

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Albania: Government needs to take prompt action to ensure protection and respect for victims of domestic violence

Amnesty International calls on the Albanian government to implement without further delay the recommendations of the People's Advocate, made in mid-April, concerning measures to end abuses at the National Centre for Victims of Domestic Violence, and to improve the conditions and treatment of the women - victims of domestic violence - sheltered at the Centre. These recommendations include the dismissal of the Centre's Director, and other measures to ensure protection and respect for the women sheltering at the Centre.

Amnesty International recalls that this Centre was founded with public and international funds (UNDP) to protect some of the most vulnerable members of Albanian society, and to ensure their enjoyment of their human right to freedom, dignity and to family life free of violence. The abuses that have been revealed at the Centre highlight the urgent need for vigilant monitoring of public institutions and for the enforcement of recruitment criteria which ensure the appointment of staff with the necessary professional qualifications, experience, integrity and competence.

Amnesty International is deeply concerned about the findings of the People's Advocate following an inspection of the Centre from 10 to 12 April 2012. These confirm complaints made earlier by women sheltered at the Centre.

They include:

- Illegal and unconstitutional 'disciplinary' measures have been imposed on a number of these women, such as denying them meals, or refusing them permission to visit their children.
- Restrictions on their right to communicate in private with their families and to use mobile phones within the Centre.
- Disrespectful and insulting behaviour by the Director towards certain of the women at the Centre.
- Failure to ensure the women's security when they leave the Centre to attend court sessions, leaving them open to further attack by their partners.
- The lack of regulations fully setting out the rights and duties of staff and women sheltered at the Centre.

Amnesty International further notes the lack of relevant qualifications and experience of the Director and the presence on the staff list of a person who seemingly does not come to work and is unknown to other staff and to the women at the Centre.

Amnesty International is informed that since the women's complaints were first made public in early April the only measures which have so far been introduced have been the appointment of a part-time jurist and psychologist and the accompaniment of their children to and from a nearby school.

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