

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	69
Land:	Albanien
Kilde:	Freedom House
Titel:	"Albania (2006)"
Udgivet:	29. november 2006
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	2007

Albania (2006)

Polity:

No polity available

Political Rights:

3

Civil Liberties:

3

Status:

Partly Free

Population:

3,200,000

GNI/Capita:

\$1,450

Life Expectancy:

74

Religious Groups:

Muslim (70 percent), Albanian Orthodox (20 percent), Roman Catholic (10 percent)

Ethnic Groups:

Albanian (95 percent), Greek (3 percent), other (2 percent)

Capital:

Tirana

Additional Info:

[Freedom in the World 2005](#)

[Freedom of the Press 2005](#)

[Nations in Transit 2004](#)

[Countries at the Crossroads 2005](#)

Overview

The July 2005 parliamentary elections brought opposition leader Sali Berisha to power as prime minister of Albania. While the election did not fully meet international standards, it marked the first peaceful change of power in the country's post "Communist history".

From World War II until 1990, former dictator Enver Hoxha's xenophobic Communist regime turned Albania into the most isolated country in Europe. The Communist government collapsed in 1990, and in March 1992, multiparty elections brought the Democratic Party (DP), led by Sali Berisha, to power. Continuing poverty and corruption weakened Berisha's government, and in 1997, the collapse of several popular pyramid investment schemes resulted in widespread arms looting and violence.

Between 1997 and 2005, Albania was ruled by the Socialist Party (SP), led by Prime Minister Fatos Nano. After the 2001 parliamentary (People's Assembly) elections, Berisha's DP announced a boycott of the Assembly to protest alleged electoral irregularities. The party returned to parliament, and political life resumed in January 2002 after the consensual election of President Alfred Moisiu and Chief Prosecutor Theodhori Sollaku. However, the truce between Berisha and Nano proved fragile, and by the beginning of 2003, Albania's short-lived national political unity again broke down. More signs of the continued turmoil within Albanian politics came with the resignation of Foreign Minister (and former prime minister) Ilir Meta, a bitter Nano rival, in July 2003. Disagreements within ruling factions in the government prevented the nomination of a replacement for the rest of the

year.

Because of such political infighting, little serious progress was made in combating organized crime and promoting economic reform. Although, in February 2003, the European Union (EU) opened negotiations with Albania for a Stabilization and Association Agreement—generally seen as the first step toward full EU membership—realistic analyses of the country's situation suggest that it has far to go before joining the EU.

The July 3, 2005, legislative elections, in which more than 20 parties fielded candidates, were considered the most unpredictable since 1991. Although the opposition DP won a clear victory, the ruling SP contested the results in many constituencies. The consequence was a lengthy delay in obtaining final results

until September, when Prime Minister Berisha formed a government. The DP will have 56 seats, with a further 24 controlled by its allies. Former prime minister Ilir Meta formed his own Socialist Movement for Integration, which won seats away from the SP. The two major parties urged their voters to support smaller allies in hopes that those parties would clear the 2.5 percent threshold to enter parliament and thus supplement their own representation. The SP was perceived to have lost support owing to the country's corruption, internal party disputes, and voters' desire for change. While the election was not free from fraud, it was praised for bringing Albania's first change of power without significant violence in the post-Communist era.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties

Albanians can change their government democratically. However, elections held in July 2005 for the 140-seat

Kuvendi Popullor (People's Assembly) were judged to have complied only partially with international standards. Observers noted flawed procedures, including multiple voting and violations of secrecy. Although there was one death due to election violence, this was minimal compared to the past. Single-member districts comprise 100 of the parliamentary seats; the remaining are filled by proportional representation. Assembly members are elected for four-year terms. The prime minister is designated by the parties that form a majority coalition. The president holds a largely symbolic post and is chosen by the Assembly for a five-year term.

With the involvement of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Albania began reforming its election process before the 2005 elections. Votes are now counted in a limited number of designated locations under the authority of local electoral commissions. Procedures for administrative and judicial review of postelection disputes were improved, and new campaign finance laws were put in place. A late agreement between the major parties on the boundaries of electoral zones cleared the way for approval of the new electoral code in January 2005, with a new law on the zones passed in March. The OSCE did not judge the reforms to solve all potential problems, although they mark a major step forward.

A number of political parties operate throughout the country. The most important political organizations are the DP and the SP; the differences between the parties are more a matter of the personalities leading them than of serious programmatic or ideological approaches. While, traditionally, Prime Minister Sali Berisha's DP found its support in the north of the country and Nano's SP in the south, these divisions are diminishing. The Greek minority is mostly represented through the Human Rights Union Party, which has three seats in parliament. Other minorities are poorly represented and participate minimally in public life.

Corruption pervades all areas of life in Albania, and up to the elections it appeared to be increasing. Tackling corruption is a stated aim of the new government, and Berisha sold his stake in a hotel to avoid a conflict of interest.

However, he and many of his associates remain tainted by past scandal. Although considerable anticorruption legislation is in place, tangible results are lacking. Government regulations are not excessive, but implementation is unpredictable. The state does not pursue accusations of official corruption, except in the case of low-level officials. Albania was ranked 126 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution guarantees freedom of expression. Although freedom of the press has improved since the fall of Communism, problems remain. The intermingling of powerful business, political, and media interests inhibits the development of independent and objective media. The government controls crucial subsidies that are doled out to those outlets providing sympathetic coverage. A print media bill meant to address media unreliability and financial dependence was submitted to the parliament in March 2005, but it was not approved as of November. A controversial draft law on digital broadcasting was rejected by the parliament in May. Suits against journalists for legitimate criticism are common. Police used excessive force against a television correspondent filming their activities in May. The government does not limit internet access, although widespread poverty means that most people cannot afford it.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion and religious practice, and Albania has not seen the inter-religious turmoil typical of its neighbors. However, Albania's small Greek Orthodox minority has intermittently made claims of being subjected to various forms of discrimination. The restitution of church properties confiscated during the Communist period remains unresolved.

The government does not significantly limit academic freedom, although it has interfered in appointments at educational institutions. Corruption is rife in universities, especially in the form of bribes for entering school and passing exams. Just before leaving office, the Nanos government ended the requirement that high school students pass an admission exam in order to enter university, but the Berisha government reversed the decision due to lack of capacity in the universities.

Freedom of association is generally respected, although police have been known to use excessive force against protesters. Independent nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are active, and their impact on the government is slowly growing. In contrast, trade unions tend to be weak.

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, but the structure of the judiciary leaves room for government pressure. Both the judiciary and law enforcement agencies are inefficient and prone to corruption, and judicial proceedings can be unduly long as well as unjustifiably delayed. The government has undertaken measures to combat corruption, develop judicial infrastructure, and institute a case-management system, but problems continue. Enforcement of judicial decisions is weak, especially when rulings are against government interests. Police undergo human rights training and monitoring but often use excessive force and torture; punishment for these

abuses, if carried out at all, is generally less than that warranted by the offense. For example, a police officer accused of torturing a 17-year-old in custody was convicted in December 2004 only of leaving the cell where he was on guard; the court concluded there was insufficient evidence to determine whether the detainee might have injured himself. Prison conditions are poor.

Widespread lawlessness plagues large parts of Albania. Weak state institutions have augmented the power of crime syndicates, and international law enforcement officials claim that Albania has become an increasingly important transshipment point for drug smugglers. The weakness of state institutions in northern Albania has also resulted in the resurgence of traditional tribal law in these areas, most importantly blood feuds involving revenge killings among different families and clans.

Roma and so-called Egyptians (a small group whose origins are unclear) in particular face discrimination and marginalization in Albania. A special state committee on minorities is to make recommendations to promote the rights of groups including Roma. However, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance considers funding to be inadequate, and Egyptians are excluded because they are not officially recognized. The government has developed a national strategy to combat racism against Roma.

Implementation of the 2004 law on property restitution and compensation for pre-Communist property owners has been slow; compensation is not likely to begin until 2007.

The constitution places no legal impediments on women's role in politics and society, but women are vastly underrepresented in most governmental institutions. Berisha promised to increase women's representation in government, and a woman is Speaker of the Assembly for the first time. Traditional patriarchal social mores pose significant problems for the position of women in society. Many groups, particularly in northern Albania, abide by a medieval moral code according to which women are considered chattel property and may be treated as such. A gender equality law was passed in 2004, but the situation for women has only improved slightly. Domestic violence is common and is not a criminal offense. Albania is a source country for trafficking in women and children. Roma and Egyptian children are disproportionately affected, and internal trafficking is increasing. A national strategy to combat trafficking has helped the situation, although implementation could be improved.