

ADVANCE QUESTIONS TO ALBANIA

GERMANY

- Serious concerns have been expressed regarding numerous reports of ill-treatment and excessive use of force by law enforcement officials. In line with this, the HR Committee and CRC were concerned at allegations of excessive use of force by law enforcement officials, ill-treatment of detainees in police custody and the use of torture to extract confessions from suspects (para. 29 of the OHCHR compilation A/HRC/WG.6/6/ALB/2, referencing CCPR/CO/82/ALB, para. 13 and CRC/C/15/Add. 249, para. 40). The Federal Republic of Germany would be interested in how Albania is addressing the above concerns.
- Various reports have noted that there is a serious issue regarding the respect for freedom of expression. The HR Committee and the Special Representative on human rights defenders shared these concerns, in particular with regard to “instances of harassment and physical violence against journalists as well as about threats of defamation suits against them” (para. 43 of the OHCHR compilation A/HRC/WG.6/6/ALB/2, referencing E/CN.4/2006/95/Add.5, para. 43, and CCPR/CO/82/ALB, para. 19).
What legislative and other necessary measures is the Albanian government taking in order to achieve true respect for the freedom of expression?

SWEDEN

- In its national UPR report, Albania outlined measures it has taken to ensure gender equality, including through its “National Strategy for Gender Equality and Domestic Violence” covering 2007-2010. At the same time, the Human Rights Committee, the Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and The Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination of Women have all expressed their concern over the continued discrimination of women under Albanian customary law and traditional social codes. As acknowledged by Albania in its UPR report, women’s participation in the work force is low. Furthermore, there are credible reports that violence against women, including domestic violence, is a widespread problem that is often neither reported nor prosecuted, particularly in rural areas. So-called family voting is reported to challenge individual women’s right to vote and female participation in public affairs is generally limited.
- Could Albania please elaborate on the measures it is taking against the discrimination of women, to facilitate women’s participation in public affairs and the labor market, and to reduce violence against women?
- Freedom of expression and of the press is guaranteed by the Albanian constitution as well as by international instruments to which Albania is party, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. While there is a general level of respect for these rights, civil society organizations have reported instances of state agents exerting indirect pressure on media institutions. On several occasions, government officials have directed verbal accusations against

media outlets who have reported allegations of wrongdoing by state agents, including by way of accusations of ties to organized crime and of having compromising personal financial interests. Many journalists have complained that overall political pressure and other circumstances continue to hinder their ability to work freely.

- Could the government of Albania elaborate on the measures it has taken to ensure full respect for freedom of expression and of the press and to prevent acts of intimidation against media institutions as well as to ensure that perpetrators of such acts are brought to justice?

UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

- The UK is pleased to note a good range of legislation on key Human Right issues in the Albanian legal framework. In line with observations from international bodies, we would be interested to hear how the Albanian government plans to ensure that human rights legislation are implemented and enforced?
- Please could you elaborate on how Albania plans to address the reported physical attacks on journalists and more widely ensure that the appropriate legal framework is in place to enable the media to operate in a suitably protected way?
- We would be grateful for information on steps taken by the Government to tackle alleged cases of corruption and ensure prosecution, including in high profile cases.
- The UK welcomes the fact that, as described in paragraph 102 of Albania's National Report, there is strong framework in place for tackling trafficking in human beings, including the National Strategy for the Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings.
- We would appreciate further elaboration on the establishment and resourcing of fundamental elements of this framework such as ensuring that those responsible for trafficking are brought to justice and ensuring that there is a sufficient and robust witness protection scheme in place for victims of trafficking who give evidence against their traffickers in court.
- The UK welcomes the 30% quota introduced in Albania for female candidates prior to the June 2009 general election, and is pleased to note that, as a result of this, there has been a significant increase in the number of women MPs. We would welcome more information on further steps planned by the Albanian government designed to embed gender equality in Albania, especially with regard to tackling domestic violence?
- The UK welcomes the fact that, as stated in paragraph three of Albania's National Report, the draft report was "forwarded to non-governmental organisation representatives working on human rights protection and promotion with a view to taking their comments". We would be interested to hear what

feedback did you receive from these NGO representatives, and how did you incorporate this feedback into the final document?

- The UK supports the positive role of the Office of the People's Advocate (the Ombudsman). Please could you provide some specific examples of where the Albanian Government has acted on recommendations of the Ombudsman?
