



Albania – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 25 January 2018

Any COI on people being abused/persecuted in Albania because they have converted from the Moslem religion to Christianity.

Information on the treatment of people in Albania who convert from Islam to Christianity was not found among sources available to the Refugee Documentation Centre

The 2016 US Department of State report, in “Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom” states:

“The constitution prohibits religious discrimination and guarantees freedom of conscience, religion, and free expression. It states everyone is free to choose or change their religion or beliefs and to express them individually, collectively, in public, or in private. The constitution also states individuals may not be compelled to participate or excluded from participating in a religious community or its practices, nor may they be compelled to make their beliefs or faith public or be prohibited from doing so.” (US Department of State (15 August 2017) *2016 Report on International Religious Freedom – Albania*)

An article from Newsweek magazine states:

“Albania is unique – the only overwhelmingly Muslim country in the whole of Europe. But the paradox is that in the centre of the capital, Tirana, not a headscarf is to be seen, let alone a burqa. A Muslim city in purely numerical terms, it is a hard-line Muslim’s nightmare in most other senses. Women wear what they want and go and do as they please.” (Newsweek (31 March 2017) *‘A Hardliner’s Nightmare’: Religious Tolerance in Europe’s Only Majority-Muslim Country*)

A BBC travel report refers to religious tolerance in Albania as follows:

“Though the choice to convert may seem a surprising one to many, the reality is that Albania has long been regarded as a place of religious tolerance and harmony. The predominant religions are Islam and Christianity, with Muslims making up more than half the population. Still, there remains a common unity between the people of the country. Churches and mosques often occupy the same streets, and interfaith marriages are widely accepted within the culture.” (BBC News (3 November 2016) *The country that’s famous for tolerance*)

A 2012 Balkan Insight report states:

“A worldwide survey by the Pew Research Center finds Muslims in the Balkans are markedly less rigorous in their religious practices than their counterparts elsewhere. According to the survey less than half of the Muslims

surveyed in the Balkans see religion as central to their lives - and only 15 per cent of Albanian Muslims consider it as such. The survey, which involved more than 38,000 face-to-face interviews in over 80 languages, finds that while there is broad agreement on the core tenets of Islam, Muslims across the 39 countries and territories surveyed differ significantly in their levels of religious commitment, openness to multiple interpretations of their faith and acceptance of various sects and movements. Muslims in Eastern Europe also report lower levels of religious practice than Muslims in other regions. They also tend to be less observant than their counterparts in other regions when it comes to mosque attendance. Only three in ten Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina visit their local mosque once a week or more, for example.” (Balkan Insight (17 August 2012) *Survey Shows Balkans Muslims Remain Secular*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit 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.

References:

Balkan Insight (17 August 2012) *Survey Shows Balkans Muslims Remain Secular*

<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/balkans-muslims-more-secular-than-their-peers>

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BBC News (3 November 2016) *The country that's famous for tolerance*

<http://www.bbc.com/travel/story/20161024-the-worlds-most-tolerant-country>

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Sources Consulted:

BBC

European Country of Origin Information Network

Google

Lexis Nexis

Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database

UNHCR Refworld