



ALBANIAN HELSINKI COMMITTEE

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AHC co-organizes the scientific conference, "Albania's Constitution 1998-2008: 10 years after"

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AHC addresses overcrowding with the highest state institutions

Based on data from the General Directory of Prisons regarding overcrowding at Albanian prisons, AHC addressed the phenomenon with the highest representatives of the state and state institutions...

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Capacity building for municipal administrations for better respect of the rights of the Roma minority and the Egyptian community

On September 19 and October 16 and 27, 2008, in cooperation with the CESC, AHC organized training seminars in the municipalities of Elbasan, Fier, and Korçë.

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1 HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS - 10 YEARS AFTER THE APPROVAL OF THE CONSTITUTION

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the approval of the Constitution of the Republic of Albania (RA), on November 27, 2008, AHC together with the European University of Tirana and the Law School of the University of Tirana organized the scientific conference "The Constitution of Albania 1998-2008: 10 years after."

Known personalities of the academic-juridical life and drafters of the Constitution pointed out efforts made to draft the Constitution; encountered difficulties, aspects of parliamentarism and the judicial system in the functioning of the Constitution; the steadiness of the Constitution in the past ten years and the future; constitutional amendments, their transparency, and debates accompanying them.

During the Conference, Ms. Hysi, Executive Director of AHC, offered an analysis of respect for human rights and freedoms during the 10 year span, the problems encountered by citizens in the justice system, in pre-trial detention facilities and prisons, and the role of monitoring institutions in respect for human rights.

2. AHC ADDRESSES PROBLEMS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS IN STATE INSTITUTIONS

2.1 Overcrowding in Albanian prisons - a problem seeking resolution

Based on data from monitoring and the situation of overcrowding in Albanian prisons, AHC, in cooperation with the Dutch Agency of Rehabilitation Institutions, addressed an open letter to the highest representatives of the Albanian state and the main responsible state institutions: Mr. Bamir Topi, President of the Republic, Ms. Jozefina Topalli, Speaker of the Parliament, Mr. Sali Berisha, Prime Minister, Mr. Enkelejd Alibeaj, Minister of Justice, Ms. Ina Rama, Prosecutor General, and Mr. Gazmend Dibra, General Director of Prisons.

In the letter, AHC recommended to state institutions to draft all-inclusive strategies to alleviate overcrowding, implement amnesty and pardons, the implementation of alternative sentences and security measures in accordance with the danger posed by the offense and the perpetrator.

2.2 Electoral reform - part of discussions in the Parliamentary Electoral Commission's hearing session

On October 7, 2008, Ms. Vasilika Hysi, Executive Director of AHC, together with some representatives of the civil society, participated in the hearing session of the Parliamentary Commission on Electoral Reform. Ms. Hysi brought to the Commission's attention some important issues such as: documentation for voting in the next parliamentary elections, electoral lists and procedures for its review, review and improvement of the referenda chapter, the right of emigrants to vote, better representation of women and minorities, better regulation of the role of local organizations in monitoring the electoral process.

Also, the AHC representative expressed the opinion that the electoral administration at all levels should be technical rather than political and electoral commissions should be made of a small group of members.

3. CITIZENS' RIGHTS AND THEIR REINSTATEMENT

3.1 Citizens address AHC

During the period October - December 2008, AHC addressed 154 complaints, received mainly from detained and convicted persons, as well as other citizens. The target of complaints dealt with the violation of rights in prison/detention, claims of use of violence by the prison personnel, requests for transfers; violations of the right to a due legal process, as well as claims about unjust judicial verdicts or innocence.

AHC offered legal counseling to the complainers and addressed concerns to the relevant state authorities regarding encountered violations.

3.2 Public reactions about violations of citizens' rights

During the period October - December 2008, AHC reacted through public statements about issues such as: violence used by police officers in the Sarandë Commissariat against two detained persons, the hunger strike of some members of the Assembly of Albania on electoral reform; reactions by the police directory of the district of Shkodër toward the People's Advocate and violence used against journalist Luan Kondi. Through the statements, AHC reiterated the importance of rights and freedoms such as: the right to not be subjected to torture and inhuman and degrading punishment, freedom of speech, etc., recommending the taking of respective measures to change the situation.

4.0 RESPECT FOR THE RIGHTS OF PATIENTS

4.1 AHC monitored the legal framework in the area of health care services

In the framework of the initiative to contribute to the improvement of human rights in the area of health care services, AHC conducted a study of the legal framework on health care service. The study presents an unbiased and objective overview of Albanian legislation in the area of health care services, legal, institutional, and financial initiatives undertaken by the Albanian state, seen from the standpoint of the European Social Charter and other international standards, as well as identified shortcomings and problems that affect respect for the patients' rights.

The findings of the study and the respective recommendations were presented to the responsible state institutions.

4.2 Meetings with representatives of state health institutions

During the period October-December 2008, AHC held several meetings with representatives of health institutions at the central and local level with a view to establishing contacts and institutionalization in the context of the initiative to monitor respect for citizens' rights in health care services. During the meeting with Ms. Anila Godo, Minister of Health, we discussed about the concerns AHC has received regarding

health care services, respect for human rights and the level of legislation enforcement at hospitals, psychiatric institutions, prisons, and pre-trial detention institutions. Also, AHC correspondents in the districts of Shkodër, Vlorë and Elbasan held meetings with heads of psychiatric hospitals, child care centers, and doctors' orders.

4.3 Better respect for human rights in the area of health care services

In order to ensure better respect of human rights, on December 22, 2008, AHC organized the training program for building the professional capacities of its activists, staff, and correspondents in the area of health care services. The training program was part of a round of monitoring missions that AHC will conduct during the coming months in some health institutions, psychiatric hospitals, and child care centers. The main purpose of the activity was to build the professional capacities of participants in the area and to offer useful information about AHC's monitoring methodology.

Participants in the training program included a group of AHC activists, made up of jurists, medical doctors, social workers, and AHC's staff of correspondents in the districts.

The above activities were made possible thanks to the financial support of the U.S. Department of State, Federal Assistance Fund.

5.1 TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACTIVITIES ABOUT PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION

5.1 Increasing municipal administration capacities for better respect for the rights of the Roma minority and the Egyptian community

On September 19, October 16 and 27, 2008, AHC, in cooperation with the Center for Economic and Social Studies, organized training seminars in the municipalities of the districts of Elbasan, Fier, and Korçë. The main purpose of the training programs was to increase the awareness and information of employees of municipal administrations about the rights of the Roma minority and the Egyptian community.

The main issues addressed during the training program included international and national standards on respect for the rights of persons belonging to minorities/communities, obligations of state institutions to implement them, as well as recommendation no. 7 of ECRI in this area.

Participating in these activities were representatives of the administration of the municipalities of Fier, Roskovec, Elbasan, and Korçë, as well as commune personnel with concentrations of the Roma minority and the Egyptian community.

The activities were realized with financial assistance from the Open Society Foundation Albania, Soros.

5.2 Increasing the professional capacities of the Roma minority for better representation at local institutions

On October 13, 2008, AHC, in cooperation with the Center for Social and Economic Studies, trained representatives of the Roma minority in the Levan commune in Fier. The objective of the program was to increase the professional capacities of representatives of

the Roma minority for better representation of their legal rights at local institutions through informing them about the duties of local state institutions toward citizens. A topic of interest for participants included the ways and forms of communication with local government bodies in order to better address their problems and concerns.

The activities were realized with financial assistance from the Open Society Foundation Albania, Soros.

5.3 Albanian police trained on international standards in non-discrimination

In order to prevent direct and indirect discrimination in police, increase the access of minorities to decision making and public life, to become better aware of the contents of recommendations by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), AHC, in cooperation with the Center for Social and Economic Studies and the General Directory of Police, carried out training programs for police officers in the district of Elbasan and Korçë. The activities were conducted on December 9 and 10, 2008.

Participants became familiar with national and international standards on respect for the rights of the Roma minority and the Egyptian community, their traditions, culture, conditions, and perspective as well as Albanian legislation regarding non-discrimination.

The activities were realized with financial assistance from the Open Society Foundation Albania, Soros.

6.0 AHC AND EMIGRANTS' RIGHTS

6.1 AHC observes respect for the rights of citizens at some border crossing points

During December 2008, AHC conducted monitoring missions at the border crossing points: Kapshticë, Tushemisht, Goricë, Qafë-Thanë, Kakavijë, Vlorë and Durrës Ports. The purpose of the monitoring missions was to observe respect for the legal rights of Albanian emigrants and citizens returned through the Readmission Agreement with European countries by Albanian and foreign police.

At the end of these monitoring, AHC submitted to the responsible state institutions the conclusions and some recommendations to improve the human rights situation at these border crossing points.

The activity was made possible through financial support by the Norwegian Helsinki Committee.

6.2 Press conference "In defense of Albanian emigrants' rights"

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, AHC and the National Albanian Diaspora Institute, on December 11, 2008, organized a press conference with representatives of the print and electronic media. The cooperation of AHC with the National Albanian Disapora Institute in preparing the informative material "In defense of Albanian emigrants' rights in Italy and Greece" was presented at the conference. The publication seeks to help Albanian emigrants living in Italy and Greece by offering an address book of some Albanian and international associations and organizations working to protect human rights in the neighboring countries.

The activity was organized in the context of enhancing cooperation between Albanian state institutions and different civil society actors, non-profit organizations working in Albania, Italy, and Greece to guarantee better protection of the rights of Albanian emigrants in these countries.

The activity was made possible through financial support by the Norwegian Helsinki Committee.

7.0 AHC, THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS DEPRIVED OF THEIR LIBERTY, AND PRISON ADMINISTRATION

7.1 Monitoring pre-trial detention facilities

During the period October - December 2008, AHC realized observations in the detention institutions: "Jordan Misja" in Tiranë, "Mine Peza" in Berat, Durrës, Vlorë, and institutions for the execution of penal decisions by imprisonment in "Shën Koll" Lezhë, Vaqarr, Fushë-Krujë, Krujë, "Ali Demi" in Tiranë and the Prison Hospital in Tiranë. The goal of the monitoring was to assess the situation of detained persons' rights in general, the physical living conditions at these institutions, the general environment prevailing in these institutions, social and health care offered at these institutions.

The findings of monitoring and the respective recommendations were submitted to the relevant institutions.

The monitoring missions were made possible through the support of the Swedish Helsinki Committee.

7.2 ACTIVITIES TO BUILD THE CAPACITIES OF PRISON STAFFS

7.2.1 Drejtuesit e Lartë të burgjeve shqiptare vizitojnë institucionet e paraburgimit dhe burgjet holandeze

On October 6-9 and December 1-4, 2008, in cooperation with the Dutch Agency of Rehabilitation Institutions, AHC organized two study visits of senior Albanian prison officials to different pre-trial detention facilities and prisons in the Netherlands. The visit sought a practical rapprochement of the Albanian model of pre-trial detention and prison system with the Dutch model and the exchange of good experiences and practices.

The following were extensively addressed during the visit: the prison system management, system decentralization; structure and functionality of buildings; professionalism of human resources; delegation of responsibilities; system of labor for convicts, prison security.

At the conclusion of the study visit, participants engaged to adapt and use practical knowledge obtained during the visit in the Albanian prison system.

The activity was organized in the context of the program "Human Prison Management," funded by the European Commission Delegation in Tirana, CARDS 2004 program.

7.2.2 AHC holds two sessions to improve the psycho-social file

On October 23-24, 2008, a working session was organized with all employees of the social care sector at the Korçë institution. Some of the addressed topics included: methods of running a penitentiary institution; rules in the institution; perception of convicted persons on the institution; challenges and obstacles of employees of the social care sector at the institution; models of reporting behavior of convicts and the role of the social worker in this aspect.

At the end of the activity, the social care group of staff, under the guidance of the international expert, drafted a new model of a one-week activities program in the Korçë prison in order to create a realistic program that would offer prisoners basic activities.

During November 17-18, 2008, a working session was organized with the responsible officials of social care, local trainers of detention and prison institutions, and representatives from the GDP social issues sector. The purpose was to improve the social care sector's use of the psycho-social file through the enhancement of training capacities of local trainers, highlighting shortcomings and achievements of current models, and through the introduction of models used in Dutch prisons.

In the end, the working groups drafted the first versions of three concrete formats of work in prisons, which complete and improve the use of the psycho-social file.

The activity was organized in the context of the program "Human Prison Management," funded by the European Commission Delegation in Tirana, CARDS 2004 program.

7.2.3 Working session for the treatment of juveniles and women

On December 19, 2008, AHC organized a working session regarding training models for recently selected employees in the prison system, as pertains to the treatment of juveniles and women at these institutions. The goal was to finalize modules on juveniles and women and their establishment in the initial compulsory training program of employees to work in the Albanian prison system.

Participants in the working session were representatives of the Training Sector at the General Directory of Prisons, as well as local trainers, previously trained by AHC on issues of juveniles and women at penitentiary institutions.

These activities were realized in the context of the project "For better respect for the rights of juveniles and women at penitentiary institutions, supported by UNICEF, Tiranë, with financial assistance from SIDA and the European Commission.

7.2.4 Albanian local trainers train the prison administration

During November 4-6, 2008, AHC undertook a follow-up mission to oversee and assess three local trainers of prisons from three local penitentiary institutions, Fushë-Krujë, Peqin, and Rrogozhinë. The trainers were trained on the treatment of juveniles and women in penitentiary institutions, based on the written program of "Training of Trainers," organized in June 2007 by AHC.

During the three training days, participants addressed topics such as conflict management in institutions, alleviating the aggressiveness of persons deprived of their liberty, and the role of prison employees in this regard, the communication and cooperation structure between sectors in the institution. All these topics were based on the module prepared for the local Albanian trainers.

Mr. Jan van den Brand, expert from the Dutch Prison Service, and Ms. Edlira Papavangjeli, AHC Project Manager, participated in the follow-up mission in order to oversee and support it.

These activities were realized in the context of the project "For better respect for the rights of juveniles and women at penitentiary institutions, supported by UNICEF, Tiranë, with financial assistance from SIDA and the European Commission.

7.2.5 Recently hired employees receive training

During December 10-12, 2008, AHC organized a training course focused on recently hired officers in uniform at the Fushë-Krujë institution. The main objective of these training programs was to boost the professional skills of the institution's personnel in uniform. The topics addressed in these training programs regarded the organization and functioning of a prison; care for personnel and its selection; professional skills and behavior toward convicts; convicts and contact with the outer world; disciplinary policies; request-complaints; different protocols regarding suicide; infectious diseases, etc.

International experts Mr. Jan van den Brand and Mr. Cees Boeij gave their contribution to the training program. 30 officers in uniform received training and certificates on the successful completion of the basic training.

The activity was organized in the context of the program "Human Prison Management," funded by the European Commission Delegation in Tirana, CARDS 2004 program.

7.2.6. Inauguration of the new Fushë-Krujë penitentiary institution

On December 12, 2008, a ceremony to inaugurate the Fushë-Krujë institution was organized and invitees included Mr. Enkelejd Alibeaj, Minister of Justice, Mr. Helmut Lohan, Ambassador of the European Commission in Tirana, Mr. Gazmend Dibra, General Director of Prisons, Ms. Vasilika Hysi, Executive Director of AHC, Mr. Jan van den Brand, representative of the Dutch Agency of Rehabilitation Institutions, as well as other representatives of state institutions pertinent to the field.

8.0 EUROPEAN CONVENTION AND STRASBOURG COURT IN AHC'S FOCUS OF ACTIVITIES

8.1 Fuqizimi i kapaciteteve te OJF-ve nëpërmjet përdorimit më të mirë të mekanizmave mbrojtës të Këshillit të Europës

On October 2-3, 2008, in the context of increasing the capacities of organizations offering legal services, AHC organized the course "General overview of protection mechanisms of the Council of Europe - Procedural and theoretical aspects of case representation in the ECHR." The course addressed legal and practical aspects of the Constitution-sanctioned rights as: the right to live (article 2), prohibition of torture (article 3), the right to due legal process (article 6), the right to privacy and the family (article 8), right to non-discrimination (article 14); and Council of Europe protection mechanisms.

Mr. Sokol Puto, independent expert and Mr. Andi Dobrushki, lawyer at the European Center for Roma Rights, Ms. Elira Kokona, expert and legal advisor at the Council of Europe, Ms. Suela Mëneri, Legal Representative of the Albanian State, provided their expertise in the course.

The course was made possible thanks to support from the Swedish Helsinki Committee.

8.2 AHC participates in the meeting of the working group at the MFA

AHC participated in the meeting of the working group organized by the MFA's Legal Representative Office regarding progress on the implementation of the Committee of Ministers' 5 recommendations, to the Albanian State. The meeting addressed legal and practical aspects of the process. Legal representative, Ms. Mëneri, invited all participants to be part of the working group that would be established for the selection of the 10 best decisions to be publicized in the OPC and asked for views and recommendations on the process of compatibility and rapprochement of Albanian legislation with the ECHR and other international acts.

Ms. Etilda Saliu, representing AHC in the meeting, praised the proposal and noted the need to establish an enforcement mechanism for Constitutional Court decisions.

8.3 AHC offers its expertise in the seminar on the Government Agent's role before the ECHR

During November 11-12, 2008, the Albanian Helsinki Committee offered its expertise in the two-day seminar organized on the role of the Government Agent before the European Court of Human Rights. Some legal and practical aspects of some ECHR articles were addressed in the seminar as: article 1, protocol 1 (right to ownership), article 3 (prohibition of torture), and article 5 (right to safety and freedom). These rights were addressed in light of decisions issued by ECHR for Albania.

Ms. Vasilika Hysi, AHC Executive Director, addressed the rights of detainees and prisoners according to Albanian legislation and practical enforcement problems.

The seminar was organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, and the Council of Europe.

8.4 AHC trains local NPO's representatives, jurists, and lecturers in some districts

To build the capacities of representatives of local organizations, jurists, and Law School lecturers on legal and practical aspects of some articles of the European Convention on Human Rights, on **November 17, 18, and 21**, AHC organized some training courses in Elbasan, Shkodër, and Vlorë, in cooperation with the Council of Europe.

In the courses, known experts such as Mr. Sokol Puto, independent expert, Ms. Suela Mëneri, legal representative of the Albanian state, Ms. Etilda Saliu, offered expertise.

The courses were made possible through financial support of the Swedish Helsinki Committee in cooperation with the Council of Europe.

9 AHC SENSITIZES THE PUBLIC THROUGH THE PRINT MEDIA

Human rights, justice reform, and electoral reform - on a TV debate on Ora News

On October 16, 2008, Ms. Vasilika Hysi, AHC Executive Director, was a guest of TV Ora News to discuss the human rights situation in Albania and justice reforms. She reiterated the need to observe respect for human rights in Albania, develop justice and electoral reforms through broad participation of interest groups, accelerate the pace for approving the Electoral Code and preparation of electoral infrastructure, especially the voter lists and citizens' ID cards.

Ms. Hysi also emphasized the need to develop justice reform through broad discussions, aiming at greater professionalism, effectiveness, efficaciousness, and judicial independence.

On Shijak TV about conditions at accompaniment and detention rooms

On October 30, 2008, Ms. Vasilika Hysi, AHC Executive Director was interviewed on Shijak TV regarding conclusions of the monitoring of accompaniment and detention rooms at some police commissariats. AHC expressed concern about hygiene in the premises, lack of special spaces for juveniles and women, and the very worn-out infrastructure of part of the premises. According to AHC, infrastructure and hygiene conditions affect non-respect for the rights of accompanied or detained persons.

Respect for the rights of detained and arrested persons

A young man's maltreatment by Sarandë police became part of a debate on News 24 TV on November 13, 2008. Guests included representatives of the People's Advocate, former police officers, journalists, and Ms. Vasilika Hysi, AHC Executive Director. Spurred by the case, Ms. Hysi reiterated the need to increase police officers' professionalism, their acquaintance with and enforcement of arrested persons' rights, the role of internal and external monitoring mechanisms of police commissariats, detention facilities and prisons, and the need to punish seriously cases of maltreatment by officers that exercise power.

Human rights and freedoms after 10 years from the approval of the Constitution

On November 2- 3, 2008, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Constitution, Ms. Vasilika Hysi, AHC Executive Director, was a guest on an A1 TV program. The addressed cases included citizens' rights and freedoms after the approval of the cConstitution, progress made and existing problems; the most violated rights in the past 10 years; justice reform, amendments to the constitution, treatment of persons deprived of their liberty. The discussion also targeted acquaintance with and implementation of the Constitution and the need to inform the public.

10. ROUND TABLE DISCUSSIONS AND MEETINGS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY, STATE INSTITUTIONS, AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

10.1 AHC participates in the meeting organized about the U.S. electoral campaign

AHC participated in the meeting organized about some aspects of the electoral campaign in the United States. U.S. Embassy representatives outlined the electoral campaign in the U.S., also presenting the issues as seen by each candidate in the campaign. Civil society participants, through their questions, expressed special interest in transparency over campaign financing and its procedures and criteria.

The event was organized by the U.S. Embassy on October 13, 2008. Ms. Etilda Saliu, AHC's legal clinic coordinator, represented AHC in the meeting.

10.2 AHC participates in the meeting organized for orphan children

On October 14, 2008, AHC participated in the meeting organized about issues encountered by orphan children from 0 to 18 years in Albania, including: indifference of state institutions and the civil society toward them; problems of education and housing; deficiencies in legislation; frequent changes in orphanage personnel. Participants made recommendations to improve the situation, such as: the need to unify law enforcement on social welfare; improve favorable policies on housing for these children; greater attention and interventions by the local government toward these children, etc.

The table was organized by Amnesty International and Ms. Etilda Saliu, legal clinic coordinator, represented AHC.

10.3 AHC participates in the round table discussion "16 days of activism against domestic violence"

On October 31, 2008, AHC participated in the round table discussion organized by CRCA to precede different activities planned on the occasion of "16 days of activism against domestic violence." The goal was to present the different activities planned by all participants on the occasion and coordinate the dates for the important events, in order to make possible the participation of the respective representatives of state institutions and the civil society.

Ms. Erida Skëndaj, legal assistant and office administrator, represented AHC in the meeting.

10.4 AHC participates in the working meeting "Albanian migration: dynamics, impact, and opportunities"

On November 3, 2008, AHC participated in the working meeting “Albanian migration: dynamics, impact, and opportunities.” The purpose of the meeting was to ensure the best coordination possible of the activity of all the responsible state actors and civil society in the area of emigration and migration. A study was presented regarding the areas most affected by the phenomenon, the characteristics, and profiles of returned emigrants, and the identification of existing opportunities for their professional training.

The event was organized by the International Organization of Migration (IOM) and Ms. Erida Skëndaj, legal assistant and office administrator, represented AHC in it.

10.5 AHC participates in the regional dialogue on institutional development and eu integration

On November 13, 2008, Ms. Vasilika Hysi, AHC Executive Director, participated in the Regional Dialogue on “Institutional development and EU integration.” Ms. Hysi presented some of the theoretical and practical aspects of human rights in Albania and the ratification of the European Convention of Human Rights by Albania, the novelties it introduced by becoming an internal part of Albanian legislation.

The event was organized and funded by USAID (Hope Fellowships Programme).

10.6 AHC participates in the working meeting on social inclusion in Albania

On December 10, 2008, AHC participated in the working meeting on the discussion of some issues and problems that accompany the inclusion of vulnerable groups into the society in Albania. Known experts introduced the “Action Plan on the Social Inclusion Strategy.” The plan determined the priority areas for interventions by the actors contributing to the process. AHC considered the meeting very important in determining the intervention needs for the future in keeping with the target of its activity.

Soros organized the round table discussion and E. Skëndaj, legal assistant and office administrator, represented AHC in it.

10.7 AHC participates in board meeting of the International Human Rights Film Festival in Albania

On December 18, 2008, AHC participated in the board meeting of the International Human Rights Festival in Albania. During the meeting, participants discussed the films shown in the festival, the achievements of each partner in the area of human rights. The meeting also renovated the directing board and decided to hold the fourth edition of the festival during April 21-24 2009. AHC is one of the Festival partners.

Ms. Klejda Ngjela, program assistant at AHC, represented AHC in the meeting.

10.8 Participations in the International Consortium meetings

On December 12, 2009, AHC participated in the meeting of the International Consortium on Integrated Border Management, which addressed progress and problems in the area. AHC presented the initiatives it had realized and those planned for 2009, pursuant to its mission of contributing to better respect for human rights at Albanian border crossing points.

Participating in the meeting were senior representatives of state institutions, different civil society actors, non-profit organizations working in this area, donors, and representatives of international bodies.

Ms. Ersida Sefa, project coordinator, represented AHC in the meeting.

On December 18, 2009, AHC participated in the meeting of the International Consortium regarding the latest developments of legal reform in the areas of justice, prisons, juvenile justice, etc. An important point of the meeting was to update the members of the Consortium on the activities of each participant. In this context, AHC representative Ms. Erida Skëndaj presented AHC's initiative to monitor first instance courts and appeals courts in some districts of Albania, regarding the implementation of the right to a due legal process. The findings of the monitoring will be submitted to relevant institutions and consortium members.

11. CAPACITY BUILDING FOR THE AHC STAFF

11.1 AHC participates in the training program "Gender equality and European integration"

On October 13 - 14, 2008, Erida Skëndaj, legal assistant and office administrator at AHC, participated in the training program "Gender equality and European integration." The program equipped participants with general knowledge on the European legal framework and international documents on gender equality as well as addressed our country's progress in the European integration process, referring to the fulfillment of obligations in the context of the SAA, which includes gender equality issues.

The program was organized by the Gender Alliance for Development Center.

11.2 AHC participates in the intensive training "NPO Directors, Instructions on Finances"

During December 15-16, 2008, AHC participated in the intensive training "NPO Directors, Instructions on Finances." The focus of the training included NPO directors and management staff and it equipped participants with knowledge on the financial aspects of NPOs; characteristics of general accounting principles; steps to improve and draft internal control system; the organization of financial documentation - structure of balance sheets, financial report, and the cashier.

Participating in the training program were representatives from several national and international NPOs. AHC was represented by Ms. Katerina Sherko, finance manager, and Ms. Erida Skëndaj, office administrator and legal assistant.

The training was organized by the audit of AHC, Fabel, Werner & Scjnitke Ltd.