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Albania: a step forward for justice for women

Amnesty International welcomes recent initiatives to introduce legislation in Albania to prevent violence against the family and to protect victims of such violence.

“This is a much-needed step forward in tackling violence against women in the family”, said Amnesty International, a human rights organization which has campaigned world-wide against violence against women.

On 23 January 2006 a coalition of Albanian non governmental organizations (NGOs), led by the Citizen’s Advocacy Organization and including the main Albanian women and children’s NGOs, presented a draft law on the prevention of violence within the family to the legislative commission of the Albanian parliament by citizens’ petition. The draft law includes provisions for both the prevention of such violence and for measures to protect victims, who lack effective remedy under current legislation.

Statistics suggest that around 40 per cent of Albanian women have experienced such violence in its physical or psychological forms. The citizens’ petition, signed by 20,000 Albanians, is an indicator that a significant sector of Albanian society condemns this widespread and deeply damaging phenomenon and calls for effective action against it.

In a report to be published in March 2006 Amnesty International will also ask the Albanian government to go further, and amend the Criminal Code so that such violence may be defined and criminalized under domestic legislation, as recommended in 2003 to the Albanian government by the UN Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Amnesty International’s report will highlight the failure of successive Albanian governments to abide by their responsibilities under international law to prevent domestic violence, and in particular to protect women and girls, the most frequent victims, from such violence, and to investigate, prosecute and punish perpetrators.

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, freedom of expression and the right to choice in marriage. Violence may lead to treatment amounting to torture, to 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 right to health and employment.

