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ALBANIAN HELSINKI COMMITTEE

NEWSLETTER

January - March 2008

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AHC ADDRESSES THE PRIME MINISTER ABOUT THE SITUATION IN DETENTION INSTITUTIONS

During *November-December 2007*, AHC undertook several observation missions at detention institutions and prisons. Based on their conclusions, AHC submitted its concerns about the situation in these facilities and relevant suggestions to improve the situation to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice, and the General Director of Prisons.....

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CITIZENS' COMPLAINTS TO AHC

During *January-March 2008*, in the context of AHC's free legal aid, AHC addressed a large number of complaints, 263, on: poor conditions at institutions for serving prison sentences, failure to respect pre-trial detention deadlines and remand measures, use of physical and psychological violence in detention and accompaniment premises, etc.

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INCREASING COOPERATION BETWEEN STATE INSTITUTIONS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL IN THE FIGHT AGAINST IRREGULAR MIGRATION

On *February 28, 2008*, AHC organized in the district of Kukës a round table discussion with representatives of local institutions to increase awareness and cooperation between local authorities to prevent and fight the illegal crossing of borders.....

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Prepared by: Erida Skëndaj

Office Administrator/
Assistant Accountant

Editing by: Marie Mato

For further information, please contact us at:

ALBANIAN HELSINKI COMMITTEE

Str. Gjin Bue Shpata; Pall. 5/1,
Ap.4, Tiranë, P.O Box no. 1752
web-site: www.ahc.org.al

Tel: 04 233671
Cel: 068 20 23 699;
E-mail: office@ahc.org.al

1. MONITORING

1.1 OBSERVATION MISSIONS AT BORDER CROSSING POINTS

During *January 2008*, AHC observed the border crossing points of Qafë-Botë, Tre Urat, and the Port of Sarandë to monitor respect for the rights of Albanian emigrants by Albanian and foreign police, and highlight progress made compared to previous observations. AHC also sought to focus on a close-up observation of infrastructure at receiving facilities and surrounding premises, as factors that have an impact on respect for human rights at these border crossing points.

In this framework, AHC held direct meetings with senior police officers, border police officers, and emigrants crossing through the border points. At the conclusion of its observations, AHC presented a final report of observations, conducted during *November 2007 - January 2008* at 12 border crossing points, to the relevant state institutions. The report reflects the main findings regarding progress made in the legal area, recruitment of female personnel at border crossing points, improvement of staff capacities, problems related to the implementation of Albania's Readmission Agreements with EU countries; the need for further improvements in the infrastructure of border crossing points and receiving facilities for interviewing deportees, the lack of logistical and technical equipment that affect the work of personnel at these border crossing points, and on respect for citizens' rights; insufficient financial resources to meet food needs of deported persons.

Reflecting observed problems, the report includes recommendations and suggestions for concrete measures to improve respect for the rights of Albanian emigrants and foreigners going through these border crossings.

1.2 OBSERVATION MISSIONS AT PENITENTIARY INSTITUTIONS

During *January-February 2008*, AHC conducted observations at pre-trial detention institutions and those for the execution of penal decisions Ali Demi, Jordan Misja, Vaqarr, "Mine Peza", and the Durrës pre-trial detention facility. The goal of the observation was to monitor respect for the rights of persons deprived of their liberty. At the conclusion of observations, AHC produced a full report on the situation at pre-trial detention facilities in the country and with relevant suggestions to improve the situation in this area.

1.3 SPORADIC AND PLANNED OBSERVATIONS AT INSTITUTIONS FOR SERVING PRISON SENTENCES AND DETENTION AND ACCOMPANIMENT PREMISES¹

In the context of free legal aid and complaints addressed to AHC, during *January-March 2008*, the Committee undertook several observations at institutions for serving prison sentences, pre-trial detention facilities, and police commissariats.

¹ These observations were carried out in the context of the project "For better respect for the rights of victims," supported by the Swedish Helsinki Committee

Based on their findings, AHC addressed the Prosecutor's Office to investigate claimed cases, and the institutions for serving prison sentences, and the General Directory of Prisons.

Also, during the period *March-April 2008*, AHC monitored the detention and accompaniment rooms in 18 police commissariats. The monitoring highlighted problems such as: poor conditions, worn out infrastructure, lack of beds, overcrowding, etc. The presence of persons for whom judicial district courts had issued remand measures at detention facilities remained a problem.

Through public statements, letters and public appeals on the Ministry of Justice, the Prime Minister, the Interior Ministry, and the General Directory of Prisons, AHC has requested the transfer of these persons to pre-trial detention facilities. In spite of improvements after AHC's intervention, the situation is still a problem.

1.4 RESPECT FOR THE RIGHTS OF DETAINED PERSONS DEMANDS INTERVENTION BY THE GOVERNMENT AND THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

Based on the situation found at pre-trial detention facilities, the Albanian Helsinki Committee wrote to Mr. Sali Berisha, Prime Minister, Mr. Enkelejd Alibeaj, Minister of Justice, Mr. Lulëzim Kodra, Deputy General Director of Prisons, regarding some concerns emerging from AHC's latest observations at pre-trial detention facilities and the hospital center under the General Directory of Prisons.

The letter addresses some problems found in the course of AHC's observations during *November-December 2007*, at detention institutions and prisons, namely in Berat, Vlorë, Krujë, Kukës, Tropojë, Korçë, Peqin, and the Tiranë Prison Hospital.

The goal of the observations is to monitor, on site, respect for the standards of treating arrested and convicted persons, respect for their rights in general and the rights of juveniles and women in particular, as well as compliance with recommendations made by local and international monitoring institutions, including the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhumane and Humiliating Treatment or Conviction. For more, please read the full letter at www.ahc.org.al

2.0 LEGAL CRITIQUE

Convinced that respect for human rights and freedoms depends also on the law and its contents, during the period of *January-March 2008*, AHC offered legal opinions and suggestions on different draft laws, seen from a human rights standpoint. AHC offered its views on: amendments to the law for better protection of juveniles; amendments to the Penal Code and the law on the execution of penal decisions, alternative convictions, and the establishment of the evidence service; the draft law "On the protection of private

data,” and amendments to the law “On the rights and treatment of convicted and detained persons”; the NPOs Code of Ethics, and the draft law “On free legal aid.”

AHC was invited to discussion sessions at the parliamentary commission of laws and constitutional issues to share its views about amendments to the law “On the rights and treatment of convicted and detained persons.” The parliamentary commission took into consideration 9 of the 15 recommendations submitted by the AHC.

Being a member of the Albanian Coalition *For the Protection of Handicapped Persons*, AHC contributed to improving the regulations of this coalition.

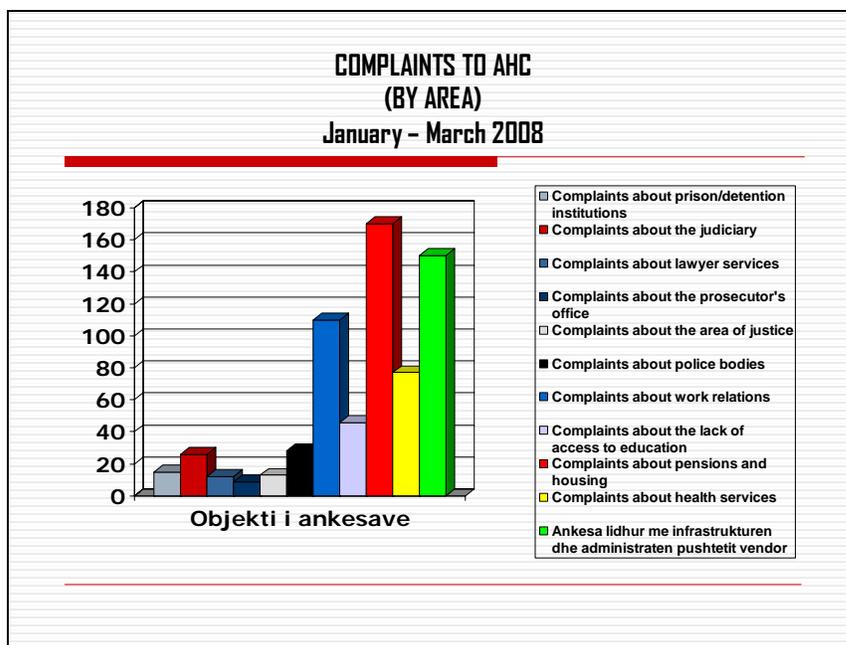
3.0 CITIZENS RAISE COMPLAINTS WITH AHC

3.1 CITIZENS’ COMPLAINTS TO AHC

During *January-March 2008*, in the context of free legal aid, AHC addressed a large number of complaints, 263 about: poor conditions at institutions for serving prison sentences, failure to respect pre-trial detention deadlines and remand measures, use of physical and psychological violence at detention and accompaniment facilities, etc. Furthermore, thanks to monitoring missions conducted at places where the Roma minority and the Egyptian community dwell, the Committee handled a series of complaints regarding the lack of infrastructure, the absence of primary health care services, lack of children’s education because of their non-registration, social welfare, etc.

Regarding the received complaints, AHC offered a variety of services such as legal advice, assistance to complete documentation, various verifications, monitoring of judicial processes, interventions in different state institutions, etc. In cases of flagrant human rights violations, AHC has reacted through public statements, open letters, and letters to state institutions recommending the taking of measures, etc.

Below is a graphic display of the target of complaints to AHC, services offered, and the category of beneficiaries.



3.2 AHC REACTS PUBLICLY ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

During *January-March 2008*, AHC issued 12 statements reported in the print and broadcast media. The statements had to do mainly with the protection of human rights, such as: women's rights, the rights of employees, of detained and imprisoned persons, of minorities and communities, of journalists, and the tragedy of Gërdec which had serious consequences in human lives and material damages.

4.0 SENSITIZING ACTIVITIES ON RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

4.1 INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS FILM FESTIVAL IN ALBANIA (IHRFFA)

The MARUBI Film and Multimedia Academy, in cooperation with the partners network including UNICEF, the Albanian Media Institute, the Albanian Helsinki Committee, the OSCE, Terre des Hommes, ARSIS, the MJAFT Moement, KRIIK Albania, and some of the embassies in Albania, organized during *March 19-23* the third edition of the International Human Rights Film Festival in Albania (IHRFFA). The main goal of IHRFFA is to raise awareness among the public and state institutions for better respect for human rights in general and those of the vulnerable society groups in particular.

In this context, 28 films were shown during 5 days in 29 hours in this third edition of the Festival. The featured films addressed different human rights themes related to post-totalitarian societies, minorities and integration, manipulation of the media, etc. The public, and the media, showed special interest in following the event.

4.2 NON-DISCRIMINATION - IN THE FOCUS OF AHC

4.2.1 ACTIVITIES AND MEETINGS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ROMA MINORITY AND THE EGYPTIAN COMMUNITY

In the context of raising awareness about and offering legal services to the Egyptian community and the Roma minority, during *February - March 2008*, AHC conducted observations, meetings, and information sharing with inhabitants and representatives of Roma and Egyptian organizations in the cities of Fier, Elbasan, Shkodër, Gjirokastër, Durrës, Fushë Krujë, Korçë and Tiranë.

AHC representatives discussed with community inhabitants about their rights and the legal ways to be pursued for resolving their issues and reinstating their violated rights. The events ensured better familiarization with the activity of local organizations working with the Roma minority and the Egyptian community and the highlighting of problems in the daily lives of the Roma minority and the Egyptian community. Some of the issues were resolved on the spot and the others were referred to the relevant institutions.

Based on their complaints and concerns, AHC representatives discussed with representatives of the local administration about issues such as: taxes, green areas, housing, social services for Roma and Egyptian families, health services, and education for the children of these communities. In these communities, failure to register children with the civil registry office remains a problem. This, in turn, leads to their failure to enroll in schools and to benefit from social and health services. Unemployment and housing remain disturbing problems for these communities.

AHC correspondents in the districts, experts of the field, Ms. Zana Sota - AHC member, volunteers, and AHC's permanent staff gave their contribution to the organization and proper conduct of the events. A report has been prepared on each district, reflecting the problems and concerns of the communities.

4.2.2 FOR GREATER SENSITIZATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES REGARDING RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

Following up on awareness-raising events on the Roma minority and the Egyptian community in some districts of Albania, during the period of *February - March 2008*, AHC organized meetings with senior officials and representatives of local government bodies, such as communes, municipalities, and prefectures, representatives of the respective police commissariats, representatives of primary and secondary health care services, of education institutions, etc.

The meetings sought to raise problems found by AHC at the local level in order to help improve the situation and respect for the rights of the Egyptian community and the Roma minority.

4.2.3 NON-DISCRIMINATION - THE JUSTICE SYSTEM AND LAW ENFORCEMENT BODIES

In the context of raising awareness and building the capacities of justice system employees and police officers for the implementation of recommendations of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), in cooperation with the Magistrates' School, the General Directory of Prisons, and ECRI, AHC conducted on *February 18-19, 2008*, two training courses: one for judges, prosecutors, and judicial police officers, and another with state police officers².

Issues addressed during both courses included: ECRI recommendations for the judicial system, police, and law enforcement agencies in Albania; the role of police, prosecutors, and judges in preventing and fighting racism, intolerance, and discrimination; Albanian legislation on racial discrimination and intolerance; problems of practice in Albania.

Participants in the training courses included police officers, prosecutors, and judicial police officers coming from districts with a concentration of Roma minority and Egyptian community members. The trainers were Ms. Sarah Burton, a jurist at the General Secretariat of ECRI, Ms. Vasilika Hysi, Executive Director of AHC and ECRI member, Ms. Suela Mëneri, jurist, legal representative for international human rights organizations, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Participants praised the training for the novelties it offered in the theoretical and practical areas, for addressing practical cases, and for the professionalism of the expertise that was offered.

4.3 INCREASING ACCESS OF MINORITIES TO LOCAL DECISION MAKING

4.3.1 AHC ACTIVITIES AT THE TIRANË, ELBASAN, FIER, AND GJIROKASTËR MUNICIPALITIES REGARDING RESPECT FOR MINORITY RIGHTS

With a view to increasing the participation of minorities in local government bodies and improving the latter's services to the most needy societal groups, increasing the capacities of Municipal Councils to draft effective strategies for increasing the access of minorities and vulnerable groups, the Albanian Helsinki Committee, in collaboration with the Municipal Councils of the municipalities of Tiranë, Elbasan, Fier, and Gjirokastër, organized during *September-October 2007*, a survey of citizens and the municipal administration of the respective municipalities on respect for minority rights at the local level.³

After processing the data of the survey, AHC compiled the first draft of the report. The draft was discussed at round tables held in Tiranë, Elbasan, Fier, and Gjirokastër with local civil society representatives in order to obtain additional information, conclusions, and recommendations on the issues addressed in the report.

After discussions with interest groups, during the period of February-March 2008, AHC organized 4 round table discussions at the municipalities of Tiranë, Elbasan, Fier, and Gjirokastër. Invited to the the round table discussions were representatives of the

² This activity was developed in the context of the project supported by CORDAID.

³ For further information on conclusions for each municipality, you may visit:
<http://www.ahc.org.al/kshh/minoriteti/MINORITETI.html>

respective municipalities, local civil society, minority organizations, local state authorities, intellectuals, students, etc. The purpose of the round tables was to have discussions about the main conclusions emerging from the report and their analysis by the main actors at the local level: local state authorities and/or elected ones and the civil society, and creation of bridges of cooperation in the future.

In all activities organized by AHC, the media was present and demonstrated an interest in covering them. After the round table discussions, AHC representatives appeared on TV programs in the main television stations where they presented the main conclusions of the study and the main issues for the broad public.

4.3.2 CONTRIBUTION TO STRENGTHENING ALBANIAN EMIGRANTS' ASSOCIATIONS IN GREECE

In order to contribute to strengthening the associations of Albanian emigrants in Greece, to preserving the Albanian language among our emigrants, and promote Albanian literature in Greece, AHC helped collect an amount of artistic books from different publishing houses. The artistic books were donated by the Çabej and OMSCA-1 publishing houses. AHC takes the opportunity to thank them for their contribution to help preserve national elements among emigrants and for the moral support offered to Albanian emigrants living in Greece. AHC will donate the books to the Albanian associations in Greece for them to donate to our emigrants for free.

5. TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN PRISONS

5.1 TRAINING FOR SENIOR OFFICIALS OF PENITENTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN ALBANIA

In order to help improve imprisonment conditions at institutions for serving prison sentences and to consolidate the role of leading officials, on *January 24, 2008*, AHC, together with its expert Mr. Jan van den Brand, introduced senior prison officials with an effective instrument for measuring the environment and the treatment of convicts with dignity and humanism. The audit instrument highlights the perceptions of convicts and personnel in these institutions regarding a series of important issues and the quality of services in these institutions. The instrument creates room for penitentiary institutions and the General Directory of Prisons (GDP) to conduct analyses of the current situation and find ways to improve it. Last, but not least, the instrument offers a standardized, objective, and comprehensive approach. AHC recommends that the instrument be used in some pilot institutions.

5.2 TRAINING OF LOCAL ALBANIAN TRAINERS

During *March 10-20, 2008*, AHC organized the program "Training of trainers in the Netherlands," which sought to enable Albanian trainers in the treatment of juveniles and women as well as in rehabilitation programs in penitentiary institutions. Participants were trained by 9 very experienced trainers and experts from the penitentiary and training areas. The presentations and case studies were combined with visits to 6

detention facilities and prisons in the Netherlands. Participants had the opportunity to see from up close how the treatment of detainees and convicts was offered.

In the end, all three working groups presented a part of the training they will realize with their colleagues in the institutions they work at. Participants received the respective certificate and a complete training manual to be used in their further training courses with 11 trainers.

AHC has been notified by the GDP about the drafting of work plans for the training programs that have been carried out or are in process by the local trainers in their institutions in the coming months.

5.3 THE PROCESS OF DRAFTING PRISON TRAINING CENTER (PTC) PROGRAMS

During *February 4-6, 2008*, the Albanian Helsinki Committee (AHC) organized a working session on drafting programs of the CPT for introductory training of recently selected basic role officers. Soon three new penitentiary institutions will begin to function and they will need trained employees. The main goal of the working session was to give concrete contribution and assistance to the working group for drafting the 22-day training program for basic role employees who had just been selected in the penitentiary system.

Experienced international experts such as Ms. Jet Hilverdink, senior trainer at the Dutch Prisons Training Center and Mr. Jan van den Brand, expert in the penitentiary area of the Dutch Agency of Correction Institutions, gave their contribution by helping the working group constantly.

The Albanian working group became familiar with the details of drafting basic programs, especially the way in which to draft training modules, instructions for trainers, work plans and work books for students/employees to be trained. At the end of the work session, working group participants took the concrete engagement to work together in four working groups to draft the manual, the workbooks and work plans for the trainers who will provide the training. The working groups are continuing to work for improving and completing the preliminary version of the materials.

5.4 SUPPORT FOR THE PROCESS OF STARTING THE INSTITUTIONS OF THE KORÇË PRISON AND THE VLORË DETENTION FACILITY

During *February 25-27, 2008* and on *April 11, 2008*, AHC together with the experts Mr. Jan van den Brand and Mr. Jacques van Huet organized two working missions with the leading staff of the Korçë prison and the Vlorë detention facility. During these missions, they offered support for the opening and functioning of these institutions. Participants were introduced to a manual of regime implementation in the institution and its priorities. The working groups at these institutions are working to draft the written procedures that will help a better functioning for the new institutions.

6. AHC'S ATTENTION TO EMIGRANTS' RIGHTS

6.1 HANDLING LETTERS AND COMPLAINTS IN THE AREA OF PROTECTION OF ALBANIAN EMIGRANTS' RIGHTS

During *January-March 2008*, a telephone line available to Albanian emigrants continued to function at AHC with a view to protecting their rights. During this period, AHC received and addressed 13 different complaints. AHC offered complainers legal counseling on how to resolve their issues. Also, on special cases, AHC addressed the responsible state institutions and other local and international organizations offering services in this area.

For part of the complaints, AHC collaborated with the Greek Helsinki Monitor to address some cases related to the rights of Albanian emigrants in Greece. Some complaints addressed to AHC deal with complaint procedures in the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. On these, AHC offered legal counseling on the procedures, deadlines, and the legal basis to be implemented.

6.2 THE SCHOOL PLAYS A SPECIAL ROLE IN PREVENING IRREGULAR MIGRATION

On *February 27, 2008*, AHC organized in the district of Kukës a round table discussion on "The school's educational role in sensitizing youth about the prevention of irregular migration"⁴. The purpose of the discussion was to boost the role of the school in sensitizing youth about the prevention of irregular migration and inform them better about the possibilities of regular migration.

Discussions at the round table highlighted the low level of knowledge and information among teachers and youth regarding the legal possibilities of regular migration and the risks and consequences coming with irregular migration; the need to publish informative and sensitizing materials; the need to engage all actors to sensitize youth; and the organization of professional training courses for youth wishing to migrate abroad for employment purposes. AHC highlighted the need for a more effective engagement of local government institutions, the civil society, the media, and their coordination in order to achieve better awareness of the society and youth.

At the conclusion of discussions, AHC presented the responsible state institutions with some of the main conclusions and recommendations in order for them to take concrete measures to fight irregular migration.

Contributors to the round table included representatives of the Educational Directory, heads of all high and 9-year schools of the district of Kukës, teachers of social subjects, psychologists, and representatives of parent boards and student governments.

7 COOPERATION WITH STATE INSTITUTIONS AND NGO-S

7.1 INCREASING COOPERATION BETWEEN STATE INSTITUTIONS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL IN THE FIGHT AGAINST IRREGULAR MIGRATION

In order to increase the awareness and cooperation between local authorities as well as between them and civil society actors and the media to prevent and fight illegal

⁴ This activity was carried out through the financial support of two AHC partners – CORDAID and the Norwegian Helsinki Committee.

border crossing, AHC organized on *February 28, 2008*, a round table discussion with local institutions representatives in the district of Kukës⁵.

Some of the issues discussed at the round table included: factors encouraging irregular migration such as poverty, high unemployment rate, lack of information about legal forms of migration; the role of the civil society and foreign donors in improving the economic situation and reducing unemployment; increasing the budget of local bodies for a more differentiated treatment of this district; cooperation with local businesses to encourage employment, and increasing the role of the Regional Employment Service Office in drafting and implementing more efficacious employment policies.

Participating in the round table discussion were representatives of the General Directory of Police, the Department of Borders and Migration, high-level representatives of state institutions at the local level such as the Municipality, the Prefecture, the Regional Council, the Regional Police Directory, the Regional Employment Service Office and Social Services, and representatives of local non-profit organizations.

AHC submitted the main conclusions and suggestions of the round table discussion to the responsible state authorities in order to take concrete measures to guarantee the free and regular movement of citizens.

7.2 ALBANIAN COALITION –“DISABILITIES AND DEVELOPMENT”

In *February 2008*, a group of human rights organizations, including the Albanian Helsinki Committee, created the Albanian Coalition – “Disabilities and development.” The purpose in founding it is the promotion and protection of persons with disabilities through cooperation and the exchange of information and expertise among members, to include issues of disabilities in development programs.

In this context, Coalition members held several meetings in order to consolidate and approve of its leading structures to ensure its good functioning in the future. The Coalition’s activity will be based on a joint agreement approved by all the members.

One of the Coalition’s initiatives was the preparation of an open letter that was sent to all responsible state institutions in order to encourage the improvement of the Electoral Code to guarantee respect for the right to vote of persons with disabilities. With assistance from the People’s Advocate, the coalition is contributing to sensitizing and exerting pressure on responsible state institutions to approve the legal status of persons with mental disabilities.

7.3 INCREASING AHC’S COOPERATION WITH LOCAL NPO-S⁶

Pursuant to increasing the access of local NPOs to AHC and their cooperation with it, during *February and March 2008*, AHC correspondents in Shkodër and Fier organized meetings with local human rights NPOs. Initially, they presented AHC’s objectives in

⁵ This activity was made possible through the financial support of AHC’s partners – CORDAID and the Norwegian Helsinki Committee.

⁶ The activities were realized in the context of the project “For better protection of the rights of victims of human rights violations” – Legal Clinic, supported financially by the Swedish Helsinki Committee

general and in greater detail the legal services that AHC offers through its Legal Clinic. During the meetings, AHC representatives disseminated sensitizing and informative materials regarding human rights and AHC's mission.

7.4 PARTICIPATION IN COORDINATING MEETINGS

As a member of the International Consortium and in order to update and coordinate better the activities with other local and foreign actors; in order to contribute better to respect for human rights and freedoms, and to sensitize local and foreign institutions active in Albania, AHC took part in the meetings of the Consortium regarding the areas of prisons, legal reform, and juvenile justice.

8. INCREASING CITIZENS' ACCESS TO AHC

8.1 PRINT AND BROADCAST MEDIA - AHC PARTNERS IN SENSITIZING AND EDUCATING THE PUBLIC ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS

To increase the citizens' access to AHC at the local level, during the period *January - March 2008*, AHC correspondents in the districts of Korçë, Shkodër, Elbasan, Gjirokastrë, and Fier presented to the local print and broadcast media AHC's activity, the free legal services it offers, encountered problems, and concrete measures taken to resolve them.

The local newspapers such as: "Nositi" (of Korçë), "Java Elbasan" and "Ku vemi" (Elbasan), "Albania", "Integrimi" and "Telegraf" (Tiranë) were the media that helped convey the above messages for sensitizing the public.

During *January - February 2008*, AHC organized several local TV and radio programs to inform citizens about the services that AHC offers in the area of legal aid. Four programs were held on local radios and TVs including: TV "Magic Star" of Korçë, Tv Skampa in Elbasan, TV Rozafa in Shkodër, and TV Kombi in Fier. AHC correspondents also informed listeners and viewers about the issues encountered in the respective districts.

Gjatë takimeve me gazetarët u diskutua lidhur me format e bashkëpunimit në të ardhmen për mbrojtjen e të drejtave të njeriut dhe rivendosjen në vend të të drejtave të shkelura.

9. AHC'S INSTITUTIONAL EMPOWERMENT

9.1 TRAINING TRIAL MONITORS

Based on the problems that the Albanian justice system faces, in order to contribute to better respect for citizens' rights by the judiciary, AHC organized the training program, "Legal and practical aspects related to trial monitoring."

The monitoring methodology, the due legal process, aspects of the organization of the judicial system, court functions, citizens' rights and their access to courts, NPOs' role in monitoring courts and namely AHC's, legislation of the judicial system in Albania

and its implementation in practice, and the meaning and implementation of article 5 and 6 of the ECHR were some of the addressed issues.

Experts shared their experience from countries such as Sweden, Macedonia, and Turkey. Experts Ms. Ulrika Borg and Violeta Velkovska and Prof. Arta Mandro, director of the Magistrates School, offered their expertise.

Participants in the training included students of law, new jurists, jurists from different organizations, AHC correspondents, and lawyers from some districts. The program was held during *March 20-21, 2008*⁷.

9.2 STUDY VISIT ON RESPECT FOR THE RIGHTS AND INTEGRATION IN THE SOCIETY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (DUBLIN, MARCH 2-9, 2008)

In *March 2008*, the USAID Mission in Albania made possible the organization of a one-week study visit to Dublin of some members of the Albanian Coalition “Disability and development,” on respect for and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. The visit was organized in the context of strengthening and boosting the professional capacities of Coalition members to improve the access of persons with disabilities in Albania to community services.

The visit aimed at offering the possibility to study and become familiar with models existing in Dublin for community services in favor of persons with disabilities, professional training programs and forms of their employment, as well as the effective protection of the rights and interests of these citizens by administrative and judicial bodies created for their protection. At the end of the study visit, each participant drafted a 6-month action plan on the forms of contribution and coordination among them to improve respect for the rights of persons with disabilities in Albania.

One representative from the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, as the responsible state body for this category of citizens, from the office of the People’s Advocate, and some human rights organizations working in this area participated in the study visit. Ms. Ersida Sefa attended from the AHC.

9.3 EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES AND BUILDING THE CAPACITIES OF AHC’S STAFF THROUGH STUDY VISITS TO HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS IN THE REGION

On *February 20-23* and *March 4-8, 2008*, Ms. Etilda saliu, coordinator of free legal service of the AHC, conducted study visits to the Macedonian Helsinki Committee in Skopje, Macedonia, the Dalmatian Solidarity Committee, in Split, Croatia, and the Croatian Helsinki Committee, in Zagreb, Croatia.

During the visit, Ms. Saliu met with senior leaders and staff members of these organizations, studied files from their practice, and assisted the direct meetings of the staff with clients seeking juridical assistance. The above activities follow the series of activities for increasing the capacities of the staff of AHC’s Legal Clinic, made possible by the Swedish Helsinki Committee.

The experience will be useful in the future for improving the organization of daily work and offering free legal aid.

⁷ The training was conducted in the context of the project “Trial Monitoring Training,” supported financially by the Swedish Helsinki Committee

9.4 THE ORGANIZATION'S STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

During *March 24- 30, 2008*, Ms. Vasilika Hysi, Executive Director of AHC, participated in the training for senior managers organized by the Harvard University, the Cambridge College, Athens. Representatives of different organizations from the region and beyond also participated in the program. The course offered opportunities for a strategic management of organizations. AHC thanks the Kokkalis Foundation and the New York University of Tirana for its financial support for this project.