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Albania: Distribution of land after the fall of the Communist regime; method used by the village council(s), particularly in Elbasan, to distribute the land; whether young women who are single are entitled to property as a result of land distribution (1992 - December 2004)

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Information on the distribution of land in Albania after the fall of the Communist regime was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, the following information may be useful.

Distribution of Land

A 4 May 1997 article appearing on a University of Buffalo listserver but attributed to the *New York Times* indicated that, in 1991, a government land reform program brought about the end of collectivised farms throughout Albania. Village elders came up with strategies to redistribute the land and, according to one village elder interviewed by the *New York Times*, the elders' decisions had never been questioned (4 May 1997).

In 1999, the Albanian news and information network Albanews published an article that dealt with the redistribution of 60,000 hectares of land that had been in the hands of the state, and which rural inhabitants of several Albanian districts had later refused because the land in question was either isolated agriculturally poor (ATA 13 Sep. 1999). The Albanian Commission of Land Division under the Ministry of Agriculture and Food agreed to the redistribution, letting the leaders of various communes' commissions from various districts of Albania come up with a way to redistribute the formerly rejected land (ATA 13 Sept. 1999).

Several sources mentioned the disparities caused by land redistribution in Albania (Koha Jone 17 Jan. 2003; NATO June 1997, 53). Since many rural Albanians ended up receiving small plots of land, large numbers proceeded to migrate to urban areas (SEDA Nov. 2004; NATO June 1997, 53). According to a Koha Jone article, the redistribution also caused important economic disparities between the mountainous north and north-east of Albania and the more fertile and flat south and south-west of the country (17 Jan. 2003). Villages located in more mountainous areas of the country also had less arable land to divide and each owner thus typically received a smaller property than his or her counterpart who lived on the plains (Koha Jone 17 Jan. 2003; SEDA Nov. 2004). One source indicated that "[t]here is a significant number of farms that are too small to