



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)
LEGAL AID BOARD

Albania - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 14 June 2013

Q16810 - Information on children in isolation because of blood feuds.

A document published by the *United Nations Human Rights Council* in April 2013 notes that:

“At present, blood feuds and related killings appear to still occur in Albania and constitute an issue of concern. The lack of comprehensive and fully reliable statistical data renders it difficult to refer to concrete figures of the current scope of the phenomenon and analyse its dynamics. In parallel, information received from various sources confirms that such killings still affect the population in some parts of the country, in particular in the northern areas of Albania. Some families still opt for self-isolation due to fear of reprisal.” (United Nations Human Rights Council (23 April 2013) *Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Christof Heyns Addendum, Follow-up to country recommendations: Albania*, pp.5-6)

This report also states:

“...of early April 2013, there were 67 self-isolated families due to blood feuds, and 33 children not attending school for the same reason. Of those children, 23 were registered in the region of Shkodra, in northern Albania.” (ibid, p.6)

In April 2013 a publication released by *Balkan Insight* notes that:

“Local media and non-governmental organizations refer to dozens of blood-feud killings per year and to hundreds of children living in isolation as a consequence.” (Balkan Insight (3 April 2013) *Blood Feuds Still Blight Albanian Lives, Report Says*)

This report also points out:

“In total, 69 families live currently isolated in their homes, the majority in the northern region of Shkoder. In these families 33 children cannot attend school because of fear of reprisal from the feuding family.” (ibid)

A news story published in March 2013 by *USA Today* notes:

“The Interior Ministry says 67 families, accounting for 155 people, are currently living in hiding across the country. Charities say the actual number is closer 6,000 people, including hundreds of women and children living in isolation in this country of 3.2 million.” (USA Today (2 March 2013) *Albanian blood feud kids must hide or risk lives*)

In January 2013 the *MailOnline* states:

“An estimated 900 children must hide indoors to avoid being slaughtered under the ancient Balkan code of practise known as Kanun.” (MailOnline (26 January 2013))

Three brothers aged 12, nine and seven have NEVER been outside their home because they are caught in a bitter family blood feud)

In October 2012 a report issued by the *United Nation Committee on the Rights of the Child* states:

“The Committee is deeply concerned about the persistence of “blood feuds” resulting from the application of customary law known as “Kanun” and in particular the killing of children and the confinement of a large number of children for fear of being killed, especially in the northern areas of the State party.” (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (5 October 2012) *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 44 of the Convention*, p.7)

A report issued in February 2010 by the *United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights* notes:

“...there are deep discrepancies in the statistics concerning blood feuds and related killings. At one extreme, media reports have referred to hundreds of blood feud killings per year and thousands of children living in isolation. At the other extreme, according to Government statistics, such killings fell steadily from 45 in 1998, to one in 2009, while the number of isolated children ranges from 36-57 country-wide, of which 29-45 are in Shkodra. The variation depended on whether the sources were police, education, or ministry officials. Families in isolation were estimated to be 124-133 country-wide.” (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (23 February 2010) *UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions, Mr Philip Alston Mission to Albania*)

In October 2011 a report published in the *South East Times* states:

“Due to ongoing vendettas, hundreds of children are forced to stay at home, or to hide with their families, and are unable to attend school.” (South East Times (13 October 2011) *Blood feuds keep hundreds of children from school in Albania*)

In November 2008 *BBC News* points out that:

“Hundreds of children across Albania are living virtually imprisoned in their homes - for fear of being killed in blood feuds under the country's ancient vendetta code...” (BBC News (18 November 2008) *Albania's young blood feud 'hostages'*)

A *New York Times* article published in July 2008 states:

“The National Reconciliation Committee, an Albanian nonprofit organization that works to eliminate the practice of blood feuds, estimates that 20,000 people have been ensnared by blood feuds since they resurfaced after the collapse of Communism in the country in 1991. Since that time, 9,500 people have been killed and nearly 1,000 children deprived of schooling because they have been locked indoors.” (New York Times (10 July 2008) *Tenacious custom of feuding isolates Albanian families*)

References

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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