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COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION KEY DOCUMENTS

ALBANIA

4 APRIL 2007

RDS-IND

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION SERVICE

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1. Preface

- i This Country of Origin Information (COI) Key Documents has been produced by Research, Development and Statistics (RDS), Home Office, for use by officials involved in the asylum/human rights determination process. It provides general background information about the issues most commonly raised in asylum/human rights claims made in the United Kingdom. The COI Key Documents includes information available up to 27 March 2007.
- ii The COI Key Documents is an indexed list of key reports, papers and articles produced by a wide range of recognised external information sources. It does not contain any Home Office opinion or policy.
- iii For Home Office users, the COI Key Documents provides direct electronic access to each source referred to in the document, via a link on the source numbers in the index and list of sources. For the benefit of external users, the relevant web link has also been included, together with the date that the link was accessed.
- iv As noted above, the documents identified concentrate mainly on human rights issues. By way of introduction, brief background information on Albania is also provided. Please note, this background material is not intended to provide a summary of the material contained in the key documents listed.
- v This COI Key Documents and the documents listed are publicly disclosable.
- vi Any comments regarding this COI Key Documents or suggestions for additional documents are very welcome and should be submitted to the Home Office as below.

Country of Origin Information Service

Home Office
Apollo House
36 Wellesley Road
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United Kingdom

Email: cois@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Website: http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/country_reports.html

ADVISORY PANEL ON COUNTRY INFORMATION

The independent Advisory Panel on Country Information was established under the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 to make recommendations to the Home Secretary about the content of the Home Office's country of origin information material. The Advisory Panel welcomes all feedback on the Home Office's country of origin information material. Information about the Panel's work can be found on its website at www.apci.org.uk.

It is not the function of the Advisory Panel to endorse any Home Office material or procedures. In the course of its work, the Advisory Panel directly reviews the content of selected Home Office COI documents, but neither the

fact that such a review has been undertaken, nor any comments made, should be taken to imply endorsement of the material. Some of the material examined by the Panel relates to countries designated or proposed for designation for the Non-Suspensive Appeals (NSA) list. In such cases, the Panel's work should not be taken to imply any endorsement of the decision or proposal to designate a particular country for NSA, nor of the NSA process itself.

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2. Background information on Albania

Full Country Name: The Republic of Albania

Area: Total area approximately 27,748 sq. km

Population: 3.5 million (est)

Capital City: Tirana

People: Albanian 95%, Greeks 3% and others 2% (Vlachs, Roma, Egyptians, Montenegrins, Macedonians and Bulgarians (1989 est). Estimates of the minority populations vary widely between different interlocutors and there is a general absence of reliable statistics.

Languages: Albanian (Tosk is the official dialect), Greek, others.

Religion(s): Sunni Muslim (70%), Albanian Orthodox (20%), Roman Catholic (10%) (est)

Currency: Lek [ALL]

Major Political Parties: Socialist Party, Democratic Party, New Democrat Party, Social Democratic Party, Republican Party, Socialist Movement for Integration.

Government: Parliamentary democracy

Head of State: President Alfred Moisiu

Prime Minister: Dr Sali Berisha (Democratic Party)

Foreign Minister: Besnik Mustafaj

Membership of International Groupings/Organisations: United Nations, South East Europe Cooperation Process, Organisation for Co-operation and Security in Europe (OSCE), Council of Europe (COE), World Trade Organisation (WTO) (FCO Country Profile: Albania, last updated 17 April 2006) [4a]

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GEOGRAPHY

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Country Profile on Albania, updated 17 April 2006, noted "Albania lies on the eastern Adriatic coastline, bordered by Montenegro to the north, Serbia/ Kosovo to the north east, Macedonia to the east, and Greece to the south and south-east." [4a]

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RECENT HISTORY

Europa World Online, accessed 20 March 2007, stated that:

"On 28 November 1912, after more than 400 years of Turkish rule, Albania declared its independence under a provisional Government. Although the country was occupied by Italy in 1914, its independence was re-established in 1920. Albania was declared a republic in 1925 and Ahmet Beg Zogu was elected President; proclaimed King Zog I in 1928, he reigned until he was forced into exile by the Italian occupation of Albania in April 1939. Albania was united with Italy for four years, before being occupied by German forces in 1943; the Germans withdrew one year later." [1a]

The BBC Country Profile on Albania, updated 22 November 2006, reported "After World War II, Albania became a Stalinist state under Enver Hoxha, and remained staunchly isolationist until its transition to democracy after 1990. The 1992 elections ended 47 years of communist rule, but the latter half of the decade saw a quick turnover of presidents and prime ministers." [7a]

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RECENT EVENTS AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The FCO Country Profile on Albania, updated 17 April 2006, noted:

“In March 1992 the Democratic Party (DP) led by Sali Berisha won the parliamentary elections. Berisha became President and was re-elected in May 1996. The 1996 elections were criticised by international observers for violations of the electoral law and for Government-instigated intimidation. In January 1997, anti-government demonstrations erupted in the south of Albania following the collapse of a number of pyramid financial schemes. Riots spread across the country and insurgents gained control of many towns in the Southwest. Protesters called for the resignation of President Berisha and for the return of their money. Over 13,000 refugees fled to Italy during the crisis. The state armouries were attacked and an estimated 550,000 small arms looted: some were smuggled out of the country, but 120,000 had been collected and destroyed by 2001.

“The Parliamentary general election that took place on 24 June 2001 was followed by a further 3 rounds in July. Though long and drawn out, these elections were peaceful and produced a decisive victory for the ruling Socialist Party. On 21 August Ilir Meta was nominated for another term as Prime Minister. A report on the elections by the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), published in October, drew attention to a number of flaws and instances of manipulation in the elections, but concluded that such shortcomings were not sufficient to have affected the overall result. Berisha has continued to dispute the result, and a further Democratic Party boycott of Parliament lasted until 29 January.

“On 24 July 2002 President Alfred Moisiu, a consensus candidate, elected by parliament, was sworn in. On 25 July Pandeli Majko resigned as Prime Minister. A Presidential decree named Fatos Nano as his successor.

“The latest Parliamentary elections were held on 3 July 2005. After a lengthy appeals process and re-runs in three of the 100 constituencies, the results were announced on 1 September (in total, there are 140 seats in Parliament, the additional 40 are allocated on a party basis). The leader of the Democratic Party, former President Dr Sali Berisha, was then invited to form a new government. In early November 2005, the OSCE/ODIHR released their final report on the elections and noted that although Albania had enjoyed its first peaceful transfer of power since the end of single party politics, there were still shortcomings to be addressed.” [4a]

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ECONOMY

GDP: US\$ 7.5 billion (2004)

GDP per head: US\$ 2385 (2004)

Annual Growth: 5.9% (2004)

Inflation: 2.9% (2004)

Major Industries: Cement, Oil, Chromium, nickel, copper, hydroelectric power.

Major trading partners: Italy, Greece, Germany, Bulgaria, Turkey, Macedonia [4a]

Exchange rate: £1 = 185.309 ALL (as at 20 March 2007) (XE.com, accessed 20 March 2007) [24]

On the economy of Albania, the FCO Country Profile, dated 17 April 2006, further stated:

“Albania is one the poorest countries in Europe. Since 1990, the economy has struggled to recover from the distortions of the communist regime, the impact of the move to a market economy and the 1997 crisis. Energy is an increasing problem, with chronic low water levels in the reservoirs on which hydro-electric production depends. The maintenance of law and order remains a major problem in Albania. There are high levels of organised crime and corruption.” [4a]

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HUMAN RIGHTS

The USSD 2006 Country Report on Human Rights in Albania stated:

“The government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were significant problems in several areas. Arrest and pretrial detention conditions continued to be an area of great concern with cases of abuse, violence, and inhuman conditions reported. Police corruption and impunity continued to be a problem. There were societal killings and an atmosphere of fear in some areas due to traditional blood feuds. Societal violence and discrimination against women and children were a problem, as was trafficking in persons. Societal discrimination against homosexuals, Roma, and Balkan-Egyptians also continued.” [2a]

In their 2006 Annual Report on Human Rights, the FCO noted in their overview of Albania that although it is party to several international agreements on human rights, Albania continued to have difficulty implementing legislation and reform in some areas. [4b] (p141)

Amnesty International’s (AI) 2006 Annual Report, covering events from January – December 2005, expressed the following concerns in Albania:

- Torture and ill-treatment
- Police impunity
- Conditions of detention
- Violence against women
- People trafficking [11a]

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3. Index to key source documents

(KB users - click source number to access document directly)

KEY FACTS AND GEOGRAPHY	[1a]	Europa World Online, Location, Climate, Language, Religion, Flag, Capital (accessed on 20 March 2007) http://www.europaworld.com/pub/
	[1a]	Europa World Online, Country Statistics (accessed on 20 March 2007) http://www.europaworld.com/pub/
	[2a]	United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2006: Albania http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78797.htm
	[2c]	United States Department of State, Background Note: Albania, last updated October 2006 http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3235.htm
	[4a]	Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile: Albania, last updated on 17 April 2006 http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029394365&a=KCountrProfile&aid=1018696633488
	[7a]	BBC, Country Profile: Albania, last updated on 22 November 2006 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1004234.stm
	[10a]	Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), The World Factbook Albania, last updated on 15 March 2007 https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/al.html
MAP	[6a]	UNHCR, Map of Albania http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/3dee189b4.pdf
HISTORY	[1a]	Europa World Online, Recent History (accessed on 20 March 2007) http://www.europaworld.com/pub/
	[2a]	United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2006: Albania http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78797.htm
	[2c]	United States Department of State, Background Note: Albania, last updated October 2006 http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3235.htm
	[4a]	Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile: Albania, last updated on 17 April 2006 http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029394365&a=KCountrProfile&aid=1018696633488
	[7a]	BBC, Country Profile: Albania, last updated on 22 November 2006 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1004234.stm

HISTORY CONT'D	[7b]	BBC Timeline: Albania, last updated on 14 March 2007 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1004984.stm
	[22a]	Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2006: Albania http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2006&country=6906
POLITICS AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS	[1a]	Europa World Online, Government and Politics (accessed on 20 March 2007) http://www.europaworld.com/pub/
	[2a]	United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2006: Albania http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78797.htm
	[2c]	United States Department of State, Background Note: Albania, last updated October 2006 http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3235.htm
	[4a]	Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile: Albania, last updated on 17 April 2006 http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029394365&a=KCountrypProfile&aid=1018696633488
	[7a]	BBC, Country Profile: Albania, last updated on 22 November 2006 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1004234.stm
	[7b]	BBC Timeline: Albania, last updated on 14 March 2007 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1004984.stm
	[8a]	Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Response to Information Request – Albania National Front Party, 16 November 2006 http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/index_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&gotorec=450659
	[11a]	Amnesty International (AI) report 2006: Albania, covering events from January to December 2005 http://web.amnesty.org/report2006/alb-summary-eng
	[22a]	Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2006: Albania http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2006&country=6906
	[22c]	Freedom House, Nations in Transit 2006: Albania http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=47&nit=389&year=2006
	[25a]	International Helsinki Federation (IHF) for Human Rights Annual Report 2006 – Albania http://www.ihf-hr.org/documents/doc_summary.php?sec_id=3&d_id=4255

HUMAN RIGHTS - GENERAL:		[2a] United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2006: Albania http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78797.htm [4a] Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile: Albania, last updated on 17 April 2006 http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029394365&a=KCountryProfile&aid=1018696633488 [4b] Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Human Rights Annual Report 2006 http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/hr_report2006.pdf [5a] Human Rights Watch (HRW), Albania Country Page, accessed on 22 March 2007 http://www.hrw.org/doc?t=europe&c=albani [6c] UNHCR, Albanian Constitution, 21 October 1998 http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rsd/rsddocview.pdf?tbl=RSDLEGAL&id=3ae6b5dd0 [11a] Amnesty International (AI) report 2006: Albania, covering events from January to December 2005 http://web.amnesty.org/report2006/alb-summary-eng [22a] Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2006: Albania http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2006&country=6906 [22c] Freedom House, Nations in Transit 2006: Albania http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=47&nit=389&year=2006
HUMAN RIGHTS – SPECIFIC ISSUES: (IN ADDITION TO GENERAL REPORTS ABOVE, INFORMATION ON THE FOLLOWING ISSUES IS PROVIDED IN THE DOCUMENTS LISTED BELOW)		
ARREST AND DETENTION – LEGAL RIGHTS	[2a]	United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2006: Albania http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78797.htm
BLOOD FEUDS	[2a]	United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2006: Albania http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78797.htm
	[8b]	Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Response to Information Requests – Protection available to persons targeted in blood feuds from government, police, 22 September 2006 http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/index_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&gotorec=450550
	[8e]	Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Response to Information Requests – Possibility of those involved in blood

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CHILDREN	[1a]	Europa World Online, Education (accessed on 20 March 2007) http://www.europaworld.com/pub/
	[2a]	United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2006: Albania http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78797.htm
	[2d]	United States Department of State, Trafficking in Persons Report, September 2006 http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2006/65988.htm
	[11a]	Amnesty International (AI) report 2006: Albania, covering events from January to December 2005 http://web.amnesty.org/report2006/alb-summary-eng
	[15a]	Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, Global Report 2004: Albania http://www.child-soldiers.org/document_get.php?id=885
	[20a]	UNICEF, Albania Background (accessed on 23 March 2007) http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/albania_background.html
	[20b]	UNICEF Albania (accessed on 23 March 2007) http://www.unicef.org/albania/
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CITIZENSHIP AND NATIONALITY	[6d]	UNHCR, Law on Albanian Citizenship, September 1998 http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rsd/rsddocview.htm?tbl=RSDLEGAL&id=3ae6b5c10
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	[22a]	Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2006: Albania http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2006&country=6906
	[22c]	Freedom House, Nations in Transit 2006: Albania http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=47&nit=3

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DEATH PENALTY	[11c]	Amnesty International, Abolitionist and Retentionist countries, last updated 12 December 2006 http://web.amnesty.org/pages/deathpenalty-countries-eng
DISABILITY	[2a]	United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2006: Albania http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78797.htm
	[11d]	Amnesty International, Albania: Disability and the right to marry, 11 November 2004 http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engneur110052004
EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS	[2a]	United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2006: Albania http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78797.htm
ETHNIC GROUPS	[2a]	United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2006: Albania http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78797.htm
	[2c]	United States Department of State, Background Note: Albania, last updated October 2006 http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3235.htm
	[3a]	European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), Threats to Roma Housing Rights in Albania, accessed on 26 March 2007 http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=2662&archiv=1
	[19a]	Minority Rights Group International, State of the World's Minorities 2007 http://www.minorityrights.org/admin/Download/pdf/SWM2007.pdf
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	[25a]	International Helsinki Federation (IHF) for Human Rights Annual Report 2006 – Albania http://www.ihf-hr.org/documents/doc_summary.php?sec_id=3&d_id=4255
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	[6b]	UNHCR, Law on Asylum in the Republic of Albania, December 1998 http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rsd/rsddocview.html?tbl=RSDLEGAL&id=3ae6b5c07
	[22a]	Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2006: Albania http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2006&country=6906

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	[2b]	United States Department of State, International Religious Freedom Report 2006: Albania http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2006/71364.htm
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	[5a]	Human Rights Watch (HRW), Albania Country Page http://www.hrw.org/doc?t=europe&c=albani
	[9a]	Reporters sans Frontieres (Reporters without Borders) Albania 2006 Annual Report http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=17334&Valider=OK
	[22a]	Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2006: Albania http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2006&country=6906
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	[6f]	UNHCR, Criminal Procedure Code of The Republic of Albania, 1 August 1995, amended 1999 http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rsd/rsddocview.pdf?tbl=RSDLEGAL&id=3ae6b5

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	[11a]	Amnesty International (AI) report 2006: Albania, covering events from January to December 2005 http://web.amnesty.org/report2006/alb-summary-eng
	[11e]	Amnesty International (AI), Albania – Obligations under the UN Convention against Torture – a gap between law and practice, 1 February 2005 http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engneur110012005
	[22a]	Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2006: Albania http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2006&country=6906
	[25a]	International Helsinki Federation (IHF) for Human Rights Annual Report 2006 – Albania http://www.ihf-hr.org/documents/doc_summary.php?sec_id=3&d_id=4255
LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER PERSONS	[8d]	Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Response to Information Requests, Treatment of homosexuals – legislation, 8 September 2006 http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/index_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&gotorec=450467
	[13a]	Sodomy Laws, Laws around the World, last edited 2 June 2006 http://www.sodomylaws.org/world/world.htm#Europe
	[17a]	The International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA), World Legal Survey: Albania, last updated 31 July 2000 http://www.ilga.info/Information/Legal_survey/europe/albania.htm
MEDICAL ISSUES	[12a]	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Country Profile: Albania (accessed 23 March 2007) http://www.unaids.org/en/Regions_Countries/Countries/albania.asp
	[16a]	The Global Fund Country Profile – Albania (accessed 23 March 2007) http://www.theglobalfund.org/programs/countrysite.aspx?countryid=ALB&lang=en
	[18a]	World Health Organisation (WHO), Mental Health Atlas 2005, Country Profiles: Albania http://www.who.int/mental_health/evidence/atlas/profiles_countries_a_b.pdf
	[18b]	World Health Organisation (WHO), Country Profile: Albania (accessed on 23 March 2007) http://www.who.int/countries/alb/en/
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	[8c]	Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Response to Information Requests, Conditions of military and alternative service, 22 September 2006 http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/index_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&gotorec=450549

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	[14a]	War Resisters' International (WRI), Albania: Refusing to Bear Arms, 2005 http://www.wri-irg.org/co/rtba/albania.htm
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