

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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## **Albania signs the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence**

Amnesty International welcomes Albania's signing today of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. The organization considers it a very welcome step in the country's progress in addressing domestic violence.

Between January and September 2011 some 1,683 reports of domestic violence were made to the authorities, 260 more than for the same period in 2010. Eighty-two per cent of the victims were women. Most incidents, including those involving violence against children, went unreported.

In 2006, in response to pressure from local women's organizations and other NGOs, Albania adopted the law "On Measures against Violence in Family Relations" (Domestic Violence Law). The law enabled victims of domestic violence to apply for protection orders, and required relevant ministries to cooperate in the identification and prosecution of domestic violence and in the coordination of support for victims.

Since the introduction of this law women have felt more confident in reporting domestic violence to the authorities. However much more remains to be done: 17 women were killed this year in Albania as a result of domestic violence.

In September, Servete Karoshi was killed by her husband, who had repeatedly ignored protection orders. In most cases proceedings for protection orders are stopped, often because the victim withdraws her petition - due to intimidation, social pressure or economic dependence on the perpetrator. Perpetrators who break the terms of protection orders are liable to fines or up to two years' imprisonment, but the courts rarely impose custodial sentences.

Amnesty International, while welcoming the commitment made by Albania in signing the convention, calls on the authorities to take further measures to ensure the full implementation of the domestic law and measures required to enable the country to ratify the Convention. Amnesty International further urges Albania to make domestic violence a specific criminal offence.

### **Background**

The Council of Europe Convention is a comprehensive, legally-binding international treaty with provisions for prevention, protection of victims and prosecution of offenders. Amnesty International welcomed the adoption of the Convention in May 2011 as a major step towards ending violence against women in Europe.

The ministerial session of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers, in Istanbul, on 10-11 May 2011 adopted the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

The Convention will enter into force once 10 countries have ratified it. The Convention is open to Council of Europe member states; however other countries can equally join the treaty.

To date only 18 countries including Albania, have signed it and no country has yet ratified the convention.

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