



Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

Albania: Blood feuds

Version 5.0

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Preface

Purpose

This note provides country of origin information (COI) and analysis of COI for use by Home Office decision makers handling particular types of protection and human rights claims (as set out in the [Introduction](#) section). It is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of a particular subject or theme.

It is split into 2 parts: (1) an assessment of COI and other evidence; and (2) COI. These are explained in more detail below.

Assessment

This section analyses the evidence relevant to this note - that is information in the COI section; refugee/human rights laws and policies; and applicable caselaw - by describing this and its inter-relationships, and provides an assessment of, in general, whether one or more of the following applies:

- a person is reasonably likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm
- that the general humanitarian situation is so severe that there are substantial grounds for believing that there is a real risk of serious harm because conditions amount to inhuman or degrading treatment as within [paragraphs 339C and 339CA\(iii\) of the Immigration Rules](#) / Article 3 of the [European Convention on Human Rights \(ECHR\)](#)
- that the security situation is such that there are substantial grounds for believing there is a real risk of serious harm because there exists a serious and individual threat to a civilian's life or person by reason of indiscriminate violence in a situation of international or internal armed conflict as within [paragraphs 339C and 339CA\(iv\) of the Immigration Rules](#)
- a person is able to obtain protection from the state (or quasi state bodies)
- a person is reasonably able to relocate within a country or territory
- a claim is likely to justify granting asylum, humanitarian protection or other form of leave, and
- if a claim is refused, it is likely or unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

Decision makers **must**, however, still consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case's specific facts.

Country of origin information

The country information in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2013. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

The structure and content of the country information section follows a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to this note.

All information included in the note was published or made publicly available on or before the 'cut-off' date(s) in the country information section. Any event taking place or report/article published after these date(s) is not included.

All information is publicly accessible or can be made publicly available. Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources.

Multiple sourcing is used to ensure that the information is accurate and balanced, which is compared and contrasted where appropriate so that a comprehensive and up-to-date picture is provided of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote. Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the bibliography.

Feedback

Our goal is to provide accurate, reliable and up-to-date COI and clear guidance. We welcome feedback on how to improve our products. If you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support him in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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Assessment

This section updated: 9 September 2022

1. Introduction

1.1 Basis of claim

1.1.1 Fear of persecution and/or serious harm by non-state actors because of the person's involvement in a blood feud.

1.2 Points to note

1.2.1 Where a claim falls to be refused, it must be considered for certification under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 as Albania is listed as a designated state.

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2. Consideration of issues

2.1 Credibility (incl. documentary evidence and ‘attestation letters’)

- 2.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 2.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 2.1.3 In cases where there are doubts surrounding a person’s claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).
- 2.1.4 When considering documentary evidence, the Upper Tribunal (UT), in the country guidance case of [EH \(Blood Feuds\) Albania CG \[2012\] UKUT 00348 \(IAC\) \(October 2012\)](#), heard on 7 December 2010 and 30 June and 27 September 2011, held that ‘Attestation letters from Albanian non-governmental organisations should not in general be regarded as reliable evidence of the existence of a feud’ [74(h)]; similarly that ‘Unless factual, prompt and consistent, Albanian press reports will add little or no evidential weight in considering whether a feud exists’ [74(j)].
- 2.1.5 Cedoca, the research unit of the Belgium Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, the Ministry of Interior, Albanian, and Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime, continued to support the above conclusions (see [Attestation letters](#)).
- 2.1.6 The UT also held that ‘Documents originating from the Albanian courts, police or prosecution service, if genuine, may assist in establishing the existence of a blood feud at the date of the document relied upon, subject to the test of reliability set out in [A v Secretary of State for the Home Department \(Pakistan\) \[2002\] UKIAT 00439, \[2002\] Imm A R 318 \(Tanveer Ahmed\)](#) [74(i)].’

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2.2 Exclusion

- 2.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons for considering whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses is applicable. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.
- 2.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
- 2.2.3 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

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2.3 Convention reason(s)

- 2.3.1 In [EH](#), the UT held that ‘members of families or clans are capable of constituting a particular social group’ [62].
- 2.3.2 Although victims of blood feuds potentially form a PSG, establishing such membership is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question is whether the particular person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of their membership of such a group.
- 2.3.3 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds see the Asylum Instruction, [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.4 Risk

- 2.4.1 Albania is listed as a designated state under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002. This means that, ‘there is, in general in that state or part of it no serious risk of persecution of persons entitled to reside in that state or part of it.’
- 2.4.2 The UT in [EH](#) set out the following factors which need to be considered when determining if an active blood feud exists:

- (i) the history of the alleged feud, including the notoriety of the original killings, the numbers killed, and the degree of commitment by the aggressor clan toward the prosecution of the feud;
 - (ii) the length of time since the last death and the relationship of the last person killed to the person;
 - (iii) the ability of members of the aggressor clan to locate the person if returned to another part of Albania; and
 - (iv) the past and likely future attitude of the police and other authorities towards the feud and the protection of the family of the person claiming to be at risk, including any past attempts to seek prosecution of members of the aggressor clan, or to seek protection from the Albanian authorities (paragraph 74(f)).
- 2.4.3 After having considered all the available evidence in the country guidance case of [EH](#), the UT found that whilst there remained a number of active blood feuds in Albania, they are few and declining (paragraph 74(a)).
- 2.4.4 That was also based on data from 2012 (and earlier – see Appendix A to D in the determination of [EH](#)). Although statistics for families affected by claimed blood feud vary, the most accurate number as of mid-2021 is anywhere between 75 and 156 families, depending on the source reporting it (though most sources acknowledge that figures produced by the Government are reflective of the situation) (see [Prevalence and location](#)).
- 2.4.5 This represents a continued decline, reflecting the conclusions of the Upper Tribunal in [EH](#). It should also be seen in the context of a population size of just under 3.1 million. Even if the highest reported figures of families affected by blood feud are considered, and, for example, that represented 1,000 people, this would only affect an estimated 0.03% of the population (see [Prevalence and location](#)).
- 2.4.6 There is no mention of blood feud in the last 2 annual reports (2018 and 2019) by the Albanian Helsinki Committee (AHC), the human rights reports for 2020 and 2021 by the US Department of State, the 2021 annual report by Amnesty International, any recent reporting by Human Rights Watch, or in the 2021 Report by the European Commission. While Freedom House stated in its last 3 Freedom in the World reports that tribal law is practiced in parts of northern Albania and sometimes involved revenge killings, it did not publish any specific data (see [Prevalence and location](#)).
- 2.4.7 Of the few, genuine active blood feuds in existence, according to the Government of Albania, most occur in the north of the country, in Shkodra (Shkoder), Lezha, Kukës, Durrës and Dibe (see [Prevalence and location](#)).
- 2.4.8 The UT in [EH](#) held that ‘In order to establish that there is an active blood feud affecting him [or her] personally, an appellant must produce satisfactory individual evidence of its existence in relation to him [or her]. In particular, the appellant must establish:
- (i) his or her profile as a potential target of the feud identified and which family carried out the most recent killing; and

- (ii) whether the person has been, or other members of his/her family have been, or are currently, in self-confinement within Albania (para 74(g)).

2.4.9 Decision makers must distinguish blood feud conflicts from other crimes. Some revenge murders are portrayed as blood feud killings when this is not the case, and criminals at times use the term to justify their crimes (see [Contemporary attitudes](#) and [Organised criminal groups](#)).

2.4.10 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.5 Protection

2.5.1 In general, the state is both willing and able to offer effective protection to persons affected by blood feud. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise, noting that:

- a. a person's reluctance to seek protection does not necessarily mean that effective protection is not available.
- b. it is not necessary to show that the state will eliminate all risk to the person and would thus amount to a guarantee of protection. Rather it is a practical standard, which takes proper account of the duty which the state owes to all its own nationals. It is enough to show that it is willing and able to take effective steps to prevent persecution or serious harm, and that the person is able to access the protection. For example, by operating an effective legal system for detection, prosecution and punishment of persecutory acts the state will be taking adequate steps to prevent persecution even if it cannot solve every crime or prevent every assault; and
- c. inefficiency and incompetence is not the same as unwillingness, unless it is extreme and widespread. There may be many reasons why criminals are not brought to justice including lack of admissible evidence even where the best endeavours are made; they are not always convicted because of the high standard of proof required, and the desire to protect the rights of accused persons. Moreover, the existence of some policemen who are corrupt or sympathetic to the criminals, or some judges who are weak in the control of the court or in sentencing, does not mean that the State is unwilling to afford protection. It will require cogent evidence that the State which is able to afford protection is unwilling to do so, especially in the case of a democracy.

2.5.2 Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.

2.5.3 The UT in [EH](#) noted that the Albanian state has taken steps to improve state protection but also held that, '... in areas where Kanun law predominates (particularly in northern Albania) those steps do not yet provide sufficiency of protection from Kanun-related blood-taking if an active feud exists and affects the individual claimant [74(c)].

2.5.4 However, that was based on the situation 10 years ago, in 2011/2012. There are considered to be 'very strong grounds supported by cogent evidence' to depart from this part of the caselaw.

2.5.5 In particular, since 2011/2012:

- a. Albania has undergone significant reform in preparation for accession to the EU. It achieved EU candidate status in 2014 and is further along in the process, with the EU commencing membership talks in July 2022.
- b. The UN Human Rights Council, in July 2019, and Global Initiatives in December 2021, noted that, whilst improvements are still required, the Government of Albania has made considerable progress in dealing with blood feud by developing an action plan to address the issue (see [Action and initiatives](#)).
- c. In 2013, the Albanian justice system developed grounds to prosecute the practice of Gjakmarrja through preventative sentencing (see [Legislation](#)).
- d. Since 2012, there have been a number of convictions under Article 78/a (Murder for blood feud) and Article 83/a (Serious threat to retaliation or blood revenge) of Criminal Code.
- e. There has also been an increase in the number of registered cases of murder for blood feud from 2017 to 2020, and of cases of involving “incitement to blood feud”. Although there have been fewer convictions and not all cases have made it to court, it must be noted that these could be for a range of reasons (see [Convictions for blood feud](#)).
- f. The General Directorate of State Police had compiled a database of all families affected by blood feud. Education (effectively via home schooling) is being provided to children who are affected by self-confinement.

2.5.6 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.6 Internal relocation

2.6.1 When considering internal relocation in [EH](#) (October 2012), the Upper Tribunal noted that Albania has a population of ‘... just over 3 million with a land mass of about 10,000 square miles, roughly 15 times the size of London, much of it mountains’ (paragraph 69).

2.6.2 The Upper Tribunal held that ‘Internal relocation to an area of Albania less dependent on the Kanun may provide sufficient protection, depending on the reach, influence, and commitment to prosecution of the feud by the aggressor clan (paragraph 74(c)).

2.6.3 The Kanun is less relevant to younger people, even in remote villages/the North.

2.6.4 The Upper Tribunal considered that:

‘Internal relocation will be effective to protect an appellant only where the risk does not extend beyond the appellant’s local area and he is unlikely to be traced in the rest of Albania by the aggressor clan. A crucial factor in establishing whether internal relocation is a real possibility is the geographical and political reach of the aggressor clan: where that clan has government connections, locally or more widely, the requirement to transfer

civil registration to a new area... would appear to obviate the possibility of “disappearing” in another part of the country, and would be likely to drive the male members of a victim clan to self-confinement in the home area as an alternative’ (paragraph 70).

- 2.6.5 While the onus is on the person to establish a well-founded fear of persecution or real risk of serious harm, decision makers must demonstrate that internal relocation is reasonable (or not unduly harsh) having regard to the individual circumstances of the person.
- 2.6.6 For further guidance on considering internal relocation and factors to be taken into account see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.7 Certification

- 2.7.1 Where a claim is refused, it must be considered for certification under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 as Albania is listed as a designated state.
- 2.7.2 Where a claim is refused, it is likely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 2.7.3 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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Country information

This section updated: 8 September 2022

3 Understanding blood feuds

3.1 Customary law – the Kanun

3.1.1 The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), formerly the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), published a report in November 2016, which stated ‘The blood-feud phenomenon in Albania dates back centuries to the customary law Kanun of Lek Dukagjin, a code regulating communal life as well as private matters. During the regime of Enver Hoxha, the blood feud was outlawed and harshly punished. However, the collapse of the regime in early 1990s, combined with the absence of a functioning state, especially in the remote northern areas, left space for the revival of revenge killings.’¹

3.1.2 Cedoca, the research unit of the Belgium Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, carried out a fact-finding mission to Albania from 13 March to 21 March 2017 to gather information from various sources on blood feud (Cedoca report 2017). The report noted that the customary law known as the Kanun:

‘... regulated the most essential aspects of social conduct within Albanian local communities: family, marriage, the rights of religious institutions, private property, credits and donations, work, claim for damages, justice, the role of the elderly, [and so on] ... the Kanun also regulated the resolution of conflicts and disputes either through violence (gjakmarrja [literally meaning ‘to take the blood’]) or through mediation (besa). The Kanun could be described as the penal law code, the civil law code and public law code all in one same code. Or, as a report by Operazione Colomba concluded: “The Kanun tradition represented the only form of social and legal control, given the absence of alternative normative systems.”’²

3.1.3 For more background information on the history of customary law and blood feud see the Cedoca report [‘Blood Feuds in contemporary Albania: Characterisation, Prevalence and Response by the State’](#), 29 June 2017, and the report by Operazione Colomba, [‘Descriptive Document on the Phenomenon of Hakmarrja and Gjakmarrja’](#), December 2017.

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3.2 Definition and reasons for blood feud

3.2.1 A UNHCR position paper of March 2006 stated:

‘[...] a blood feud involves the members of one family killing members of another family in retaliatory acts of vengeance which are carried out according to an ancient code of honour and behaviour. [...] Traditionally, it is only adult males who become targets of a blood feud, which can last for decades and can require the extinction of all male family members. More recently, there have been reports of women and children becoming targets in blood feuds. They may also be killed or injured in attacks on male family

¹ EUAA/EASO, [‘Albania Country Focus’](#) (section 5.3.3), November 2016

² Cedoca, [‘Blood Feuds in contemporary Albania...’](#) (page 4), 29 June 2017

members, while children can be kept at home for extended periods and prevented from attending school because the family fears they may be killed, attacked or kidnapped. Thus, while adult males are the primary target in a blood feud, other family members may also be at risk of death or lesser violations of their human rights.’³

3.2.2 Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime (hereafter referred to as Global Initiative), ‘an independent civil-society organization... with a globally dispersed Secretariat...’ whose ‘... network members include prominent law-enforcement, governance and development practitioners who are dedicated to seeking new and innovative strategies and responses to organized crime’⁴, reported on 11 December 2021 that:

‘In Albania, a blood feud is called *gjakmarrja*, which means “blood-taking” or “blood feud”. Revenge or vendetta, on the other hand, is called *hakmarrja*. The latter is the obligation to “take life to right an earlier wrong, to salvage honour”. The terms are used interchangeably and sometimes can be confusing, as in both cases the killing is made to restore justice and honour. The key difference, however, is that blood feud is a protracted series of family-based revenge killings that can last for generations, whereas a vendetta is retaliation for a killing – a tit-for-tat killing. The lines are blurred when a vendetta conducted for the sake of a family member triggers a blood feud.’⁵

3.2.3 The Cedoca report 2017 concluded that, ‘It seems that there is no general agreement about how to define blood feuds in contemporary Albania.’⁶

3.2.4 The UN Committee Against Torture (UNCAT) published a report dated 5 April 2022, submitted by the Government of Albania (received July 2021), citing amendments to law number 144 of the Criminal Code, dated 2 May 2013, which made a distinction between murder for revenge and murder due to blood feud in terms of penalties applied (see [Legal context](#))⁷.

See also [Law: increase in punishment for blood feud](#).

3.2.5 Blood feud reportedly occurred due to:

- Property and land disputes, including violation of property
- Human trafficking
- Honour
- Debt
- Kidnapping
- Rape

³ UNHCR, ‘[UNHCR position on claims for Refugee Status...](#)’ 17 March 2006

⁴ Global Initiative, ‘[Our story](#)’, no date

⁵ Global Initiative, ‘[Blood feuds in Albania exploited by criminal groups](#)’, 11 December 2021

⁶ Cedoca, ‘[Blood Feuds in contemporary Albania...](#)’ (page 14), 29 June 2017

⁷ UNCAT, ‘[Third periodic report submitted by Albania under article 19...](#)’ (para 190), 5 April 2022

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(this list is in no particular order and not exhaustive)

See also [Organised criminal groups](#).

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3.3 Contemporary attitudes

- 3.3.1 The Cedoca 2017 report, referencing their fact-finding mission and regarding modern attitudes towards the Kanun and blood feud, stated:

‘many sources indicated that contemporary Albanian society no longer legitimates or accepts blood feud murders as an integral social obligation under customary law... However – in spite of the general claims about a new, modern mentality that is no longer sustaining blood feuds – murders have still been committed in the 21st century whereby the Kanun was invoked. It seems that this phenomenon is the result of the perpetuation of a traditional mentality among some sections of Albanian society...’¹¹

- 3.3.2 The Cedoca 2017 report also noted that ‘Another possible characteristic of a contemporary blood feud case may be its coverage in the media. Many sources have claimed that the Albanian media tend to exaggerate the blood feud phenomenon. The Vice Minister of Internal Affairs even claimed that the press is sometimes involved in cases where people falsely claim to be involved in a blood feud. Mentor Kikia agreed that the media tend to exaggerate.’¹²

- 3.3.3 Sources cited in the Cedoca 2017 report indicated that the lines between blood feud, revenge killings (hakmarrja) and general criminality were often blurred and that crimes reportedly committed in the name of blood feud were not always related to the Kanun¹³.

- 3.3.4 The Cedoca 2017 report cited the Director General of the Albanian State Police who stated that cases of revenge, which are usually the result of crime and individual conflicts or disputes, can affect anyone and happen anywhere. Very often, such cases are mistakenly referred to as blood feuds¹⁴.

- 3.3.5 The same report added:

‘Mentor Kikia explained that with regard to contemporary blood feud in Albania, the Kanun “no longer makes the lines of conduct: If they would have respected the Kanun to the letter, there would have been less killings in the 1990s.” On the other hand, he acknowledged that Kanun-elements like “self-isolation” ... or the element of “negotiation” ... can sometimes still be observed in contemporary blood feuds.

‘Alfred Koçobashi stated that blood feud still occurs “when someone

⁸ Operazione Colomba, ‘[Descriptive Document on the Phenomenon...](#)’ (page 11), December 2017

⁹ The Balkanista, ‘[Blood feuds and honour, a tragic tale of Albanian tradition](#)’, 7 November 2020

¹⁰ Cedoca, ‘[Blood Feuds in contemporary Albania...](#)’ (pages 10 to 11), 29 June 2017

¹¹ Cedoca, ‘[Blood Feuds in contemporary Albania...](#)’ (page 7), 29 June 2017

¹² Cedoca, ‘[Blood Feuds in contemporary Albania...](#)’ (page 26), 29 June 2017

¹³ Cedoca, ‘[Blood Feuds in contemporary Albania...](#)’ (pages 11 to 13), 29 June 2017

¹⁴ Cedoca, ‘[Blood Feuds in contemporary Albania...](#)’ (page 12), 29 June 2017

innocent, a third party has to pay the price for the damage a family member has done, but he added that since the 1990s it is not about honour anymore. 80% is criminal and not related to customary law or medieval common law. It's about mafia-style killings. It's murder cases for other reasons than blood feud, just like they happen elsewhere. It's normal killings or vendetta killings.

'Elsa Ballauri from the Albanian Human Rights Group (AHRG) also referred to the transformation of blood feud: "blood feud has changed in the perspective of the so-called ancient codes." She pointed out that nowadays, people are killing even women and children for blood feud, which is not in accordance to the stipulations of the Kanun. "It's not real blood feud like it is written in the Kanun. It has transformed." She also declared: "It's more a justification nowadays because they are committing crimes and they say: 'I did it for blood feud'. But for me, none of the cases after the 1990s is a real blood feud case".'

'Also Rasim Gjoka from the Foundation for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation of Disputes (AFCR) explained that "in most of the cases that are referred to with the term blood feud, people use the term blood feud in order to justify their heavy crimes. It is not true blood feud. It's pure criminality"...'¹⁵

- 3.3.6 In November 2019, Operazione Colomba, noted that during monitoring visits, mainly in Shkodër area, '... the staff found that the conditions and the situations of many families have improved in several aspects in the last years: some families decide to abandon the purpose to avenge and to overcome the stalemate to which the perpetuation of this social plague had forced them to live.'¹⁶
- 3.3.7 Operazione Colomba announced in February 2020 that it was ending its presence in Albania¹⁷.

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This section updated: 8 September 2022

4 Legal context

- 4.1.1 The Albania Penal Code states under Article 78/a that murder committed due to blood feud shall be punished by not less than 30 years or life imprisonment. Under Article 83a, serious threat of retaliation or blood revenge against a person for him to be locked up at home, shall be punished by three years' imprisonment (See also [Self-isolation](#)). Under Article 83b, inciting other persons to retaliation or blood revenge, when it does not constitute other criminal offence, shall be punished by up to three years imprisonment¹⁸.
- 4.1.2 In its report of December 2021, Global Initiative referred to the punishments provided for under Articles 78a, 83a and 83b and stated that 'All of these legal amendments to the Criminal Code entered into force in 2013.'¹⁹

¹⁵ Cedoca, '[Blood Feuds in contemporary Albania...](#)' (pages 11 to 13), 29 June 2017

¹⁶ Operazione Colomba, '[Monthly report of activities in Albania – November 2019](#)', 12 December 2019

¹⁷ Operazione Colomba, '[Closure of Operazione Colomba's presence in Albania](#)', 14 February 2020

¹⁸ Euralius, '[Criminal Code of the Republic of Albania](#)', 27 January 1995

¹⁹ Global Initiative, '[Blood feuds in Albania exploited by criminal groups](#)', 11 December 2021

5 Contemporary blood feuds

5.1 Prevalence and location

5.1.1 Data on the number of blood feuds varies according to source.

5.1.2 According to the Cedoca 2017 report:

‘Apart from the figures published by the Committee of Nationwide Reconciliation (CNR) in 2016, which are significantly higher than all other figures, all other records show that the phenomenon is gradually decreasing. The Ombudsman says he trusts official figures rather than the NGOs’ or people’s general opinion. Alfred Kocobashi [Ombudsman representative in Shkoder] argued that “figures are very low compared to some NGO figures” because those NGOs “try to increase this number to gain money for their activities”.’²⁰

5.1.3 In the Cedoca 2017 report, a representative of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) speaking on the prevalence of blood feuds told Cedoca that they were still a problem: as long as a family member survives, some people will continue to hold on to a blood feud. He added that there were still victims who would seek justice. However, all Cedoca interlocutors agreed that the number of people affected by blood feuds was gradually decreasing²¹.

5.1.4 The UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) Compilation of UN information to the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, dated February 2019, noted, without providing any data, that ‘The United Nations country team stated that blood feud killings continued to occur in Albania.’²²

5.1.5 Global Initiative published a report on blood feuds in Albania on 11 December 2021 which stated that ‘Blood feud is still a phenomenon in Albania, albeit mainly limited to the north of the country... More detailed research is required to get a clear picture of the situation, and to be able to estimate the extent and the spillover effect to family members of the victims both in Albania and overseas.’²³

5.1.6 In its report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), received in November 2019 and published in February 2021, the Government of Albania indicated that the areas most affected by blood feud were Shkodra, Lezha, Kukes, Durres and Dibe²⁴.

5.1.7 The USSD reports for 2020 and 2021 did not mention blood feud or confinement as a result^{25 26}.

5.1.8 There was no mention of blood feud or of the authorities’ approach to this

²⁰ Cedoca, ‘[Blood Feuds in contemporary Albania...](#)’ (page 28), 29 June 2017

²¹ Cedoca, ‘[Blood Feuds in contemporary Albania...](#)’ (page 30), 29 June 2017

²² UNHRC, ‘[Compilation on Albania; Report of the Office of the United...](#)’ (para 12), 22 February 2019

²³ Global Initiative, ‘[Blood feuds in Albania exploited by criminal groups](#)’, 11 December 2021

²⁴ UNCRC, ‘[Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports submitted by...](#)’ (para 69), 15 February 2021

²⁵ USSD, ‘[2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Albania](#)’, 30 March 2021

²⁶ USSD, ‘[2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Albania](#)’, 12 April 2022

phenomenon in the last 2 annual reports (2018 and 2019) by the Albanian Helsinki Committee (AHC)²⁷, by Amnesty International (2021 annual report)²⁸, or in the European Commission's (EC) 2021 Report²⁹.

- 5.1.9 Freedom House noted in its Freedom in the World Report 2022, covering 2021 events, that 'Tribal law is practiced in parts of northern Albania, and sometimes involves revenge killings.'³⁰ Previous Freedom House reports, also mentioned this phenomenon³¹ ³². However, none of the reports published any specific data.
- 5.1.10 Global Initiative noted that 'According to a report from 2018, the problem [of blood feud] is mostly concentrated in the Shkodra [Shkoder] district in northern Albania.'³³
- 5.1.11 In a December 2021 report, Global Initiative cited an interview with a local journalist who believed that there were 156 families in blood feud in the district of Shkodra, out of which around 102 families were isolated and around 54 families had emigrated to Europe (mostly to Italy, Belgium and France and only 4 families in UK). The journalist stated that this data was last updated in August 2021³⁴.
- 5.1.12 In its 11 December 2021 report, Global Initiative cited data provided by an NGO working with affected families in Shkodra. The data indicated that, at a national level as of 2018, '... 704 families are engaged in blood feud, 113 of which have moved abroad.' The report showed the number of families affected by blood feud at the national level, 2018³⁵:

	Tirana	Durres	Lezhe	Diber	Kukes	Shkoder	Total
Families in blood feud	68	86	105	89	87	156	591
Isolated	5	6	6	0	3	17	37
Families overseas	8	6	33	3	16	47	113

- 5.1.13 Global Initiative commented that 'The high number of families in areas where blood feud is not culturally entrenched ([such as] in Tirana and Durres) can be explained by the fact that families have moved to these areas from the north of the country, bringing the feuds with them.'³⁶
- 5.1.14 In its report to the UNCAT, the Government of Albania stated:
'From General Directorate of the State Police, a database is created for registering of all families affected by Phenomena of blood feud as well as Standard Procedures of Work have been drafted "On evidencing and

²⁷ AHC, '[REPORTS - Komiteti Shqiptar i Helsinkit](#)', 2018 and 2019

²⁸ Amnesty International, '[Albania 2021](#)', 29 March 2022

²⁹ EC, '[Albania Report 2021](#)', 19 October 2021

³⁰ Freedom House, '[Albania: Freedom in the World 2022](#)' (section F3), 24 February 2022

³¹ Freedom House, '[Albania: Freedom in the World 2021](#)' (section F3), 3 March 2021

³² Freedom House, '[Albania: Freedom in the World 2020](#)' (section F3), 4 March 2020

³³ Global Initiative, '[Blood feuds in Albania exploited by criminal groups](#)', 11 December 2021

³⁴ Global Initiative, 'Blood feuds in Albania', 13 December 2021

³⁵ Global Initiative, '[Blood feuds in Albania exploited by criminal groups](#)', 11 December 2021

³⁶ Global Initiative, '[Blood feuds in Albania exploited by criminal groups](#)', 11 December 2021

registering on the database the persons involved in criminal offenses with the motive of blood feud”. Referring to the data administered by the structures of the State Police, it results that in our country there are 75 families with 159 persons confined (self-deprived of freedom), from which 25 are children.’³⁷

See also [Self-isolation](#).

- 5.1.15 The table below compiles the most recent data (from sources identified by CPIT) on families affected by blood feud in Albania:

Source and date	NGO (2018) ³⁸	State Police (as of July 2021) ³⁹	Journalist (as of August 2021) ⁴⁰
Families affected	591	75	156

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5.2 Self-isolation

- 5.2.1 ‘Isolated’ families are those who self-confine themselves to their homes and cut themselves off from the rest of their community because of fear of reprisals^{41 42}.
- 5.2.2 Global Initiative cited an NGO, who indicated that 37 families were isolated in the district of Shkodra as of 2018⁴³. According to a local journalist, 102 families were isolated in the same district, as of August 2021⁴⁴. In its report to the UNCAT (received July 2021), the Government of Albania noted that 75 families were confined to their homes due to blood feud⁴⁵.
- 5.2.3 Children confined at home were offered home-schooling^{46 47}.
- 5.2.4 The USSD’s human rights report for 2019 stated that some children, particularly in Shkoder, were confined to their homes in fear of revenge attacks due to their families’ involvement in blood feuds⁴⁸.

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5.3 Number of blood feud murders

- 5.3.1 Based on press reports, Operazione Colomba stated that there were 5 murders due to blood feud in 2018 – 2 of the murders occurred in Tirana, one in Burrel and one in Shkodër. One also occurred in Spain⁴⁹. Cases of revenge murder (hakmarrje) in 2018 were far higher – Operazione Colomba

³⁷ UNCAT, [‘Third periodic report submitted by Albania under article 19’](#) (para 194), 5 April 2022

³⁸ Global Initiative, [‘Blood feuds in Albania exploited by criminal groups’](#), 11 December 2021

³⁹ UNCAT, [‘Third periodic report submitted by Albania under article 19’](#) (para 194), 5 April 2022

⁴⁰ Global Initiative, ‘Blood feuds in Albania’, 13 December 2021

⁴¹ Global Initiative, ‘Blood feuds in Albania’, 13 December 2021

⁴² Cedoca, [‘Blood Feuds in contemporary Albania...’](#) (page 15), 29 June 2017

⁴³ Global Initiative, [‘Blood feuds in Albania exploited by criminal groups’](#), 11 December 2021

⁴⁴ Global Initiative, ‘Blood feuds in Albania’, 13 December 2021

⁴⁵ UNCAT, [‘Third periodic report submitted by Albania under article 19’](#) (para 194), 5 April 2022

⁴⁶ UNCRRC, [‘Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports submitted by...’](#) (para 68), 15 February 2021

⁴⁷ Global Initiative, [‘Blood feuds in Albania exploited by criminal groups’](#), 11 December 2021

⁴⁸ USSD, [‘2019 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Albania’](#) (section 6), 11 March 2020

⁴⁹ Operazione Colomba, [‘Blood feuds in 2018 – numbers from the press’](#), 4 March 2019

recorded 132 cases which occurred across the country⁵⁰.

5.3.2 Operazione Colomba published monthly reviews of media reports on cases of revenge and blood feuds and recorded 5 murders cited as blood feud during 2019, one each in January, February, March, August and October⁵¹. Operazione Colomba announced in February 2020 that it was ending its presence in Albania⁵².

5.3.3 In its report to the UNCAT⁵³, the Government of Albania recorded the number of cases of 'blood feud murder', between 2012 and 2020, as per Article 78a of the Criminal Code:

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Cases	7	3	4	0	1	1	1	0	1

5.3.4 In its report to the UNCRC, which was received in November 2019, the Government of Albania referred to criminal proceedings in relation to blood feud and stated that 'Since 2012, 41 suspects have been found guilty of murder for blood feud (39 suspects were acquitted) ...'⁵⁴

5.3.5 The US Department of State (USSD) noted in its human rights report covering 2017 events that there were murders and revenge killings in 2017 that may have been related to blood feuds. Until August 2017, however, the authorities had reported only one case of murder due to a blood feud⁵⁵.

See also [Convictions for blood feud](#).

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5.4 Organised criminal groups

5.4.1 In its report of 11 December 2021, Global Initiative stated:

'Today, the idea of a blood feud is part of the fear factor of Albanian criminal groups. It helps their image to be seen as potential dispensers of violence – hunting down their opponents and taking revenge. It also puts a gloss of customary or traditional norms on their violent behaviour. That said, criminal groups do not tend to recruit people connected to families involved in blood feuds since they do not want to be drawn into these protracted disputes. They are also wary of taking on powerful families in areas of the north of Albania because of the risk of triggering a blood feud: it's bad for business.

'However, recent research has shown that sometimes criminal groups apply their own version of a blood feud. According to the Kanun, you cannot take revenge for a family member who is killed while committing an immoral act ([for example] while stealing property). However, organized crime sometimes misuses the Kanun to exact revenge: there have been cases when an organized crime group is unable to find an opponent and instead kills one of the person's family members, justifying it as blood feud. In this situation, the family members of the victim often go into hiding or emigrate in fear of

⁵⁰ Operazione Colomba, '[Blood feuds in 2018 – numbers from the press](#)', 4 March 2019

⁵¹ Operazione Colomba, '[Monthly report Archivi - A Crowd Against Blood Feuds](#)', Jan to Dec 2019

⁵² Operazione Colomba, '[Closure of Operazione Colomba's presence in Albania](#)', 14 February 2020

⁵³ UNCAT, '[Third periodic report submitted by Albania under article 19](#)' (para 194), 5 April 2022

⁵⁴ UNCRC, '[Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports submitted by...](#)' (para 66), 15 February 2021

⁵⁵ USSD, '[2017 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Albania](#)' (section 6), 20 April 2018

further retaliation from the organized crime group.’⁵⁶

- 5.4.2 Global Initiative provided an example of how a revenge killing might become a blood feud:

‘... in the turf war between two powerful organized crime groups in the city of Shkodra, leaders of criminal group A killed a key member of criminal group B. In retaliation, the leaders of criminal group B, when they were unable to locate members of criminal group A, instead killed the father and uncle of one of the key members of that group. Now, that person considers the murder of his family members as a blood feud and will therefore try to kill family members of the leaders of criminal group B. In other words, even if the criminal groups could end the conflict between them, the cycle of violence will continue. As a result, what started as a revenge killing related to a criminal act (which may have been falsely depicted as a blood feud) has become a real blood feud.’⁵⁷

- 5.4.3 See [Emigration](#) for information about whether criminal gangs pursue blood feuds abroad.

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5.5 Impact on women

- 5.5.1 The Cedoca report 2017 stated:

‘Although they are not supposed to be targeted according to the Kanun, women and girls have become victims of contemporary blood feuds. According to the Shkodër Regional Police Directorate, these have mostly been cases of collateral damage. But women can also be perpetrators of blood feud crimes. Statistics from the Ministry of Justice show that 7 women have been sentenced for blood feud murders between 2005 and 2015, whereas for the same period 128 men were sentenced for the same offences.

‘Apart from their direct involvement as a victim or a perpetrator, a recurring characteristic aspect of contemporary blood feuds is that women in the affected families easily find themselves in a vulnerable position and are subjected to domestic violence. According to the AIPA report... “these women live under the pressure of psychological, physical and sexual violence of males”, but they do not denounce them because they “justify this violence as a result of their husbands’ or sons’ circumstances”.

‘According to Mentor Kikia, the Albanian police has become more accessible and helpful to women over the last few years.’⁵⁸

- 5.5.2 Further information about improved police attitudes towards women is available in the Cedoca report⁵⁹. See also [NGO support](#).

- 5.5.3 According to the Government of Albania, in its report to the UN CEDAW, dated 25 February 2022, ‘Women do not have to be housebound but they have to cope with the repercussions of their male family members having to

⁵⁶ Global Initiative, [‘Blood feuds in Albania exploited by criminal groups’](#), 11 December 2021

⁵⁷ Global Initiative, [‘Blood feuds in Albania exploited by criminal groups’](#), 11 December 2021

⁵⁸ Cedoca, [‘Blood Feuds in contemporary Albania...’](#) (page 24), 29 June 2017

⁵⁹ Cedoca, [‘Blood Feuds in contemporary Albania...’](#) (pages 24 to 25), 29 June 2017

be housebound due to blood feuds.⁶⁰

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This section updated: 8 September 2022

6 Police

6.1 Action and initiatives

6.1.1 The Government of Albania stated in its February 2019 report to the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, published by the UNHRC that:

‘Significant efforts have been made in recent years to address the issue of blood feud. The Criminal Code, criminalising and strengthening sentences for the crimes of murder for blood feud, of serious threats of revenge for blood feud, threats against a person to be confined at home and incitement to blood feud. In March 2015, Parliament approved a resolution urging the Coordinating Council for the Fight against Blood Feud to take measures to prevent the phenomenon in Albania. The Headquarters against Crime with Motives of Revenge and Blood Feud was established at General Directorate of State Police (GDPS) and is responsible for guiding, overseeing and coordinating the work of subordinate structures in this field.’⁶¹

6.1.2 The UNHRC’s report and recommendations of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, dated 3 July 2019, noted that ‘Several measures had been taken against the phenomenon of “blood feud”. The General Directorate of State Police had compiled a database of all families affected by blood feud. In 2018, Albania had adopted an action plan on the prevention, detection, documentation and fight against criminal acts committed for motives of blood feud and vengeance.’⁶²

6.1.3 In its report to the UN CEDAW, the Government of Albania noted that ‘DG State Police have drafted and approved Action Plan 2057/2018 to help prevent, detect, document and fight criminal offences committed in the context of blood feuds. A task force has been established for the purpose of leading and coordinating the activities of subordinate structures in the fight against this phenomenon.’⁶³

6.1.4 The report explained the objective of the Action Plan, stating:

‘The objective of this Action Plan is to counter the phenomenon of blood feud and revenge in close cooperation with local government and non-profit organizations on resolution of conflicts by reconciliation; to enhance cooperation with the prosecution in order to conduct quick investigation against such criminal offences and to bring the offenders before justice; to organize comprehensive measures to apprehend the offenders of murders in general and blood feud in particular as a major preventive measure against blood feud; to enhance cooperation with Directorates of Education and schools in order to educate the young generation with the spirit of tolerance

⁶⁰ UN CEDAW, [‘Fifth periodic report submitted by Albania...’](#) (para 233), 25 February 2022

⁶¹ UNHRC, [‘National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 5...’](#) (para 69), 22 February 2019

⁶² UNHRC, [‘Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review...’](#) (para 52), 3 July 2019

⁶³ UN CEDAW, [‘Fifth periodic report submitted by Albania...’](#) (para 232), 25 February 2022

and crime prevention.⁶⁴

6.1.5 The UNHRC Compilation of UN information to the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, dated February 2019, stated ‘While noting the action plan adopted in 2014 by the General Police Directorate to prevent, discover, document and fight the criminal activity based on blood feuds, [the UN country team] stated that there was insufficient coordination between the State police and the Public Prosecution Office, and court sentences for perpetrators remained light.’⁶⁵

6.1.6 In its 11 December 2021 report, Global Initiative also cited the action plan, noting that:

‘Some of the action points called for the state police to collect evidence on families engaged in blood feud, monitor the affected families and update the database of ongoing cases. Moreover, all children affected by blood feud were to be provided with education at home. In addition, the Parliament adopted a resolution in 2015 to prevent the phenomenon of blood feuds in Albania. However, the Ombudsman reported later that year that after the resolution, “no concrete solution has been made by state institutions to implement the tasks set by the Parliament to prevent this phenomenon and to issue bylaws”. In its 2018 progress report, the EU noted that “the resolution and recommendations on blood feuds still require follow-up”.’⁶⁶

6.1.7 The Government of Albania stated in its report to the UNCRC that ‘In 2014, Instruction No.36 “On Procedures for the Education of Confined Children” was adopted, by developing a curriculum and special subject programmes for the education of confined children. Since the academic year 2013–2014, 39 children have received basic education at home (with three in 2016–2017).’⁶⁷

6.1.8 The commissioned report by Global Initiative drew on information from 8 ‘expert interviewees’, including a prosecutor, an activist, an investigative journalist and representatives of 2 NGOs dealing with blood feud for more than fifteen years (in addition to the review of data from a report published in 2018 by the NGO ‘Centre for New Generation’). The report stated:

‘Our interviewees confirmed that the steps taken by the government since 2015 are insufficient to address blood feuds. Greater action is needed, for example, to strengthen measures against judicial corruption and corruption of public officials because corrupt judges may refrain from imposing the proper sentencing for blood feud murders. Furthermore, while the justice reform is having some positive effects, there is still room for improvement when it comes to dealing with blood feuds. For example, interviewees suggested that the justice reform should be thorough to strengthen the rule of law and more should be done to improve economic and education status of families in blood feud, especially given that beyond monitoring and some home schooling, the action plan seems to be having little effect. According to all interviewees, the economic and social status of affected families

⁶⁴ UN CEDAW, ‘[Fifth periodic report submitted by Albania...](#)’ (footnote 74), 25 February 2022

⁶⁵ UNHRC, ‘[Compilation on Albania; Report of the Office of the United...](#)’ (para 12), 22 February 2019

⁶⁶ Global Initiative, ‘[Blood feuds in Albania exploited by criminal groups](#)’, 11 December 2021

⁶⁷ UNCRC, ‘[Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports submitted by...](#)’ (para 68), 15 February 2021

continues to be poor and most of them are looking to emigrate overseas.’⁶⁸

- 6.1.9 In its report to the UNCAT, the Government of Albania stated that ‘From the structures of the State Police during the period 2013–2020, awareness meetings are organized continually for the phenomena of blood feud, with the participation of representatives of the local authorities and different NPO [non-profit organisations].’⁶⁹

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6.2 Protection

- 6.2.1 The Cedoca report 2017 noted 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: Operazione Colomba and Elsa Ballauri. Although they agreed that the police is accessible nowadays and that the police is “at least” hearing the citizens and that they are taking complaints now, they stressed that there are still very important issues of negligence and ineffectiveness at the heart of the police forces. They claimed that the police could do their investigation work much better. ‘Sometimes the suspects in a contemporary blood feud case are arrested immediately after an incident but what follows is a deficient investigation and the suspects are released again.’

‘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.’⁷⁰

- 6.2.2 The same report noted that:

‘Interventions by the authorities (police and Prosecutor’s Office) have become another possible characteristic of contemporary blood feuds. All the consulted experts agreed that the police forces nowadays try to intervene in blood feud situations and that police interventions can be of various kinds... A representative at the Shkodër Regional Police Directorate declared that his police officers try to supervise the confined families in his district, “by regularly contacting them, by patrolling in the proximity of their houses. Local police officers are tasked to stay near the affected families and to stay in contact with them.” With regard to the affected families in his area who are not living in confinement he declared: “we are trying to communicate, mitigate, mediate, negotiate and soothe down.” This source declared that “all the affected families know neighbourhood police officers. They have their phone numbers and general emergency numbers.”

‘Mentor Kikia confirmed that police officers have visited many families in order to identify those who are still affected by blood feud. He also confirmed that many affected families have been provided with the necessary contact details in case they felt an immediate danger. Besides he stated that a lot of

⁶⁸ Global Initiative, ‘Blood feuds in Albania’, 13 December 2021

⁶⁹ UNCAT, ‘[Third periodic report submitted by Albania under article 19](#)’ (para 193), 5 April 2022

⁷⁰ Cedoca, ‘[Blood Feuds in contemporary Albania...](#)’ (page 33), 29 June 2017

people have been arrested after the amendments in the penal code...

‘Even though there are various ways to file a complaint (in the office, by telephone, by e-mail or through a mobile phone application), many experts confirmed that people do not easily go to the police or to the prosecutor to denounce or to report a contemporary blood feud case...’⁷¹

6.2.3 In the commissioned report of December 2021, Global Initiative noted:

‘The state will provide protection to those who report that they feel under threat by monitoring them and/or by arresting those who threaten the victims of a blood feud. However, according to the rules of blood feud, families will lock down immediately when threatened (since inside the home is considered the only safe space) and are often unwilling to report this to the police since in communities where honour is an important part of the moral code, going to the police is considered weak and embarrassing.’⁷²

6.2.4 The report further stated that ‘Current regulations are insufficient to uproot the phenomenon. While protection is provided to the victims, trust in the justice system is low which impedes the necessary cooperation between the community and the state agencies.’⁷³

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6.3 Reported corruption amongst the police

6.3.1 The commissioned report by Global Initiative stated:

‘It should be mentioned that all individuals applying to become members of the state police or special forces are vetted and subject to background security checks. ... There have been cases however, where serving members of the state police or special forces have had family members engaged in blood feud. In such cases the law enforcement officer is usually transferred to another district to avoid possible conflicts.’⁷⁴

6.3.2 The report noted that if there were concerns that a police officer may be involved in blood feud, ‘...the victim can report the state police officer to the Police Supervision Agency, an institution under the authority of the Minister responsible for public order and security. This Agency is in charge of the supervision of any police officer who violates the law and misuses his office.’⁷⁵

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⁷¹ Cedoca, ‘[Blood Feuds in contemporary Albania...](#)’ (page 22), 29 June 2017

⁷² Global Initiative, ‘Blood feuds in Albania’, 13 December 2021

⁷³ Global Initiative, ‘Blood feuds in Albania’, 13 December 2021

⁷⁴ Global Initiative, ‘Blood feuds in Albania’, 13 December 2021

⁷⁵ Global Initiative, ‘Blood feuds in Albania’, 13 December 2021

7 Judiciary and justice

7.1 Convictions for blood feud

7.1.1 Global Initiative reported in December 2021 that: ‘Between 2012 and 2016 the government took steps to to criminalize and ensure heavy penalties for blood feud-related offences.’ The report referred to the punishments provided for under Articles 78a, 83a and 83b and stated that ‘All of these legal amendments to the Criminal Code entered into force in 2013.’⁷⁶

7.1.2 And that

‘... there has been an increase in the number of registered cases of murder for blood feud from 2017 to 2020. From five registered cases in 2017, the number increased to seven in 2020. However, the conviction rate for those accused of this crime has declined. Only one of the five cases registered for investigation in 2017 resulted in a guilty verdict. Of the seven cases registered in 2020, only one was sent to court; the defendant was found not guilty. Similarly, only one of the four cases registered for “incitement to blood feud” in 2020 was sent to court. From 2017 to 2020, the highest number of cases of incitement registered in one year was 11 cases in 2018. Only one of these was sent to the court, where it resulted in a guilty verdict.’⁷⁷

7.1.3 The commissioned Global Initiative report included a table showing the number of convictions for blood feud offences, 2016-2020⁷⁸:

Year	Murder for blood feud Article 78/a of Criminal Code	Serious threat to retaliation or blood revenge Article 83/a of Criminal Code	Incitement to blood feud Article 83/b of Criminal Code
2020	0	1	0
2019	0	0	0
2018	1	1	0
2017	3	0	0
2016	0	1	0

7.1.4 According to the Government of Albania, in its report to the UNCRC, which was received in November 2019, Several criminal proceedings concerning blood feud have been initiated. Since 2012, 41 suspects have been found guilty of murder for blood feud (39 suspects were acquitted), seven for the criminal offence of serious threats of revenge or blood feud, and one person was fined for the criminal offence of incitement to blood feud.⁷⁹

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⁷⁶ Global Initiative, ‘[Blood feuds in Albania exploited by criminal groups](#)’, 11 December 2021

⁷⁷ Global Initiative, ‘[Blood feuds in Albania exploited by criminal groups](#)’, 11 December 2021

⁷⁸ Global Initiative, ‘Blood feuds in Albania’, 13 December 2021

⁷⁹ UNCRC, ‘[Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports submitted by...](#)’ (para 66), 15 February 2021

7.2 Reported corruption amongst the judiciary

7.2.1 Bertelsmann Stiftung, in its BTI 2022 Country Report Albania, which assesses the transformation toward democracy and a market economy as well as the quality of governance, covering the period from 1 February 2019 to 31 January 2021, noted in regard to corruption reform, the full results of which were yet to be seen, that:

‘The main plank of reform is the vetting of 800 members of the judiciary. Only those vetted will be allowed to be part of the new structures. As of 2020, less than half of the judiciary – 330 members – were vetted at first instance. The vetted members helped to create some of the new structures currently in place – the Special Anti-Corruption and Organized Crime Structure (SPAK), composed of the Special Prosecution Office (SPO) and the National Bureau of Investigations (NBI); and the Anti-Corruption and Organized Crime Courts. A new general prosecutor and high justice inspector were also appointed.’⁸⁰

7.2.2 The USSD HR Report 2021 noted that:

‘Through September, the Special Prosecution Office against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK) announced that it had opened investigations and brought charges against several public officials, including former ministers, mayors, sitting judges and prosecutors, former and sitting judges of the Constitutional Court’s Vetting Appeal’s Chamber, former judges of the Supreme Court, and officials in the executive branch. As of September, one judge, two prosecutors, one mayor, and the former procurement director at the Ministry of Interior were indicted on abuse of office or corruption charges...

‘As of November, 125 judges and prosecutors were dismissed, 103 confirmed, while 48 others had resigned rather than undergo vetting. As of July, 173 judges and prosecutors were dismissed, 148 confirmed, while 89 others had resigned or retired.’⁸¹

7.2.3 The European Commission (EC) noted in its Albania 2021 report that ‘Good progress was made, with the continued implementation of justice reform and the vetting process, which advanced steadily, despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic’ and that ‘Some progress was made in strengthening the fight against corruption.’⁸²

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⁸⁰ Bertelsmann Stiftung, ‘[BTI 2022 Country Report Albania](#)’ (Rule of law), 23 February 2022

⁸¹ USSD, ‘[2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Albania](#)’ (section 4), 12 April 2022

⁸² EC, ‘[Albania Report 2021](#)’ (pages 18 and 23), 19 October 2021

8 Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) support

- 8.1.1 The Cedoca report 2017 reported on initiatives to help women who were impacted by blood feuds:

‘There are also a number of non-governmental initiatives for women affected by blood feud in and around Shkodër. Liljana Luani in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth and the Directorate of Social Services is providing professional courses for women in blood feud. Women are picked up from their homes and brought to the place where these courses are given. Afterwards they are dropped off at their houses again. The aim of these courses, is to teach women a profession which will allow them to start working afterwards. These women are also offered psychological support. Liljana Luani remarked that one of the biggest challenges was to change their husbands’ mentality in order to let the women leave their houses and follow the courses. According to Liljana Luani, many changes can now be observed with regard to these women’s behaviour towards their husbands and children.’⁸³

- 8.1.2 Global Initiative noted in its commissioned report of December 2021 that:

‘We did not find any NGO providing protection to people trapped in a blood feud, probably because such support would be very risky for those involved. Instead, NGOs seem to provide isolated families with food, education, vocational training for women and social activities for children. NGOs engaged in helping families in blood feud are also reluctant to report any threats against them unless it is eminent and very serious. Instead, they usually try to solve such problems informally because they fear that going to the police could escalate the situation and/or cause them to lose the trust of the community. However, the cooperation between NGOs and public authorities in the District of Shkoder on social activities with children or women of these families was noted as very positive.’⁸⁴

See also [Police – Action and initiatives](#).

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9 Conflict resolution, negotiation and mediation

- 9.1.1 Cedoca noted the possible communication between feuding families:

‘Another possible characteristic of a contemporary blood feud is the existence of a permanent line of communication between the families who are in conflict. Mentor Kikia stated: “Between families who live in isolation, there’s always communication and negotiation. This element of negotiation can for example lead to a situation where one of the family members is allowed to work or to go to school.”

‘He concluded that “if there is an element of ongoing negotiation, a given

⁸³ Cedoca, ‘[Blood Feuds in contemporary Albania...](#)’ (page 25), 29 June 2017

⁸⁴ Global Initiative, ‘Blood feuds in Albania’, 13 December 2021

situation will rather be considered as a blood feud.”⁸⁵

See also [Self-isolation](#).

9.1.2 In the report of December 2017, Operazione Colomba stated:

‘Mediation is an alternative dispute resolution technique that brings a third party (who may be an individual, an organisation, community, group etc.) into the dispute. Mediation helps the parties determine the facts, understand the reason for behaviours, accept different viewpoints, identify common interests, recognise that all the parties to a dispute have equal rights and duties, accept the contributions made by the parties and generate new ideas that will lead to agreement.

‘The Albanian Kanun tradition recognises mediation as a way of resolving disputes and feuds. In the Kanun, reconciliation is the final stage in mediation. Traditional peace-building practices are rooted in local communities and include methods applied from the XIX to the XX centuries, a number of which were taken up again after the collapse of Communism. Traditional approaches are closely linked to the local socio-cultural environment. The code therefore allows two rights/duties: the taking of blood or forgiveness of the other family [...]. Forgiveness is achieved through mediation. Mediators are community figures whose moral authority allows them to guide the mediation process by influencing the views and behaviours of the feuding parties. Mediators can be religious figures, bajraktar [chiefs, leaders], missionaries of peace, individuals or clans who are not related to the feuding clans.’⁸⁶

9.1.3 The Cedoca report 2017 stated:

‘Communication between affected families also can be part of a process of mediation and definitive reconciliation. According to Rasim Gjoka, the process of mediation and conflict resolution has modernized nowadays. While mediators had a decisive role in the past and used the Kanun in order to solve conflicts, mediators nowadays no longer force families to take a decision. Families are invited to talk to each other and sometimes traditional elements are used (besa [mediation], the elderly) if they can contribute to reaching a peaceful solution. Schools and the church can also play a role in mediation. The representative from the Shkodër Regional Police Directorate acknowledged the existence of this type of communication between the affected families and he believed that in modern Albanian society “people try to find a solution through talking, dialogue and mitigation”. At the local Prosecutor’s Office... prosecutors declared that they prefer not to take part in the mediation and reconciliation process “because the elderly can do it better”.

‘Rasim Gjoka stated that it is easier to find a solution in old cases because these families still communicate with one another. According to this source, reconciliation is more difficult in new cases because families “don’t accept communication or negotiation for getting a solution”. In recent years the maximum number of successful reconciliations supervised by his organization was 2 to 3, while 15 years ago there were approximately 10

⁸⁵ Cedoca, ‘[Blood Feuds in contemporary Albania...](#)’ (pages 18 to 19), 29 June 2017

⁸⁶ Operazione Colomba, ‘[Descriptive Document on the Phenomenon...](#)’ (page 33), December 2017

solutions annually. Other interlocutors confirmed that successful and definitive reconciliations have become rare nowadays.⁸⁷

9.1.4 The Cedoca report 2017 further noted that money may be paid as part of the reconciliation process and that religion also may play a part:

‘Sometimes people pay money during the reconciliation process. Some of Cedoca’s interlocutors said they know cases in which amounts varying from 30.000 to 50.000 euros were paid to associations (with no legal status) in order to - sometimes partially - resolve their conflict. According to most interlocutors, these associations have mostly deteriorated situations as they kept the money for themselves instead of handing it over to the opposing family. The authorities have been dealing with this problem by pressing charges against some of these associations...

‘Rasim Gjoka declared that in the experience of the mediators of AFCR the monetary compensation for blood has not been applied, considering it an old customary norm. Also Luigj Mila declared that he does not consider money as an element but he acknowledged that he once managed to reach a reconciliation where a family “did not accept money, but was helped to build a house”.

‘Rasim Gjoka stated that there is no difference between Muslims and Catholics in the way they contribute to reconciliation but he claimed that the Catholic church in Shkodër has been very active “to prevent a situation or an escalation of conflicts”...

‘Nearly all of Cedoca’s interlocutors agree that families are more likely to reconcile when the murderer has been sentenced fairly.⁸⁸

9.1.5 The Cedoca report 2017 noted the importance of elders in regard to reconciliation:

‘It seems that a contemporary blood feud can be characterized by the attribution of an important role to the elderly when it comes to regulate the situation. The General Director from the Albanian State Police stated that he qualifies a murder case as a blood feud case when a decisive role has been attributed to the elderly, for example in order to choose the target.

‘Rasim Gjoka underlined the importance of the role of the elderly when it comes to finding a reconciliation: “The elderly have an influence as a supporter from outside or inside a family. Old and wise men, like also the heads of a village, are needed as a supporter in the process of communication and negotiation between two parties in a blood feud.” Representatives of four local Prosecutors’ Offices also declared that the elderly are sometimes very reliable when it comes to reconciling two parties of a contemporary blood feud case: “They can help better than the authorities”. According to a report by sociology lecturer and UNHCR Protection Officer Edlira Baka Peco, usually an elder can be approached by families in blood and asked to organize a reconciliation meeting. Although this looks like an old ritual, “similar scenes are being seen in the peripheries

⁸⁷ Cedoca, [‘Blood Feuds in contemporary Albania...’](#) (page 19), 29 June 2017

⁸⁸ Cedoca, [‘Blood Feuds in contemporary Albania...’](#) (page 20), 29 June 2017

of big cities even nowadays”.⁸⁹

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This section updated: 8 September 2022

10 Attestation letters

10.1.1 The Cedoca report 2017 stated:

‘The issuance of fake blood feud attestations and the presentation of such certificates by asylum seekers in and outside Europe is a recurring topic in many reports on blood feud. According to the 2014 OSCE report on blood feud there is neither an official nor a non-official entity that is authorized to issue such certificates.

‘A representative at the Shkodër Regional Police Directorate confirmed that the police offices do not issue attestations or verifications declaring families have problems. “But every complaint is written down and it is part of the procedure to provide a copy of a complaint.” Telephone complaints are also registered in a special book in the command room and citizens can obtain a copy of any official document at any time.

‘The Prosecutor’s Office declared that it can issue attestations to citizens about cases that have been started but such attestations will never state that a given case is correlated with blood feud. In these attestations the facts of an incident are registered: what has happened, who is a victim and who is the perpetrator. The General Director from the Albanian State Police mentioned that unofficial reconciliation organizations have taken advantage of the requests for blood feud attestations by a number of citizens. He stated that Albanians have obtained documents from those institutions falsely claiming they are in a blood feud situation, and he noted that even municipality and police signatures were falsified. The Vice-Minister of Interior Affairs argued that a lot of research has been done into organizations that are abusing the phenomenon. She declared that the Ministry of Interior Affairs has intensified its actions against this kind of abuse.

‘The Prosecutor’s Office has started several proceedings against associations that deliver false attestations. These proceedings have resulted in convictions and are a warning to other NGOs, according to a representative at the Prosecutor’s Office in Tirana. She cited two court cases (in Durrës and in Shkodër) in 2016. With regard to the Durrës-case, the head of the National Assembly of Missionaries for Reconciliation was sentenced to 2 years imprisonment while his associate was sentenced to 9 months imprisonment.

‘Apart from reconciliation associations, some local police officers and heads of villages have also benefitted from issuing false documents. According to Alfred Koçobashi, in recent years a total of 16 persons were criminally investigated and charged for fraud and abuse of power: the head of the National Assembly of Missionaries for Reconciliation in Durrës and two of his associates, the mayor of Postribë town, the secretary general of the Association of Missionaries for Peace, the heads of the villages of Mes, Boks

⁸⁹ Cedoca, [‘Blood Feuds in contemporary Albania...’](#) (pages 20 to 21), 29 June 2017

and Drisht, an elder of the village Shtoj and of Rrethina, and seven citizens.

‘Most non-governmental sources Cedoca met during its fact-finding mission have received requests from Albanian citizens or foreign lawyers to issue attestations to prove (often wrongly) that their clients are in a blood feud situation. The persons asking for such attestations often say they or their family members need them as a proof of their situation. None of Cedoca’s interlocutors have complied with such requests.’⁹⁰

- 10.1.2 Global Initiative stated in its 11 December 2021 report that there have been cases where fake attestation letters were obtained to support asylum claims relating to blood feud. The report added ‘The situation changed after several individuals were arrested and the law was modified in 2014 to only allow prosecution offices to issue such certificates. Furthermore, a number of host countries (France, Belgium and Sweden, among others) now also ask Albanian authorities to verify the certificates. In case the certificates are forged or not based on facts, the persons responsible will be criminally investigated by Albanian authorities.’⁹¹
- 10.1.3 According to its commissioned report, Global Initiative noted that ‘... between 2014 and 2017 a number of people either issuing or using fake certificates were arrested which seems to have reduced this practice.’⁹²
- 10.1.4 In correspondence with the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) Research Directorate, ‘... an officer at the US Embassy in Tirana stated that Albania is a “hot bed” for fraud and corruption, and that fraudulent documents “seem to be readily available and easily accessed”’⁹³

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This section updated: 8 September 2022

11 Relocation within Albania

11.1.1 The Cedoca 2017 report stated:

‘According to multiple sources, some of the affected families are not particularly safer after having moved away from where they were living. The Director of the Prosecutor’s Office stated that for the affected families “the fear can be everywhere”. Also a representative of the Albanian Helsinki Committee warned that in the case of a contemporary blood feud situation, a potential victim will not necessarily be safe after having moved inside Albania. He explained that “each country is a village” nowadays. Mentor Kikia claimed that some of the isolated families cannot even dream of moving to Tirana either because they are either too poor to move outside or because nowhere is safe for them. Elsa Ballauri confirmed that there are situations where moving is not an option because the potential targets will surely be followed, even abroad if necessary. Luigj Mila, Alfred Koçobashi and a representative of the OSCE likewise claimed that the blood feud mentality, insofar as it still prevails, does not know any limits of time and

⁹⁰ Cedoca, ‘[Blood Feuds in contemporary Albania...](#)’ (pages 43 to 44), 29 June 2017

⁹¹ Global Initiative, ‘[Blood feuds in Albania exploited by criminal groups](#)’, 11 December 2021

⁹² Global Initiative, ‘Blood feuds in Albania’, 13 December 2021

⁹³ IRB, ‘[Albania: Availability of fraudulent identification documents ... \[ALB200127.E\]](#)’, 4 October 2021

place.’⁹⁴

11.1.2 In its report of December 2017, Operazione Colomba stated:

‘The feuding families monitored by Operazione Colomba in Shkodra and Tirana belong mainly to clans from Dukagjin and Tropoja (7 clans in Dukagjin and 4 in Tropoja). More than half have moved within Albania to city suburbs from their mountain areas of origin, often to escape the possible consequences and risks of a blood feud. Movement within the country reduces tension between parties but does not unfortunately guarantee safety as traditional Albanian society is based on relations between extremely extended families that can easily get information on the location of other people. Often the family surname alone is an indication of where it and its members come from, making it easy to find people who move out of a district.’⁹⁵

11.1.3 In its commissioned report of December 2021, Global Initiative noted:

‘All interviewees confirmed that no person is safe from blood feud in any city in Albania. Albania is a small country and people can be easily traced. There is a significant internal emigration flow of people from the north of the country to other regions but these networks can (and will) identify individuals who try to escape and hide...

‘As mentioned above it is very easy to track someone and find people via family connections across the country. Due to the wave of internal migration from the north of the country to central and southern Albania, families that are originally from the north are now present in all in communities of Albania. It is also comparably easy to identify and trace people from the north because of their distinctive customs, accents as well as their names and surnames.’⁹⁶

11.1.4 The Freedom in the World 2022 report, covering 2021 events, noted that ‘Albanians generally enjoy freedom of movement, though criminal activity and practices related to historically predominant honor codes limit these rights in some areas. People are generally free to change their place of residence or employment.’⁹⁷

11.1.5 The USSD HR Report 2021 noted in regard to in-country relocation that:

‘To receive government services, citizens changing place of residence within the country must transfer their civil registration to their new community and prove the legality of their new domicile through property ownership, a property rental agreement, or utility bills. Many individuals could not provide documentation and thus lacked access to public services. Other citizens, particularly Roma and Balkan-Egyptians, lacked formal registration in the communities where they resided. The law does not prohibit their registration, but it was often difficult to complete. Many Roma and Balkan-Egyptians lacked the financial means or necessary information to register.’⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Cedoca, ‘[Blood Feuds in contemporary Albania...](#)’ (page 27), 29 June 2017

⁹⁵ Operazione Colomba, ‘[Descriptive Document on the Phenomenon...](#)’ (page 25), December 2017

⁹⁶ Global Initiative, ‘Blood feuds in Albania’, 13 December 2021

⁹⁷ Freedom House, ‘[Albania: Freedom in the World 2022](#)’ (section G1), 24 February 2022

⁹⁸ USSD, ‘[2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Albania](#)’ (section 2d), 12 April 2022

- 11.1.6 With regard to whether a person could live alone in Tirana, the Global Initiative commissioned report stated:

‘An individual can live alone in Tirana without his or her family but ... he is not safe from the risk of the blood feud as the counterpart will use all forms of identification to find him. The widespread use of social media, particularly by young people, makes it even easier to track them down....

‘Tirana is a big city and living alone is not considered strange or unusual. The same can be said of other large cities such as Durres, Fier, Vlora and even Shkoder. These cities are university cities and it is normal for students (male or female) to live alone and work part time or full time.’⁹⁹

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This section updated: 8 September 2022

12 Emigration

- 12.1.1 According to sources cited in Cedoca’s 2017 report, many families affected by blood feud had left Albania and only those who could not afford to leave stayed¹⁰⁰. In its reports to both the UNCAT and CEDAW, the Government of Albania stated that 15 families, with a total of 56 persons, had left Albania due to blood feud^{101 102}.

- 12.1.2 Global Initiative stated in its 11 December 2021 report that the lines were sometimes blurred between assassinations and blood feuds relating to drug trafficking:

‘It occurs when disputes from abroad are settled in Albania or when blood feuds that started in Albania are exported abroad. For instance, relatives of members of criminal organizations are seeking asylum in EU countries in order to evade the threat of retaliation. According to a 2017 report from Operazione Colomba, these are credible threats. From 2013 to 2017, it reported that blood feud murders were committed in the following countries: 11 in Italy, four in Greece and two each in Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands, as well as one each in Kosovo, Montenegro, the UK, the Czech Republic, Sweden, Switzerland, Canada and the US. However, it should be noted that criminal groups generally prefer not to expose themselves abroad and therefore continue the vendetta or blood feud in Albania.’¹⁰³

- 12.1.3 In its commissioned report, Global Initiative added ‘... it is important to note that emigrating overseas makes it more difficult to commit the murder and it depends on the financial power and network of the criminal organization whether or not to continue the vendetta or blood feud abroad.’¹⁰⁴

See [Organised crime gangs](#) for further information.

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⁹⁹ Global Initiative, ‘Blood feuds in Albania’, 13 December 2021

¹⁰⁰ Cedoca, ‘[Blood Feuds in contemporary Albania...](#)’ (page 27), 29 June 2017

¹⁰¹ UNCAT, ‘[Third periodic report submitted by Albania under article 19](#)’ (para 194), 5 April 2022

¹⁰² UN CEDAW, ‘[Fifth periodic report submitted by Albania...](#)’ (para 233), 25 February 2022

¹⁰³ Global Initiative, ‘[Blood feuds in Albania exploited by criminal groups](#)’, 11 December 2021

¹⁰⁴ Global Initiative, ‘Blood feuds in Albania’, 13 December 2021

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Terms of Reference

A 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) is a broad outline of what the CPIN seeks to cover. They form the basis for the [country information section](#). The Home Office's Country Policy and Information Team uses some standardised ToR, depending on the subject, and these are then adapted depending on the country concerned.

For this particular CPIN, the following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- The Code of Lek Dukagjin (the 'Kanun')
 - beliefs about blood feuds
 - modern-day application
- Prevalence of blood feuds and regions affected
- Families in isolation
- State protection, including investigations, arrests, prosecutions and sentences for crimes related to blood feuds
- Support services
 - By the Govt
 - By NGOs
 - Reconciliation Committees
- Work underway to change beliefs leading to blood feuds, including the effectiveness of such initiatives
- Attestation letters for blood feuds
 - who produces them, what they are likely to include, how to identify whether they are genuine
 - Purchase of false attestation letters, including how to identify false letters
- Relocation possibilities, including freedom of movement, likelihood of a person being found

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Changes from last version of this note

Minor updates to COI and review of assessment

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