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## HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN ALBANIA

### ISSUE

Since the election of the first non-communist government in 1992, Albania has struggled to adhere to internationally accepted standards of human rights and freedoms. A lack of democratic institutions and traditions has been the main impediment to progress.

### BACKGROUND

The election of President Berisha in March 1992 marked the end of the most repressive and isolated regime in Eastern Europe. The new Albanian government, in an effort to gain Western acceptance and support, began implementing sweeping changes to all facets of society.

Included in these changes was the establishment of a new judicial system based on the Italian model. However, the recent trial of five ethnic Greek members of the OMONIA party raised questions regarding the independence of the judiciary and pre-trial proceedings, including arrest without warrant. Albania also lacks modern laws in areas such as political expression, freedom of the press, and access to information.

The OMONIA trial also underlined historic disputes between Albania and Greece, with the status of the Greek minority seized upon by both sides to make political points. International observers generally agree that Albania's minority Greek population have constitutional guarantees of human and minority rights that measure up to international standards.

The CSCE's High Commissioner on National Minorities, Max van der Stoep, recently suggested to Albanian authorities that they establish a national institution to deal with complaints of discrimination. The Commissioner also recommended that, in order to provide police with a better understanding of human rights in general, special training be provided regarding national legislation and commitments relating to human rights obligations.

At CHR51, the UN Centre for Human Rights will be reporting to the Commission on the implementation of CHR50 resolution 1994/57, which called upon the Albanian authorities to pursue their positive steps towards meeting the requirements under the International Bill of Human Rights and other relevant international instruments, by which the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Albanians, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, will be effectively promoted and guaranteed.

### CANADIAN POSITION

Canada established diplomatic relations with Albania in 1987 and has non-resident accreditation from our Embassy in Budapest. In 1992, Canada provided technical assistance for the translation of human rights texts for distribution in universities and we have offered