



QUARTERLY

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ALBANIAN HELSINKI COMMITTEE

NEWSLETTER

January – March 2007

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Monitoring of the electoral process

During the period of January-February 2007, AHC was involved in the monitoring of the electoral campaign and the voting process on the 18th of February 2007 in the districts of Tirana, Gjirokastra, Fier, Durrës, Elbasan, Shkodër, Vlorë, Korçë and in the communes of Dropulli, Cepo, Cepo dhe Odries, in Belsh, Cërrik, Shirgjan, Bradashesh, Labintot Field, Drenovë, Gjergjan, Spitalë and Shkozet.

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AHC donates books for prisoners

AHC, donated a considerable number of *1814 books*¹ to the libraries of detention and penitentiary facilities, aimed at assisting in the improvement the living conditions in such facilities, in the establishment and enrichment of libraries inside of them, and contributing in the education and cultural enhancement of persons deprived of their liberty.

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AWARENESS CAMPAIGN “ALL DIFFERENT – ALL EQUAL” – WEEK AGAINST DISCRIMINATION, 19-24 OF MARCH 2007

On the international day against discrimination in general, and racial discrimination in particular, AHC carried out several awareness-raising activities for the young generation educating and making them aware of the need to prevent overt or covert discrimination in the society.

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1. RESPECT FOR CITIZENS' RIGHTS

1.1 Monitoring Missions

In the context of the project “Respecting Migrant and Returnee Rights”, AHC monitored the respect of citizens’ rights in some cross-border points. More concretely, on:

- ▶ On the 18th – 19th of January 2007, AHC monitored the main cross- border points with Montenegro, respectively the cross-border of: Hani i Hotit (Malësi e Madhe), Muriqan (Shkodër) and that of the seaport of Shëngjin (Lezhë).
- ▶ On the 29th – 30th of January 2007, AHC monitored the cross-border point at Vlora and Himara seaports. Main problems observed at the cross-border point at Vlora seaport related to infrastructure. There was no facility where the seaport police could interview returnees or carry out relevant procedures.
- ▶ On the 7th – 9th of February 2007, AHC monitored the main cross-border point of Saranda, respectively that of Qafë- Bllatë, Livadhja and of Saranda seaport.
- ▶ During the 12th -14th of March 2007, AHC monitored the cross-border points with Macedonia, respectively the CBP of Goricë (Korçë), Tushemisht and Qafë-Thanë (Pogradec).

Main problems observed were related to poor infrastructure at the cross-border points, treatment of citizens by border police, etc. For further information, visit AHC official web page: <http://www.ahc.org.al/kshh/eng/emigrant/EMIGRANT.html>

Relevant state authorities have been acquainted with the conclusions and recommendations drawn from these monitoring activities.

1.2 Monitoring of the electoral process

During the period January-February 2007, AHC has monitored the electoral campaign and the voting process of 18 February 2007 in Tirana, Gjirokastra, Fier, Durrës, Elbasan, Shkodra, Vlora, Korça and in the communes of Dropulli, Cepos, and Odries, in Belsh, Cërrik, Shirgjan, Bradashesh, Labinot Fushë, Drenovë, Gjergjan, Spitallë and Shkozet. The main object of the monitoring were the voter lists, the interest of the voters for the lists, exercising of the right of complain for the irregularities in the voters’ lists, the respect of the election norms during the counting and voting process, etc.

For monitoring of the local government elections of 18 February 2007, the Albanian Helsinki Committee accredited 150 long-term observers who monitored aspects of the pre-electoral process, electoral campaign, the voting and counting process, in Tirana, Durrës, Fier, Gjirokastra, Korça, Shkodra, Vlora and Elbasan and in some other

communes. For more information with this regard please visit our website: <http://www.ahc.org.al/kshh/eng/reports.html>

1.3 Observance of detainee rights

During the period of March-May 2007, in line with its human rights protection and public awareness-raising mission, AHC will carry out a round of monitoring missions in prison and detention facilities. The purpose of this round is to monitor the situation of detainee rights after the transfer of detention facilities under the authority of the Ministry of Justice as well as identify issues faced by the prison administration and look into the need for the improvement of this process. At the end of this round of monitoring, AHC will present responsible institutions with its recommendations on the improvement of the situation of detainee rights in the detention and prison institutions.

2. OFFERING EXPERTISE IN THE FIELD OF LAWMAKING AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

2.1 In its letters addressed to CEC, AHC called for the solution of various issues related to the electoral process

- ▶ With the aim of improving the respect of voter rights and enforcement of the law, AHC addressed the Central Electoral Commission AHC through a letter where it expressed its concern on the possible misinterpretations and law violations resulting from two guidelines issued by the Ministry of Interior and an official paper sent by Mr. Ferdinand Pone at the Civil Registrar's Offices on the issuing of birth certificates to voters.
- ▶ The Albanian Helsinki Committee sent a letter to Mr. Çlirim Gjata, Chairman of the Central Election Commission, on January 16, 2007 with regard to CEC measures to equip election commissions with two candles. AHC has expressed its concern that two or three days before the elections, on election day, and during the time when votes are counted and election results are issued at the LGEC level, electricity should not be missing.
- ▶ In order to ensure the integrity of the electoral process prior to Election Day, during the elections and the ballot counting process, on the 19th of January 2007 AHC addressed Mr. Genc Ruli, Minister of Economy; Mr. Andi Beli, AEC Director and copied Mr. Sali Berisha, the Head of the Council of Ministers through another letter calling for measures to guarantee uninterrupted supply of energy. In the light of recent power shortages, AHC suggested that appropriate authorities take measures to ensure uninterrupted power supply 2-3 days before the elections, on Election's Day and 2-3 days after the elections, especially in the areas where the ballot counting process had yet to be completed or where runoff elections were held.
- ▶ On the 16th of January 2007, the Albanian Helsinki Committee addressed the Head of CEC, Mr. Çlirim Gjata, and the Head of the Council of Ministers, Mr. Sali

Berisha, through a letter and informed them on the enjoyment of a voter's right to complain in case of an omission or error in the voter lists. Amendments made to the Electoral Code on the 13th of January 2007 through the law no. 9697, do not determine the role of courts in solving the concerns of a voter who was unable to find his/her name in the voters' list. In this letter, AHC expressed its concern and suggested that, these two bodies, in cooperation with the Supreme Court guide the district courts on what type of documentation must a citizen, whose name is not in the voters' list, present in order to prove he/she is eligible to vote.

- ▶ On the 19th of January 2007, the Albanian Helsinki Committee in a letter addressed to the Minister of Education and Science, Mr. Genc Pollo, to the Rector of the University of Tirana Mr. Shezai Rrokaj, and the rest of rectors of private and public universities in Albania, called for the establishment of voting stations inside student dormitories. Amendments made to the Electoral Code, nullified all clauses on the temporary register, which applied to the temporary residence voter lists as well. In order for the students to vote in their areas of residence, as determined by the main Inhabitants' Register, AHC suggested no test or exam be scheduled for the period of 16th - 19th of February 2007.

2.2 Coordinating Meetings on Roma Minority issues

On the 23rd of January 2007, the OSCE Presence in Tirana organized "A coordinating meeting on the issues of the Roma minority". The purpose of this meeting was to report on future activities of the civil society, international organization and state institutions for the benefit of Roma minority and the implementation of the national strategy "On the Improvement of the Living Conditions of the Roma Minority". This meeting was attended by the Albanian Helsinki Committee, representatives of local and international organizations working in the field of Roma minority rights as well as representatives of state institutions.

2.3 Meeting of the working group on the implementation of the EC recommendations

A meeting on the implementation of the five recommendations on human rights approved by the EC Committee of Ministers was held on 16th of February 2007 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The purpose of this meeting was to establish a working group to work and contribute to a better implementation of the five recommendations. This meeting was attended by representatives of the Parliament of Albania, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Justice, Albanian Helsinki Committee and representatives of other organizations active in the field of human rights. In the context of this meeting, AHC presented the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with its comments on the implementation of the five recommendations to Albania.

2.4 Meeting between civil society and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

On 6th of March 2007, AHC participated in a meeting of the working group for the implementation of the CPT (Committee for the Prevention of Torture) recommendations. This was a follow up meeting between the Legal Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and civil society representatives. The purpose of this meeting was to review the work of the civil society to facilitate a speedy implementation of such recommendations by responsible state institutions. Participants in the meeting discussed ways of cooperation between the civil society bodies active in this field and the Legal Office at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This Legal Office took it upon itself to provide the rest of the participants with a copy of its schedule of activities in this field, while the representatives of the civil society promised to provide this office with a brief description of their profile.

2.5 Meeting of the working group on Free Bar Service System

On the 16th of March 2007, the Juvenile Justice Clinic organized a follow up meeting of the working group on the review of the draft report about “Free Bar Service System”. In this meeting, AHC representative Ms. E. Saliu assisted by bringing forth AHC recommendations presented in its study on free bar service.

2.6 AHC thoughts on parts of the Sectoral Strategy of the Ministry of Justice

The Albanian Helsinki Committee (AHC) upon the request of the Ministry of Justice and after familiarizing itself with the Sectoral Strategy of the Ministry of Justice shared some thoughts on the ways AHC can contribute to the revision and improvement of this Strategy. More concretely, AHC thoughts and suggestions focused on the penitentiary system as well as other issues related to higher access and transparency of the judicial system, with the aim of improving respect for citizen rights.

This detailed document brought issues related to the short-term and mid-term goals and objectives of the Strategy to the attention of the Ministry of Justice. These issues characterize both fields mentioned earlier. In this document, AHC expressed its opinion on strategic interventions and policies that should be introduced and enforced by responsible governmental bodies in these two fields. AHC ensued with some thoughts on the issues listed in Chapter 3 of the Strategy, “Capacity Building at the General Directorate of Prisons”.

The Ministry of Justice welcomed and appreciated this document as very beneficial in the improvement of its Sectoral Strategy.

3. CAPACITY BUILDING AND EDUCATIONAL TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN THE PENITENTIARY SYSTEM

3.1 Training of basic role and sectoral personnel at the Detention Institution of Lezha

On the 1st and 2nd of March 2007, AHC organized the third training session for the basic role police personnel of the internal detention regime, as well as representatives of the civilian personnel in this institution¹. The purpose of this training session was to provide a model of good management for the detention system in our country². In this session, the foreign experts Mr. Jan Van Den Brand and Mr. Cees Boeij offered their expertise and experience³. Main subjects in this training were: the detention system, the daily activities program and their role in achieving a balance between security and social and reintegrating programs; the correct and consistent enforcement of the Code of Conduct for detention and prison system personnel.

Participants said they found this training very useful for their every day duties. This training was held in the detention facility of Lezha.

3.2 Meeting with the General Director of Prisons (GDP)

On the 3rd of March 2007, the Albanian Helsinki Committee, represented by the Program Coordinator, Mrs. Edlira Papavangjeli, and the foreign experts in the penitentiary field Mr. Jan van den Brand and Mr. Cees Boeij, contracted by AHC, held a meeting with the General Director of Prisons Mr. Saimir Shehri and his leading staff.

Some of the issues discussed in this meeting were: the progress achieved through the training sessions offered to the administration of Lezha detention institution, latest developments in the field of penitentiary and correction system and the transfer of detention facilities under the General Directorate of Prisons, problems and concerns which characterize this process, the establishment of new penitentiary institutions and measures taken by the GDP for the recruitment of new personnel in these institutions. AHC and its experts advised Mr. Shehri to speed up the personnel selection and recruitment process especially for those institutions that are expected to be established, in order to plan for their training before these institutions start functioning. Mr. Shehri promised to speed up this process and welcomed and appreciated the contribution of AHC in the field of the penitentiary system.

¹ This activity is part of the training AHC carried out during 2006-2007 with the Lezha institution administration.

² This working session was held in the context of the AHC project "A Human Rights Approach to Detention Management", funded by the Human Rights and Democracy Fund and the US State Department.

³ General Directors of the Dutch Prison Service.

3.3 AHC books to prisoners

Aiming at the improvement of the living conditions in the detention and prison institutions, and the enrichment and creation of libraries in these institutions as well as the expansion of the general and cultural education of individuals deprived of their liberty, AHC donated *1814 books, best editions of domestic and foreign literature*⁴ to the libraries of these detention and prison institutions.

AHC called on all local and foreign non-profit organizations working in the field of human rights protection in detention and prison facilities, to embrace its initiative. The following organizations responded to AHC call: The Council of Europe Office, Ombudsman, UNICEF, the Albanian Center for Human Rights, the Center for Protection of Children in Albania, by donating books for the libraries of detention and prison institutions. Several renowned publishing houses responded to this call as well, such as: *Çabej, Omsca-1, Ombra GVG and Dudaj*. These publishing houses donated fiction books from their own library funds.

The books donation ceremony was held on the 7th of March 2007, at the International Cultural Center.

3.4 AHC contribution in publishing the newsletter “Return to Society”

Based on the need of detainees and the correction administration for consistent communication between prisons and prisoners and prison personnel, AHC decided to financially support the publication of the monthly informative newsletter “Return to Society” issued by the General Directorate of Prisons. This newsletter was published during April 2005 – February 2007. AHC enriched the content of this bulletin with information on various legal activities and issues which might arouse the interest of prisoners and also information on the contribution given by AHC to build the capacity of personnel in several prisons. This bulletin also informed readers on developments in these institutions as well as on problems and issues often raised by various monitoring bodies, being local or international. The newsletter “Return to Society” serves as a window for prisoners and detainees to express their talent in poetry.

4. ADDRESSING HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES IN STATE INSTITUTIONS

4.1 Meetings with governmental officials

4.1.1 AHC representatives called for an audience with Republic of Albania Mr. Alfred Moisiu

⁴ This is an initiative taken thanks to the financial support of the Swedish Helsinki Committee and the US Embassy in Tirana.

On the 22nd of January 2007, the President of the Republic of Albania held an audience with representatives of the civil society, among who were AHC representatives as well. In this meeting, Mr. Alfred Moisiu appreciated the role of the civil society in the development of democracy and in the monitoring of the electoral process in particular. Some of the main discussion points in this meeting were the electoral campaign, the observance of the Code of Conduct, electoral campaign funding transparency and the observance of the right to vote. The President of the Republic of Albania highlighted the important role of the civil society in monitoring the elections and the need for coordination of its work and efforts.

4.2 Contact with state authorities

AHC has had continuous contact with state institutions. In its contacts, AHC has presented stated authorities with complaints received in its mail address, problems identified during monitoring rounds, recommendations on how to solve different legal and practical issues, reports on various activities carried out by AHC, etc. State institutions, most frequently addressed by AHC, were the Central Electoral Commission, the General Prisons Directorate, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, etc. It is worth mentioning that out of all state institutions, AHC has had a very productive communication and cooperation with the Central Electoral Commission on various legal issues and practices to be followed in order to ensure the progress of the electoral process.

Apart from these institutions, AHC has kept citizens informed on steps it has taken to address their complaints.

5. PUBLIC AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

5.1. Public awareness and education through the mass media⁵

5.1.1 Violations of the Code of Conduct in election campaigns – a concern for media representatives

On January 22, 2007. Ms. Vasilika Hysi, Executive Director of the AHC, was invited to the program of the Television Vizion+ to take part in a debate the main topics of which were: the start of the electoral campaign by political groups and the violation of the Code of Conduct by the political parties. Ms. Vasilika Hysi expressed the AHC's stance and role in monitoring elections.

5.1.2 Albanian Helsinki Committee invited to participate in the BBC auditorium

On Saturday, January 27, 2007, Ms. Vasilika Hysi, AHC Executive Director, was invited to the "Auditorium" television program in which there were treated issues such as

⁵ During January - March, AHC has frequently voiced its concern through the print and the electronic media on the electoral process and related problems

elections, electoral campaign, energetic crisis, transparency in financing the electoral campaign of the political forces, etc.

5.1.3 Informing voters on their right to vote and voting procedures– a necessity resulting from amendments to the Electoral Code **Delays in the publication of voters' lists impair voters' rights**

On the 26th of January 2007, the AHC Executive Director, Ms. Vasilika Hysi, was invited to a morning TV show broadcast by the NEWS-24 channel in order to sensitize voters on the amendments made on the voting lists' publication, complaint and voting procedures. Some of the topics clarified by Ms. Hysi were delays in the publication of voter lists and how it impacted the right to vote; informing special groups such as students studying outside their areas of residence, or detainees, patients, etc; the right to complain and the relevant mechanisms available to voters who were unable to find their name in the preliminary voters' lists or whose name was misspelled. On the same day, representatives of the Ministry of Interior and of CEC responded to some of the concerns raised in this TV show, such as those dealing with the publication of voter lists, the issue of birth certificates and rules for their use.

5.2 Press Conferences

5.2.1 The Albanian Helsinki Committee – the first non-profit organization to publish the monitoring results of the electoral process

On the 13th of February 2007, the Albanian Helsinki Committee held a press conference on the main conclusions of the first round of monitoring of the electoral campaign. These conclusions were drawn based on monitoring of the electoral campaign by AHC observers in the 7 main districts of the country: Tiranë, Shkodër, Elbasan, Gjirokastrë, Vlorë, Korçë and Fier. This conference was attended by the print and electronic media, which covered the activity in the everyday news editions.

On the 19th of February 2007, AHC held a press conference on the first conclusions of the monitoring of the electoral process, including the Election Day of 18th of February 2007 as well.

For further information, see <http://ahc.org.al/kshh/zgjedhjet/raporteZGJEDHJET.html>

5.2.2 Press Conference on the Use of Language during the Electoral Campaign

On the 13th of February 2007, AHC held a joint press conference with the SOROS foundation, "Mjaft" Movement, the Institute on Legal Studies and Practices and the Gender Alliance for Development. In this press conference, representatives of the civil society cautioned against uncivil tactics used by candidates running for local elections, as well as against breaches of privacy and family life.

5.3 Publications

5.3.1 Leaflets on the electoral process

As part of the voters' awareness and educational mission, AHC published a leaflet with information on the local elections of the 18th of February 2007 and also on the rights of voters in this process. These leaflets were distributed all over the country with the daily press.

5.3.2 Publication of some supplements

- ▶ In February 2007, AHC also published four supplements for the daily press. These supplements provided information on various issues pertaining to the electoral process. Language used was simple and understandable for the public at large.
- ▶ The same month, AHC published in the print media another supplement with immigration related information. These materials cited parts of the "National Strategy on Migration" as well as parts of AHC reports on monitoring missions, as well as information on the relaxation of the visa regime with Albania and other information from Consulates to Albanians wherever they live and work.

5.3.3 Report on the monitoring of local elections⁶

As part of the monitoring process of the local elections of the 18th of February 2007, AHC posted in March in its webpage a report on the most important aspects the last local elections. This report presents the range of problems observed during the elections and it also addresses some of the issues such as: the pre-election process, the electoral campaign, the voting and counting process. Furthermore, this reports also includes some of the main conclusions and suggestions of AHC on the improvement of the electoral reform and administration of elections.

For further information, visit our website: www.ahc.org.al

5.3.4 Re-publication of the handbook "How to make norms applicable"

AHC republished in March 2007 1800 copies of the Manual "How to Make Norms Applicable" in order to meet the need of prison administrations for such information and of the rest of the actors operating in the field of human rights protection in detention or prison facilities. This manual, encompassing international experience, attempts to present a description of the UN rules on living conditions in prisons and treatment of prisoners, as well as explain how their value and meaning relates to prison policies and everyday work inside these institutions.

⁶ This report was prepared in the context of the monitoring of the local elections of 18th of February 2007, and is financially supported by CORDAID

5.4 AHC PUBLIC REACTIONS

During the period January – March 2007, AHC issued **15 public releases** mainly on issues pertaining to the local elections process, such as: respect for the Electoral Code of Conduct, delays in the establishment of the LGECs, the observance of the Electoral Code, the ballot counting process, etc⁷. Furthermore, in cooperation and in solidarity with other non-profit organizations, AHC has publicly condemned displays of anti-Albanian feelings and xenophobia in Greece.

6. AWARENESS AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

6.1 International Film Festival on Human Rights in Albania

During the period of 14-17 March 2007, “Marubi” Multimedia and Film Making School organized the second edition of the International Film Festival on Human Rights in Albania. A year has gone by and the international reputation of this Festival has increased and it is recognized by a number of national and international bodies operating in the field of human rights. The second edition of this Festival was made possible through the support of a number of partners such as: the International Consortium of Human Rights, the Albanian Helsinki Committee, the Utica College, UNICEF, the German Embassy, the US Embassy, the French Embassy, the Italian Embassy, the Albanian Institute of Mass Media, EUSAC, UNDP and OSCE.

Fiction and Documentary films shown during this festival, although from five different continents, were based on themes and subjects which touched upon sensitive phenomena on the situation of human rights in our country, such as: children’s rights, women’s rights, trafficking in persons, ethnic and cultural diversity, etc.

6.2 Awareness campaign “All different – all equal” Week against discrimination, 19-24 March 2007

In the context of the international day against discrimination and against racial discrimination in particular, AHC arranged some awareness activities with the young generation aiming at the education and awareness raising to prevent cases of open and hidden discrimination in the society.

On the dates of March 19 – 20, 2007, AHC held awareness workshops in the general high schools “Aleks Buda” and “Eqerem Çabej”, “Sadik Stavileci” in Katundi i Ri and “Gramoz Palushi” in Babrru, Tiranë.

The main topics tackled in the workshops were as follows: general issues of discrimination, children rights and cases of their discrimination, racial discrimination, cases of discrimination within the ranks of pupils belonging to different cultures, cultural heritage, discrimination at schools, participation of pupils at decision making, functioning

⁷ For more information, see Appendix no. 1

of the pupil senates and other similar bodies, in educating tolerance and understanding, the role of non-profit organizations in this process, etc.

The interactive and all-inclusive approach used in these activities provided pupils with the opportunity to freely convey their thoughts as regards discrimination. In the context of these activities meetings were held with the representatives of the schools directorates in which the workshops were arranged and ideas were exchanged related to the sensitizing curricula as regards tolerance and observance of cultural diversity.

AHC donated the libraries of these schools some useful publications for the legal education of youth.

In the context of anti-discrimination week, AHC held some awareness activities with pupils and students in some schools of the districts of Fier, Korça and Elbasan.

In the district of Korça a workshop was held with the pupils of the General High School “Ymer Dishnica”. Through a questionnaire drafted from the pupils themselves information was collected about discrimination. The conclusions were presented at the workshop. Moreover the pupils have prepared essays, poems and drawings where the forms of discrimination were presented from their perspectives that were dealt with during the workshop. The best creations were awarded with prizes and were accompanied with a symbolic souvenir.

In the district of Fier a series of awareness -raising and cultural events were held with the motto: “All Different, all Equal”. An open class with the pupils of the private school “Flatrat e Dijes” (The Wings of Knowledge), during which the children discussed about discrimination and their rights in the family. A scientific session was organized with the teachers of the district of Fier in which the efforts against discrimination made by some education institutions in Fier were referred to. Also Recommendation 10 of the European Committee against Racism and Tolerance as regards the role of school in combating discrimination was presented. Later cultural events with the pupils of the schools were held and the laboratory of the Myzeqeja tradition was inaugurated, including traditional food. AHC staff took part in these activists.

In the district of Elbasan a seminar was held with the students of the faculties of the University “Aleksandër Xhuvani” about the forms of discrimination and the measures for its prevention. The students themselves arranged a Mock Debate with the topic “Has the government worked sufficiently for the protection of human rights especially of those belonging to the Roma and Egyptian community?”

All the awareness-raising events that were arranged aimed not only at raising youth awareness in combating discrimination but also at the same time at promoting debate among the youngsters⁸.

⁸ The events were arranged in the context of the project “Respecting the best interest of the child – An obligation for all”, sponsored by the SOROS Foundation and CORDAID

AHC as an organization for the protection and observance of human rights in Albania will keep contributing to the improvement of the human rights situation in Albania and prevent discrimination of all the forms.

AHC extends acknowledgments to the district and region Education Directorates of Tirana, Korça, Fier, and the Rectorate of the University of Elbasan for their fruitful contribution in arranging these events.

Furthermore thanks go to the diligent work of the experts and AHC correspondents in the respective districts for the arrangement of the events in the context of the week against discrimination.

6.3 Round Tables

Treatment of infectious diseases in Albanian detention and prison facilities

On the 26th of January 2007, at “Doros” Hotel AHC held a round table aimed at taking action in the drafting of a policy and of an realistic plan for the prevention and treatment of infectious diseases in prisons⁹. This activity was interesting and important at the same time because of the current problems faced by the Albanian prisons and detention facilities in treating persons deprived of their liberty with infectious diseases. At the end of this round table, participants came up with some recommendations that were presented to the Ministry of Justice and the General Directorate of Prisons. In this document, participants called for a policy and for an action-plan for the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of infectious diseases in detention and prison facilities¹⁰.

This round table was attended by chiefs of medical staff and deputy directors from all prison facilities in Albania, deputy directors of Prison Hospital Center, the deputy of the Detention Institution no. 302 and 313 in Tirana as well as one representative from the GDP¹¹. Mr. Jan van den Brand offered his own expertise during this activity¹².

7. HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCACY

7.1 Legal Advice

The experts that held presentations in these seminars, Florian Xihani - Tirana, Mikail Sterio – Elbasan, Donika Jorgaqi – Fier, Arben Kosturi – Korçë and AHC staff Vasilika Hysi, AHC Executive Director and Etilda Saliu, lawyer /Project Coordinator

AHC Correspondents, Frederik Jorgaqi – Fier, Keti Qirinxhi – Korçë and Ymer Leksi - Elbasan

⁹ This activity was part of the project “Prison Reforms and the Role of the Civil Society in Albania”, funded by the Sweedish Helsinki Committee.

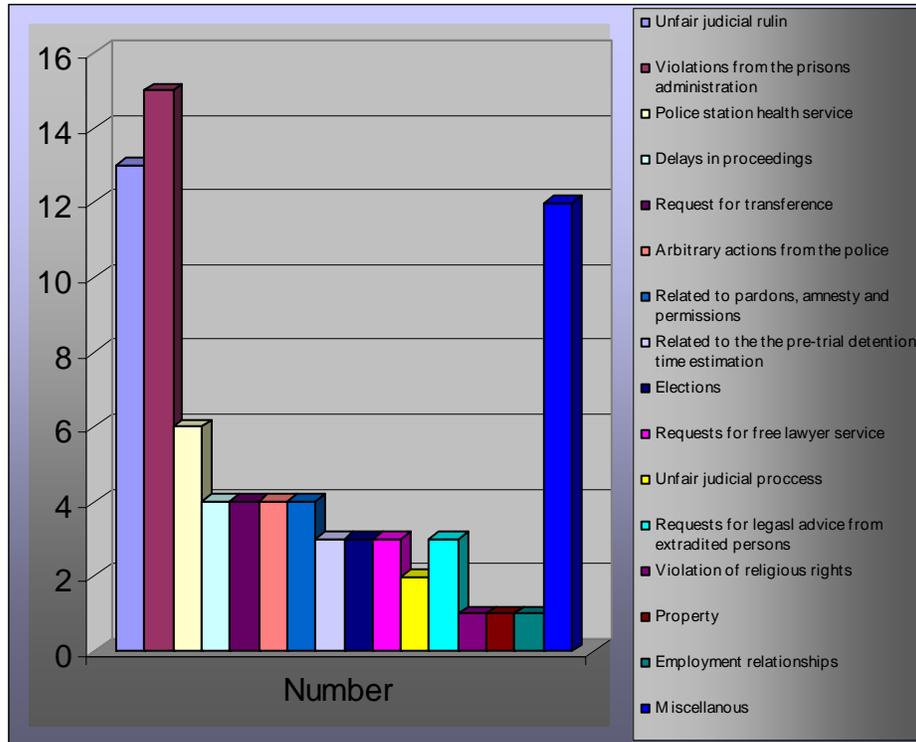
¹⁰ AHC will soon publish this document in its official webpage: www.ahc.org.al

¹¹ GDP health service personnel participation is necessary since it is this sector that will be directly responsible for the drafting of a policy and action plan against infective diseases in the albanian penitentiary system.

¹² Expert in the Dutch Prison Service and head of the working group which drafted the policy against infective diseases in the dutch penitentiary institutions.

During January-March 2007, AHC received a total of 73 complaints and requests for legal advice. The majority of these complaints were submitted by detainees and prisoners. Their complaints were usually directed against court decisions. An increase of the number of complaints about violation of human rights by prison administration and by police bodies is obvious. In the majority of cases, AHC has addressed these issues to the responsible bodies, such as the General Prisons Directorate, relevant district Public Prosecutor's Office, District Police Directorates, etc.

Bar chart on complaints received during January-March 2007:



7.2 AHC Confirmed Cases

Apart from responding to letters and complaints made by citizens, AHC has also verified claims of human rights violation.

- ▶ After the report of 18th of January 2007 on the hunger strike of the prisoner A.S., serving his sentence in the Peqin, a group of AHC observers undertook a fact-finding mission in this institution. Prisoner A. S. started his hunger strike in a protest against a court decision on his case, a decision that he deemed as unfair and based on false and manipulated statements. AHC lawyer observers advised the prisoner of his right to appeal the court decision.
- ▶ After a complaint reported over the telephone on the 25th of January 2006, a group of AHC observers monitored the Rrogozhina prison where they also met with the inmate E. A. who claimed to have been ill treated by uniformed prison personnel. The

prisoner, being in a very serious psychological situation, had attempted to commit suicide. In our meeting with the prisoner and the regime chief, we learned that the prisoner attempted to cut his wrists, being in a depressive state of mind.

- ▶ On the 31st of January and 5th of February 2007, AHC received other telephone calls from prisoners serving their sentences in the prison of Peqin. The common objective of these calls was to report violence exerted against the prisoner A.Q. by uniformed prison personnel. They claimed that the prisoner A.Q. was in a very serious health condition due to the violence exerted against him. AHC immediately notified the General Prosecutor's Office and the Elbasan District Prosecutor's Office in order to verify these claims. The District Prosecutor's Office immediately opened investigations, which proved that these claims were false.

8. INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ORGANIZATION

8.1 AHC Capacity Building

- ▶ On the 23rd of February 2007, the Center for Public Legal Initiative offered a one-day training on "the Role of the Attorney in the Enforcement of the Law "On Measures Against Domestic Violence". The purpose of this training was to introduce participant employees to the legal practice against domestic violence, and to theoretical and practical considerations. Representatives of state institutions, non-profit organizations offering free legal advice and attorneys were also invited to this training. Ms. Klesta Alikaj represented AHC in this training.
- ▶ Following the CEC accreditation of AHC observers on 27th of January 2007, AHC organized a training session for its observers covering such topics as: the Electoral Code and recent amendments to it, CEC guidelines, pre-election and election process monitoring methodology, observance of the Electoral Code of Conduct, proper reporting. This training also dealt with: the role of the observer, the qualities of an observer, how to caution the commissions if needed and reporting the monitoring results. Representatives of the monitoring mission OSCE/ODHIR present in Albania to monitor the local elections 2007 also participated in this training invited by AHC. Following the training process, AHC continued to train its district correspondents and election observers on special aspects of elections, specific and concrete issues.
- ▶ On the 26th of March 2007, OSCE in cooperation with the Council of Europe and the Center of Civilian Legal Initiatives held a training session on the law "On measures Against Domestic Violence" and field problems. The targeted groups were attorneys active in this field. Among other participants, there were also AHC lawyers, Ms. E. Saliu and Ms. E. Sefa.

9. ENHANCING COOPERATION WITH THE CIVIL SOCIETY AND STATE ACTORS

9.1 Memorandum of Cooperation on Monitoring European Integration Progress of Albania

On the date February 26, 2007, Open Society Foundation for Albania -Soros, Albanian Helsinki Committee, Institute of International Studies and the European Center together with the Ministry of Integration signed the Memorandum of Cooperation on monitoring EU-Albania relationship in the context of the European integration process¹³. During the signing ceremony, both parties expressed their commitment for promoting civil society monitoring in the process of the European integration of the country. The cooperation of the government structures with the non-governmental ones in the context of the endeavors for European integration has been recommended on the part of the European Commission.

9.2 The Assembly Meeting of Balkans Human Rights Network (BHRN)

The Albanian Helsinki Committee was represented by its Program Coordinator, Ms. Edlira Papavangjeli at the Assembly Meeting of the Balkans Human Rights Network Assembly held on the 10th of March 2007 in Skopje, Macedonia.

The purpose of this meeting was to assemble together members of the Balkans Human Rights Network from Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Albania and Macedonia, in a General Assembly Meeting.

This assembly was addressed by foreign and local experts, as well as representatives of the BHRN member bodies. Participants discussed at length the future role of the BHRN. This Assembly chose a steering committee and its head as well as the three members of the Assessment Committee that is to evaluate all draft proposals presented by member organizations of the BHRN. Ms. Edlira Papavangjeli was one of the chosen members for this committee.

9.3 Local and international observers meet on the electoral process

As part of the local elections monitoring activities, AHC participated on 15th of February in a meeting with representatives of the Council of Europe Delegation of Local and Regional Authorities. This meeting was also attended by other local observers in Albania. Some of the main issues discussed in this meeting had to do with the voters' interest about the voters' lists, the issue of the electoral commissions, etc.

10. NEW PROJECTS

On January 2007, AHC began implementing the project “**Monitoring and Reporting EURO-Albania Relationship Progress**”, financially supported by SOROS foundation. The period of the implementation of the project is January-December 2007.

The aim of this project is to increase public transparency as regards the European Integration process of Albania, to raise awareness and the accountability of the state bodies for their role in this process through independent, objective and professional

¹³ This Memorandum of Cooperation is achieved in the context of the project “Monitoring and reporting the progress of EU-Albania relationship” which will be applied by the Open Society Foundation for Albania - Soros, Albanian Helsinki Committee, Institute of international studies and the European Center.

monitoring of the measures taken and the progress achieved by Albania towards the achievement of the European Partnership Program.

In framework of the project, Soros foundation in cooperation with AHC, Institute of International Studies and the European Center ¹⁴, through identification of the legal gaps and the main problems aim at offering constructive opposition in the domains where monitoring will be extended with the aim of contributing to speeding up the accession of Albania in the European family. The main fields the project will cover are elections and other parliamentary issues, minorities, judicial system, pre-trial detention and prison system, etc. For more information on the objectives and the expected results of the project please visit the website of AHC: <http://www.ahc.org.al/kshh/eng/integration/integration.html>

11. PUBLICATIONS IN THE NEAR FUTURE

11.1 A study on the policies for minorities and funding strategies in Albania

AHC brings to the reader a study on the direct impact of the actions and policies of all Albanian and foreign actors in the improvement of the respect for the rights of the Roma and Egyptian communities.

This study attempts to provide readers as well as organizations/individuals working with the Roma and Egyptian community with more information and with a database on the implemented and ongoing projects and programs targeting these groups

11.2 The observation for respect of minority rights from Korça City Hall

During January-December 2006, AHC implemented the project “Monitoring minority rights in the Korça City Hall” in the context of activities in the field of minority rights. The purpose of this project was to assess the observance of minority rights at a local level and also identify possibilities for their enhancement. The methodology used for this project involved interviews with citizens and the administration of Korça Municipality.

Conclusions drawn by the interviews with citizens and City Hall administration were discussed in a round table held in Korça city and were also included in the publication “Observation of Minority Right by Korça City Hall”

11.3 AHC publications in the field of penitentiary system

At the end of the monitoring round carried out in the detention facilities during July-December 2006, AHC published its final report on “The Observance of Detainee Rights”. This report presents conclusions drawn from observations and also the main findings and

¹⁴ This project will be implemented in cooperation between the four afore-mentioned organizations.

recommendations of AHC for the improvement of the situation of human rights in detention facilities.

11.4 2006 Human Rights Report

During April 2007, AHC will publish the Human Rights Report for the year 2006.