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## Enlargement countries

### Republic of Albania

**1. Overview of the human rights and democracy situation:** Albania's legal framework sets out a generally good basis for respect, protection and fulfilment of fundamental rights. Progress during the reporting period included the adoption of a new strategy for the protection of crime victims, the adoption of the bylaws relevant to the implementation of the framework law on the rights of persons belonging to minorities as well as the preliminary results of the national population and housing census published in June. Implementation efforts need to intensify overall, particularly in the areas of freedom of expression, violence against women and property rights. The electoral framework remained conducive for organising democratic elections. Parliament adopted amendments to the Electoral Code, partially in response to Constitutional Court rulings, thus enabling out-of-country voting by Albanian diaspora, introducing partially open candidates lists (mixed candidate lists) and changes to the party quotient. However, there has been limited progress in addressing outstanding recommendations from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the Venice Commission, as the mandate of Parliament's ad-hoc committee on electoral reform expired without any results. Parliament exercised its powers in a mostly satisfactory way. However, its oversight role over the executive remained to be strengthened. Parliamentary activities were affected by strong political polarisation. Confrontation between the ruling majority and a part of the opposition continued to be harsh until March 2024, with the latter disrupting a plenary session with barricades due to alleged restrictions on their rights. Despite the return to normal functioning of the Parliament in March 2024, political polarisation remained high. This continued to negatively impact Parliament's key legislative and oversight roles and extended delays in appointing individuals to key positions, including the Ombudsperson and the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination. Civil society organisations (CSOs) operated in a challenging environment, including in relation to registration requirements and limited public funding for CSOs. The structures for consulting civil society were not reinforced to be fully operational. The conditions necessary for effective VAT exemption need to be put in place without further delay.

Albania continued implementing the justice reform and the vetting process, which led to significant improvements in the functioning of the judiciary. The vetting process in first instance has been completed, which is a major milestone. Concerns remained about attempted political interference and pressure on the judicial system and shortcomings in the merit-based appointments of non-magistrate members of the High Judicial Council and the

has underscored the imperative to end the culture of impunity in Lebanon, stressing the need for a transparent investigation into the Beirut Port explosion of August 2020. The EU carried out diplomatic démarches and made public statements in support of human rights in a multilateral context notably for the 68th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, and for the 79th session of the UNGA Third Committee or in support of the UN convention on cybercrime.

## State of Libya

**1. Overview of the human rights and democracy situation:** In 2024, Libya's human rights and democracy situation remained deeply affected by political uncertainty, institutional fragmentation, and violations and abuses of human rights and fundamental freedoms. In this challenging context, arbitrary detentions and enforced disappearances continued, with no substantial progress toward accountability or the rule of law. The municipal elections, held without disturbances on 16 November marked a positive step showcasing coordination between Libya's eastern and western regions while also revealing some shortcomings, such as limited participation of women and allegations of vote tampering. Women's organisations and human rights defenders continued facing threats, affecting their participation in political and public life. Libyan media also suffered from a lack of legislative protections, leaving journalists and activists vulnerable to harassment, intimidation, and violence. Libya ranked 143 out of 180 countries in the Reporters Without Borders press freedom index in 2024, up 6 places compared to the previous year. The announced creation of two 'morality policing' agencies in October 2024 — the Public Morals Protection Agency (PMPA) under the Presidential Council and the General Directorate for the Protection of Public Morals (GDPPM) under the Ministry of Interior of the Government of National Unity further underscored a growing trend towards restricting and violating women's rights. Migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers remain among the persons in the most vulnerable situations, frequently subjected to human rights violations, including violence, exploitation, abuse, inhumane conditions, torture, forced labour, sexual assault and human trafficking. Libya retains the death penalty with thirty articles in Libya's penal code providing for capital punishment, including for acts of speech and association. No executions have been carried out since 2010 but military and civilian courts continued to impose the death penalty. According to Human Rights Watch, as of September the total number of people under confirmed death sentences were 105, including 19 who were detained. According to ILGA World consensual same-sex sexual acts continue to be criminalised in Libya.

**2. EU action - key focus areas:** In 2024, the EU continued to promote respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights in Libya in the context of the EU Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024, which has been extended until 2027. Key focus areas included strengthening democracy, rule of law and legitimate national institutions in Libya, including efforts to reform the banking sector and address fiscal transparency. Another key focus area of EU action was addressing impunity and strengthening accountability for human rights violations, and violations and breaches of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). The EU also focused on fundamental freedoms and strengthening civic and political space, including the participation of Libyan women in political, economic and social life, and their representation in government positions. Lastly, in 2024, the EU also focused on enhancing the protection of

internally displaced persons (IDPs), minorities, migrants, irregular migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers, in particular those in vulnerable situations.

**3. EU bilateral political engagement:** The EU's advocacy centred on reinforcing Libya's international human rights obligations, democratic values and governance reforms. The EUDEL established a direct dialogue with Libyan authorities to enhance human rights-compliant migration management, support community stabilisation and protection, and facilitate the voluntary returns of migrants to their countries of origin in full respect of the principle of non-refoulement. Migration Advocacy Talks hosted by the EUDEL, along with regular meetings with CSOs and INGOs were key components of these efforts. The EU also supported the UNSMIL's engagement with Libyan institutions to address enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests and strengthen legal representation for victims. In 2024, the EU successfully established a strategic dialogue with Libyan authorities on migration and coordinated several high-level engagements, including four technical visits, and a political visit by European Commission Vice President Schinas to attend the July Tripoli Trans-Mediterranean Migration Forum. As part of its broader efforts to promote gender equality and to uphold human rights, the EUDEL intensified its role in the yearly awareness campaign "16 Days of Activism" to address violence against women. On 3 November, in the context of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists (2/11), the EUDEL also launched the EUDEL Press Freedom Talks, fostering dialogue with Libyan journalists and civil society to address media freedom and human rights challenges.

**4. EU financial engagement:** The EU has renewed its funding for the 'Libya Permanent Political Platform' project, which aims to broaden participation in the Libyan-led political dialogue surrounding the Peacemakers' 'Multi-Track Roadmap'. Additionally, EU funding has continued to support the High National Elections Commission through UNDP technical assistance for the electoral process throughout 2024. The EU also funded a project that aims to contribute to peace and stabilisation in Libya by informing policy dialogue on gender justice. In addition, the EU funded a border management programme of the IOM, which provided health support and facilities in the south of the country. Whilst decriminalising irregular migration and ending arbitrary detention are longer-term objectives, the EU has been working on encouraging the governance of labour migration in Libya, through funding a capacity building action targeting the Ministry of Labour for the development of and procedures for the regularization of migrant workers.

**5. Multilateral context:** Libya has ratified most major international human rights treaties, albeit with notable exceptions and reservations, including as regards the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty. Moreover Libya is not party to the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol, although it is party to the Organisation of the African Union Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. In 2024, UNSMIL's Human Rights Service continued to monitor and report abuses, advocating for accountability and the rule of law in Libya. On 12 June 2024, during its 56th session, the Human Rights Council considered the report of OHCHR on the situation of human rights in Libya followed by an interactive dialogue with calls for accountability and justice to human rights violations and abuses, and institutional and judicial reforms to combat impunity. In August 2024 UNSMIL/OHCHR published its report 'Tarhuna – mass graves and related human rights violations and abuses in Libya' warning that continued lack of accountability and years of



impunity for human rights violations and abuses risk fuelling more instability and division. In May, Resolution 2733 of the UNSC renewed measures to enforce the arms embargo, including authorisation for vessel inspections. In August, the UNSC urged Libyan leaders to de-escalate tensions and avoid unilateral actions that could destabilise the situation. By October, it welcomed progress in resolving the Central Bank of Libya crisis, urging swift implementation of agreements endorsed by the House of Representatives (HoR) and the High Council of State (HCS). A number of visiting requests issued by UN Special Procedures are pending.

## Kingdom of Morocco

**1. Overview of the human rights and democracy situation:** Morocco is a monarchy with the King having executive powers, an elected Parliament, and a government proceeding from the Parliament. In 2024, Morocco continued with the reform of its social protection system. In 2024, the Law 58/23 provided 3.9 million households with direct social aid every month. Legislative reforms of the Penal Code and the Family Law (*Moudawana*) are still under discussion. Announced changes would include the prohibition of marriage for minors, stricter rules regarding polygamy, as well as rights of the mother in case of a divorce. International human rights organisations and experts remarked that the space for press freedom is shrinking with journalists constrained to apply self-censorship. Morocco ranked 129 out of 180 countries in the Reporters Without Borders press freedom index in 2024, which found that independent media and journalists face significant pressure. The royal pardon remains an integral part of religious and national celebrations in Morocco. This year's royal pardon on the occasion of the Throne Day in July also included prominent journalists Omar Radi, Soulaïman Raïssouni, and Taoufik Bouachrine, whose cases were addressed in the European Parliament's resolution on the situation of journalists in Morocco in January 2023. Reforms towards the judicial power in Morocco are ongoing. Currently, 20 proposals are at different stages of the legislative process, including the Code of Civil Procedure, the Penal Code or the Code of Criminal Procedure. However, the law has not yet been adopted. Morocco retains the death penalty in law, but there have been no executions for more than 20 years. Consensual same-sex relations continue to be criminalised and can lead to imprisonment. In Morocco's current legislative framework, 48 provisions allow for the death penalty although the Kingdom has been observing a de facto moratorium on executions since 1993.

**2. EU action - key focus areas:** In 2024, the EU continued to promote respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights in Morocco in the context of the EU Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2027. EU action in the country revolved around strengthening the rule of law and promoting civil society space and freedom of expression. Other priorities for EU action included gender equality, women's rights and the rights of the child as well as the abolition of the death penalty.

**3. EU bilateral political engagement:** The EU's bilateral engagement with Morocco is guided by the EU-Morocco Association Agreement, which stipulates that EU-Morocco relations are based on respect for human rights and democratic principles. The EU actively engaged in the international and local human rights campaigns to mark the Day against the Death Penalty on 10 October. The EU delegation joined the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence