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Albania - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Tuesday 29 November 2017

Information on blood feuds including: recent incidents; available state protection; &

In November 2016 the *European Asylum Support Office* notes that:

“Successive Albanian governments have taken measures to eliminate blood feuds and revenge killings” (European Asylum Support Office (November 2016) *EASO Country of Origin Information Report. Albania. Country Focus*, p.32).

In June 2017 the *Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons* states in a report that:

“The Vice-Minister of Internal Affairs declared to Cedoca that – generally speaking – the authorities are nowadays closely monitoring the known cases of contemporary blood feuds and that the phenomenon is largely under control” (Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (29 June 2017) *Blood Feuds in contemporary Albania: Characterisation, Prevalence and Response by the State*, p.32).

This report also points out that:

“During its fact-finding mission, Cedoca met two experts who expressed strong doubt that the police is capable of controlling, monitoring, preventing and prosecuting the contemporary blood feud phenomenon...However, multiple other non-governmental sources confirmed that the police forces have renewed and strengthened their attention to the phenomenon of contemporary blood feuds and have also acknowledged its effectiveness and impact on the decrease of the phenomenon...” (ibid, p.33).

A report issued by *BBC News* in November 2017 states:

“Though they have a long history, blood feuds remain potent today, with 68 families in the Shkodra region of northern Albania currently unable to leave their homes because of them” (BBC News (12 November 2017) *The children trapped by Albania's blood feuds*).

No further information on this issue could be found among sources available to the RDC.

Information on the June 2013 elections including: bribery/vote rigging; stabbing of Bashota family

In June 2013 *Balkan Insight* states:

“There have been numerous reports of voters being offered money, goods and services in exchange for their votes in the June 23 parliamentary elections, a

watchdog says" (Balkan Insight (10 June 2013) *Vote-Buying 'Rampant' Ahead of Albania Poll*).

In September 2013 the *Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe* points out in a report that:

"The start of the election day was tarnished by isolated instances of violence, one of which ended tragically with the death from gunshot wounds of one party supporter and severe injuries to two others, including one candidate, outside a VC in Lac (Lezhe District). With these extremely regrettable exceptions, the election day generally took place in an orderly manner...Due to the changes in the composition of the VCCs right up until election day, those members of the VCCs who were nominated late had not been trained, which induced confusion and often tensions on election day, as the procedures were understood differently...According to the statistics of the OSCE/ODIHR, based on the observation of the more than 380 observers deployed, the opening was assessed positively in 84% of the VCs observed and negatively in 16%, which is significant. VCs were supposed to open at 7 a.m. but there were delays in opening in 72% of the VCs observed, due to lack of organisation, arguments over procedures, late arrival of VCC members or missing material such as ink or ballots" (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (2 September 2013) *Observation of the parliamentary elections in Albania (23 June 2013)*)

A report published in October 2013 by the *Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe* states that:

"The 23 June elections were competitive with active citizen participation throughout the campaign and genuine respect for fundamental freedoms. However, the atmosphere of distrust between the two main political forces tainted the electoral environment and challenged the administration of the entire electoral process" (Organization for Security and Co-Operation (16 October 2013) *Albania, Parliamentary Elections, 23 June 2013: Final Report*).

A report issued in October 2013 by the *European Commission* points out that:

"The tense and polarised political climate ahead of the June elections at times jeopardised the work of the election administration bodies. The elections themselves were competitive and conducted in an orderly manner overall. Voter turnout was 53.6%. Voting and counting proceeded well, with the exception of some isolated incidents and procedural irregularities which did not affect the generally smooth conduct of the elections. Overall, the elections marked tangible progress with respect to previous practice, therefore meeting the key priority on the conduct of elections" (European Commission (16 October 2013) *Albania 2013 Progress Report*).

In February 2014 the *United States Department of State* issued a report commenting on events of the preceding year including noting that:

"On June 23, the country held parliamentary elections that the OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission reported "were competitive with active citizen participation throughout the campaign and genuine respect for fundamental freedoms." The OSCE also noted, however, that "the atmosphere of distrust between the two main political forces tainted the electoral environment and challenged the administration of the entire electoral process." The observation mission also cited problems with procedural irregularities and instances of inappropriate overlap between state

institutions and party interests” (United States Department of State (27 February 2014) *2013 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Albania*).

A report published in March 2014 by the *Albanian Helsinki Committee* notes that:

“In the June 23 elections, we found visible improvements in terms of the quality of the voter lists, respect for voting as well as vote-counting procedures. The electoral administration generally demonstrated correct behavior, although there were also sporadic interferences with voters, which may be considered a violation of the freedom of vote” (Albanian Helsinki Committee (4 March 2014) *Report on the Situation of Respect for Human Rights in Albania 2013*).

A report issued in June 2014 by *Freedom House* states:

“Parliamentary elections on 23 June were the most orderly in postcommunist Albania's history, resulting in an unusually peaceful transfer of power” (Freedom House (12 June 2014) *Nations in Transit 2014: Albania*).

No further information on this issue could be found among sources available to the RDC.

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