



[EMBARGOED FOR : 30/03/2006]

amnesty international

It's in our hands

**STOP
VIOLENCE
AGAINST
WOMEN**



Albania

Violence against Women in the Family: "It's not her shame".

Date 30/03/2006

SUMMARY

AI Index: EUR 11/002/2006

Thousands of women in Albania, like women across the world, are at risk of violence from their husbands or their intimate partners. They are hit, beaten, slapped and kicked; some are raped; some are killed. Many more endure psychological violence, physical and economic control.

Violence against women is an abuse of the human rights of women and girls including their rights to mental and physical integrity, to liberty and security of the person, to freedom of expression, the right to choice in marriage and the basic requirement of non-discrimination. Violence may lead to treatment amounting to torture or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and in extreme cases, may violate the right to life. Violence against women prevents the full enjoyment of rights and fundamental freedoms such as the rights to health and employment.

Through the voices of women who have escaped abuse, Amnesty International documents the failure of the Albanian authorities to live up to their international obligations to prevent violence against women, to protect women from such violence, and to ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted and punished.

In this report, Amnesty International identifies the barriers which prevent women in gaining access to justice, including: the justification of violence as part of Albanian "tradition"; the failure of law enforcement officers to respond appropriately to women seeking assistance; and the failure of the legal system and the courts to recognize violence against women in the family (domestic violence) as a criminal offence.

Amnesty International pays tribute to the women's organizations, and other non governmental organizations (NGOs), who have – with little or no assistance from the Albanian authorities – provided counselling, legal advice and shelter, enabling women who have suffered violence to regain their lives.

Amnesty International calls for women who have suffered violence to be able to enforce their rights to protection, reparation and redress. In recommendations to the government of the Republic of Albania, Amnesty International calls for the criminalization of domestic violence and the introduction of legislation, drafted by NGOs, which would provide women protection from violent spouses or partners.

Amnesty International calls for a coordinated response to violence against women in the family, an integrated multi-agency approach that includes not only law enforcement and judicial authorities, but also health care and education professionals who may assist in the prevention of such violence. Where prevention fails, law enforcement officials and prosecutors should record and monitor reported incidents, act to protect victims of violence, and respond promptly and effectively to allegations of, or threats of, violence against women. Prosecutors and judiciary should ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice. Women should have prompt access to judicial mechanisms affording protection, and to appropriate health care and shelters providing physical protection, medical assistance and psychological support. In this context, the organization calls on the authorities to cooperate with women's and other NGOs to ensure, including through additional funding, their provision of appropriate support and assistance.

Recognizing the barriers that prevent women from seeking help from the authorities, and that legal measures must be accompanied by a grass-roots campaign that informs and educates women and men about the right of women to live free from violence, Amnesty International recommends that the Albanian government also embark on a public campaign to challenge discriminatory "traditional attitudes" which condone such violence and to transfer the "shame" from women who are abused to the men who abuse them.

This report is based on Amnesty International's own research, including the monitoring of documentation in criminal proceedings and reports in the Albanian media over a three-year period, as well as research by Albanian NGOs, professionals and academics. It draws on information provided to Amnesty International by Albanian NGOs, government officials, police and legal and medical professionals in interviews conducted during a visit to Albania in October 2005.

This report is one of a series published as part of Amnesty International's Stop Violence against Women campaign, which was launched in March 2004. The global campaign highlights the failure of countries around the world to prevent, investigate and punish violence against women. Through the campaign, Amnesty International

joins the women and men who have fought against this violence, some of whom have achieved dramatic changes in laws, policies and practices. Amnesty International seeks to show how the human rights approach can galvanize the state, the community and individual men and women everywhere to confront and overcome violence against women.

This report summarizes a 66-page document (32,000 words): Albania. Violence against Women in the Family: "It's not her shame". (AI Index: EUR 11/002/2006), issued by Amnesty International in March 2006. Anyone wishing further details or to take action on this issue should consult the full document. An extensive range of our materials on this and other subjects is available at <http://www.amnesty.org> and Amnesty International news releases can be received by email:

http://www.amnesty.org/email/email_updates.html

INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT,
1 EASTON STREET,
LONDON WC1X 0DW,
UNITED KINGDOM

