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Albania: Whether a new national identity card has been issued; whether the *leternjoftim* is a common identity document used in the country

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

According to SecureIDNews, a Florida-based online publication that covers issues pertaining to government identification, smart cards, identification and authentication technology (SecureIDNews n.d.), "no new ID cards have been produced for Albania since the fall of communism in 1990 because of problems with the country's civil registry" (ibid. 26 Mar. 2008). The New York-based international news website Wordpress.org published a 19 August 2008 article written by a journalism student in Albania that states that neither identity cards nor passports are being produced in Albania.

An official from the General Consulate of the Republic of Albania in New York stated in correspondence with the Research Directorate that "the Albanian government plans to begin issuing the new identity card in January 2009" (Albania 11 Sept. 2008). Similarly, a *Southeast European Times (SETimes)* article reports that the Interior Minister of Albania, Bujar Nishani, has announced that "Albanians will receive new electronic ID cards and biometric passports by February" (*SETimes* 15 July 2008). A statement on the website of the Ministry of Interior of Albania notes that the system to produce the new identity cards will be ready to start production in early 2009 (Albania 27 July 2008). An official at the Canadian Embassy in Rome stated in correspondence with the Research Directorate that the new identity card should be available by June 2009 (15 Sept. 2008). According to SecureIDNews, French company Sagem Sécurité has been contracted by the Albanian government to make new biometric passports and identity cards (26 Mar. 2008).

Information on whether the *leternjoftim* is a common identity document used in Albania was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, the Albanian Official stated that passports, birth certificates (with a photo) and *leternjoftim* are the most commonly used documents in Albania (Albania 11 Sept. 2008). The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) states in a 2007 report on local elections that birth certificates "are widely used" in Albania as voter identification (5 June 2007). In contrast, the Canadian Official stated that birth certificates "are no longer acceptable" as a general identity document or as voter identification (15 Sept. 2008). The Canadian Official also stated that the driver's licence "is not acceptable" as an identity document (15 Sept. 2008).