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LEGAL AID BOARD

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Information on the Socialist Party of Albania

Under the heading 'Political Organizations: Socialist Party of Albania (SPA) (Partia Socialiste e Shqipërisë) (PSSH)' in the *Europa World Plus* entry for Albania, The Socialist Party is referred to as follows:

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Founded 1941 as Albanian Communist Party; renamed Party of Labour of Albania in 1948, adopted present name in 1991; now rejects Marxism-Leninism and claims commitment to democratic socialism and a market economy; contested 2009 legislative elections as mem. of Unification for Change. Chair. Edi Rama. Sec.-Gen. Andis Harasani. 110,000 mems" (*Europa World Plus* (02 October 2009) *Albania: Political Organizations: Socialist Party of Albania (SPA) (Partia Socialiste e Shqipërisë) (PSSH)*)

The July 2009 *Freedom House* Freedom in the World report for Albania states:

"From 1997 to 2005, Albania was ruled by the Socialist Party (PS). In the 2005 legislative elections, the opposition PD ultimately obtained 56 of 140 seats, with another 24 controlled by its allies. While the poll was not free from fraud, it was praised for bringing Albania's first post-communist rotation of power without significant violence." (*Freedom House* (16 July 2009) *Freedom in the World – Albania* (2009))

A June 2009 *World Press* news article reports:

"The Parliamentary Elections of June 28 will decide much about the future of Albania. The Democratic Party and the Socialist Party will seek to win the majority of the electorate votes. The new electoral system adopted in December 2008 will make it difficult for a single Party to form the government. The small parties like L.S.I. or the newly-formed G99 will decide who will create the government. Those are both Left Parties but their willingness to collaborate with

the Socialist Party if it wins the election will depend on the offers they'll receive to be part of the government. The pre-election polls conducted by Zogby International and the "Gani Bobi" Institute in Pristina show the results being very close. The final result will depend on how the undecided electorate will vote." (World Press (1 June 2009) *The Pros and Cons of the Albanian Parliamentary Elections*)

Under the heading 'Government', the June 2009 *US Department of State* background Note for Albania states:

"Type: Parliamentary democracy.
Constitution: Adopted by popular referendum November 28, 1998.
Independence: November 28, 1912 (from the Ottoman Empire).
Branches: Executive--President (chief of state), Prime Minister (head of government), Council of Ministers (cabinet). Legislative--140-seat unicameral People's Assembly or Kuvendi Popullor (100 members elected by direct popular vote; 40 by proportional vote; all serve 4-year terms). Judicial--Constitutional Court, High Court, multiple district and appeals courts.
Suffrage: Universal at age 18.
Main political parties: Democratic Party of Albania (DP); Albanian Socialist Party (SP); Socialist Movement for Integration (LSI); Albanian Republican Party (PR); Demo-Christian Party (PDK); Union for Human Rights Party (PBDNJ); New Democracy Party (PDR); Social Democratic Party (PSD); Social Democracy Party (PDS)." (US Department of State (June 2009) *Background Note: Albania*)

A May 2009 *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* news report states:

"TIRANA (Reuters) – Gunmen have shot and killed an Albanian opposition Socialist Party lawmaker, police said, as the west Balkan country prepares to hold elections seen as crucial in its bid for European Union accession.

The killing of Fatmir Xhindi, 49, is likely to heighten tension ahead of the June 28 general elections, which pit the ruling Democratic Party of Prime Minister Sali Berisha against the main opposition Socialist Party led by Edi Rama." (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (3 May 2009) *Gunmen kill Albanian opposition MP ahead of polls*)

The 'Politics' section of The *UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office* Country Profile for Albania, under the heading 'Government: Opposition', states:

"Opposition:
Socialist Party (SP)
Social Movement for Integration (SMI)
Social Democratic Party (SDP)
Democratic Alliance Party (DAP)
Social Democracy Party (SDY).

The Socialist Party emerged in 1991 as the successor party to the communist Albanian Workers Party, initially sharing power with the DP but went into opposition between 1991 and 1997. Following the 1997 parliamentary elections, the SP returned to power and governed until 2005. The party has been divided between the old-guard factions of the former communists and the reformist social-democratic members who have little connection with the party's communist heritage. Some of this latter group split from the SP in 2004 and formed the Social Movement for Integration (SMI) under former Prime Minister Ilir Meta.

The splitting of the left-wing vote and allegations of corruption were some of the reasons that led to the SP losing power in the July 2005 elections. It won only 42 seats and is now in opposition.

The SP defines itself as a social democratic party. As in 2003, the SP fought the election on what it regarded as its successes in government. It is pro-EU and NATO and seeks to 'bring Albanians closer to Europe'. Its election campaign focused on five areas: education, health, the economy, social services and infrastructure." (UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office (16 March 2009) *Country Profile: Albania*)

References:

Europa World Plus (1 October 2009) *Albania: Political Organizations: Socialist Party of Albania (SPA) (Partia Socialiste e Shqipërisë*
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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.

Sources Consulted

Amnesty International

BBC News

European Country of Origin Information Network

Freedom House

Human Rights Watch

International Crisis Group

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

IRIN News

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Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database

UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office

UK Home Office

UNHCR Refworld

US Department of State

World Press