



Amnesty International Annual Report 2013 - Albania

Publisher [Amnesty International](#)

Publication Date 23 May 2013

Cite as Amnesty International, *Amnesty International Annual Report 2013 - Albania*, 23 May 2013, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/519f51b818.html> [accessed 3 July 2013]

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Head of state: **Bujar Nishani (replaced Bamir Topi in July)**

Head of government: **Sali Berisha**

The government adopted reforms which restricted the immunity of MPs and other public officials from prosecution and revised the Electoral Code, following previous allegations of fraud. In December, the European Council postponed the granting of EU candidate status to Albania, conditional on further reform.

Enforced disappearances

In November, proceedings before the Serious Crimes Court concerning the enforced disappearance in 1995 of Remzi Hoxha, an ethnic Albanian from Macedonia, and the torture of two other Albanian men, ended with the conviction of three former state security agents. One of them, Ilir Kumbaro, who fled extradition proceedings in the UK in 2011, was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment in his absence. The charges against his two co-defendants were changed by the court to offences covered by a 1997 amnesty, resulting in them not being sentenced. In December, all three defendants appealed against their convictions.

Unlawful killings

In May, the trial opened of former Republican Guard commander, Ndreja Prendi, and former Guard officer, Agim Llupo, charged with killing four protesters, the injury of two others, and concealing evidence. The charges arose from violent clashes between police and protesters during anti-government demonstrations in January 2011 in Tirana.

Torture and other ill-treatment

In June, the UN Committee against Torture expressed concerns about the lack of effective and impartial investigations by the Ministry of Interior into alleged ill-treatment by law enforcement officers. The Committee also reported that basic safeguards against torture were not provided to

people in detention, including timely access to lawyers and doctors, and noted the excessive length of pre-trial detention.

In July, four prison guards were each fined 3,100 leks (€22) by Tirana District Court for beating Sehat Doci in Prison 313 in August 2011.

- In September, a group of former political prisoners went on hunger strike in protest against the government's prolonged failure to provide reparations for their imprisonment by the communist government between 1944 and 1991. Thousands were imprisoned or sent to labour camps during this period and subjected to degrading treatment and, often, torture. During the 31-day protest, two men set themselves on fire; one, Lirak Bejko, died of his injuries in November. The Ombudsperson considered the actions of the Tirana police in denying hunger strikers medicines and liquids to be an act of torture.

Violence in the family

There were 2,526 reported incidents of domestic violence, 345 more than in the previous year, and petitions by victims for court protection orders also increased. Most victims were women. An amendment to the Criminal Code making violence in the family an offence punishable by up to five years' imprisonment came into force in April. However, there was no minimum sentence for such offences, except when committed repeatedly and prosecutions could only be initiated on the basis of a victim's complaint.

The Director of the National Centre for Victims of Domestic Violence was dismissed in May, after the Ombudsperson investigated complaints by women at the Centre that they had been subjected to arbitrary punishments and restrictions.

Discrimination

Roma

Many Roma continued to be denied their right to adequate housing.

- Some Roma, forced to move from their homes near Tirana railway station after a 2011 arson attack, were evicted from temporary tented accommodation. In February, lacking adequate alternative housing, eight families moved briefly into the premises of the Ombudsperson's Office. They were later transferred to disused military barracks. However, their very poor accommodation and inadequate police protection from threats and attacks by the neighbouring community obliged them to leave. By the end of the year, no permanent solution to their housing had been found.
- In July, the livelihoods of an estimated 800 Romani families were affected when Tirana police implemented an administrative order prohibiting the collection of scrap and other recyclable materials by seizing their vehicles and other equipment. The Ombudsperson opened an inquiry into excessive use of force and ill-treatment by police during the operation.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people

The first Tirana Pride took place in May. In July, Tirana Prosecutor's Office dismissed a criminal complaint by LGBTI organizations against Deputy Minister of Defence Ekrem Spahiu about his homophobic remarks concerning the Pride.

Housing rights – orphans

Young people leaving social care remained at risk of homelessness, despite legislation guaranteeing homeless registered orphans up to the age of 30 priority access to social housing. Many continued to live in dilapidated disused school dormitories or struggled to pay for low-grade private rented accommodation.

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