to social services. These children are also likely to be exposed to the risk of exploitation by organized crime circles for sexual and forced labor purposes. This phenomenon however has not been properly documented by any comprehensive data and/or analysis in either Albania or Kosovo." **[39a] (p2)**

25.21 The report continued:

"Albanian and Kosovo authorities will often cooperate when the issue of an Albanian child begging becomes an issue for deportation; however the institutional cooperation between the two countries should take the form of an integrated approach towards managing the cases of these children in order to effectively prevent and address this phenomenon. In both countries, Terre des homes (Tdh) delegations and Save the Children Albania are working to develop coordinated child protection safety nets that offer protection to children against various forms of abuse including violence, neglect, exploitation, and/or trafficking. Tdh supports the child protection work and efforts of the national duty-bearers through capacity-building and via encouragement of synergies between the various protection actions undertaken by a diverse number of multi-disciplinary actors." **[39a] (p2)**

See Trafficking, Children - Childcare and protection and

See also the Regional report on the implementation of UNICEF Guidelines on the protection of the rights of child victims of trafficking: Assessment of the situation in Albania, Kosovo and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 2010 for further information. **[39b]**

ORPHANS

25.22 Amnesty International, in a report In Search of Shelter: Leaving Social Care in Albania, 20 May 2010, stated that:

"In the Albanian language, the word for orphan (jetim) has a range of meanings. A child is an orphan if both parents have died or one parent has died, especially if the dead parent is the father (often the family's only breadwinner). In addition, in colloquial use all children in state orphanages (Children's Homes) or private institutions providing residential care are generally referred to as orphans (and often refer to themselves as orphans), although the more accurate term is "children deprived temporarily or permanently of parental care". Nowadays the great majority of these children have a living parent or parents, who for various reasons are temporarily or permanently unable

or unwilling to care for them. Children whose parents have both died (in Albania sometimes referred to as "biological orphans") are generally adopted.

"Further, in Albanian colloquial use and in legal terminology an orphan is not necessarily a child (a person under 18 years), but may also be an adult. Albanian law recognizes orphan status and grants certain rights, including the right to priority with housing, to people with this status up to the age of 25 (and beyond this age, in certain circumstances). Orphan status and the rights deriving from it are not granted to children with a living parent or parents, unless the latter have been deprived of their parental rights by a court, or have abandoned the child." **[26f] (p5)**

25.23 The same report, in its concluding remarks stated that;

"International law makes the state responsible for providing "special protection and assistance" to children deprived of parental care. International standards, as set out in the UN Guidelines on Alternative Care for Children, also require states to provide individual assistance to such children in their transition to independence and to give them the educational and vocational means to become financially independent. In practice, in Albania the failure to fully meet these standards means that as they reach adulthood many cannot, without state assistance, obtain adequate housing. Employment and housing are both scarce, and many do not have the qualifications and skills to obtain employment providing a salary that enables them to afford adequate housing on the open market, as well as other living expenses. These disadvantages are common not only to young people raised in state orphanages and sent to vocational boarding schools, but also to a significant number of young people raised in private institutions." **[26f] (p33)**

25.24 While there have been improvements in the treatment of 'orphans', for example, Law No. 9355, dated 10.03.2005 "On Social Aid and Services" which defines measures to provide assistance and social services to individuals and groups in need due to limited economic opportunities and their limited, physical, psychological and social skills, including children **[22B] (P58)** and a Decision of the Council of Ministers (DCM) No. 419, dated 19.06.2003, 'For Treatment of Orphans with Healthcare and Medications', which stipulated that persons who have the status of an orphan and are not employed, are entitled to free healthcare and free medications. **[22b](p93)**

25.25 As a result of its research, Amnesty International sent a memorandum to the Albanian government in November 2009, Orphans and other children deprived of parental care – Amnesty International's concerns in which, while recognising that some progress had been made also outlined continuing concerns. **[26g]**

EDUCATION

25.26 UNICEF, on the Albania country page stated that:

"Many parents do not understand the importance of children's pre-school years, especially in poor areas of the north and overcrowded informal settlements that have sprung up around the capital since 1991. Believing that education begins at school, they fail to offer appropriate stimulation for young children, and physical punishment is common. Children's access to quality pre-school education has fallen dramatically.

"Since the 1990s, 15,000 pre-school teachers have been dismissed and 1,736 pre-schools have closed nationwide, 72 per cent of them in rural areas. Almost every child

attended pre-school during the Communist period, but in 2003, only 44 per cent of children attend nationwide.

"This figure falls to 13 per cent in rural areas. As funding and standards have declined, so has the quality of services in crèches and kindergartens. Inadequate pre-schooling reduces primary school enrolment, undermines children's healthy development and hinders their ability to succeed in school." **[30a] (The children)**

25.27 In its Country Profile for Albania, accessed on 10 December 2010, Europa World Plus noted:

"Education in Albania is free and compulsory for children between the ages of six and 14 years. Enrolment at pre-primary schools included 47% of children in the relevant age-group (males 47%; females 47%) in 2004. In that year enrolment at primary schools included 94% of children in the relevant age-group (males 94%; females 93%), while, according to UNESCO estimates, secondary education enrolment included 73% of children in the appropriate age-group (males 74%; females 72%). In 2007/08 a total of 90,202 students were enrolled at Albania's institutions of higher education. Spending on education accounted for some 10.6% of government expenditure in 2004 (equivalent to some 3.0% of GDP). In October 2006 the European Investment Bank announced that it was to provide funds of €12.5m. to support the reform of education infrastructure and management in Albania." **[1a] (education)**

25.28 The US State Department 2010 Human Rights Report: Albania (USSD Report 2010), released on 8 April 2011, noted:

"The law provides for nine years of free education and authorizes private schools. School attendance is mandatory through the ninth grade or until age 16, whichever comes first; however, in practice many children left school earlier than the law allowed to work with their families, particularly in rural areas. Parents must purchase supplies, books, uniforms, and space heaters for some classrooms, which was prohibitively expensive for many families, particularly Roma and other minorities. Many families also cited these costs as a reason for not sending girls to school." **[2f] (Section 6)**

See 25.04

25.29 The UNICEF webpage for Albania, under the section 'The Children: Adolescence' accessed on 22 February 2011, reported that:

"Enrolment in vocational secondary schools has fallen by 89 per cent, while in general secondary schools it has increased by 24 per cent

40 per cent of employed young people have only temporary or occasional jobs

The percentage of juvenile offenders (14-to-18-year-olds) declined from 1 per cent in 1992 to 0.3 per cent in 2002

2001 population census suggest that 20 per cent of the 15-24 age group has left the country." **[30a] (The Children/Adolescence)**

HEALTH AND WELFARE

25.30 The Republic of Albania, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Second, Third and Fourth Periodic Report, November 2009 stated that:

"Health care is provided through a vast network of primary health care centers, polyclinics and hospitals for outpatient specialized cases in 36 districts of the country. Public health services and promotion of health education are offered in the context of primary health, and are supported and supervised by the Institute of Public Health (IPH). In the primary care system, service for children starts in the rural areas where ambulances employ mid-level qualified staff, such as nurses and midwives. These ambulances provide basic health services in prevention and treatment of diseases of the rural population, including children. The package of these services, which was revised in January of 2009, included care for mothers and children. The ambulances provide regular care for women during pregnancy, child birth at the birth home (if there is one at these ambulances), care after birth, vaccinations, first aid emergency and referral services, home visits, health promotion and health education for these categories, etc." **[22b] (p82)**

25.31 The report continued:

"For the first time ever, health centers have been established which serve the local populations through teams of specialized doctors contracted by the health insurance system. These teams offer a package of well-defined health services. The goal of these health centers is to provide quality health services to all the population in the area covered by the center. In accordance DCM No. 857, dated 20.12.2006, care for mothers and children, and health education and promotion should be a part of this package." **[22b] (p82)**

25.32 A report from the Xinhua News Agency dated 21 November 2009 reported that:

"The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) praised Albania for what it has done to protect and promote children's rights during the past 20 years. "There are many improvements, including improved health services for children and higher enrolment in schools," UNICEF's Albanian branch said in a press release. However, there is much more to be done, especially when Albania is preparing for European integration, the release said. A latest living standard survey indicated that 12.4 percent of all Albanians still live in poverty, and half of them are children. One recent demographic and health survey found that one out of six children in Albania are stunted or too short for their age." **[44a]**

25.33 UNICEF, on its Albania country page, undated, reported, "Health statistics show real improvement over the past several years, and health professionals are increasingly adopting holistic and preventive care strategies." **[30a] (overview)**

25.34 The WHO, in its National Survey on Public Attitudes to Mental Health - Albania 2009 stated that:

"20 per cent of the adolescents under the age of 18 suffer from developmental, emotional or behavioral problems, and one in eight has a mental disorder. Among adolescents and children from poor communities, this rate is one in five. In young people, depression and low self-esteem are linked with smoking, binge drinking, eating disorders and unsafe sex, putting them at risk of a range of diseases including sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS." **[45c] (p19)**

The report continued:

"A considerable portion of these children don't take or have no access in proper care because of the lack of specialized services. Most of the interventions available have been traditionally focused on the adult patients, disregarding the need of early interventions during childhood. In Albania mental health services for children are centralized only in Tirana, not facilitating the access to them of the largest percentage of children in the country." **[45c] (p20)**

25.35 The European Commission Staff Working Paper, Albania 2011 Progress Report, 12 October 2011stated that:

"There has been good progress regarding communicable diseases. Immunisation with pneumococcal vaccination has begun, aimed at reducing childhood infections and infant mortality. Two workshops have been organised on HPV and Rotavirus introduction vaccines, and the respective action plans have been prepared. Paediatricians, epidemiologists and other doctors throughout the country have been trained on new vaccines. The programme and database of web based national electronic vaccination registry has been prepared, including vaccination coverage, stock management and adverse reactions. The Influenza Lab has been upgraded and the plan for vaccination of risk groups against influenza has been prepared. … Despite a number of alleviating measures, health inequalities persist. Health authorities in Tirana have supported immunisation activities, including door to door screening, for Roma families and children as well as capacity development of health care providers to reach vulnerable population groups with immunisation and other child health services. However, there are still no reliable data with regard to the health care of Roma newborns and breastfeeding mothers. Primary health care in general has not been accessible for all groups, especially marginalised and young people (young people with HIV/AIDS, young drug users and the Roma minority)." **[8c] (p63)**

See Medical issues – Mental health

A comprehensive collection of data including mortality rates and the effect of common illnesses on specific [population groups can be found on the World Health Organisation (WHO) - European health for all database (HFA-DB) **[45a]**

DOCUMENTATION

25.36 The US State Department 2010 Human Rights Report: Albania (USSD Report 2010), published on 8 April 2011, stated:

"In general, parents must register their children in the same community where they registered. However, according to the Children's Rights Center of Albania (CRCA), children born to internal migrants frequently had no birth certificates or other legal documentation and, as a result, were unable to attend school. This is a particular problem for Romani families as well, who often marry young and fail to register their children." **[2f] (Section 6)**

25.37 Immigration Translation Services, a company that provides certified translations for the U.S. Immigration (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services – USCIS stated that:

"A typical Albanian birth certificate contains your first, middle, and last name, maiden name (if you married and changed your last name), sex (gender – male or female, or

boy or girl), your father's and mother's name, date of birth, place of birth, name of issuing agency and place of registration, name and title of signing officer.

"Some Albanian birth certificates may have additional information and data such as: nationality, ages, and professions of father and mother, paternal and maternal grandfather and grandmother information, addresses (residences) of father, mother, and grandparents.

"In many cases, civil service office of municipality is authorized to issue birth certificates, marriage certificates, and similar civil registration documents in Tirana, Skopje, or in other cities.

"If you lost your Albanian birth certificate or need a new certificate of birth for a newborn, you may contact Consular Services…" **[40a]**

Further background information on registration documents can be found at http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,IRBC,,ALB,4562d8b62,474e89541e,0.html **[10d]** and The University of Geneva report Demographic Data in Albania, Results of an Assessment, 10 January 2008. **[42a]**

25.38 Further information, including relevant data can be found at.

Albania: Children's Rights References in the Universal Periodic Review, 2 December 2009, for a useful compilation of extracts featuring child-rights issues from the reports submitted to the United Nations first Universal Periodic Review. **[36b]**

The Annex to the First, Second, Third and Fourth Periodic Report, November 2009 (see paragraph 26.28) which contains relevant data concerning the situation of children in Albania. **[22c]**

A wide range of demographic data, updated 3 March 2010, with particular reference to children, at UNICEF – Statistics. **[30b]**

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26. TRAFFICKING

26.01 The US State Department 2009 Human Rights Report: Albania (USSD Report 2009), published on 11 March 2010, stated:

"The law prohibits trafficking in persons for all purposes and provides penalties for traffickers; however, individuals and organized crime syndicates trafficked persons, particularly women and children, from and within the country. The country was a source country for men, women, and children trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labor, including forced begging and agricultural work. Victims were trafficked primarily to Greece, but also to Italy, Macedonia, Kosovo, Spain, France, the United Kingdom, and other West European countries as well as within the country.

"Trafficking in persons is punishable by law, with criminal penalties ranging from five to 15 years in prison for sex trafficking offenses and from four to 15 years for labor trafficking. Fines from 50,000 to four million lek ($500 to $40,000) accompany prison sentences in criminal cases. Civil remedies are also available. During the year the

government increased its investigations and prosecutions for trafficking in persons offenses." **[2b] (Section 6)**

See paragraph 26.08

26.02 The report continued:

"The government continued its slow implementation of the national action plan to provide services to victims of trafficking. The government provided limited services to trafficking victims, operating a shelter near Tirana; however, it did not provide financial assistance to the four nongovernment shelters.

"The National Strategy on the Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings was the primary vehicle through which the government addressed trafficking. Through the strategy, the government offered training to 270 personnel and sponsored dozens of public awareness campaigns during the year to prevent trafficking." **[2b] (Section 6)**

26.03 The US Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report 2010 (USSD TIP Report 2010): Albania, published on 14 June 2010, reported in greater depth and stated that:

"Albania is a source country for men, women, and children subjected to trafficking in persons, specifically forced prostitution and forced labor, including the forced begging of children. Albanian victims are subjected to conditions of forced labor and sex trafficking within Albania and Greece, Italy, Macedonia, Kosovo, and Western Europe. Approximately half of the victims referred for care within the country in 2009 were Albanian; these were primarily women and girls subjected to conditions of forced prostitution in hotels and private residences in Tirana, Durres, and Vlora. Children were primarily exploited for begging and other forms of forced labor. There is evidence that Albanian men have been subjected to conditions of forced labor in the agricultural sector of Greece and other neighboring countries.

"The Government of Albania does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. The government continued to improve its capacity to identify, protect, and reintegrate trafficking victims. It also successfully prosecuted some sex trafficking offenders, leading to significant penalties imposed on them during the reporting period. In March 2009, the government approved an amendment to the Social Assistance law which will provide victims of trafficking with the same social benefits accorded to other at- risk groups in Albania and provide government funding for shelters." **[2d]**

26.04 The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI), in its Commentary on the March 2011 Country of Origin Information (COI) report on Albania, May 2011, stated that:

"Amongst other common factors' for trafficking it is important to include the position of women – especially rural women – in society, practically as 'second-class citizens', at times as chattel which are traded between the men of the parental and spousal family, especially in the north and north-east of the country. In such an environment, there is a significant stigmatisation of divorced and separated women, which makes their lives unbearable in the areas they live in and which fuels their need to escape the country at any cost. **[86a] (p12)**

Trafficking Routes

26.05 The Protection Project, in its report A Human Rights Report on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, 5 October 2010 stated that:

"Albania is a country of origin of trafficking victims, mainly to Greece, Italy, Belgium, United Kingdom, as well as within Albania. In the last few years, Albania has increasingly become a transit country for men, women, and children, recruited into the trafficking chain, coming from Eastern Europe. In 2007, Greece was reported as the main destination for trafficked victims transited, from or through, Albania. The traffickers primarily use land routes and falsified documents to transfer their victims across borders. Kidnapping and deception of young women and girls for commercial sexual exploitation remains the main "recruiting" method used by traffickers. Once transported to the destination country, they are forced into prostitution and are brutally abused. The trafficking in children to Greece can be divided in trafficking for sexual exploitation and begging related forms of labor." **[47a]**

26.06 The report continued:

"Due to its vicinity to Western Europe, especially Greece and Italy, and its proximity to North Eastern bordering countries, Albania has been used as a main trafficking route and hub for traffickers.… Other common factors contributing to trafficking in persons in Albania are economic disparity, inadequate border control, widespread corruption, and lack of opportunities and education for young people, particularly women. The poverty—especially in rural areas—has created a sense of desperation and hopelessness among young women and girls, making them vulnerable to the false promises and deception used by traffickers. **[47a]**

Prosecution

26.07 Amnesty International, in its Annual Report 2010: Albania published 28 May 2010 (Events of 2009), stated that:

"Prosecutions remained scarce because victims feared reprisals by their traffickers, or were pressured by their families to withdraw complaints. During 2009 the Serious Crimes Court convicted five people of trafficking women for prostitution and four of trafficking children." **[26b]**

26.08 The USSD TIP Report 2010 observed that:

"The Government of Albania sustained its anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts during the reporting period. Albania criminally prohibits sex and labor trafficking through its penal code, which prescribes penalties of 5 to 15 years' imprisonment. These penalties are sufficiently stringent and exceed those prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape. The State Police and Serious Crimes Prosecution division reported investigating a combined 35 suspected traffickers in 2009. The government prosecuted 31 suspected trafficking offenders in 2009, convicting 11 of them; this contrasts with 26 trafficking offenders convicted in 2008 and seven in 2007. All of the prosecutions and convictions involved sex trafficking of women or children. In 2009, sentences imposed on convicted trafficking offenders ranged from 5 to 16 years' imprisonment. Pervasive corruption in all levels and sectors of Albanian society seriously hampered the government's ability to address its human trafficking problem, according to local observers. While there were no prosecutions of trafficking-related complicity initiated, the Supreme Court overturned convictions of traffickers in two cases in 2009, raising concerns regarding the court's impartiality. In January 2009, the government reported it

doubled the number of police investigators to investigate trafficking.… The government also continued its anti-trafficking training for 200 judges, prosecutors, and judicial police officers." **[2d]**

Legislation

26.09 The Protection Project report noted that:

"The Criminal Code of the Republic of Albania, which was enacted in a consolidated version in 2004, recognizes trafficking in persons as a criminal offense. Article 110/1 defines trafficking as 'Recruitment, transport, transfer, hiding, or reception of persons through threat or the use of force or other forms of compulsion, kidnapping, fraud, abuse of office, or taking advantage of social, physical, or psychological condition or the giving or receipt of payments or benefits in order to get the consent of a person who controls another person, with the purpose of exploitation of prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced services or work, slavery or forms similar to slavery, putting to use or transplanting organs, as well as other forms of exploitation.' The punishment for this crime is imprisonment for 5 to 15 years, with a fine of 2 million to 5 million lek. The organization, management, and financing of the trafficking of persons are punishable by imprisonment of 7 to 15 years, with a fine of 4 to 6 million lek.

"The exploitation of children for labor, begging, or other forced services are also criminalized under the 2004 Criminal Code. Exploiting a child to forced labor or similar occupation is a criminal act and is punished by imprisonment for a term up to one year and a fine ranging from 50 thousand to 1 million lek. This article also criminalizes the sale of a child as means for organ donation, or illegal adoption, for purposes of profit. The crime is punished by imprisonment of up to 7 years." **[47a]**

Implementation

26.10 A Council of Europe Report concerning the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by Albania, First evaluation round, Strasbourg, 2 December 2011, reported that:

"The First Instance Court for Serious Crimes competent for ruling in respect of trafficking provisions has adopted a number of decisions, making it possible to establish case law on certain points of interpretation (see paragraph 49). However, the CC has been successively revised with regard to questions of trafficking and sexual exploitation and there has been no harmonisation since. There are risks of confusion, therefore, between provisions punishing trafficking in persons, and particularly between the provision prohibiting trafficking in women (Article 114(b)) and the one prohibiting the "exploitation of prostitution with aggravating circumstances" (Article 114(a)). The latter punishes, inter alia, exploitation of prostitution by deception, coercion or the abuse of a person's physical or mental incapacity and provides for a penalty of seven to 15 years' imprisonment, but not for a fine. This confusion is partly sustained by the fact that, even though the CC provisions on trafficking are applicable not only to acts of transnational trafficking but also to acts of national trafficking, in the latter case the prosecution authorities tend to view national trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation solely as a form of exploitation of prostitution with aggravating circumstances (see also paragraph 169). The 2008-2010 Strategy lists the failure to differentiate between prostitution and THB for the purpose of sexual exploitation and between THB for the

purpose of exploitation of labour and illicit trafficking in migrants and undeclared work as one of the challenges still to be tackled." **[52c] (p36)**

26.11 The same report continued:

"As mentioned above (paragraph 25), the First Instance Court for Serious Crimes has been competent for the offences of trafficking in persons, women and minors since 2004. A total of four prosecutors are assigned to the Prosecutor's Office of this court and two of them form part of a unit specialised in prosecuting THB offences. A specialised judicial officer has been appointed to serve as a victims' co-ordinator. The Albanian authorities indicated that this number of specialised prosecutors and judges is adequate in view of the quantity of cases currently coming before the court (an average of 12 to 18 cases concerning THB per year) and as long as the number of cases does not significantly increase.

"The Albanian authorities have indicated that in 2008, 19 sets of proceedings were opened and 16 convictions were handed down for THB, and in 2009, 24 sets of proceedings were opened and seven convictions were handed down. All the sentences handed down were followed by custodial sentences. According to the Albanian authorities, in 2010 the police identified 37 cases of THB, 25 more than in 2009, and the Serious Crime Prosecution Office initiated criminal proceedings in 39 cases, 15 more than in the previous year. In 2010, the First Instance Court for Serious Crimes tried 19 cases related to THB and reached a decision on seven out of them resulting in the conviction of 11 persons.

"The specialisation of prosecutors and judges of the First Instance Court for Serious Crimes makes it possible to train them in protection and assistance for victims. Action against trafficking has formed part of the initial training of prosecutors and judges since 2003. Courses are also available in this area within the framework of further training. The judges and prosecutors assigned to the First Instance Court for Serious Crimes and the Prosecutor's Office attached to it receive specialised training on the offences covered, including trafficking. Basic police training includes modules on trafficking: of the 324 training courses organised in 2010 for chief inspectors for example, 27 were dedicated to action against trafficking. Occasionally, multidisciplinary training sessions are organised on the theme of trafficking, bringing together judges and doctors, for example. However, prosecutors and judges must be made aware of the phenomenon of national trafficking (see paragraph 59), and the need to prosecute these acts as such and as energetically as transnational trafficking." **[52c] (p38)**

Assistance to victims of trafficking

26.12 The USSD TIP Report 2010 stated that:

"The Government of Albania took some steps to improve its efforts to identify and protect victims of trafficking victims in 2009. The government implemented its National Referral Mechanism and conducted meetings with relevant stakeholders to improve its functioning. … In January 2010, it approved a draft law to provide social assistance to trafficking victims bridging the time that they leave the shelters until they find employment. NGO-managed shelters continued to rely primarily on international donor funds in order to provide comprehensive services to trafficking victims. The government continued to fund and operate a reception center that housed both victims of trafficking and irregular foreign migrants identified within Albanian territory; however, victims' freedom of movement is often restricted in this high-security center. …" **[2d]**

26.13 The report continued:

"The government encouraged victims to participate in investigations and prosecutions of trafficking offenders; however, victims often refused to testify, or they changed their testimony as a result of intimidation from traffickers or fear of intimidation. In some cases in 2009, the police offered no protections to trafficking victims when testifying against their traffickers, forcing victims to rely exclusively on NGOs for protection. … The General Prosecutor's office did not request witness protection for victims of trafficking in 2009." **[2d]**

26.14 The Council of Europe Report of 2 December 2011 reported that:

"Since 2004, if a victim of trafficking agrees to co-operate with the authorities, they may benefit from special protection, recently reinforced by Law No. 10/173 of 22 October 2009 on the Protection of Witnesses and Persons Collaborating with Justice. This special protection may include measures such as new identities, changes in place of residence, etc. However, in practice, even though this programme has been in existence since 2004, only two victims of trafficking have benefited from it, one in 2006 and one in 2010. In the view of the NGOs involved in protecting victims of trafficking, the special protection programme for victims of trafficking should be applied more often, given the real danger they face. This would facilitate prosecutions and give victims better protection. **[52c] (p39)**

26.15 With regards to the prevention of trafficking, the USSD TIP Report 2010 noted that:

"The National Coordinator's office continued to manage regional anti-trafficking working groups comprised of relevant stakeholders in 2009. These working groups, however, reportedly do not always include civil society actors and they did not efficiently address trafficking cases brought to their attention.… In November 2009, the government passed legislation to improve the registration process for new births and individuals in the Roma community; previous cumbersome procedures rendered unregistered Albanians and ethnic Roma highly vulnerable to trafficking." **[2d]**

26.16 In regard to the situation concerning trafficked women who have returned or, been returned, to Albania, in a searching publication 'Trafficking and Human Rights: European and Asia-Pacific Perspectives' 30 September 2010: Edited by Leslie Holmes, Chapter 6. 'Between Social Opprobrium and Repeat Trafficking: Chances and Choices of Albanian Women Deported from the UK' by Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers stated that:

"Available figures and estimates regarding the Albanian trafficking issue sometimes appear to be stretched in opposite directions, according to conflicting political or other interests and sometimes to moralising attitudes that often bear little relation to the actual situation of transnational Albanian trafficking victims and sex workers. However, stereotypical attitudes, image anxieties and politically driven estimates can have a profound effect on the situation of those attempting to extricate themselves from their predicament and hoping to be given protection by the authorities back home after trafficking episodes. They can also be symptomatic of deeper problems, such as weak governance, that may affect the likelihood of protection. In particular, in Albania – as with many other countries – there still exists a problem of social 'shame' that causes discomfort within families, in wider society, and even on the national level, resulting in a preference for silence over open discussion of the serious issues …" **[48a]**

26.17 The same publication continued:

"…the effects of deeply culturally embedded familism and corresponding stigma for Albanian women outside family protection and control, which effectively trap them in a 'social opprobrium' that renders the question of 'willing' or 'voluntary' retrafficking redundant. The notion of victimhood in relation to trafficked women appears as the result of modernisation processes in Albania. Attitudes informed by cultural 'shame' that both criminalise and direct the blame onto the 'whores' themselves, regardless of a history of coercion or consensus, are still ubiquitous in wider social attitudes.

"Yet because of the prevalence of engrained corruption in conjunction with cultural familism there appear, so far, to be no alternative forms of societal or state protection and security options available to trafficked persons after their return to Albania – other than family reintegration. This is seen by all Albanian stakeholders in the anti-trafficking fight, as well as by the women themselves, as the only long-term option apart from remarriage or success in the asylum system." **[48a]**

26.18 AI, in Albania Human Rights - Human Rights Concerns, undated, stated that:

"The trafficking of women and children for forced prostitution and cheap labor continued, although arrests and prosecutions for trafficking markedly increased. The law, however, did not adequately protect victims, for whom there were limited support services provided by non-governmental organizations" **[26i]**

26.19 The European Commission Staff Working Paper, Albania 2011 Progress Report, 12 October 2011stated that:

"Trafficking in human beings is still an area of concern. The Office of the National anti-Trafficking Coordinator has increased its commitment, and policy and operational measures have enhanced the identification and protection of trafficking victims. In February 2011, a National Action Plan for combating human trafficking was adopted. Moreover, the government has started providing some financial support to shelters supporting victims. Albania remains a country of origin for trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labour.

"A multidisciplinary approach to address trafficking in human beings has to be implemented. Identification of victims needs to be improved, and all actors likely to come in contact with a victim of trafficking need to be properly trained. An effective and functioning National Referral Mechanism to protect, assist and support victims of trafficking, especially children, is crucial in this regard. Overall progress has been achieved in this area, but the capacity of the law enforcement agencies and international cooperation need to be considerably reinforced." **[8c] (p57)**

Re-trafficking

26.20 The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI), in its Commentary on the March 2011 Country of Origin Information (COI) report on Albania, May 2011, stated that:

"This is when a trafficked person is repatriated to Albania and after a certain time in a shelter, police station, or other place is re-trafficked again abroad. The main cause for this is the difficult life the individual faces upon return to Albania. During such returns, police notify the parents or in their absence other close relative of the individual they

hold. This is the first moment of the breach of privacy as these relatives generally are not aware of the activities the person was engaged in abroad – especially when this involves work in the sex industry. Second, because Albania is such a small country where families are closely related to each-other and trace relations and acquaintances in various parts of the country, there is a significant and real danger that the police officers handling the case will either know the person, or relatives of the person, or know someone who knows the person. As such, the return of an individual who has been a trafficking victim to Albania is generally not an anonymous event; information about spreads around quickly, with the result that stigmatisation of the individual and the family prejudices the return to their area of origin. This stigmatisation means that the individual cannot lead a meaningful life and participate in activities such as going outside the compounds of the house – not even in the garden – go to work, to school, etc. They effectively live imprisoned. Some years ago a returned young woman committed suicide after a few months of living in her parental home under such conditions, as her life had become unbearable." **[86a] (p12)**

See the National strategy on combating trafficking in persons 2008-2010 **[49a]**

See Women and Crime - Witness protection program

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27. MEDICAL ISSUES

OVERVIEW OF AVAILABILITY OF MEDICAL TREATMENT AND DRUGS

27.01 The Institute of Statistics, Institute of Public Health [Albania] and ICF Macro, in the Albania Demographic and Health Survey (ADH) 2008-09 published in March 2010 stated that:

"The health system in Albania is mainly public. The state is the major provider of health services, health promotion, prevention, diagnosis and treatment. The private sector, which is still developing, covers most of the pharmaceutical and dental services, as well as some clinics for highly specialized diagnosis, mostly in Tirana and one or two other major cities. The Ministry of Health (MoH) is the leader in health policy development and planning and in the implementation of health strategies.

"Diagnostic and curative health services in Albania are organized in three levels: primary health care, secondary hospital services, and tertiary hospital services. The public health services are provided within the framework of primary health care and are coordinated and supervised by the Institute of Public Health. Other national health institutions that report to the MoH and that provide specific services are: the National Centre for Blood Transfusion, the Centre for Child Development and Growth, the National Centre for the Quality, Safety and Accreditation of Health Institutions, the National Centre for Drug Control, the Centre the Continuing Education, and the National Centre of Biomedical Engineering." **[50] (p4)**

27.02 The ADH Survey continued:

"The main mission of the Primary Health Care (PHC) system in Albania is to ensure that the population has the best possible health conditions, in accordance with the main goal of the MoH, 'Health for All'. PHC services at the community level represent the first

level of access to health care. … the second level of health care is provided by hospitals. There are over forty public hospitals in the country, including 22 District Hospitals, 11 Regional Hospitals, 4 University Hospitals, 1 University Trauma Centre, 2 Psychiatric Hospitals, and 1 National Centre for Child Development and Growth. With continuous support from both the government and donors, hospital infrastructure and medical equipment and supplies have improved substantially in recent years." **[50] (p5)**

27.03 GlobalSurance a private medical insurance provider in a 2012 assessment of the Albanian health service stated that:

"The Albania healthcare system has been adversely affected by the fall of communist rule, as the country suffered various setbacks. During the 1990's, Albania was affected by a period of political transition and conflicts, which had an impact on the country's infrastructure, with large scale destruction of healthcare facilities. When violence broke out in 1997, the provision of healthcare services across the country suffered badly, limiting healthcare to emergency care only, with a decline in immunization programmes. In 1999, the fragile Albanian healthcare system had to cope with an influx of refugees from neighboring Kosovo - which itself was undergoing internal conflict and strife - meeting the needs of patients from this country in addition to indigenous health requirements. The pressures arising hindered the progress in reforming the Albanian healthcare sector, which had begun to take shape after the change from communism. These factors have had a negative influence on the Albanian healthcare system which is still apparent today, limiting the scope for transition and development of the healthcare sector.

"The standard of healthcare in Albania is generally very poor - particularly outside the capital Tirana - although privately run medical facilities in Tirana have been introduced and now offer patients better quality medical services within Albania. Outside the capital, the provision of healthcare services declines rapidly and the capability of medical facilities is limited to basic treatment. There is a notable absence of specialist treatment and medical supplies outside Tirana and the overall provision of accident and emergency care is restricted throughout the country." **[88a]**

27.04 An article from The Southeast European Times Web site (SETimes.com), In Albania, an underfunded healthcare system leads to bribery, 24 January 2012, stated that:

"Although public healthcare is free under the social insurance coverage in Albania, bribing doctors for their services is a widespread phenomenon. In 2011, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime published a report on bribery in the country. The findings indicated that "in many cases bribes are paid to facilitate bureaucratic procedures … 70% of citizens who participate in a bribery act do so to receive better treatment." More than 70% of citizens who pay bribes pay them to doctors, while almost 50% bribe nurses, the report said. … "Only 25% to 30% of population pays healthcare insurance -- the state is still the biggest donor to the system. Our citizens think that health is not a 'product' needing maintenance, therefore, ordinarily they don't pay for it." With 2.1% of the country's GDP earmarked for health care, Albania has the lowest health care budget in the region." **[72e]**

See Corruption

PHARMACEUTICAL SERVICE

27.05 The Ministry of Health in An Overview of the Health Care System in Albania, dated January 2009, reported that:

"The pharmaceutical service in Albania is mainly private. Essential parts of these services … are: 3 local private manufacturers, 216 pharmaceutical warehouse[s], 1020 pharmacies, 210 pharmaceutical private agencies, 42 hospital pharmacies (which are the only ones that offer public service). This service aims to a rational usage of a number of effective drugs, safe and with high quality and to the availability and reasonable prices for all the population. Although this service is private, it is monitored rigorously from the Ministry of Health and National Center of Drugs Control. Compared to the past, Albania has now a high number of registered drugs. This number is being increasing in continuation. Up to now, are registered 3400 drug form-doses. (sic)

"Within the Ministry of Health … [there are] two important Commissions …

• the Drug Commission on Drafting and Reviewing the Reimbursement List, which once a year selects the drugs that are going to be reimbursed by the Health Insurance Institution (HII),

• The Drug Pricing Commission which, once a year approve(s) the maximal CIF (cost, insurance, freight) prices of imported drugs and for local manufactured drugs.

"As mentioned above, in Albania [there] exists the Reimbursement System, part of which is the Reimbursement List. The number of reimbursement drugs is 450." **[51a](p13)**

27.06 A report from the Council of Europe, Synthetic report on the national law of the beneficiary parties as to the tension between healthcare as a human right of all persons and the organisation of the coverage via social insurance dated 29 September 2009, discussed the presence of a social health care scheme in which it stated that:

"In Albania, the social health care system is conceived as a social insurance. The law provides that health insurance is compulsory and covers all the citizens permanently living in the Republic of Albania as well as foreigners who work and have their insurance in Albania. Compulsory health insurance is non-profit and covers the following:

a) 50-100% of the drug price for drugs on the supported price list at the open pharmaceutical network;

b) The primary and secondary health care sectors (health centres and hospitals, both secondary and tertiary level). The financing of the primary health care is based on a "minimum benefit package" that health centre should deliver to the population in their area. The hospital sector is financed according to a historical budget. Capital investments are under the authority of the Ministry of Health.

"According to the law, the Health Insurance Institution (HII) is in charge to manage compulsory insurance money and to finance the public health sector. Private health insurances are presumed to offer supplementary coverage for co-payment of drugs, prosthesis, optic glasses, dental services and other ambulatory services, which are not covered by compulsory insurance. Private health insurance also covers the expenditures for treatment abroad. Actually, insurance commercial companies tend to create private health insurances, but there is not yet a real market of private health insurances." **[52a] (p2)**

See Pharmaceutical Pricing and Reimbursement Information - Albania 2009 **[56a]** and Eurohealth Volume 13 Number 1, 2007 **[57a]** for further background.
For further information on the Health service – overall situation, see: Healthcare in Albania **[53a]** and Medical Services in Albania **[54a]**

See 'Health and Social Conditions of Older People in Albania: Baseline Data from a National Survey, 2010' for information regarding treatment of the elderly in the health system. **[55a]**

See Corruption

HEALTH SECTOR TRENDS IN ALBANIA

27.07 According to the Ministry of Health (MoH) Health in Albania, National background report, dated 2 April 2009:

"Albania seems not to have experienced a fall in life expectancy after dramatic political and economic changes. Despite the fact, that life expectancy at birth is lower than most of developed European countries, it is somewhat higher that most of the countries of Eastern and Central Europe. Healthy life expectancy is lower compared to EU countries, including the new members after 2004. Infant mortality remains high by EU standards, but is decreasing steadily. The same is true for child (under 5) mortality rate(s), while maternal mortality remains a concern and doesn't show clear trends of decreasing. Infant mortality shows significant differences among districts. …

"The epidemiological profile is changing: Levels of cardiovascular diseases, cancer and external causes of death are increasing. The burden of communicable diseases is decreasing in general terms, but some infections as HIV/AIDS are increasing. These diseases cause 0.5% of all deaths. There are 18 new cases of tuberculosis per 100 000. There are 0.7 new cases of HIV infection per 100 000.The rates of sexually transmitted infections (per 100 000 per year) are low compared to EU figures …. Brucellosis remains stable during the last two years after more than ten years of an apparent epidemic increase. Most of the vaccine preventable diseases are under control with several of them in the way of eradication. During the last year, anyway, were reported some cases of measles after four years of 0 cases. Viral Hepatitis is still a problem for the country. Gastroenteritis in children is decreasing with rates getting close to those of EU; the rate of children under 5 dying from diarrhea is 0.4 per 100 000." **[51b] (p13)**

27.08 The report continued:

"Cardiovascular diseases are the leading causes of death; 52% of the total number of deaths. Within this group, the major killers are – ischemic heart disease: cause of 7% of the disease burden and 15% of all deaths: 128 deaths per 100 000; the indicator is lower than those reported by central and eastern European countries but higher than western European countries. Cancer is responsible for 14% of all deaths. …

- There are 4 suicides or self-inflicted injuries per 100 000.

- Unintentional injuries are responsible for 43 deaths per 100 000 per year, a figure much higher than rates of western European countries.

- Injuries from road traffic accidents cause 12 deaths per 100 000.

- Respiratory diseases cause 6% of all deaths: 47 deaths per 100 000 populations.

- Smoking accounts for 22% of the disease burden. Alcohol consumption causes 6% of the disease burden. Obesity causes an estimated 10% of the disease burden, and physical inactivity, 5.3%." **[51b] (p14)**

For further relevant statistical information see the European health for all database (HFA-DB), World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, Updated: January 2011. **[45a]**

HIV/AIDS – ANTI-RETROVIRAL TREATMENT

27.09 The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) reported that:

"UNAIDS is present in Albania through the UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS which was established in 2000. The Theme Group coordinates UNAIDS policies with country priorities and ensures that UNAIDS policies and best practices are adapted for Albanian needs and included in national policies and actions. Support is directed at HIV/AIDS national strategic planning, which resulted in the revision of the National Strategy on prevention of HIV/AIDS in Albania 2004-2010 which informed a new strategy 2009-2014, a law on HIV/AIDS prevention and the Technical Support Plan for HIV/AIDS in Albania. **[25b]**

Prevention

"Albania is a low prevalence country with 290 reported cases as of the end 2008. However, Albania could face a rapid spread of the virus. The Albanian Government, in close collaboration with the UN and other partners, works to keep Albania a low HIV/AIDS prevalence country. UN technical and financial support to Government is focused on technical assistance, capacity building and preventive programmes. Expertise includes needs assessments, studies on bio-behavioral surveillance, reproductive health and also on support to resource mobilization. Albania receives financial support for prevention from the Global Fund Fifth Round and expertise is provided to the government for their new application. Improvement of surveillance and voluntary counseling and testing centres as well as awareness raising for risk groups need further support and attention. **[25b]**

Treatment and care

"The UN in Albania is assisting Albanian Health Authorities to provide accessible, affordable and acceptable treatment for people living with HIV. Antiretroviral treatment is free of charge and offered only at the University Hospital Centre in Tirana. Technical assistance was provided to define appropriate antiretroviral therapy in line with the country's epidemiological profile and available funds. Treatment is procured through UNICEF Albania Office at a discount price. Medical personnel are trained in Albania and abroad for treatment and care protocol. Training courses are also provided on HIV/AIDS surveillance and how to adapt treatment guidelines for the country." **[25b]**

27.10 The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) in its Evaluation of the Country of Origin Information Report on Albania, May 2011, stated that:

"… people living with HIV/AIDS: this is a vulnerable group in Albania as there is a strong stigma and discrimination attached to HIV/AIDS. This comes not only from the

general society, but even from those who have a professional duty to test and treat them, such as doctors and nurses. Because of this, reporting of HIV/AIDS cases is a rather delicate issue, resulting in people being deprived of the chances to treat their condition in time, and thus live longer and better." **[86a] (p11)**

27.11 The European Commission Staff Working Paper, Albania 2011 Progress Report, 12 October 2011stated that:

"As regards the International Health Regulations (IHR) implementation, the Albanian Institute of Public Health (IPH) has been established as a focal point and a coordinating institution. Country-wide, epidemiologists, public health professionals and physicians have been trained on emergencies and IHR. Adoption of secondary legislation to ensure the right to health for persons and children living with HIV/AIDS and persons at risk is still pending." **[8c] (p63)**

See National AIDS Program, UNGASS (United Nations Special Session on HIV/AIDS), Country Progress Report, Reporting period: January 2008-December 2010 for further information. **[59a]**

MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health legislation

27.12 The WHO, in its report National Survey on Public Attitudes to Mental Health - Albania 2009, undated, stated that:

"The Mental Health Act was approved by the Albanian Parliament in 1996. In that period it was considered to be a big step toward the institutional awareness on human rights of people with mental disorders. It provides a framework for compulsory examinations, admissions and treatment. Even though the public and institutional awareness on the importance of human rights in mental health has increased during the last years, the Act encounters considerable difficulties for implementation. After more than a decade from its approval, the legislative framework on mental health in Albania requires (a) revision, (b) development of normative acts and (c) awareness among key stakeholders in order to be implemented. **[45c] (p25)**

27.13 The latest WHO-AIMS report on the mental health system in Albania was published in 2006, it reported that:

"In Albania, the network of mental health facilities was composed of 2 mental hospitals, 34 outpatient facilities (2 of them for children and adolescents), 2 psychiatric wards in general hospitals, 5 day treatment facilities (3 of them for children and adolescents) and 2 community residential facilities. The number of beds in mental health facilities was 30.3 per 100.000 general population (Figure 1): 43% of all beds, the majority, were in mental hospitals (18.9 beds per 100.000); 15% were in general hospitals (6.5 beds); 1% were in community residential facilities (0.5 beds); and 11% were in secure units (5 beds). The number of beds in mental hospitals decreased in the last four years (-13%). While no beds were reserved for children and adolescents in the mental hospitals and community residential facilities, 15 were set aside (0.5 per 100.000) in general hospitals for this population. In addition to beds in mental health facilities, there were also 424 beds (13.6 per 100.000) in residential facilities within or outside the health system that provide care for people with mental retardation and for people with substance abuse (including alcohol) problems." **[45b]**

27.14 The WHO, in its report National Survey on Public Attitudes to Mental Health - Albania 2009 outlined the existing situation:

"The mental health (psychiatric) services are organized in primary, secondary and tertiary health care sector. Traditionally, in Albania, the mental health care has been offered by centralized, biologically oriented and symptoms' focused services. These services have been offering care mostly focused on inpatient services, not only as a technical approach, but also as a human resource allocation. During recent years, the typology of the existing psychiatric service network has started to change as a result of the Mental Health Sector Reform. New services, not known before, i.e. community mental health centers, supported accommodation homes, day care centers, etc., have been included as part of the public health care system. Also, changes have affected the responsibilities of existing staff, doctors and nurses, which have been joined by new professional profiles, such as psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists, etc. …" **[45c] (p21)**

27.15 The report continued:

"Mental Health Services for Children and Adolescents, of all levels, are centralized only in Tirana, covering in this way only 1% of the children with mental health problems. Limited and centralized services, together with the lack of the specialized human resources in this field, are among the most important barriers towards effective treatment of mental health problems in children and adolescents, reducing also the possibility for promotion and prevention in this area. **[45c] (p23)**

See Children – Health and welfare

27.16 According to the Ministry of Health (MoH) Health in Albania, National background report, dated 2 April 2009:

"Mental health is another dimension of health affected by changes in Albanian population. Suicide rates, despite being lower than those reported by EU countries are steadily increasing. Neuropsychiatry disorders account for 20% of the total disease burden and 3% of all deaths." **[51b] (p14)**

27.17 The USSD Report 2010, released on 8 April 2011, noted that:

"During the year the ombudsman continued to inspect mental health institutions and found that while physical conditions in facilities in Vlora and Shkoder had improved, they were not in compliance with standards and remained understaffed. Inspections of the Tirana Psychiatric Hospital found that specific windows and doors needed to be replaced for safety reasons. The ombudsman regularly conducts inspections throughout Albania and recommended a major legal, organizational, and budgetary review of the country's mental health care system. The admission and release of patients at mental health institutions was a problem due to lack of sufficient financial resources to provide adequate psychiatric evaluations." **[2f] (Section 6)**

27.18 The IAGCI in its Evaluation Report of May 2011 stated that:

"... Despite an alleged commitment to human rights and the ratification of major human rights instruments, the Republic of Albania does not take seriously its commitments to the rights of people with mental disabilities. Albanians have little awareness of human rights principles and their own domestic laws protecting the mentally disabled. Under

Article 41 of the Mental Health Law of Albania, "persons with mental disorders, who have committed a penal act and are condemned by the Court to suffer the punishment in psychiatric institutions, benefit from medical care according to the dispositions of this law." The Prison Hospital in Tirana illustrates some of the more egregious human rights violations against the mentally disabled. Although Albanian law stipulates one year of treatment to be followed by a re-evaluation, the average length of stay is five years'.

The report continues that:

'The general conditions in this psychiatric unit are appalling. This is not a treatment facility; it is a unit within the prison where those prisoners with mental illness are warehoused. Patients live five to a room and spend most of their days in their cells. There is one bathroom for twenty-five people and showers are available twice a week. Family contact is rare. The rules of the hospital are the same as those of the prison. As with other prisoners, individuals with mental disability are not allowed any music or reading material other than religious tracts. The administration of the health facility is under the Director of Prisons-not the Ministry of Health. Appropriate treatment is thus not a high priority. Health providers are doing their best under circumstances that violate all ethical principles. Our observations suggest that the law is not being observed'.

"Although this report was written some years ago, it reflects many of the facets of this type of care in the last two years as well." **[86a] (p9)**

See Prison conditions

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28. HUMANITARIAN ISSUES

See Recent developments - Floods in Albania - 2010

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29. FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

29.01 The US State Department 2010 Human Rights Report: Albania (USSD Report 2010), published on 8 April 2011, stated:

"The constitution and law provide for freedom of movement within the country, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights in practice. … Internal migrants must transfer their civil registration to their new community of residence to receive government services and must prove they are legally domiciled through property ownership, a property rental agreement, or utility bills. Many persons could not provide this proof and thus lacked access to essential services. Other citizens lacked formal registration in the communities in which they resided, particularly Roma and Balkan Egyptians. The law does not prohibit their registration, but it was often difficult in practice to complete. The law prohibits forced exile, and the government did not employ it." **[2f] (Section 2)**

See Blood feuds – Families in isolation

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30. FOREIGN REFUGEES

30.01 The US State Department 2010 Human Rights Report: Albania (USSD Report 2010), published on 8 April 2011, stated:

"In practice the government provided protection against the expulsion or return of refugees to countries where their lives or freedom would be threatened on account of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. Under the law, there is no time limit for requesting asylum, but the government must make the decision regarding granting asylum within 101 days of the initial request. The government generally complied with this time frame. The government actively cooperated with the UNHCR and the Refugee and Migrants Services Albania, which provided assistance to refugees." **[2f] (Section 2)**

30.02 The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), provided statistical information which illustrated the numbers involved in terms of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs):

Statistical Snapshot*	
* As at January 2010	
Residing in Albania [1]	
Refugees [2]	70
Asylum Seekers [3]	20
Returned Refugees [4]	0
Internally Displaced Persons (IDPS) [5]	0
Returned IDPs [6]	0
Stateless Persons [7]	0
Various [8]	0
Total Population of Concern	90
Originating from Albania [1]	
Refugees [2]	15,711
Asylum Seekers [3]	1,592
Returned Refugees [4]	0
Internally Displaced Persons (IDPS) [5]	0
Returned IDPs [6]	0
Various [8]	0
Total Population of Concern	17,303

1. Country or territory of asylum or residence. In the absence of Government estimates, UNHCR has estimated the refugee population in most industrialized countries based on 10 years of asylum-seekers recognition.
2. Persons recognized as refugees under the 1951 UN Convention/1967 Protocol, the 1969 OAU Convention, in accordance with the UNHCR Statute, persons granted a complementary form of protection and those granted temporary protection. It also includes persons in a refugee-like situation whose status has not yet been verified.
3. Persons whose application for asylum or refugee status is pending at any stage in the procedure.
4. Refugees who have returned to their place of origin during the calendar year. Source: Country of origin and asylum.
5. Persons who are displaced within their country and to whom UNHCR extends protection and/or assistance. It also includes persons who are in an IDP-like situation.
6. IDPs protected/assisted by UNHCR who have returned to their place of origin during the

calendar year.
7. Refers to persons who are not considered nationals by any country under the operation of its laws.
8. Persons of concern to UNHCR not included in the previous columns but to whom UNHCR extends protection and/or assistance.
9. The category of people in a refugee-like situation is descriptive in nature and includes groups of people who are outside their country of origin and who face protection risks similar to those of refugees, but for whom refugee status has, for practical or other reasons, not been ascertained.
The data are generally provided by Governments, based on their own definitions and methods of data collection. A dash (-) indicates that the value is zero, not available or not applicable.

Source: UNHCR/Governments.

Compiled by: UNHCR, FICSS. [10e]

See Arrest and detention and Prison conditions

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31. CITIZENSHIP AND NATIONALITY

31.01 Albanian citizenship is determined according to the Law on Albanian Citizenship, No. 8389, dated 5 August 1998. (LegislationOnline, accessed 22 February 2011) **[75b]**

Passports and ID cards

31.02 An article in SETimes.com dated 15 July 2008, accessed 22 February 2011) stated that:

"Interior Minister Bujar Nishani announced on Monday (July 14th) that Albanians will receive new electronic ID cards and biometric passports by February."We are ready to start issuing these important documents early next year, and they will be needed by any citizen who wants to obtain an official document from state institutions," Nishani said during a meeting of the parliament's integration committee. Provision of electronic IDs and of biometric passports is among the tasks Albania must fulfil to meet the European Commission's definition of democratic elections and the free movement of people outside the country." **[72b]**

31.03 The Albanian government e-portal, accessed May 2011, stated that:

- 'Every citizen at the age of 16 and above, has to be equipped with the Electronic Identity Card;

- The citizen can carry out a single application to be equipped simultaneously with an electronic identity card and biometric passport;

- Any citizen can apply for biometric passport. Citizens that are at the age of 16 and over can apply, only after they are equipped with an electronic identity card;

- Citizens can re-apply for these two documents.' **[93a]**

Examples of current Albanian passports and Identity cards can be found at Albania: General Directorate of Civil Status at the Interior Ministry (Drejtoria e Pergjithshme e Gjendjes Civile). **[79a]**

Greeks

31. 04 The International Observatory on Statelessness reported that:

"An unknown number of the Greek minority in Albania lack citizenship. Most of them live in a southern region called northern Epiros, referring to the historical state of Epiros which was divided between Albania and Greece in 1913. Greeks were harshly affected by the communist regime's attempts to homogenize the population. In 2006, the Greek government decided to allow Greeks in Albania to obtain dual citizenship. The number who has obtained Greek passports as a result of the decision is not known." **[41a]**

See the EUDO Citizenship Observatory Country Report: Albania for comprehensive information on Citizenship both current and historical. **[78a]**

See Constitution

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32. FORGED AND FRAUDULENTLY OBTAINED OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

32.01 The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) noted in a Response to Information Request (RIR), dated 16 October 2006, that:

"In October 2005, the Albanian Telegraphic Agency (ATA) reported the takedown of a "mega laboratory" in Albania that was forging various travel documents, including passports and visas, as well as American Green Cards, unspecified ID cards, bank cards and telephone cards (7 Oct. 2005). During the raid about 1,000 passports from 29 countries, including Canada, the United States, and Australia were confiscated (ATA 7 Oct. 2005). Additionally, a number of border passage stamps for Greece and Italy were found, as well as stamps from the Albanian consulate in Washington, other unnamed Albanian ministries, and entry and exit stamps for Rinas Airport (ibid.). The Associated Press (AP) also reported that the same police operation involved the arrest of nine individuals, including four Tirana airport law enforcement agents, three other airport officials and two tourism agency owners who were all charged for forging travel documents and selling them to prospective illegal migrants (7 Oct. 2005)." **[10f]**

32.02 The IAGCI in its Evaluation Report of May 2011 stated that:

"… [O] ne of the key requirements for easing visa restrictions for Albanians in December 2010 was the equipment of individuals who want to travel abroad with biometric passport and ID cards which need to meet certain security and quality criteria. The biometric passports are the only ones accepted to be used by those travelling without a visa in the Schengen are[a. These appear to be of high quality and are claimed to be difficult to forge. Furthermore, the basic population registers are since 2008 being digitalised and brought under a centralised and computerised system, within the Ministry of Interior. In fact, the concern now is not so much the ability to forge these documents, as is the data protection and political interference in the use of such centralised personal data." **[86a] (p32)**

See Corruption, Trafficking and paragraph 31.02

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33. EXIT AND RETURN

33.01 The Country of Return Information (CRI) Project, in the Albania: Country Sheet, May 2009, stated that:

"In March 2005, Albania signed the agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Albania on the readmission of persons residing without permission (illegal residents), through which an EU Member State can ask Albania to readmit any of its nationals. The purpose of the agreement is to establish rapid and effective procedures for the identification and return of persons residing without authorization on the territories of one of the Member States. Since 1 January 2008, Albanian citizens enjoy the benefits of a visa facilitation agreement with the European Union. This agreement provides simplified procedures for issuing visas, including a visa fee waiver for a broad range of categories of citizens including students, sportsmen and sportswomen, cultural workers, journalists, people visiting family members living in the EU, people in need of medical treatment, businessmen etc. …The EU initiated further steps towards the liberalisation of its visa regulations when on 28 January 2008 the General Affairs and External Relations Council asked the Commission to present a detailed roadmap. The roadmap should set clear and transparent conditions for countries in the region to get further visa alleviations. In March 2008, the dialogue on visa liberalisation with Albania was launched, and in June 2008 the Roadmap document was officially installed." **[80a]**

33.02 An article in SETimes.com. dated 15 December 2010, accessed 22 February 2011) stated that:

"Bosnian and Albanian citizens are free to travel without visas within Schengen Zone countries as of Wednesday (December 15th). All holders of biometric passports are eligible for the visa-free regime, which does not give them right to settle or work in these countries. The EU decided to scrap visa requirements for citizens of BiH and Albania on November 8th. Thus, Kosovars are the only people in the Western Balkans who need visas to enter the EU. Macedonia and Serbia were included in the regime last December." **[72c]**

33.03 The IAGCI in its Evaluation Report of May 2011 stated that:

"The only reported problem entering the country is the still widespread corruption among the border police. Especially while crossing the land borders, travellers are often forced to pay bribes". **[86a] (p31)**

See Freedom of movement

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34. EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS

34.01 The US State Department 2010 Human Rights Report: Albania (USSD Report 2010), published on 8 April 2011, stated that:

"Workers have the right to form independent unions and they exercised this right in practice … The law provides the right to strike for all workers except civil servants, and workers exercised this right in practice. … The law prohibits strikes that courts judge to be political. Citizens in all fields of civilian employment have the constitutional right to organize and bargain collectively, and the law establishes procedures for the protection

of workers' rights through collective bargaining agreements. … The law does not prohibit anti-union discrimination, and there were some reports of such occurrences." **[2f] (Section 7)**

34.02 The USSD Report 2010 continued:

"The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, including by children; however, women and children were trafficked for sexual exploitation and labor. … The law criminalizes exploitation of children for labor or forced services; however, the government did not enforce the law effectively." **[2f] (Section 7)**

See Children – Child labour

34.03 The US State Department 2010 Human Rights Report: Albania (USSD Report 2010), published on 8 March 2011, stated that:

"The law establishes a 40-hour workweek; however, individual or collective agreements typically set the actual workweek. Many persons worked six days a week. The law requires payment of overtime and rest periods; however, employers did not always observe these provisions in practice. The government had no standards for a minimum number of rest periods per week, no limits on the maximum number of hours worked per week, and no regulations regarding premium pay for overtime; it did not prohibit excessive compulsory overtime.

"Several accidents in the Bulqiza mines were reported during the year. Most accidents involved collapses in the mines and were due to a lack of adequate safety measures and procedures. In May a 65-year-old mineworker was reported to have died in a work-related accident while working in one of the Bulqiza mines. During the year media outlets continued to report that women and minors collected chromium from mines to support their families." **[2f] (Section 7)**

34.04 The IAGCI in its Evaluation Report of May 2011 stated that:

"Furthermore, various researchers and other observers have reported political interference with public administration employees, especially as only a small share of them have been given the status of civil servant, while the employment of the remainder is influenced by political motivations. As such, there is a high turnover amongst staff working in various ministries and other public service institutions – whether at central or local level – and political loyalty becomes paramount in carrying out one's duties. The Freedom House Nations in Transit 2010 **(p.63)** reported that:

"… an increasing number of complaints (up to 200 in 2009) over the state's failure to implement court decisions have been submitted to the European Court of Human Rights. These unimplemented decisions are often related to property issues and illegal dismissals from the civil service." **[86a] (p32)**

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Annex A

CHRONOLOGY OF MAJOR EVENTS

Source - British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Timeline, a chronology of key events: updated on 24 January 2012 **[15b]**, unless otherwise stated.

1939 Shortly before the start of World War II, Italy invades. King Zog flees to Greece.

1940 Italian army attacks Greece through Albania.

1941 Enver Hoxha becomes head of new Albanian Communist Party.

1943 German forces invade and occupy Albania following Italian surrender.

1944 Germans withdraw after Communist resistance. Enver Hoxha installed as new leader.

1945 Tribunals begin against thousands of "war criminals".

1946 Purges of non-communists from government positions.

1948 Albania breaks ties with Yugoslavia; Soviet Union begins economic aid to Albania.

1950 Britain and the US back landings by right-wing guerrillas, who fail to topple communists.

1955 Albania becomes a founding member of the Warsaw Pact.

Isolationist state

1961 Albania allies itself with China, after Soviet Union breaks diplomatic relations over ideological rift.

1967 Violent clampdown on religious activity. Albania declared the world's first atheist state.

1968 Albania withdraws from Warsaw Pact over Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia.

1978 China ends economic and military aid to Albania after relations become strained by China's reconciliation with the US.

1985 Hoxha dies, replaced by Ramiz Alia.

Political upheavals

1989 Communist rule in Eastern Europe collapses. Ramiz Alia signals changes to economic system.

1990 Independent political parties formed. Albanians granted right to travel abroad. Thousands try to flee through Western embassies.
Thousands more seize ships at port and sail illegally to Italy.

1991 In multiparty elections, the Communist Party and allies win 169 of the 250 seats, the newly-formed Democratic Party takes 75.
General amnesty for political prisoners. First opposition newspaper published.
Alia re-elected president. Prime Minister Fatos Nano resigns after protests at economic conditions and killing of opposition demonstrators.
New government headed by Vilson Ahmeti.

1992 Democratic Party wins elections. Party leader Sali Berisha, a former cardiologist, becomes first elected president. Aleksander Meksi is prime minister.

1993 Ex-communist leaders, including Fatos Nano and Ramiz Alia, convicted and jailed for corruption.

Anger on streets

1994 National referendum rejects new constitution which opponents said allowed president too much power.

1995 Alia released from prison following appeal-court ruling.

1996 Democratic Party general election victory tainted by accusations of fraud.

1997 Leka, son of late King Zog, returns from exile in bid to take throne. Referendum on restoration of monarchy fails. He is accused of trying to stir up an armed insurrection and flees back into exile.
Kosovo Albanian refugees poured across the border into Albania
Fraudulent pyramid investment schemes collapse, costing thousands of Albanians their savings and triggering anti-government protests. Up to a million weapons are looted from army stores as angry mobs take to the streets.
Government resigns and Socialist-led coalition sweeps to power. Fatos Nano, now released from prison, returns as prime minister.
Sali Berisha resigns as president in wake of financial crisis, succeeded by Socialist leader Rexhep Mejdani.
Convictions of communist-era leaders overturned.

1998 Escalating unrest in Kosovo sends refugees across border into Albania.

September Violent anti-government street protests after prominent opposition Democratic Party politician, Azem Hajdari, shot dead by unidentified gunmen.
PM Fatos Nano quits. Former student activist, Pandeli Majko, named as new prime minister.

Refugee influx

1999	Nato air strikes against Yugoslav military targets. In Kosovo thousands flee attacks by Serb forces. Mass refugee exodus into Albania.
October	Majko resigns as prime minister in October 1999, after losing Socialist Party leadership vote. 30-year-old Ilir Meta becomes Europe's youngest prime minister.
2001	
January	Albania and Yugoslavia re-establish diplomatic relations broken off during the Kosovo crisis in 1999.
2001	
April	UN says thousands of Albanians are being poisoned by fatal toxins in their environment, urges international community to help.
2001	
July	Ruling Socialist Party secures second term in office by winning general elections. PM Meta names European integration and an end to energy shortages as his priorities. Meta heads a new coalition government from September.
2001	
December	Rift widens between Meta and his Socialist Party Chairman Fatos Nano. Nano prompts three ministers to resign and blocks the appointment of their replacements.
2002	
January	Meta resigns as prime minister after failing to resolve party feud.
2002	
February	Pandeli Majko becomes premier and forms new government as rival factions in Socialist Party pledge to end infighting.
2002	
June	Parliament elects Alfred Moisiu president after rival political leaders Nano and Berisha reach compromise, easing months of tension. Royal family returns from exile.
2002	
August	Fatos Nano becomes prime minister after the ruling Socialist Party decides to merge the roles of premier and party chairman. It is Nano's fourth time as premier.

Steps towards EU

2003

January	Albania and EU begin Stabilisation and Association Agreement talks, seen as possible first step in long road to EU membership.

2004

January	Day of mourning declared after at least 20 people die when the boat on which they were trying to cross to Italy illegally breaks down in mid-Adriatic.

2004

February	Opposition stages angry demonstration in Tirana to demand Mr Nano's resignation and protest against government failure to improve living standards.

2005

September	After two months of political wrangling, former President Sali Berisha emerges as the victor in July's general election.

2006

April	Parliament imposes ban on speedboats in coastal waters in bid to crackdown on people and drug smuggling.

2006

June	Stabilisation and Association agreement signed with EU.

2007

June	President George W Bush becomes the first US leader to visit Albania, highlighting its position as a close ally of Washington.
July	Parliament elects ruling party chairman Bamir Topi president, after three failed rounds of voting made a snap election look possible.

2008

March	Defence Minister Fatmir Mediu resigns over arms depot blasts that killed 26 and damaged Tirana airport. See paragraph 3.02

2009

April	Albania officially joins NATO and formally applies for membership of the European Union. Albania is not expected to join the EU until 2015 at the earliest.

Berisha re-elected

2009

July Sali Berisha's centre-right Democratic Party wins parliamentary elections by a narrow margin.

2009

November Opposition Socialist Party begins series of demonstrations in Tirana in protest against alleged vote-rigging in the 2009 election.

2010

May Socialist leader Edi Rama calls for a campaign of civil disobedience to continue until government agrees to a partial recount of 2009 election.

2010

November European Union rejects Albania's request for EU candidate status, but eases visa requirements for Albanians.

2011

January Deadly clashes between anti-government protesters and police outside the prime minister's office in Tirana.

2011

February 20th anniversary of fall of Communism marked with celebrations, amid tension between the government and opposition. **[86a] (p36)**

2011

December Former intelligence chief Ilir Kumbaro, wanted on torture charges in Albania, jumps bail and goes missing in London, where he had been hiding under a false name since 1996.

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Annex B

Source - Europa World Plus, accessed 12 December 2010) **[1a] (Political organisations)** unless otherwise stated.

POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS

Albanian Communist Party (ACP) (Partia Komuniste e Shqipërisë) (PKSh)
Founded 1991; granted legal recognition 1998.
Chair. Hysni Milloshi.

Albanian Green Party (Partia e Gjelbër e Shqipërisë)
Founded 2001; ecologist; observer mem. of European Greens; contested 2009 legislative elections as mem. of Socialist Alliance.
Chair. Edlir Petanaj.

Christian Democratic Party of Albania (CDPA) (Partia Demokristiane e Shqipërisë) (PDK)
Founded 1991; contested 2009 legislative elections as mem. of Pole of Freedom.
Leader Nard Ndoka.

Democratic Alliance Party (DAP) (Partia Aleanca Demokratike) (PAD)
Founded 1992 by fmr mems of the Democratic Party of Albania; contested 2009 legislative elections as mem. of Alliance for Change.
Chair. Neritan Ceka.
Sec.-Gen. Edmond Dragoti.

Democratic Party of Albania (DPA) (Partia Demokratike e Shqipërisë) (PDSh)
Founded 1990; …; merged with the New Democratic Party (f. 2001 by fmr mems of the DPA) in 2008; contested 2009 legislative elections as mem. of Alliance for Change.
Chair. Prof. Sali Berisha.
Sec.-Gen. Ridvan Bode.

Environmentalist Agrarian Party (EAP) (Partia Agrare Ambientaliste) (PAA)
Founded 1991;
Chair. Lufter Xhuveli.

Justice and Unity Party (Partia për Drejtësi dhe Unitet)
Founded 2009;
Chair. Shpëtim Idrizi.

Note: see Party for Justice and Integration (PJI) below.

Liberal Democratic Union Party (LDUP) (Partia Bashkimi Liberal Demokrat) (PBLD)
contested 2009 legislative elections as mem. of Alliance for Change.
Chair. Arjan Starova.

Movement for Solidarity
Founded Sept. 2007 by fmr leader of the SPA;
Leader Fatos Nano.

Movement of Legality Party (MLP) (Partia Lëvizja e Legalitetit) (PLL)
Founded 1992; contested 2009 legislative elections as mem. of Alliance for Change.

Chair. Ekrem Spahia.
Sec.-Gen. Artan Tujani.

Party for Justice and Integration (PJI) (Partia për Drejtësi dhe Integrim) (PDI)
Founded 2005; … , contested 2009 legislative elections as mem. of Alliance for Change.
Chair. Tahir Muhedini.

Please note that:

Justice and Unity Party and **Party for Justice and Integration** merged to create the Justice, Integration and Unity Party (JIUP). A key focus of the new party and its former constituent parties is the Cham issue. (the expulsion of Muslim Cham Albanians a few thousands of whom had collaborated with the occupation forces, from the Greek province of Epirus between 1944–1945)
Founded: 17 February 2011
Leader: Shpëtim Idrizi (former leader of JUP)
Honorary President: Tahir Muhedini (former leader of PJI)

Republican Party of Albania (RPA) (Partia Republikane e Shqipërisë) (PRSh)
Founded 1991; contested 2009 legislative elections as mem. of Alliance for Change.
Chair. Fatmir Mediu.

Social Democracy Party (Partia Demokracia Sociale)
Founded 2003 by breakaway faction of the SDP; contested 2009 legislative elections as mem. of Unification for Change.
Chair. Prof. Dr Paskal Milo.

Social Democratic Party (SDP) (Partia Socialdemokrate) (PSD)
Founded 1991; contested 2009 legislative elections as mem. of Unification for Change.
Chair. Skënder Gjinushi.

Socialist Movement for Integration (SMI) (Lëvizja Socialiste për Integrim) (LSI)
Founded 2004 by fmr mems of the SPA; … , contested 2009 legislative elections as mem. of Socialist Alliance.
Chair. Ilir Meta.
c. 40,000 mems (April 2005)

Socialist Party of Albania (SPA) (Partia Socialiste e Shqipërisë) (PSSh)
Founded 1941 as Albanian Communist Party; renamed Party of Labour of Albania in 1948, adopted present name in 1991; now rejects Marxism-Leninism … , contested 2009 legislative elections as mem. of Unification for Change.
Chair. Edi Rama.
Sec.-Gen. Andis Harasani.
110,000 mems

Union for Human Rights Party (UHRP) (Partia Bashkimi për të Drejtat e Njeriut) (PBDNj)
Founded 1992; represents the Greek and Macedonian minorities; contested 2009 legislative elections as mem. of Unification for Change.
Leader Vangjel Dule.

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Annex C

Source - Europa World Plus, accessed 12 December 2011) **[1a] (Directory: Government and Politics)** unless otherwise stated.

PROMINENT PEOPLE

President	Bamir Topi (elected by vote of the Kuvendi Popullor 20 July 2007; inaugurated 24 July 2007).

A coalition of the Democratic Party of Albania (DPA), the Socialist Movement for Integration (SMI) and the Republican Party of Albania (RPA). July 2011. The Party for Justice and Integration (PJI – now the JIUP, see Annex B) and para 3.02.**[86a](p37)**

Prime Minister	Prof. Sali Berisha (DPA).
Deputy Prime Minister :	Edmond Haxhinasto (SMI).
Minister of Economy, Trade and Energy:	Mr Nasip Naço (as of January 2011) – (SMI).
Minister of European Integration:	Majlinda Bregu (DPA).
Minister of the Interior:	Bujar Nishani (DPA).
Minister of Defence:	Arben Imami (DPA)
Minister of Finance:	Ridvan Bode (DPA).
Minister of Foreign Affairs:	Edmond Haxhinasto (SMI).
Minister of Justice:	Eduard Halimi (DPA)
Minister of Public Works and Transport:	Sokol Olldashi (DPA).
Minister of Education and Science:	Myqerem Tafaj (DPA).
Minister of Health:	Petrit Vasili (SMI).
Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities:	Spiro Ksera (SMI).
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection:	Genc Ruli (DPA).
Minister of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports:	Aldo Bumçi (DPA).
Minister of the Environment, Forestry and Water Administration:	Fatmir Mediu (RPA).
Minister of Innovation and Information and Communication Technologies:	Genc Pollo (DPA).

PROMINENT PEOPLE OUTSIDE OF THE GOVERNMENT

A comprehensive list of prominent people, past and present, can be found at: List of famous Albanian People. **[81a]**

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Annex D

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Amnesty International
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CPJ	Committee to Protect Journalists
EU	European Union
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK)
FH	Freedom House
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IAGCI	Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (of the Independent Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency)
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICRC	International Committee for Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
MSF	Médecins sans Frontières
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
ODPR	Office for Displaced Persons and Refugees
OECD	Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
RSF	Reporters sans Frontières
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
STC	Save The Children
TB	Tuberculosis
TI	Transparency International
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USSD	United States State Department
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

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Annex E

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

Below are listed in chronological order (most recent first) the complete text of letters from the FCO to the UK Border Agency referred to in the text above.

LETTER A.

FCO correspondence: Republic of Albania, Ministry of Interior, The General Directorate of State Police, Department against Organised and Serious Crimes-information on the start of investigations on persons who have issued certificates or documents which have then been submitted by Albanian citizens in support of their asylum claims in several European countries, 23 December 2011. (Hard copy held by COIS)

> "REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
>
> MINISTRY OF INTERIOR
>
> The General Directorate of State Police
>
> Department against Organised and Serious Crimes
>
> Subject: Reply
>
> Addressed to: British Embassy
>
> In response to your letter dated 09.01.2012, requesting detailed information on the start of investigations on persons who have issued certificates or documents which have then been submitted by Albanian citizens in support of their asylum claims in several European countries, we would like to inform you that :
>
> The police teams within the General Directorate of State Police, based on intelligence and verifications conducted in cooperation with counterpart police authorities and local media, have referred procedurial information and documents to the Prosecution Offices in Tirana and Shkoder against chairmen and members of NGOs involved with "Blood Feud" issues and against elected members of local counties in Shkoder district, namely:
>
> 1. On 02.12.2011, we have referred material evidence to the Prosecution Office in Shkoder against the citizen Pashko Tom Popaj, member of the NGO "Missionaries of Peace and Blood Feuds of Albania" based in Shkoder, on charges of "Document forgery" provided by article 186 of Penal Code. Certificates, issued by this citizen, have been submitted in support of asylum claims to the relevant authorities in Belgium. Based on our material evidence, the Shkoder Prosecution Office has started the criminal case Nr 1315 dated 19.12.2011.
>
> 2. On 02.12.2011, we have referred material evidence to the Prosecution Office in Tirana against the citizen Gjin Marku, chairman of the NGO "The Committee of Nationwide Reconciliation" based in Tirana, on charges of "Document forgery" provided by article 186 of Penal Code. Certificates, issued by this citizen against payments, have

been then submitted in support of asylum claims to the relevant authorities in Germany and United Kingdom. Based on our material evidence, the Tirana Prosecution Office is still conducting preliminary investigations on this case.

3. On 24.10.2011, we have referred material evidence to the Prosecution Office in Shkoder against the citizens Faz Shabaj, Mayor of Postribe Commune in Shkoder district, and Ramadan Likaj, Mayor of Koplik, Malesi e Madhe district, on charges of "Document forgery" provided by article 186 of Penal Code. Certificates, issued by these citizens, have been then submitted in support of asylum claims to the relevant authorities in Belgium. Based on our material evidence, the Shkoder Prosecution Office has registered the criminal case Nr 1144 dated 28.10.2011.

4. In November 2011, we have referred material evidence to the Prosecution Office in Tirane against the citizen Agim Loci, Director of the Institute (the Home of Justice and blood feud" based in Tirana on charges of "Passive corruption in the private sector" provided by articles 164b and 186b of the Penal Code. Certificates, issued by these citizens, have been then submitted in support of asylum claims to the relevant authorities in the United Kingdom. The Tirana Prosecution Office is still conducting preliminary investigations on this case.

The Department against Organised and Serious Crimes at the General Directorate of State Police has proved that the above citizens have issued false and not legally based certificates, even though the concerned nationals have not been registered with the relevant authorities as persons involved in conflicts or blood feuds.

We are cooperating with the relevant Prosecution Offices for the full investigation of all these and other similar cases.

Deputy Director General

Agron Kulicaj"

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Annex F

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