



Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

Albania: Ethnic minority groups

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Preface

This note provides country of origin information (COI) and policy guidance to Home Office decision makers on handling particular types of protection and human rights claims. This includes whether claims are likely to justify the granting of asylum, humanitarian protection or discretionary leave and whether – in the event of a claim being refused – it is likely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under s94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

Decision makers must consider claims on an individual basis, taking into account the case specific facts and all relevant evidence, including: the policy guidance contained with this note; the available COI; any applicable caselaw; and the Home Office casework guidance in relation to relevant policies.

Country Information

COI in this note has been researched in accordance with principles set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#) and the [European Asylum Support Office’s research guidelines, Country of Origin Information report methodology](#), namely taking into account its relevance, reliability, accuracy, objectivity, currency, transparency and traceability.

All information is carefully selected from generally reliable, publicly accessible sources or is information that can be made publicly available. Full publication details of supporting documentation are provided in footnotes. Multiple sourcing is normally used to ensure that the information is accurate, balanced and corroborated, and that a comprehensive and up-to-date picture at the time of publication is provided. Information is compared and contrasted, whenever possible, to provide a range of views and opinions. The inclusion of a source is not an endorsement of it or any views expressed.

Feedback

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Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to make recommendations to him about the content of the Home Office’s COI material. The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office’s COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI’s work and a list of the COI documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector’s website at <http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/country-information-reviews/>

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Policy guidance

Updated: 1 May 2017

1. Introduction

1.1 Basis of claim

- 1.1.1 Fear of persecution or serious harm by state or non-state actors due to the person's membership of an ethnic minority group.

1.2 Points to note

- 1.2.1 In this note, 'ethnic minority group' means Roma, Balkan-Egyptians, Vlachs (Aromanians), Gorani, and ethnic Greeks, Macedonians, and Montenegrins, though the treatment and experiences of each group differ.
- 1.2.2 Where a claim is refused, it must be considered for certification under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 as Albania is listed as a designated state.

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2. Consideration of Issues

2.1 Credibility

- 2.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 2.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 2.1.3 Decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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2.2 Assessment of risk

a. Treatment by the state

- 2.2.1 Albania has not legally recognised all minorities that self-identify or are recognised by other organisations or states. Under Albanian law Roma and Vlachs (Aromanians) are officially recognised as ethnolinguistic minority groups. Whereas ethnic Greeks, Macedonians, and Montenegrins are recognised as national groups (see [Recognised groups](#)).
- 2.2.2 Equal access to rights for ethnic minorities has yet to be ensured in practice in Albania. Some Roma and Balkan-Egyptians (hereafter Egyptians) in particular are reported to face marginalization and discrimination in access to housing, employment, health care, education, social assistance such as unemployment benefit and participation in political life. Some Roma and Egyptian parents find it hard to register the births of their children because they themselves are without legally documented places of residence. There have also been cases of forced evictions (see [Roma and Egyptians](#)).

- 2.2.3 The inclusion of Roma children in the education system has reportedly improved in recent years but they are still not fully integrated in the education system, which often subsequently leads to unemployment and social exclusion. On every education indicator, girls are doing worse than boys, while very few Roma of either sex complete primary or secondary education (see [Roma and Egyptians](#)).
- 2.2.4 Although Roma and Egyptian communities in particular face discrimination from the state, it is not in general sufficiently serious by its nature and repetition as to amount to persecution or serious harm. The onus is on the person to demonstrate that on return they would face treatment which would reach the high threshold of being persecutory or otherwise inhuman or degrading. Decision makers must therefore carefully consider the individual factors of each case, taking full account the person's circumstances.

b. Societal treatment

- 2.2.5 The European Commission has reported that in general inter-ethnic relations in Albania are good (see [Government initiatives](#)).
- 2.2.6 Reports indicate that Roma and Egyptians in particular face societal discrimination especially in terms of housing, employment and education. There are no reliable data on hate crime and it is believed that many cases go unreported (see [Roma and Egyptians](#)).
- 2.2.7 In general the level of societal discrimination is not sufficiently serious by its nature and repetition that it will reach the high threshold required to constitute persecution or serious harm. The onus is on the person to demonstrate why, on return, they would be at real risk of persecution or serious harm from non-state actors.
- 2.2.8 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.3 Protection

- 2.3.1 Where the person's fear is of persecution or serious harm by the state, they will not be able to avail themselves of the protection of the authorities.
- 2.3.2 Where the person's fear is of persecution or serious harm by non-state actors (including rogue state actors), there are protections in law and avenues of redress.
- 2.3.3 The Albanian government has passed comprehensive anti-discrimination law which the European Commission has said is broadly in line with European Union standards. However, enforcement of the law remains to be strengthened. The law provides official minority status for national groups and separately for ethno-linguistic groups.
- 2.3.4 The Law on Protection from Discrimination was adopted in 2010 and the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination has been established and issues sanctions. The People's Advocate (Ombudsman), although having no enforcement powers, monitors the situation and treatment of minority ethnic groups by public institutions, may initiate an investigation in some cases where a victim is unable to come forward to do so and make

recommendations for legislative changes. There are similarly effective avenues for submitting a complaint against police for misconduct (see [Legal framework](#)).

- 2.3.5 In December 2015 the government adopted an action plan covering 2016-20 for Roma and Egyptian integration and is now working to draft a new comprehensive law for the protection of minorities that fully conforms to international standards. As part of this process the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has established a working group and initiated a wide consultation process involving independent institutions, minorities' associations, civil society and international organisations. A nationwide public awareness campaign against discrimination and on the existing complaints procedure is also to be carried out (see [Government initiatives](#)).
- 2.3.6 At local level the police have established links and cooperation with minority groups such as the Roma and Egyptians to, amongst other things, exchange information about problems about human rights violations and discrimination; to assist with resolution of conflicts within the communities or with other residents; and address any ill-treatment by the police personnel against members of the communities (see [Police](#)).
- 2.3.7 There are therefore laws and systems in place which provide minority ethnic groups with avenues for redress against discrimination and harassment. This demonstrates that there is in general sufficiency of protection for minority ethnic groups in Albania. A person's reluctance to seek protection, or lack of knowledge of it, does not mean that the protection is not available. Decision makers must consider each case on its facts. The onus is on the person to demonstrate why they would not be able to seek and obtain state protection.
- 2.3.8 For further guidance on assessing the availability or not of state protection, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.4 Internal relocation

- 2.4.1 Where the person's fear is of persecution or serious harm by the state, they will not be able to relocate to escape that risk.
- 2.4.2 Where the person's fear is of persecution or serious harm by non-state actors – including rogue state agents – internal relocation is likely to be an option to escape such risk.
- 2.4.3 The onus will be on the person to demonstrate why they would be unable to internally relocate to a part of the country where they would not face difficulties in the proposed new location.
- 2.4.4 See also the country policy and information note on [Albania: Background \(including actors of protection and internal relocation\)](#).
- 2.4.5 For further guidance on internal relocation, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.5 Certification

- 2.5.1 Where a claim is refused, it is likely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002. This is because in general the mistreatment feared, even if it did occur, is unlikely to amount to persecution or serious harm and effective state protection is likely to be available.
- 2.5.2 For further information on certification, see the [Appeals Instruction on Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under Section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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3. Policy summary

- 3.1.1 Although societal discrimination and social and economic inequalities against ethnic minorities persist in Albania, including some discrimination in employment and access to education, healthcare, housing and social security – particularly against Roma and Egyptians – this discrimination is not such that it will on its own generally reach the level of being persecutory or otherwise inhuman or degrading treatment.
- 3.1.2 Effective state protection is, in general, likely to be available for members of ethnic minority groups who face discriminatory societal treatment or from rogue state actors.
- 3.1.3 Furthermore, if a person is at real risk from non-state agents in their home area, they would in general be able to relocate to a part of the country where they would not be at risk, as long as it would not be unreasonable to expect them to do so.
- 3.1.4 Where a claim is refused, it is likely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

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Country Information

Updated: 5 April 2017

4. Demography

4.1 Minority groups

- 4.1.1 The World Population Review, in its Albania Population 2016 report, stated that:

'Ethnicity is a delicate issue in Albania, and one that is debated. Official statistics show Albania is very homogeneous with more than 97% Albanian majority, but minority groups like the Roman, Greeks and Macedonians have questioned this data and claim a larger share. Three national minorities are recognized: Greeks, Macedonians and Montenegrins.

'There are also two cultural minorities -- Aromanians and Romani -- and other Albanian minorities like the Bulgarians and Jews. The Greek government estimates 300,000 Greeks in the country, while the Albanian government claims just 60,000.

'At the 2011 census, the population of Albania was officially 83% Albanian, 0.9% Greek, 0.2% Macedonian, 0.01% Montenegrin, 0.3% Aromanian, 0.3% Romani, 0.1% Balkan Egyptian, 14% no declared ethnicity and 1.6% not relevant.

'Many minority groups have criticized the country's census law which imposes a \$1,000 fine on anyone who declares an ethnicity that differs from what is on their birth certificate.'¹

- 4.1.2 The European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document: Albania 2013 Progress Report, 16 October 2013, stated that 'The results of the Population and Housing Census were contested by minority representatives, including some Roma and Egyptian associations, as not reflecting the reality on the ground.'²

- 4.1.3 The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), in Basic Facts on Roma – Albania, dated 28 August 2010, stated that:

'Roma in Albania are recognised as an ethnic-linguistic minority. Official sources say that there are about 1,300 Roma in Albania, however other sources estimate that there are up to 120,000 Roma in Albania; ... Official censuses in Albania acknowledge the Roma. Romani communities are found all over the country; the largest are found in central and southeast Albania in regions like Tirana, Durrës, Elbasan, Fieri, Berat, Korça, Pogradec, Bilisht, Gjirokastra, Delvina, Kruja, Shkodra, etc.[...]

¹ World Population Review, Albania Population 2016, 6 August 2016. <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/albania-population/> Date accessed 3 April 2017.

² European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document: Albania 2013 Progress Report (p45), 16 October 2013 https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2013/package/al_rapport_2013_en.pdf Date accessed 3 April 2017.

'In Albania, there are many groups referred to as Roma including Kabuzis, Meckars, Kurtofs and Cergars tribes – Shkodrani and Besage Roma. Another ethnic group which originates from Egypt is the Jevgs, who are generally perceived to be Romani.'³

4.1.4 Minority Rights Group International's World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples states on its website that:

'Many Egyptians consider themselves to be a national minority distinct from both the Roma community and the Albanian community, defining themselves by their ethnic background, their stated historical roots as descendants of persons from Egypt, their traditions and their cultural heritage. However, the authorities have not provided minority status to the Egyptians thereby denying them constitutional protections against discrimination available to other members of minority groups. To qualify for minority status under Albanian law, a group of individuals must share the same language (other than Albanian), have documentation to prove its distinct ethnic origin or national identity, and have distinct customs and traditions or a link to a kinship state outside of the country. The government maintains that the Egyptians did not meet some criteria, such as a distinct language and traditions, and instead considered them a community – rather than a distinct minority. This means that the Egyptians do not qualify for any special measures available to the Roma – even though they too have suffered greatly since the collapse of communism.'⁴

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4.2 Recognised groups

4.2.1 According to Minority Rights Group International:

'Three minorities are officially recognized in Albania as national minorities – Greeks, Macedonians and Montenegrins. Roma and Vlachs/Aromanians are recognized as linguistic (sometimes called cultural) minorities. Both linguistic and national minorities are recognized under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) in Albania. Some members of the Roma and Vlach/Aromanian minorities would like to be considered national rather than linguistic minorities. Egyptians are not recognized as either a national or a linguistic minority – although they would like their status to be acknowledged as such.'⁵

4.2.2 The US State Department's (USSD) Country Reports on Human Rights Practices covering events in 2016 stated: 'The law provides official minority status for both national and ethnolinguistic groups. The government defined Greeks, Macedonians, and Montenegrins as national groups; Greeks

³ The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) Basic Facts on Roma – Albania, 28 August 2010 <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=3622>. Date accessed 3 April 2017

⁴ Minority Rights Group International: World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples, undated <http://minorityrights.org/minorities/egyptians/>. Date accessed 3 April 2017

⁵ Minority Rights Group International World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples. Albania. Peoples. Undated. <http://minorityrights.org/country/albania/>. Date accessed 3 April 2017

constituted the largest of these. The law defined Aromanians (Vlachs) and Roma as ethnolinguistic minority groups.’⁶

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5. Legal framework

5.1 Context

- 5.1.1 The European Commission’s Albania 2016 progress report, dated 9 November 2016, noted that:

‘In June 2014, the European Council granted Albania candidate status. The Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) has been in force since April 2009 and Albania has implemented smoothly its obligations. Regular political and economic dialogue between the EU and Albania has continued through the relevant structures under the SAA. The government engaged in EU-related reforms and continued to make progress in meeting the objectives set out in the five key priorities for the opening of accession negotiations.’⁷

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5.2 The legal position

- 5.2.1 In its 2016 Albania Country Report the Bertelsmann Foundation said:

‘Minorities enjoy broad cultural rights, which are monitored by the EU, OSCE and neighboring countries. Existing discrimination and de facto marginalization of particular groups, such as gays, lesbians and Roma, reflects more the lack of sufficient resources and social services than a legal problem.

‘Respect for civil rights is enshrined in the Albanian Constitution and the Human Right conventions the country has ratified. The office of the Ombudsman is the main domestic human rights institution. The new ombudsman elected in 2011 has taken an increasingly proactive active role in monitoring the situation of human rights and state accountability on the issue. His intervention relates to areas of property issues, police abuse, undue length of judiciary proceedings, non-enforcement of judgments in civil cases, inadequate conditions in prisons and living conditions for the Roma minority.’⁸

- 5.2.2 The European Commission’s Albania 2016 progress report, dated 9 November 2016, noted that:

⁶ US Department of State: Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2016 - Albania, 3 March 2017. Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=265388> Date accessed: 24 March 2017

⁷ European Commission, Brussels, 9.11.2016 SWD(2016) 364 final Commission Staff Working Document: Albania 2015 Report, Accompanying the document: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. 2016 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy. 9 November 2016. Page 4. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_albania.pdf Date accessed: 3 April 2017

⁸ Bertelsmann Foundation: BTI 2016; Albania Country Report, 2016 http://www.bti-project.org/fileadmin/files/BTI/Downloads/Reports/2016/pdf/BTI_2016_Albania.pdf Date accessed 3 April 2017

'The legal framework for the protection of human rights is broadly in line with European standards and Albania has ratified most international human rights conventions. However, enforcement of human rights remains to be strengthened. Shortcomings particularly affect the following areas:

- Despite the efforts made, enforcement of property rights has yet to be ensured and the processes of property registration, restitution and compensation need to be completed.
- Living conditions for Roma and Egyptians need to be improved. Social exclusion and discrimination need to be tackled through better policy implementation and better inter-institutional cooperation. Additional efforts are needed to develop a track record of anti-discrimination cases.
- Institutional mechanisms to protect the rights of the child and to tackle gender-based and domestic violence remain poor. The legislation on juvenile justice has yet to be brought in line with international standards. Services for victims of domestic violence need to improve in quality, quantity, accessibility and geographical coverage.' ⁹

5.2.3 The European Centre for Minority Issues – a non-partisan institution founded in 1996 by the governments of the Denmark, Germany, and the German State of Schleswig-Holstein – stated in a February 2015 report:

'Albania's internal legislation takes into consideration minority rights and addresses them in various legal acts and laws. The Constitution of 1998 clearly states that the basis of the Albanian state relies on respect and protection of fundamental human rights including minority rights (Article 3) because the fundamental human rights and freedoms are inviolable, inalienable and indivisible (Article 15) where all are equal before the law and no one may be discriminated for reasons such as ethnicity, language, race, gender (Article 18). Besides this, persons who belong to national minorities exercise in full equality before the law on human rights and freedoms and have the right to freely express their ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic belonging as well as preserve and develop it (Article 20).

'... Albania has ratified various international treaties regarding the protection of minority rights such as: the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in 1991 which internationally recognizes the protection of minorities; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) in 1991 which provides provisions based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) in 1994; the Convention of the Council of Europe for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in 1996 which emphasizes the respect of minority rights on an individual basis; the European Union Convention for the

⁹ European Commission, Brussels, 9.11.2016 SWD(2016) 364 final Commission Staff Working Document: Albania 2015 Report, Accompanying the document: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. 2016 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy. 9 November 2016. Page 21. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_albania.pdf Date accessed: 3 April 2017

Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment and Punishment in 1996; the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in 1999.¹⁰

5.2.4 The Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) reported in March 2015:

'ECRI has already examined in previous reports whether Albanian legislation is in line with its General Policy Recommendation (GPR) No. 7 on national legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination. Therefore, in this fifth report, it will only address persistent shortcomings. In 2013 several provisions of the Albanian Criminal Code (CC) on hate crime were amended. Its Article 265 now criminalises incitement to hatred and disputes on the grounds of race, national origin, religion or sexual orientation. Incitement to violence and discrimination are not mentioned in this article. The grounds of colour, language and citizenship are missing (§ 18a of GPR No. 7); so is gender identity.

'Article 266 CC makes it a criminal offence to endanger social peace by inciting to violence "against other parts of the population" (as well as by inciting to national hatred or "arbitrary actions" against them). This provision seems to criminalise incitement to violence as recommended in § 18a of GPR No. 7; however, it only covers the ground of ethnic origin, and contains a restriction, as public peace needs to be at risk. This restriction too is not in line with § 18a of its GPR No. 7, according to which public incitement to hatred against any individual or group of individuals should be punishable, even in the absence of any consequences.

'Insults, defamation and threats with death or serious bodily injury are punishable under Articles 119, 120 and 84 CC. Articles 119b and 84a cover insults and threats with death or serious injury on the grounds of "ethnicity, national origin, race or religion". However, they are restricted to offences committed through computer systems and do not cover all relevant grounds (cf. § 18b and c of GPR No. 7). Moreover, there is no article that criminalises expressly the expression of ideologies described in § 18d of GPR No. 7.

'Article 74a CC establishes as a criminal offence offering in public or deliberately disseminating to the public, through a computer system, material that denies, minimises significantly, approves of or justifies acts that are genocide or crimes against humanity. This is not totally in line with § 18e of GPR No. 7, as it only covers acts committed through a computer system and the denial of war crimes is missing (cf. § 18e of GPR No. 7).

'Article 265 CC covers part of § 18f of GPR No. 7, as it criminalises the production, dissemination and storage aimed at dissemination of "writings" which incite to hatred. Civil society has informed ECRI that courts do not always apply this provision to the distribution of other than written material. ECRI therefore considers that Article 265 CC should be amended so as to mention expressly "pictorial and other material". Article 119a CC

¹⁰ ECMI - European Centre for Minority Issues: Accessible Justice System for All: the Case of the Roma Minority in Albania, 11 February 2015 http://www.ecmi.de/uploads/tx_ifpubdb/ECMI_Working_Paper_84.pdf Date accessed 3 April 2017

complements Article 265 CC and prohibits the dissemination of racist and xenophobic “material” (in general), but only when using a computer system.

‘Articles 333 and 333a CC criminalise the setting up and participation in organisations and groups having the purpose of committing criminal acts. Both provisions contain the restriction that the organisation must aim at gaining material or non-material benefit (Article 28.1 and 4 CC). This is not in line with § 18g of GPR No. 7, according to which the law should criminalise the creation, leadership and participation in the activities of all groups which promote racism – independently of whether they have the purpose to commit criminal acts or the objective to profit therefrom.

‘In line with § 18h of GPR No. 7, Article 253 CC criminalises racial discrimination by civil servants and persons carrying out public duties. However, racial discrimination in the private sector – racial discrimination “in the exercise of one’s occupation” – is not covered.

‘In line with § 21 of GPR No. 7, motives related to gender, race, [skin] colour, ethnicity, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, political, religious, or philosophical convictions are aggravating circumstances according to Article 50 CC. Only the ground of citizenship is missing.

‘In its fourth report ECRI recommended to Albania to introduce comprehensive legislation aimed at combating discrimination. In the conclusions on the implementation of this recommendation ECRI welcomed the adoption of Law No. 10 221 on Protection from Discrimination (LPD) in 2010 and noted that most of the relevant parts of its GPR No. 7 had been incorporated into it.’¹¹

5.2.5 The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) in a submission to the European Commission in July 2016 stated:

‘There is no reliable data on hate crime and many cases go unreported. Among the key recommendations by ECRI and others, the authorities should as a matter of urgency do the following: (1) spell out in the law the general duty for public authorities to promote equality; (2) enact clear legislation about the shared burden of proof in discrimination cases; and (3) enact provisions allowing for the discontinuation of public funding to political parties and other organisations that promote racism. The authorities should act upon the repeated recommendation by ERCI to ensure effective access to justice for victims of discrimination through a functioning and properly funded legal aid system.’¹²

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¹¹ CoE-ECRI - Council of Europe - European Commission against Racism and Intolerance: ECRI Report on Albania (fifth monitoring cycle); Adopted on 19 March 2015; Published on 9 June 2015 [CRI(201 5)18], 9 June 2015 <https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Albania/ALB-CbC-V-2015-18-ENG.pdf> Date accessed 3 April 2017

¹² European Roma Rights Centre. Written comments by the European Roma Rights Centre for Consideration by the European Commission concerning Roma Inclusion in the Western Balkans Progress Reports 2016 <http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/file/ec-submission-on-roma-inclusion-in-the-western-balkans-july-2016.pdf> Date accessed 3 April 2017.

5.3 Law on Protection from Discrimination (LPD)

- 5.3.1 A copy of the [2010 Law on Protection from Discrimination](#) can be accessed on the UN International Labour Organisation's website.¹³
- 5.3.2 An information booklet produced by the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination for minority groups explaining the operation LPD can be found at: <http://www.osce.org/albania/110959?download=true>

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5.4 Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination

- 5.4.1 The website of the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination (CPD) states:
- 'The Assembly of the Republic of Albania, on 04.02.2010 passed law No. 10 221, "For the protection against discrimination".
- 'Pursuant to this law, the Commissioner for the protection from Discrimination was established as an institution which exercises its authority independently, which ensures efficient protection from discrimination and any kind of behaviour which incites discrimination due to gender, race, colour, ethnicity, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, political, religious or philosophical beliefs, economic, education or social situation, pregnancy, parentage, parental responsibility, age, family or marital condition, civil status, residence, health status, genetic predispositions, disability, affiliation with a particular group, or for any other reason.'¹⁴
- 5.4.2 According to Equinet, European Network of Equality Bodies:
- 'The Commissioner for the Protection from Discrimination (CPD) is the equality body in Albania, established since 2010, by an organic law, fully aligned/approximated with the European Directives in the field of non-discrimination. The CPD is a public legal person, independent in performing its duties and the responsible authority to ensure effective protection from discrimination in the country.
- 'Litigation powers:
- Representing in front of courts
 - Formally deciding on complaints (e.g. decision or recommendation addressed to the parties) legally binding
 - The CPD takes part in judicial processes in the quality of the defendant. In these cases the plaintiff may object to the court the Decisions of the CPD (including the decisions on Discrimination and those imposing sanctions by fine) and ask for their cancellation. Assistance of the victims of discrimination to the court by the CPD in the quality of a third or interested party on the judicial process, related to cases which have been

¹³ Republic of Albania, The Assembly, Law no. 10221 dated 4 February 2010 "On Protection against Discrimination" http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---ilo_aids/documents/legaldocument/wcms_178702.pdf . Date accessed: 22 March 2017.

¹⁴ Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination. Undated. <http://www.kmd.al/?fq=brenda&gj=gj2&kid=77>. Date accessed 3 April 2017.

handled before administratively by the CPD, based on the Albanian Code of Civil Procedures. The CPD has initiated judicial processes to the competent Administrative Courts for issuing the execution procedures of fines imposed by the CPD.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Number of inquiries handled per year (all contact even if not resulting in a formal complaint)	4	15	90	166	172	180
Number of cases handled per year (case files opened and processed)	1	18	110	181	209	288

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5.4.3 The Albanian Helsinki Committee's 2015 report stated:

'The Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination (CPD) has increased its activity in 2015, but on the other hand it is found that citizens are becoming more and more aware in this regard. Different NGOs, who have the mission to protect the citizens of the most vulnerable categories, have helped these categories of persons to seek protection of the right to non discrimination to the Office of the Commissioner, or the relevant courts. These documents include cases of initiatives undertaken by the Centre for Legal Civic Initiatives, in Tirana, which has supported many women who have allegedly been discriminated against, those of the organization the Albanian Foundation for the Protection of the Rights of Disability, in Tirana, which has helped people with disabilities to seek putting an end to discrimination, or of other organizations that operate in the protection of Roma and the LGBT community. Despite the results achieved, there is room for improving the work and specifically we mention the need to improve legislation regarding the "burden of proof" that the law be approximated to the EU standards.'

5.4.4 The European Commission's 2016 report on Albania (covering the period October 2015 to September 2016) stated: 'On non-discrimination, the Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination (CPD) handled a slightly decreased number of cases, while it increased the amount of actions it brought of its own initiative. Its participation in judicial processes doubled compared to 2014. In the reporting period, the CPD issued 11 sanctions.'

¹⁵ Equinet, European Network of Equality Bodies. Albania: Commissioner for the Protection from Discrimination. Undated. <http://www.equineteurope.org/CommissionerforProtectionfromDiscrimination> Date accessed: 24 March 2017

¹⁶ AHC - Albanian Helsinki Committee: Report on the situation of human rights in Albania for 2015, December 2015. Section 8. Equality before the law and the prohibition of discrimination. http://www.ahc.org.al/web/images/Raporte/AL/Report_on_the_human_rights.pdf Date accessed 3 April 2017

¹⁷ European Commission, Brussels, 9.11.2016 SWD(2016) 364 final Commission Staff Working Document: Albania 2015 Report, Accompanying the document: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. 2016 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy. 9 November 2016. Page 65. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_albania.pdf Date accessed: 21 March 2017

5.5 People's Advocate (Ombudsman)

5.5.1 According to the People's Advocate website:

'The People's Advocate (Ombudsman) Institution is provided for the first time in the Albanian Constitution adopted in November 1998, while the Law No. 8454 "On the People's Advocate Institution" (amended later on) was firstly adopted by the Albanian Parliament in February, 4. 1999. This law is designed to take into consideration the legislation of other countries of Europe, which have previously created such an institution. The direction of the People's Advocate is a monocratic one. The Ombudsman is elected by a three-fifths majority of all members of the Assembly for a period of 5 years with the right of re-election.'¹⁸

5.5.2 The US State Department's (USSD) Country Reports on Human Rights Practices covering events in 2016 stated:

'The Office of the Ombudsman is the main independent institution for promoting and enforcing human rights...The office may initiate an investigation in some cases where a victim is unable to come forward to do so. Although the ombudsman lacked the power to enforce decisions, he acted as a monitor for human rights violations. The Office of the Ombudsman was underfunded and understaffed. The ombudsman reported to the Assembly annually. Although the Assembly distributed copies of some of the ombudsman's annual and special reports or posted them online, it rarely discussed the reports in plenary or committee sessions. The Assembly consulted the ombudsman's office on draft legislation related to human rights, but often this was only at the last minute or at the request of the ombudsman.'¹⁹

5.6 Government initiatives

5.6.1 The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), in Basic Facts on Roma – Albania, dated 28 August 2010, stated that: 'Albania joined the Decade of Roma Inclusion in 2008; within this framework the Government adopted a National Action Plan which focuses on education, employment and social protection, housing and infrastructure, health, social infrastructure and equal opportunities and cultural heritage'.²⁰

5.6.2 The Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) reported in March 2015:

¹⁸ Peoples Advocate. About Us. Undated. <http://www.avokatipopullit.gov.al/en/rreth-nesh-0> Date accessed: 24 March 2017

¹⁹ US Department of State: Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2016 - Albania, 3 March 2017. Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=265388> Date accessed: 24 March 2017

²⁰ The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) Basic Facts on Roma – Albania, 28 August 2010 <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=3622>. Date accessed 3 April 2017

'There is no problem of real understanding between the different groups of the Albanian population. The People's Advocate and increasingly the CPD counter public hate speech. In October 2014, the police made available a tool for reporting online hate speech. The Government has adopted a Code of Ethics and the new Audiovisual Media Authority is tasked with drafting ethical guidelines.

'In 2010 the National Action Plan for Roma Inclusion was adopted which also benefits the Albanian Egyptians (Egyptians). Substantive progress has been made in the field of civil registration of Roma. Since 2012, all children are entitled to one year's free pre-school education. Due to positive action in the field of education, the school drop-out rate of Roma pupils has decreased. Also, a points system gives Roma, under certain circumstances, priority access to social housing.'

- 5.6.3 The same report continued: 'However, despite the progress achieved, some issues give rise to concern...There is no comprehensive and coherent data to evaluate the outcome of the strategy and the action plan for Roma inclusion. No proper budget has been allocated to their implementation; as many programmes rely on donors' funds, their long term sustainability is uncertain.'

- 5.6.4 The European Commission's Albania 2016 progress report, dated 9 November 2016, noted that:

'As regards respect for and protection of minorities, some steps were taken to improve the legal framework. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs established a working group to draft a comprehensive law for the protection of minorities. A broad consultation process took place involving independent institutions, minorities' associations, civil society and international organisations. The working group should now swiftly complete its work and finalize the drafting process of the law that should aim to ensure equal access to rights for persons from all minorities. Albania has still not adopted the European Charter for regional and minority languages. The role and the capacity of the State Committee on Minorities remained limited and need to be reinforced. Overall, inter-ethnic relations remained good.'

- 5.6.5 In a resolution adopting the European Commission's 2016 report, the European Parliament in February 2017 stated, amongst other things:

²¹ CoE-ECRI - Council of Europe - European Commission against Racism and Intolerance: ECRI Report on Albania (fifth monitoring cycle); Adopted on 19 March 2015; Published on 9 June 2015 [CRI(2015)18], 9 June 2015. Summary. <https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Albania/ALB-CbC-V-2015-18-ENG.pdf> Date accessed 3 April 2017

²² CoE-ECRI - Council of Europe - European Commission against Racism and Intolerance: ECRI Report on Albania (fifth monitoring cycle); Adopted on 19 March 2015; Published on 9 June 2015 [CRI(2015)18], 9 June 2015. Summary. <https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Albania/ALB-CbC-V-2015-18-ENG.pdf> Date accessed 3 April 2017.

²³ European Commission, Brussels, 9.11.2016 SWD(2016) 364 final Commission Staff Working Document: Albania 2015 Report, Accompanying the document: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. 2016 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy. 9 November 2016. Page 68. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_albania.pdf Date accessed: 3 April 2017

'20. Recalls, among the key priorities, the need to reinforce the protection of human rights, minority rights and anti-discrimination policies, including by strengthening their enforcement; urges the competent authorities to continue improving the climate of inclusion and tolerance for all minorities in the country in line with European minority protection standards, including by enhancing the role of the State Committee on Minorities; welcomes the initial steps aimed at improving the legal framework for the protection of minorities, and calls on Albania to adopt the framework law on the protection of minorities and to ratify the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages; notes the broad consultation process involving independent institutions, minorities associations and civil society; underlines the need to improve living conditions for Roma, Egyptians and other ethnic minorities; calls for concrete actions such as the civic registration (birth certificates and IDs) of Roma and Egyptians, calls for continued efforts in improving their access to employment and all public and social services, education, health, social housing and legal aid; is concerned that, despite improvements, the inclusion of Roma children in the education system remains the lowest in the region.'²⁴

- 5.6.6 The European Commission's Albania 2016 progress report, dated 9 November 2016, noted that:

'The 2016-20 action plan for [Roma and Egyptian] integration was adopted in December [2015]. The national budget will finance 55 % of the actions, while the remaining part is to be provided by donors. The third EU-Albania seminar on the inclusion of Roma and Egyptian communities, held in April [2016], resulted in operational conclusions, which set the main priorities for the next two years.'²⁵

- 5.6.7 A resolution on the 2016 Commission Report on Albania was passed by the European Parliament in February 2017 and included amongst other things:

'21. Commends the efforts of the Ombudsman's office to improve the human rights legislation, especially in the framework of the reform of the judiciary; welcomes active promotion of the rights of vulnerable groups and the principles of human dignity, freedom, equality and the rule of law; regrets that the work of the Ombudsman's office continued to be limited by lack of funding and personnel at his central and local offices; calls for enhancement of the authority, autonomy, efficiency and resources of his office;'

²⁴ European Parliament. European Parliament resolution of 15 February 2017 on the 2016 Commission Report on Albania (2016/2312(INI)). 15 February 2017. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2017-0036+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>. Date accessed: 3 April 2017

²⁵ European Commission, Brussels, 9.11.2016 SWD(2016) 364 final Commission Staff Working Document: Albania 2015 Report, Accompanying the document: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. 2016 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy. 9 November 2016. Page 68. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_albania.pdf Date accessed: 3 April 2017

'24. Notes that further efforts are needed to protect the rights of all minorities in Albania, through the full implementation of the relevant legislation...' ²⁶

5.6.8 In February 2017 Albania's Foreign Minister, Ditmir Bushati, in an address to the UN Human Rights Council said: 'Albania has always attached special attention to the protection and respect of the rights of minorities. We are now working to prepare and adopt a new, updated framework law on minorities, in conformity with the European Framework Convention on National Minorities and the best international standards.'²⁷

5.6.9 In March 2017 the Council of Europe announced:

'The EU/CoE Joint Programme "Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Albanian System of Human Rights protection and Anti-discrimination" is preparing a nation-wide public awareness campaign against discrimination and on the existing complaints procedure. The awareness campaign represents one of the three main pillars of the joint programme action and an international consultant visited Tirana to this end on 9 and 10 March 2017. The aim of the consultant's first mission was to collect relevant information with a view to conceptualising the detailed awareness campaign, identify relevant activities and stakeholders to be involved in the awareness raising activities and also main channels of communication in order to get across relevant messages.

'Several meetings with the programme's stakeholders, i.e. representatives of the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, the People's Advocate, the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth and the Albanian Audio-visual Media Authority (AMA) took place during this visit, along with several focus groups with the School of Magistrates, the Albanian School of Public Administration, the Police Academy, the NGOs active in the area, students and professors of the Social Sciences Faculty.'²⁸

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5.7 Police

5.7.1 The US State Department's (USSD) Country Reports on Human Rights Practices covering events in 2016 also noted with regard to the police generally that:

'Civilian authorities generally maintained effective control over police [...].

'Police did not always enforce the law equitably. Personal associations, political or criminal connections, poor infrastructure, lack of equipment, or

²⁶ European Parliament. European Parliament resolution of 15 February 2017 on the 2016 Commission Report on Albania (2016/2312(INI)). 15 February 2017. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-20170036+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>. Date accessed 4 April 2017.

²⁷ Albanian Telegraphic Agency. Albania, highly committed to protection and promotion of minority rights. 28 February 2017. <https://www.ata.gov.al/en/bushati-albania-highly-committed-to-protection-and-promotion-of-minority-rights/> Date accessed 4 April 2017.

²⁸ Council of Europe. CoE preparing nationwide awareness campaign on anti-discrimination and on the existing complaint procedure. 13 March 2017. <http://www.coe.int/en/web/national-implementation/-/coe-preparing-nationwide-awareness-campaign-on-anti-discrimination-and-on-the-existing-complaint-procedure> Date accessed 5 April 2017.

inadequate supervision often influenced law enforcement. Low salaries, poor motivation and leadership, and a lack of diversity in the workforce contributed to continued corruption and unprofessional behavior. Authorities made efforts to address these problems by renovating police facilities, upgrading vehicles, introducing the use of in-car and body cameras, and publicly highlighting anticorruption measures.

'Impunity remained a serious problem, although the government made greater efforts to address it, in particular by increasing the use of camera evidence to document and prosecute police misconduct.

'While the government had mechanisms to investigate and punish abuse and corruption, police corruption remained a problem. The Service for Internal Affairs and Complaints conducted audits, responded to complaints, and carried out investigations with increased emphasis on human rights, prison conditions, and adherence to standard operating procedures. This office fielded 2,202 complaints, including 1,777 phone calls via the anticorruption "green line." As of September [2016] authorities dealt with 34 cases involving 46 officers as administrative violations and handled eight cases involving eight officers as criminal offenses, forwarding them for prosecution. During the year the ombudsman also processed complaints against police officers, mainly relating to problems with arrests and detention.'

5.7.2 In its comments on the March 2015 ECRI report, the Albanian authorities stated:

'[T]he State Police clarify that, in order to prevent hate crimes, particularly those against vulnerable groups, the local police structures have established links and cooperation with groups such as the Roma, Egyptians and representatives of LGBT organizations by conducting the following activities:

- The identification of Roma and Egyptian communities, their locations or settlements, associations/organizations representing the community.
- Organize joint meetings between the police and the Roma and Egyptian communities to exchange information regarding problems with the rule of law and crime, as well as their concerns regarding human rights violations and discrimination on the bases of ethnicity, etc.
- Identification and treatment of problems to resolve conflicts in these communities or with other residents, to address and resolve them according to the law.
- Identification and legal treatment of cases of rights violations, mistreatments or abuses committed by the police personnel against the citizens of these communities.'

²⁹ US Department of State: Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2016 - Albania, 3 March 2017. Section 1. Role of the police and security apparatus. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=265388> Date accessed: 24 March 2017

³⁰ CoE-ECRI - Council of Europe - European Commission against Racism and Intolerance: ECRI Report on Albania (fifth monitoring cycle); Adopted on 19 March 2015; Published on 9 June 2015 [CRI(2015)18], 9 June 2015. Viewpoints of the Albanian Authorities, as Appendix to ECRI's Fifth

- 5.7.3 See also the country policy and information note on [Albania: Background \(including actors of protection and internal relocation\)](#).

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6. Roma and Egyptians

6.1 Overview

- 6.1.1 The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), in Basic Facts on Roma – Albania, dated 28 August 2010, stated that:

‘Roma in Albania live in poor conditions in settlements, lacking connections to basic infrastructure like water, electric and public services. There have been cases of forced evictions and instances in which Albanian authorities have discriminated against Roma in the provision of social services, social welfare payments, the provision of municipal infrastructure and health care.’³¹

- 6.1.2 In its 2016 Albania Country Report the Bertelsmann Foundation stated ‘Roma and Egyptian communities continue to face discrimination and severe poverty, children belonging to these groups are subject to forced labor. Albania has legal regulations to protect vulnerable groups against discrimination, but the implementation of these rules is deficient.’³²

- 6.1.3 The European Commission’s Albania 2016 progress report, dated 9 November 2016, noted that: ‘Roma and Egyptians continued to face very difficult conditions and frequent discrimination, particularly on access to education, employment, housing, health and civil registration.’³³

- 6.1.4 The US State Department’s (USSD) Country Reports on Human Rights Practices covering events in 2016 stated:

‘There were allegations of significant discrimination against members of the Romani and Balkan-Egyptian communities, including in housing, employment, health care, and education. Some schools resisted accepting Romani and Balkan-Egyptian students, particularly if they appeared to be poor. Many mixed schools that accepted Romani students marginalized

Report on Albania (page 52), <https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Albania/ALB-CbC-V-2015-18-ENG.pdf> Date accessed 3 April 2017

³¹ The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) Basic Facts on Roma – Albania, 28 August 2010 <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=3622>. Date accessed 3 April 2017

³² Bertelsmann Foundation: BTI 2016; Albania Country Report, 2016 http://www.bti-project.org/fileadmin/files/BTI/Downloads/Reports/2016/pdf/BTI_2016_Albania.pdf Date accessed 3 April 2017.

³³ European Commission, Brussels, 9.11.2016 SWD(2016) 364 final Commission Staff Working Document: Albania 2015 Report, Accompanying the document: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. 2016 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy. 9 November 2016. Page 68. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_albania.pdf Date accessed: 3 April 2017

them in the classroom, sometimes by physically setting them apart from other students.’³⁴

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6.2 Housing

- 6.2.1 The Council of Europe’s European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) reported in March 2015: ‘In practice, most Roma and Egyptians cannot benefit from social housing. 60 % of Roma housing premises do not have running water. Many Roma and Egyptians cannot regularise their homes. A considerable number are threatened by forced evictions without alternative housing.’³⁵
- 6.2.2 The US State Department’s (USSD) Country Reports on Human Rights Practices covering events in 2016 stated:
- ‘Romani rights NGOs criticized the lack of legal safeguards against eviction and demolition of Romani camps included in the law on property legalization. Evictions and demolitions continued during the year and affected many Romani families. The government operated alternative housing programs for evicted families including Roma, but these programs were generally unsustainable without significant NGO and external donor support.’³⁶
- 6.2.3 The European Commission’s Albania 2016 progress report, dated 9 November 2016, noted that: ‘Living conditions remained poor, with a substantial part of Roma households lacking access to piped water. The 2016-2025 national housing strategy was adopted. It aims to improve the institutional, legal and regulatory framework for middle and low income households, including Roma.’³⁷
- 6.2.4 According to Amnesty International’s 2016/17 report:
- ‘In June [2016], the local authorities in Tirana threatened to forcibly evict over 80 families – mainly Roma and Egyptian – living in the area of Bregu i Lumit, an area at risk of being flooded by the Tirana River. The authorities failed to provide adequate notice, genuine consultation and alternative housing. Following the intervention by housing activists and the Albanian Ombudsperson, evictions were temporarily suspended at the end of

³⁴ US Department of State: Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2016 - Albania, 3 March 2017. Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=265388> Date accessed: 3 April 2017

³⁵ CoE-ECRI - Council of Europe - European Commission against Racism and Intolerance: ECRI Report on Albania (fifth monitoring cycle); Adopted on 19 March 2015; Published on 9 June 2015 [CRI(2015)18], 9 June 2015. Summary. <https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Albania/ALB-CbC-V-2015-18-ENG.pdf> Date accessed 3 April 2017.

³⁶ US Department of State: Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2016 - Albania, 3 March 2017. Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=265388> Date accessed: 3 April 2017

³⁷ European Commission, Brussels, 9.11.2016 SWD(2016) 364 final Commission Staff Working Document: Albania 2015 Report, Accompanying the document: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. 2016 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy. 9 November 2016. Page 68. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_albania.pdf Date accessed: 3 April 2017

September [2016]. As part of an “intervention plan”, proposed by the Mayor of Tirana, the families were given options on their eviction and resettlement. By the end of the year, it remained unclear if all families would be able to access resettlement and if the offered alternatives were adequate and sustainable.³⁸

- 6.2.5 The European Commission’s Albania 2016 progress report noted that ‘As a result of the dialogue held by the Tirana municipality with the 72 families affected by the planned eviction in the Bregu i Lumit area, the eviction was stopped and efforts were made to find alternative housing solutions. This was a clear progress in the handling of evictions compared to the previous case at the Tirana artificial lake, where some 44 families were evicted in October 2015 without proper dialogue with the families concerned. Albania has yet to develop guidelines on evictions in line with international standards and train local and national institutions on procedures to be followed before, during and after evictions.’³⁹

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6.3 Civil registration/Access to services

- 6.3.1 The Council of Europe’s European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) reported in March 2015 stated that ‘Only one in five Roma have health insurance cards.’⁴⁰

- 6.3.2 The US State Department’s (USSD) Country Reports on Human Rights Practices covering events in 2016 stated:

‘In order to receive government services, individuals moving within the country must transfer their civil registration to their new community of residence and prove the legality of their new domicile through property ownership, a property rental agreement, or utility bills. Many persons could not provide this proof and thus lacked access to public services. Other citizens, particularly Roma and Balkan-Egyptians, lacked formal registration in the communities where they resided. The law does not prohibit their registration, but it was often difficult to complete. Many Roma and Balkan-Egyptians lacked the financial means to register, and many lacked the motivation to go through the process.

‘There were no reports of discrimination in birth registration, but onerous residency and documentation requirements for registration made it more

³⁸ Amnesty International: Amnesty International Report 2016/17 - The State of the World’s Human Rights - Albania, 22 February 2017. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/europe-and-central-asia/albania/> Date accessed 5 April 2017.

³⁹ European Commission, Brussels, 9.11.2016 SWD(2016) 364 final Commission Staff Working Document: Albania 2015 Report, Accompanying the document: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. 2016 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy. 9 November 2016 (page 68). https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_albania.pdf Date accessed: 3 April 2017

⁴⁰ CoE-ECRI - Council of Europe - European Commission against Racism and Intolerance: ECRI Report on Albania (fifth monitoring cycle); Adopted on 19 March 2015; Published on 9 June 2015 [CRI(2015)18], 9 June 2015 (Summary). <https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Albania/ALB-CbC-V-2015-18-ENG.pdf> Date accessed 3 April 2017.

difficult for the many Romani and Balkan-Egyptian parents who lacked legally documented places of residence to register their children or to access government services dependent on registration....According to the domestic branch of the NGO Association for the Social Support of Youth (ARSIS), children born to internal migrants or those returning from abroad, especially from Greece, frequently had no birth certificates or other legal documents and consequently were unable to attend school or have access to services. This was particularly a problem for Romani families, in which couples often married young and failed to register the births of their children.⁴¹

‘Civil registration requirements, including fees, and lack of identification made it difficult for many Roma to vote in the June 2015 local elections.’⁴²

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6.4 Women and children

6.4.1 In its July 2015 report “Child Notice Albania”, UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) stated:

‘Both Roma and Egyptians in Albania continue to be denied their full human rights and to be discriminated against. A UNICEF Albania commissioned report states that: ‘The key indicators for Roma children are that they are five times more likely to be living in poverty than non-Roma children; they are four times more likely to be underweight or stunted; they have only a 50/50 chance of completing their basic schooling; and only one in six has the chance to complete middle school. Roma children are also less likely than other children to have the full range of vaccinations and one-third of Roma girls are likely to be married before they reach eighteen. Without sustained, concentrated and targeted interventions to raise the living standards of Roma children, they are very likely to be eventually raising their own children in the same situation of poverty and deprivation as their parents.’ In 2012, only 0.3 per cent of Roma households and 4.8 per cent of Egyptian ones reported receiving unemployment benefit (0.6 % Roma and 0.1% Egyptian received benefits for orphans). In law these benefits are universally accessible, a further sign of how access to services and integration of the community is hindered by a complex set of economic, historical, cultural and politic factors.’⁴³

6.4.2 The same report stated:

‘There is a lack of data on the health status of Roma and Egyptian women and mortality rates among Roma and Egyptian infants and children. A survey of Roma identified almost five per cent of children with severe illnesses, 5.6 per cent with chronic diseases, and 3.2 per cent who were

⁴¹ US Department of State: Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2016 - Albania, 3 March 2017. Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=265388> Date accessed: 3 April 2017

⁴² US Department of State: Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2016 - Albania, 3 March 2017. Section 3. Participation of Women and Minorities <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=265388> Date accessed: 3 April 2017

⁴³ UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), Child Notice Albania, 23 July 2015. <https://www.unicef.be/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/unicef-child-notice-albania-oktober2015.pdf>. Date accessed 3 April 2017

disabled. A later study indicated that 19.2 per cent of Roma and 10.9 per cent of Egyptian respondents had lost a child after birth. Almost 11 per cent of Roma children had not received any vaccines... Health care is free of charge for children 0-18 years old, but unregistered Roma children cannot benefit from this policy. Thirty seven per cent of Roma do not know where to register, or the procedures that would allow them to. Discrimination within health services is reported among the Roma community but the main obstacle they face is being unable to pay for specialist health examinations and medicines. In the absence of health cards, many Roma parents receive medical treatment for their children only at advanced stage of diseases. A 2013 study found that only 50 per cent of Roma said they possessed health cards and received services at health centres.⁴⁴

6.4.3 The US State Department's (USSD) Country Reports on Human Rights Practices covering events in 2016 stated:

'Although the legal minimum age for marriage is 18, authorities did not enforce the law. Underage marriages occurred mostly in rural areas and within Romani communities. According to the 2015 Early Marriages in Albania study of the Observatory of Children, approximately 3 percent of children between the ages of 15 and 18 were married. The study also noted that 9 percent of Romani children between the ages of 13 and 18 were married. ARSIS claimed that, in certain Romani communities, girls as young as seven and boys as young as nine were considered married.'⁴⁵

6.4.4 The European Commission's Albania 2016 progress report, dated 9 November 2016, noted that:

'Roma children living or working on the street remained a concern despite efforts to reduce this phenomenon by taking street children and their families under protection. Child marriage remained a worrying practice, involving around 2.9 % of Roma children in the 15-18 age group. Civil registration improved, but further efforts are needed, particularly to ease the transfer of registration between municipalities and of children born abroad. Lack of registration often prevents access to social support.'⁴⁶

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6.5 Education and employment

6.5.1 The US State Department's (USSD) Country Reports on Human Rights Practices covering events in 2016 stated that 'There were reports of

⁴⁴ UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), Child Notice Albania, 23 July 2015. https://www.unicef.be/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/unicef-child-notice-albania_oktober2015.pdf. Date accessed 3 April 2017

⁴⁵ US Department of State: Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2016 - Albania, 3 March 2017. Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=265388> Date accessed: 3 April 2017

⁴⁶ European Commission, Brussels, 9.11.2016 SWD (2016) 364 final Commission Staff Working Document: Albania 2015 Report, Accompanying the document: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. 2016 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy. 9 November 2016. Page 68. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_albania.pdf Date accessed: 3 April 2017

employment discrimination based on gender, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, nationality, and ethnicity.’⁴⁷

- 6.5.2 The Council of Europe’s European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) reported in March 2015: ‘Only one out of four Roma children has access to pre-school education. The education outcomes of many Roma and Egyptians remain poor and obstruct their access to the regular labour market.’⁴⁸
- 6.5.3 The European Commission’s Albania 2015 progress report, dated 10 November 2015, recorded: ‘Roma and Egyptian children are still not fully integrated in the education system, which often leads to unemployment and exclusion. Quotas for the enrolment of Roma, Egyptians and disadvantaged students in public universities continued to be applied. Enrolment rates for Roma and Egyptian children increased slightly, but overall they remain very low.’⁴⁹
- 6.5.4 The same report noted: ‘The inclusion of Roma children in the education system continued improving, but remains the lowest in the region. School segregation is a matter of serious concern. The electronic data collection system “Romalb” is partially functional and in-service training is necessary to ensure that it is used by all local government units.’⁵⁰
- 6.5.5 The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) in a submission to the European Commission in July 2016 stated:
- ‘While some progress has been made in the field of education – since 2012 all children are entitled to one year’s free pre-school education – the Roma Inclusion Index 2015 reports that on every education indicator, girls are doing worse than boys, very few Roma are completing primary or secondary education, and segregation is worsening. The ERRC has been working on countering segregation in Albania, in cases such as the Naim Frasheri school on outskirts of the city of Korca. It is known as “Roma and Egyptian” school because all 283 children of this school come from families from these two communities. Although there are three schools in the catchment area, and the other two are racially integrated, poor Roma and Egyptian parents have been induced to enrol their children in this school in order to secure

⁴⁷ US Department of State: Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2016 - Albania, 3 March 2017. Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=265388> Date accessed: 3 April 2017

⁴⁸ CoE-ECRI - Council of Europe - European Commission against Racism and Intolerance: ECRI Report on Albania (fifth monitoring cycle); Adopted on 19 March 2015; Published on 9 June 2015 [CRI (2015)18], 9 June 2015. Summary. <https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Albania/ALB-CbC-V-2015-18-ENG.pdf> Date accessed 3 April 2017.

⁴⁹ European Commission: Albania 2015 Report [SWD(2015) 213 final], 10 November 2015. Section 4. http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2015/20151110_report_albania.pdf Date accessed 5 April 2017

⁵⁰ European Commission, Brussels, 9.11.2016 SWD(2016) 364 final Commission Staff Working Document: Albania 2015 Report, Accompanying the document: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. 2016 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy. 9 November 2016. Page 68. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_albania.pdf Date accessed: 3 April 2017

social support (mainly food packages).The ERRC has submitted information on these two situations to the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination and the Ombudsman in Albania. Both institutions accepted that there is discrimination in the schools. The responsible authorities need to act on their findings and take all necessary desegregation measures including free transport for Romani children to mainstream schools, and a redrawing the boundaries of the catchment areas, to ensure full access to quality integrated education for Roma and Egyptian children.’⁵¹

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7. Vlachs (aka Aromanians)

7.1.1 According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica:

‘Vlach, also spelled Vlah, autonyms Armăn and Rămăn, also called Aromanian, Macedoromanian, and Macedo-Vlach, any of a group of Romance-language speakers who live south of the Danube in what are now southern Albania, northern Greece, the Republic of Macedonia, and southwestern Bulgaria. Vlach is the English-language term used to describe such an individual. The majority of Vlachs speak Aromanian, but inhabitants of a few villages on both sides of the border between Greece and southeastern Macedonia speak Meglenoromanian and call themselves Vla (plural Vlaš). There is also a Vlach diaspora in other European countries, especially Romania, as well as in North America and Australia.

‘Estimates of the number of Vlachs and of Aromanian speakers vary widely. The only official figures for those declaring Vlach ethnic affiliation come from the Republic of Macedonia (2002), 9,695, with 6,884 declaring Vlach their mother tongue; Albania (2011), 8,266, with 3,848 claiming Aromanian as their mother tongue; and Bulgaria (2011), 3,684 ethnic Vlachs.

‘Aromanian is used and codified as a distinct language in the Republic of Macedonia and in Albania.’⁵²

7.1.2 The Country Policy and Information Team (CPIT) did not locate any current sourced information specific to the Vlach minority group reporting that they are in particular subjected to ill treatment in Albania.

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8. Greeks

8.1.1 Minority Rights Group International’s World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples states on its website that:

‘Greeks make up the largest ethnic minority in Albania. There are no official up-to-date figures, but according to the 1989 Census, there were 58,758

⁵¹ European Roma Rights Centre. Written comments by the European Roma Rights Centre for Consideration by the European Commission concerning Roma Inclusion in the Western Balkans Progress Reports 2016 <http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/file/ec-submission-on-roma-inclusion-in-the-western-balkans-july-2016.pdf> Date accessed 5 April 2017.

⁵² Encyclopaedia Britannica. Vlach 3 November 2015. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Vlach> Date accessed 3 April 2017

Greeks. Other estimates put it much higher. The size of the Greek minority is especially contentious on account of the history of claims to southern Albania made by the Greek government in Athens, and of the substantial support within Greece and among Greeks in Albania, for the establishment of an autonomous district of 'Northern Epirus'.

'While violent incidents have declined in recent years, the ethnic Greek minority has pursued grievances with the government regarding electoral zones, Greek-language education, property rights and government documents. Minority leaders complain of the government's unwillingness to recognize the possible existence of ethnic Greek towns outside communist-era 'minority zones'; to utilize Greek on official documents and on public signs in ethnic Greek areas; to ascertain the size of the ethnic Greek population; and to include more ethnic Greeks in public administration. While Greek-language public elementary schools are common in the southern part of the country, where most ethnic Greeks live, OMONIA complains that the community needs more classes both within and outside the minority zones. Every village in the Greek zones has its own elementary-middle (nine-year) school in the Greek language, regardless of the number of students, which has declined in recent years due to emigration to Greece; Gjirokaster has two Greek-language high schools. Teacher training is available for teachers of the Greek national minority at the Pedagogical High School in Gjirokaster, and there is a Greek language branch at Gjirokaster University.'⁵³

- 8.1.2 The US State Department's (USSD) Country Reports on Human Rights Practices covering events in 2016 stated: 'The ethnic Greek minority complained about the government's unwillingness to recognize ethnic Greek towns outside communist-era "minority zones" or to use Greek in official documents and on public signs in ethnic Greek areas. Public education was not available in the [...] Vlach language[s].'⁵⁴
- 8.1.3 The Country Policy and Information Team (CPIT) has not been able to locate any current, relevant information in the sources consulted in this note specific to the Greek minority group reporting that they are in particular subjected to ill treatment in Albania.

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9. Macedonians

- 9.1.1 Minority Rights Group International's World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples states on its website that:⁵⁵

'The Albanian government recognizes as Macedonian only the minority living in the Prespa area and excludes Macedonians living in other areas, especially those in Golo Brdo who are mainly Muslim. Elementary schooling

⁵³ Minority Rights Group International: World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples, undated <http://minorityrights.org/minorities/greeks/> Date accessed 3 April 2017

⁵⁴ US Department of State: Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2016 - Albania, 3 March 2017. Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=265388> Date accessed: 3 April 2017

⁵⁵ Minority Rights Group International: World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples, undated <http://minorityrights.org/minorities/greeks/> Date accessed 3 April 2017

in Macedonian is provided. A radio and TV programme in Macedonian was broadcast by the Korca state radio and TV station. The areas where Macedonians live are extremely poor and many survive as day labourers in the Republic of Macedonia. Macedonians in the Prespa region are Eastern Orthodox Christian and those in Golo Brdo are predominantly Muslim.

‘The four Macedonian organizations in Albania, Mir (Peace), Gora, MED (Macedonian Aegean Society) and Prespa, boycotted the 2001 census in Albania because there was no option for Macedonian in the census list. In 2003, the Association of Macedonians in Albania (consisting of the four organizations) conducted their own census of the number of Macedonians in Albania. It estimated a population of between 120,000 and 350,000, while the Albanian state only officially recognizes 5,000.

‘ECRI [the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance] ...recommends that the Albanian authorities ensure that people are not denied the possibility of having their ethnic identity officially recognized simply due to their geographic location in the country outside of areas previously categorized as minority zones.

‘In 2005 most of the Macedonian organizations united into the political party Macedonian Alliance for European Prosperity, which participated in the 2007 elections.’⁵⁶

- 9.1.2 Following a resolution passed by the European Parliament in February 2017 it was reported:

‘A European Parliament document calling on Albania to recognize a Bulgarian minority and legally enshrine its rights has prompted a harsh response in Macedonian media. They accuse Bulgaria of following an agenda that aims to deny the existence of the Macedonian nation. State-run news agency MIA notes. In other words, they want - and succeeded - to put forward the thesis that the Macedonian minority in the three places indicated is actually a Bulgarian one.’⁵⁷

- 9.1.3 The Country Policy and Information Team (CPIT) did not locate any current sourced information specific to the Macedonian minority group reporting that they are in particular subjected to ill treatment in Albania.

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10. Gorani

- 10.1.1 The Joshua Project Profile on the Gorani, undated, noted:

‘The Gorani, meaning Highlanders, is an Islamic ethnic group which inhabits the Gora region, located between Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia. Another autonym of this people is “Našinci” which literally means "our people". They

⁵⁶ Minority Rights Group International: World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples, undated <http://minorityrights.org/minorities/greeks/> Date accessed 3 April 2017

⁵⁷ Novinite.com. EP Ruling on Bulgarians in Albania Sparks Negative Reaction from Macedonian Media. 16 February 2017. <http://www.novinite.com/articles/178921/EP+Ruling+on+Bulgarians+in+%3Cb%3EAlbania%3C/b%3E+Sparks+Negative+Reaction+from+Macedonian+Media>. Date accessed 4 April 2017

are also known among the neighboring Albanians by several exonyms, "Torbeshë" and "Poturë". They speak the Gora dialect, which is known by many Gorani as "Našinski"...

'The Gorani live in the northern slopes of Sar Mountain and the intersection of Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia. Gorani in Kosovo today live in the villages of Backa, Brod, Dikance, Globocica, Gornja Rapca, Krushevo, Kukaljane, Ljeshtane, Ljubovishte, Mlike, Orcusha, Radesha, Restelica, Veliki Krstec, Vranishte, Zli Potok, Mali Krstec, Donja Rapca. There are also nine villages in northern Albania, along the border with Kosovo. According to the information in the municipal area and its surroundings Dragash there are around 12,000 or 13,000 in other countries.' ⁵⁸

10.1.2 A blog posted on the Mistrecja website, on 14 May 2013, observed that:

'Gorani population is located in northeast of Albania and southwest of Kosovo. The population is numbered on 60000. The Gorani word means highlander, because the Gorani population lives on hills and mountains, language Gorani's use is našinski, a Slavic language. The religion of Gorani is Islam, even they call their self as Muslim by Nationality. The center of Gora is Dragaš in Kosovo and Shistavec village in Albania. They were claimed by Bosnia, Bulgaria, Serbia and Macedonia but they are a minority group. Most of Gorani Population migrated in Tirana, capital of Albania. The Gorani speak Albanian language in school, the writing and reading is in Albanian. By Albanians they are known with few exonyms such as Bulgareci, (Bulgarians) torbesh, (bag carriers) and Gorane. The declare of nationality by Gorani was as Albanian.' ⁵⁹

10.1.3 An undated paper extracted through the European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo (EMCI) website, stated:

'The Gorani community is a Slav-speaking, predominantly Islamic group which, while sharing Cultural similarities with Bosniaks, considers itself a separate ethnic group. The Gorani Community originates from the Gora region, which covers southern Kosovo and borders parts of Macedonia and Albania. The Gorani community celebrates the beginning of the spring which is known as Durevdan (St. George day), which is also recognised by law as the official day of the Gorani community (6 May).' ⁶⁰

10.1.4 A Balkans Insight article in April 2016 stated:

'Members of a small community of obscure origin in northern Albania are applying in droves for Bulgarian passports, seeking a new life in the European Union.

'The passengers, all from the Gora region on the border between Kosovo and Albania, belong to the Gorani minority and hope to secure Bulgarian

⁵⁸ The Joshua Project, Profile: The Gorani, undated, http://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/18765/AL Date accessed 4 April 2017.

⁵⁹ Mistrecja, Gorani people, 14 May 2013, Blog, <http://www.mistrecja.com/2013/05/gorani-people.html>, Date accessed 4 April 2017.

⁶⁰ European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo (EMCI), Gorani community, undated, (Culture and religion), <http://www.ecmikosovo.org/>, [Accessed 30 September 2016]

passports in the Bulgarian capital, which they then hope will allow them to live in the EU.

'The Gora region in Albania is made of nine villages whose inhabitants speak a Slavic tongue, similar to Macedonian and Bulgarian.

'The Gorani are believed to have moved to the area between the 11th and 13th century. It is thought they were Bogomils, a neo-Gnostic Christian sect that emerged in the First Bulgarian Empire. The word "Bogomil" translates as those "dear to God." They later converted to Islam but retained their Slavic speech.

'The bilingual community has called the Gora region home for centuries. However, in the last two decades the community has been tempted by offers of citizenships from neighboring states.

'In the early Nineties, Serbia tried to claim the Gorani as a Serbian minority, partly because they also live in Kosovo, which Serbia was then fighting to retain.

' Macedonia also offered the Gorani citizenship. The Bulgarians were next. But their offer triggered a much bigger migration.' ⁶¹

- 10.1.5 The Gorani are not officially recognised as a minority group. A resolution passed by the European Parliament in February 2017 included amongst other things the following:

'24. Notes that further efforts are needed to protect the rights of all minorities in Albania, through the full implementation of the relevant legislation; recommends that the rights of people with Bulgarian ethnicity in the Prespa, Golo Brdo and Gora regions be enshrined in law and ensured in practice.' ⁶²

- 10.1.6 Novinite.com - an English-language news site based in Bulgaria - reported ahead of the European Parliament passing the resolution:

'The European Parliament is calling for the first time on Albania to recognize the Bulgarian community living in the country as a minority, EPP/GERB MEP Andrey Kovatchev has said.

'In a press statement, Kovatchev cites a draft report prepared by the Parliament that recommends for "the rights of people of ethnic Bulgarian origin in the areas of Prespa, Golo Bardo and Gora to be included into the legislation and safeguarded in practice."

Kovatchev's estimates, which roughly coincide with unofficial ones from different Bulgarian sources, suggest "between 50 000 and 10 000" ethnic Bulgarians live in Albania.

⁶¹ Balkan Insight. Albania's Gora Minority Takes Bulgarian Route to EU. 18 April 2016. <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/albania-s-gora-minority-takes-bulgarian-route-to-eu-04-18-2016> Date accessed 4 April 2017.

⁶² European Parliament. European Parliament resolution of 15 February 2017 on the 2016 Commission Report on Albania (2016/2312(INI)). 15 February 2017. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2017-0036+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>. Date accessed 4 April 2017.

'In the Gora region in particular, some historians have referred to the cross-border Slavic-speaking groups living there as "Gorani", whose identity is a matter of disputes between Albanians, Kosovars, Macedonians and Bulgarians - but also among the Gorani themselves.'⁶³

10.1.7 In a subsequent article, Novinite.com reported:

'A European Parliament document calling on Albania to recognize a Bulgarian minority and legally enshrine its rights has prompted a harsh response in Macedonian media.

'Macedonian news website Dnevnik.mk has described the EP move as "surprising".

'Other media outlets pick up on the story saying the European Parliament states "there are Bulgarians" in Gora, Mala Prespa and Golo Brdo. They also cite negative reactions from the Greens-European Free Alliance group, which has 51 seats in the EP and whose MEPs note the only minority living in the areas in question is "the Macedonian minorities, which is officially recognized in Prespa, but not in Golo Brdo."

"Gora is home to the Muslim community of Gorani," Mkd.mk quotes EFA representatives as saying "No international organization, human rights groups, local organization, has raised demands about the rights of a "Bulgarian minority", merely because such a minority exists only in the rights of Bulgarian officials in Sofia and, evidently, also in the European Parliament."

'They accuse Bulgaria of following an agenda that aims to deny the existence of the Macedonian nation. State-run news agency MIA notes: "Earlier, the Bulgarian MEPs claimed that "100 000 Bulgarians live in Albania who do not have all the rights of a recognized minority." In other words, they want - and succeeded - to put forward the thesis that the Macedonian minority in the three places indicated is actually a Bulgarian one."⁶⁴

10.1.8 The Country Policy and Information Team (CPIT) did not locate any current sourced information specific to the Gorani reporting that they are in particular subjected to ill treatment in Albania.

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⁶³ Novinite.com. EU Parliament 'Calls on Albania to Recognize Bulgarian Minority' 2 February 2017. <http://www.novinite.com/articles/178691/EU+Parliament+%27Calls+on+Albania+to+Recognize+Bulgarian+Minority%27> Date accessed 4 April 2017.

⁶⁴ Novinite.com. EP Ruling on Bulgarians in Albania Sparks Negative Reaction from Macedonian Media. 16 February 2017. <http://www.novinite.com/articles/178921/EP+Ruling+on+Bulgarians+in+%3Cb%3EAlbania%3C/b%3E+Sparks+Negative+Reaction+from+Macedonian+Media> Date accessed 4 April 2017.

Version control and contacts

Contacts

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Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

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