

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

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### **Albania: Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Albania: Amnesty International calls for further measures to end domestic violence against women and for access to adequate housing for orphans and young people leaving care**

Amnesty International welcomes Albania's support for a great many of the recommendations made by states in the Working Group, as set out in the outcome report. These include recommendations which address concerns outlined in the organization's submission to the UPR relating to the rights of children and women. In particular, Amnesty International welcomes Albania's support for recommendations to strengthen measures against all forms of violence against women, to promote the enforcement of the Law on Measures against Violence in the Family, and to increase public awareness about this law in smaller towns and rural areas.<sup>1</sup> The organization urges prompt implementation of these recommendations, including the dedication of funding to establish local shelters and centres providing legal and other assistance to victims of domestic violence. To reinforce legal sanctions against domestic violence, Amnesty International urges Albania to amend the Criminal Code to make domestic violence a specific offence.

Amnesty International welcomes Albania's support for the recommendations to implement the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children and to adopt further measures to ensure protection of the human rights of children leaving care.<sup>2</sup> Support for these recommendations requires support for other related recommendations still under consideration by Albania, including: measures to prevent the unnecessary admission of children to institutional care, the reintegration of children in care into their biological families, raising the age of leaving care to 18 years and the enactment and implementation of legislation to improve support for children in care as well as after leaving care<sup>3</sup> – all measures recommended in the Guidelines. Amnesty International is particularly concerned about the situation of orphans and other young people after leaving care, and calls on Albania to increase protection for these young people by ensuring that they have access to adequate housing, in accordance with national and international law.

Amnesty International regrets Albania's rejection of two recommendations calling for the prohibition of corporal punishment of children as a disciplinary method.<sup>4</sup> According to recent press reports, a free national Child Line, opened in Tirana in June 2009, currently receives about 400 calls a day from children reporting ill-treatment. Surveys carried out by the Tirana-based Human Development Centre, sponsored by UNICEF, have shown that violence against children is prevalent in Albania and that many adults still maintain that physical and psychological violence can have a positive effect on a child's education and development. Violence against children is not confined to the family but is prevalent in schools, including violence inflicted by teachers, and there have been allegations of the ill-treatment of children at police stations. While the Law on Measures against Violence in the Family includes children among the categories of persons who may claim state protection in the form of "protection orders", the law has been drafted with the protection of women, rather than children, primarily in mind. Article 124/b of the Criminal Code prohibits the physical or

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<sup>1</sup> A/HRC/13/6, paragraph 67, recommendations 18,19,21,22,25,30,32,42,54,55,56,57and 58.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, paragraph 67, recommendations 16 and 79.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, paragraph 69, recommendations 2, 10, 15 and 16.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, paragraph 70, recommendations 1 and 2.

psychological ill-treatment of children by a person who has a duty of care to them. However, in Amnesty International's view, there are grounds for amending Article 124/b to make explicit that all physical or psychological ill-treatment of children, including corporal punishment for disciplinary reasons, whether in the home, school, other institutional environment, or any other circumstances, is prohibited.

**Background**

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Albania on 17 March 2010 during its 13<sup>th</sup> session. Prior to the adoption of the report of the review Amnesty International delivered the oral statement above. Amnesty International also contributed to the information basis for the review through its submission on Albania: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR11/001/2009/en>

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