



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)
LEGAL AID BOARD

Albania - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Thursday 13 & Friday 14 June 2013
Current information on blood feuds

In April 2013 a document published by the *United Nations Human Rights Council* notes that:

“Blood feud killings also continued to occur, although the lack of reliable data renders it difficult to refer to concrete figures and the dynamics of the phenomenon” (United Nations Human Rights Council (23 April 2013) *Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Christof Heyns Addendum, Follow-up to country recommendations: Albania*, p.1).

This report also points out that:

“At present, blood feuds and related killings appear to still occur in Albania and constitute an issue of concern. The lack of comprehensive and fully reliable statistical data renders it difficult to refer to concrete figures of the current scope of the phenomenon and analyse its dynamics. In parallel, information received from various sources confirms that such killings still affect the population in some parts of the country, in particular in the northern areas of Albania. Some families still opt for self-isolation due to fear of reprisal” (ibid, pp.5-6).

This document also states:

“...of early April 2013, there were 67 self-isolated families due to blood feuds, and 33 children not attending school for the same reason. Of those children, 23 were registered in the region of Shkodra, in northern Albania” (ibid, p.6).

In April 2013 *Balkan Insight* notes in a report that:

“Although the phenomenon has declined in recent years, blood feuds continue to deprive families of basic human rights, a report by Albania’s Ombudsman underlines” (Balkan Insight (3 April 2013) *Blood Feuds Still Blight Albanian Lives, Report Says*).

This document also states:

“The scale of the problem is hard to monitor as there are deep discrepancies in statistics on blood feuds and related killings. Local media and non-governmental organizations refer to dozens of blood-feud killings per year and to hundreds of children living in isolation as a consequence. On the other hand, government statistics claim that such killings fell sharply in number over the last decade. According to the Ombudsman’s report, there were 98 murders due to vendettas from 2001 to 2012, including five in the first nine months of the last year” (ibid).

This report also notes:

“In total, 69 families live currently isolated in their homes, the majority in the northern region of Shkoder. In these families 33 children cannot attend school because of fear of reprisal from the feuding family” (ibid).

A report published by the *Albanian Helsinki Committee* in April 2013 commenting on events of 2012 states that:

“There were over 11 blood-feud related killings...” (Albanian Helsinki Committee (7 February 2013) *Report on the Situation of Respect for Human Rights in Albania for the Year 2012*).

A report issued in April 2013 by the *United States Department of State* commenting on events of the preceding year notes:

“Incidents of societal killings, including both “blood feud” and revenge killings, appeared to increase during the year. Such killings sometimes involved criminal gangs. Although long-standing traditions surrounding blood feuds prohibit killing children or women, NGOs reported several cases where perpetrators intentionally targeted minors or women. The National Reconciliation Committee (NRC) claimed that the number of women killed in blood-feud related homicides was 10 times higher than in any of the last 20 years. The ombudsman reported some cases in which authorities refused to protect families or prevent blood feud killings. The Albania Helsinki Committee reported that the nonlegal traditions (kanun) dictating blood feud were often intentionally misinterpreted to justify revenge or societal killings. On June 14, Maria Qukaj, a 17-year-old girl from Shkoder, and her grandfather, Kole Qukaj, were shot and killed near their home by two brothers as part of an ongoing blood feud between two families over irrigation water. Some neighbors and activists claimed authorities were aware of the threat posed by the feud and refused to intervene. The NRC reported 152 blood feud killings during the year. Blood feud cases are tried by district courts. The law punishes premeditated murder, when committed for revenge or a blood feud, with 20 years’ or life imprisonment” (United States Department of State (19 April 2013) *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012, Albania*, Section 1a Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life).

References

Albanian Helsinki Committee (7 February 2013) *Report on the Situation of Respect for Human Rights in Albania for the Year 2012*

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

Sources Consulted

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