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Republic of Albania

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Domestic violence remained widespread and survivors rarely received justice. Impunity for cases of torture and other ill-treatment continued. Access to habitable and affordable housing for people living in poverty, including Roma, remained very limited, despite government pledges. A former barracks designated as temporary accommodation for victims of forced eviction did not meet international standards.

Background

In June, the EU Council of Ministers approved EU candidate status for Albania, conditional on further judicial reform, combating corruption and organized crime and ensuring the protection of human rights, including the rights of Roma, anti-discrimination policies, and the implementation of property rights.

Albania's first Pride march took place in May.

Enforced disappearances

The whereabouts of the body of Remzi Hoxha, an ethnic Albanian from Macedonia who was forcibly disappeared in 1995 by state security agents, was not revealed to his son, despite assurances by the Prime Minister in 2013 that the location of his grave would be identified.

Unlawful killings

Prosecutors reviewed the case of Aleks Nika, a demonstrator who died after being shot during anti-government demonstrations in January 2011 in the capital Tirana. In May, police officers who allegedly ill-treated some demonstrators during and after the protests were questioned. In July, the state prosecutor filed charges against the former General Director of Police and his deputy for failing to arrest six Republican Guard officers suspected of shooting at the demonstrators.

Housing rights

The Ministry of Urban Development and Tourism and the National Housing Authority proposed to increase the stock of social housing and access for those in inadequate housing. In February, the Ministry announced a new housing strategy to include Roma and Egyptians, to promote the legalization of informal settlements, and to improve access to water and sanitation. However, little progress was made.

In March 2014, a former barracks in the Shishtufinë area of Tirana was formally designated as the National Emergency Transition Centre for victims of forced evictions. Over 50 Roma families evicted from Rruga e Kavajes in Tirana had been resettled in Shishtufinë in October 2013. Conditions at the centre – which was located far from sources of employment and basic services – were inadequate and did not meet international standards for adequate housing.

On International Roma Day in April, some of the 100 Roma families at risk of eviction from Selita in Tirana demonstrated to demand alternative housing. The government rejected a proposed amendment to the law on the legalization of illegal construction in May, requested in a petition signed by 6,000 Roma and Egyptians which called for procedural protections against forced eviction and adequate alternative accommodation.

In July the UN Human Rights Committee issued an interim protection measure suspending the demolition of seven Roma families' houses in Elbasan pending the hearing of their complaint and compensation claim.

The government failed to guarantee the legal right of homeless registered orphans up to the age of 30 to priority access to social housing. In May, on national Orphans Day, orphans demonstrated calling for education and housing, and describing the financial assistance provided by the state as derisory.

Torture and other ill-treatment

Impunity generally persisted for allegations of ill-treatment by law enforcement officers. In May, Parliament introduced a new Internal Issues and Complaints Service to combat police corruption and human rights violations. In August the Head of the Public Order sector of the State Police in Kukës was charged with abuse of office and unlawful deprivation of liberty, for the ill-treatment of a detainee.

Former political prisoners organized hunger strikes in protest against the government's failure to fairly distribute compensation for their imprisonment by the communist government between 1944 and 1991, when thousands were imprisoned or sent to labour camps and subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.

Violence against women

In June the High Council of Justice published a review of domestic violence cases in 38 courts, and recommended changes to the law and court practice. They found that criminal proceedings were slow and that courts violated procedural deadlines for reviewing protection orders and issuing decisions.

Some 3,094 incidents of domestic violence were reported to the police by the end of September, with women accounting for the majority of the victims. Just over a third (1,292) of these reports resulted in criminal proceedings.

By the end of September, 1,882 women had sought protection orders in civil proceedings; however, in the Tirana District Court, for example, more than two-thirds of applications for protection orders were withdrawn or discontinued. Where protection orders were issued they were often not enforced.

Refugees and asylum-seekers

In response to EU pressure, Albania developed a new border management strategy. Over 500 undocumented migrants and refugees, including Syrians, were detained between January and June. Others were returned to Greece without access to an asylum process. By the end of September, over 12,000 Albanians had applied for asylum in EU member states, on grounds including domestic violence and discrimination against LGBTI people and Roma.

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