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# ALBANIAN HELSINKI COMMITTEE

## NEWSLETTER

April – June 2008

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### AHC REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN ALBANIA 2007

AHC monitored respect for citizens' rights in areas that are part of its mission. The report, made public on *May 8, 2008*, addresses issues such as: functioning of the rule of law, the process of Albania's integration into NATO and the EU, electoral reform, respect for the rights of citizens deprived of their liberty, the media, the justice system, minorities and respect for the rights of Albanian citizens crossing through border crossing points or returned through Readmission Agreements.

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### AHC MONITORED THE PROGRESS OF ALBANIA'S PROCESS OF INTEGRATION IN THE AREAS OF MIGRATION

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### NEW PENITENTIARY INSTITUTIONS NEED PERSONNEL SELECTED ACCORDING TO STANDARDS AND TRAINED IN THE AREA OF HUMAN RIGHTS

*During April 21-23 and during June 2-4, 2008*, AHC organized training courses for employees in uniform hired in the institution of Fushë-Krujë and the Vlorë detention institution. The courses sought to enhance the personnel's professional capacities...

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## **1.0 .MONITORING**

### **1.1AHC MONITORED AND PRESENTED THE 2007 ANNUAL HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT IN ALBANIA**

In its activity, AHC monitors respect for citizens' rights in the areas included in its mission.

The conclusions of the monitoring of the human rights situation for 2007 are presented in a report that was made public on **May 8, 2008**, at a press conference in the presence of print and broadcast media representatives.

The report addresses issues such as: the functioning of the rule of law, the process of Albania's integration into NATO and the EU, electoral reform, respect for the rights of persons deprived of their liberty, the media, the justice system, minorities, and respect for the rights of Albanian citizens crossing the border crossing points with Albania, or who have been returned in the context of the Readmission Agreement.

The report highlights progress achieved in certain areas and difficulties and shortcomings encountered during 2007 in the context of respect for human rights.

The print and broadcast media demonstrated interest in the report and its findings.

### **1.2 AHC MONITORED THE PROGRESS OF ALBANIA'S EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROCESS IN THE AREAS OF MIGRATION**

In order to contribute to Albania's faster integration into the EU and to encourage the taking of measures to achieve European standards in the area of respect for human rights, AHC monitored the progress of reform implementation in the policies of emigration and border management during 2007 and the first quarter of 2008. Part of this process was the analysis of factors and challenges encountered during this process and the need for cooperation between state institutions and the civil society as a function of Albania's integration into the European family.

The findings of the monitoring were further presented at a round table discussion organized by AHC on **April 30, 2008**.

Participating in the round table discussion were senior representatives of state institutions, different civil society actors, representatives of local and foreign organizations contributing to this area, and media representatives. The presented issues drew the attention and interest of participants.

The event was realized thanks to the financial support of the Norwegian Helsinki Committee.

### **1.3 DETENTION AND ACCOMPANIMENT ROOMS IN POLICE COMMISSARIATS UNDER THE OBSERVATION OF AHC**

During April 2008, AHC conducted observations in the detention and accompaniment rooms of police commissariats in: Lezhë, Laç, Krujë, Korçë, Pogradec, Librazhd, Elbasan Durrës, Berat, Burrel, Kavajë and Tiranë.

Encountered problems included poor conditions in the detention and accompaniment rooms, the dilapidated infrastructure, the lack of beds, overcrowding, keeping of remanded persons in detention rooms. To that end, AHC addressed state institutions with open letter with suggestions for improving the situation and reacted through public statements to help change the situation.

Furthermore, through monitoring missions conducted at detention and accompaniment rooms, it was possible to identify cases in which persons on whom courts had decided for arrest in prison were kept still in detention rooms. Such cases were encountered in the detention rooms in Vlorë, Korçë and Shkodër.

For the reinstatement of violated rights, AHC reacted through public statements, open letters to competent state institutions, letters to the respective Directories, for the taking of concrete measures, meetings with representatives of these institutions, etc.

#### **1.4 SPORADIC OBSERVATIONS AND VERIFICATION OF CITIZENS' COMPLAINTS**

During the period April-June 2008, AHC conducted sporadic observations at institutions for serving prison sentences, pre-trial detention institutions and commissariats, to verify complaints received at AHC. The Committee's observers and correspondents made valuable contributions to the conduct of sporadic verifications.

## **2.0 CITIZENS' RIGHTS AND THEIR REINSTATEMENT**

### **2.1 CITIZENS ADDRESS AHC FOR THEIR COMPLAINTS**

During the period **April – June 2008, in the context of free legal aid offered by AHC, the Committee handled 150 cases.** The subject of complaints included: violation of the right to be informed, housing and social welfare for groups in need, unjust court decisions, complaints about procedural violations during judicial processes, arbitrary actions by police bodies, violations of rights in prisons, detention facilities, and in the police detention and accompaniment rooms, etc.

AHC offered citizens different services including: legal counseling, assistance for completing documentation, different verifications, monitoring of judicial processes, interventions with different state institutions, etc.

AHC cooperated with organizations active in this area such as the Center for Civic Legal Initiatives, Free Legal Aid Tiranë, and the Albanian Disabilities Rights Foundation. Through its services, AHC made its contribution not only to informing citizens on the areas these organizations are active in, but also on how to avoid overlapping of actions.

### **2.2 AHC REACTS TO HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS**

During the period April-June 2008, AHC issued 12 statements, the focus of which included problems encountered by addressing letter and complaints, conditions at the Vlorë commissariat, prevention of violence in stadiums, violence toward journalists, greater transparency and attention to protect the rights of miners, parliamentary ethics, and important institutional reforms that are a direct and important indicator of the rule of law, such as electoral reform.

## **2.3 AHC DEFENDS THE RIGHTS OF CITIZENS WHO ARE VICTIMS OF HUMAN RIGHTS' VIOLATIONS**

### **2.3.1 ROUND TABLE ON FREE LEGAL AID**

On **April 1, 2008**, AHC organized the round table discussion on the role of the civil society in offering free legal aid to citizens whose rights are violated by representatives of state authorities. The goal of the round table discussion was the presentation of AHC's experience and the exchange of views with representatives of organizations offering legal services and representatives of different institutions for a more effective legal service.

At the conclusion of the discussions, participants emphasized the ***need for the approval as fast as possible of the law on free legal aid*** as a special institution, ***increase of cooperation between organizations offering legal services, the training of lawyers offering free legal aid, and private lawyers***. Participating in the round table discussion were representatives of the civil society and state institutions.

## **3.0 PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION IN SCHOOLS IN AHC'S FOCUS**

### **3.1 TRAINING SEMINARS FOR TEACHERS FOR THE PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION IN SCHOOLS**

In order to prevent discrimination in schools of children of the Roma minority and the Egyptian community, during June 2008, in cooperation with the Center for Economic and Social Studies, AHC organized two training seminars in the districts of Korçë and Elbasan with representatives of Educational Directories, directors and teachers of high and 9-year schools.

The origin, traditions, living style, and problems of education of Roma and Egyptian children, seen from the standpoint of the civil society and in the spirit of international recommendations in the area, were some of the topics addressed in these events.

The training seminars drew the attention of participants for their interactive character and for the rich information contained in them, both in terms of the current situation of the Roma minority and the Egyptian community, and in terms of the practice conveyed through Recommendation no. 10 of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance. The local media reported extensively on the events.

The events were realized thanks to the financial support of the Open Society Foundation for Albania, Soros.

### **3.2 FOR AN INFORMATION STRATEGY FOR EMIGRANTS' RIGHTS**

In order to improve the information of Albanian emigrants about their rights and facilitate their integration or the process of voluntary return to Albania, AHC offered some opinions on the Draft of the Information and Communication Strategy on Emigration Issues, prepared by IOM in cooperation with the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities (MLSAEO). The strategy is an efficacious instrument for managing migration and the needs for better information and communication with Albanian emigrants wherever they are.

AHC appreciates the work done by IOM and the Ministry and expressed its willingness to cooperate for better protection of and information for emigrants about their rights.

### **3.3 AHC ASSISTS ALBANIAN EMIGRANTS IN ITALY**

In order to assist Albanian emigrants living in Italy, the Albanian Helsinki Committee prepared an information brochure with legal information for Albanian emigrants in Italy regarding: the residence permit, eviction cases, free legal services, who Albanian emigrants should turn to if their rights are violated, or if they are the target of discrimination and racism, services offered by the Albanian Embassy in Italy, etc.

For the preparation of this brochure, AHC cooperated closely with the Albanian Embassy in Rome and with experienced experts in the area of migration in Italian legislation.

## **4.0 AHC AND EMIGRANTS' RIGHTS**

### **4.1 AHC COOPERATES WITH STATE INSTITUTIONS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL TO FIGHT IRREGULAR MIGRATION**

#### **4.1.1 LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN PREVENTING IRREGULAR MIGRATION**

In order to strengthen cooperation between local institutions in coordinating work to fight irregular migration, during **April 2008**, AHC organized two round table discussions in the cities of Burrel and Pukë.

Several problems emerged from the round table discussions: low level of information on regular migration, the need to improve the economic situation and alleviate poverty and unemployment in the northern districts, improve the professional capacities of local institution representatives, encourage cooperation between central and local state institutions, the civil society, the media, and businesses.

Participating in the round table discussions were representatives from the General Directory of Police, the National Employment Service, the State Social Service, the Municipality, the Prefecture, the Regional Council, the Regional Police Directory, the Regional Employment Service and Social Services Office, and representatives of local non-profit organizations.

#### **4.1.2 EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND THEIR INFORMATIVE AND SENSITIZING ROLE IN THE PREVENTION OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION**

In **April 2008**, AHC organized in the cities of Burrel and Pukë two round table discussions on “The educational role of schools in sensitizing youth about the prevention of irregular migration.”

The round table discussions were organized in accordance with the National SAA Implementation Plan with a view to increasing the role of schools in sensitizing youth to prevent irregular migration and inform them better about the possibilities for regular migration. The main topics addressed in the discussions included: the need for publishing informative and sensitizing materials as a result of lack of information among teachers and youth in this area, the need for better coordination, and the need to establish training courses and vocational schools for youth wishing to emigrate abroad for employment purposes.

Representatives of educational institutions of Burrel and Pukë as well as representatives of the parent boards and student governments contributed to these discussions with their presence. The main conclusions and suggestions of the round table discussions were shared with the responsible state institutions.

The events were realized through the financial support of two of AHC’s partners, CORDAID and the Norwegian Helsinki Committee.

#### **4.2 SENSITIZING ACTIVITIES TO ASSIST IMMIGRANTS**

In order to help Albanian emigrants with better information regarding their rights and ways to protect them, AHC has prepared brochures that seek to provide important information about the rights of emigrants envisioned by Italian legislation; the main Albanian state institutions and embassies and consular offices, as well as local and foreign organizations, including information on the services they offer to assist emigrants.

The publications were realized thanks to the financial support of the Norwegian Helsinki Committee.

#### **5.0 RESPECT FOR THE RIGHTS OF DETAINED AND CONVICTED PERSONS BY ENHANCING THE CAPACITIES OF THE DETENTION FACILITY AND PRISON ADMINISTRATION**

##### **5.1 TRAINING COURSE WITH DIRECTING OFFICIALS OF PENITENTIARY INSTITUTIONS**

During **April 1-3, 2008**, AHC organized a training course with directing officials of institutions for serving prison sentences. Ms. Miriam Dierckxsens, Mr. Jan van den Brand and Mr. Jacques van Huet, as experienced experts in the area, gave their contributions.

The course focused on important issues such as: planning and delegating, provision of information and reaction to it, making decisions, planning events and connections between them, determining and allocation of institution resources, etc.

Participants were equipped with helpful training materials. They appreciated the quality of the course and the practical handling of issues.

## **5.2 NEW PENITENTIARY INSTITUTIONS NEED PERSONNEL SELECTED ACCORDING TO STANDARDS AND TRAINED IN THE AREA OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

**On April 21-23, May 12-14, and June 2-4, 2008**, AHC organized training programs for the uniform officers selected recently in the institution of Fushë-Krujë, and the pre-trial detention institution of Vlorë. The programs sought to increase the professional skills of personnel regarding the daily functioning of the prison institution and the human and dignified treatment of persons deprived of their liberty.

Topics addressed in the training programs included: the mission and vision of the penitentiary system in Albania, the organizational structure of a prison, care for personnel, selection and basic training, professional skills and treatment of convicts, creation of a safe environment, the communication structure, use of force, conflict management, differentiation between convicts, and daily activities. The Code of Conduct as a policy of integrity in prisons, convicts and their contact with the outside world, disciplinary policies, demands-complaints, and protocols were also topics of the training programs.

Experts Mr. Boeij Cees, Mr. De Groen Theo, Mr. Poll Kees, Mr. Van Den Brand Jan, Mr. Verschure Hattinga Joostm, Mr. Bertelink Hans, Ms. Wanders Yola, and Mr. John Nijhuis contributed to the training programs.

Group discussions accompanied by visits to the inside premises of the prison enabled the intertwining of theoretical and practical knowledge. 168 employees in uniform were trained and equipped with certificates for the successful completion of this basic training. They expressed appreciation for the training program and the methodology employed.

## **5.3 SUPPORT FOR THE PROCESS OF DRAFTING THE PRISON TRAINING CENTER PLAN OF ACTION**

On **April 4, 2008**, AHC and experts Vesna Babic and Jan van den Brand reviewed the preliminary draft of the Prison Training Center Plan of Action for the years 2008-2010. The experts offered concrete suggestions to improve the Plan so that it assumes its final form and serve as a document that envisions the transformation of the training center into an authentic Training Center. It is expected that the General Directory of Prisons (GDP) working group will finalize the Plan of Action and the document will be accompanied by financial estimations to make possible the desired transformation.

## **5.4 DRAFTING THE SENIOR PRISON MANAGEMENT MANUAL**

On **April 10** and **May 16, 2008**, AHC organized two meetings with the working group assigned to draft the Senior Prison Management Manual. To date, there is agreement on the structure and some of the chapters elaborated by

Albanian specialists with assistance from foreign experts. AHC and its experts are assisting with and contributing to this process.

The activity is carried out in the context of the project 'For better respect of the rights of juveniles and women in penitentiary institutions,' supported by UNICEF Albania and is funded by CARDS 2004 and SIDA.

### **5.5 DRAFTING THE CURRICULUM OF THE PRISON TRAINING CENTER<sup>1</sup> ON THE TREATMENT OF JUVENILES IN PRE-TRIAL DETENTION INSTITUTIONS AND PRISONS**

During *June 2-4, 2008*, the Albanian Helsinki Committee (AHC) organized a working session for drafting the curriculum of the Prison Training Center (PTC) in order to offer the basic training to the recently hired personnel in uniform on the treatment of juveniles in pre-trial detention institutions and prisons. The training module is drafted for the first time in the Albanian prison system and comes at an appropriate time as procedures are underway to open three new penitentiary institutions that will have special sections for juveniles. Furthermore, the need for training is felt in pre-trial detention institutions with newly selected personnel.

At the conclusion of this working session, the working group participants with support from Ms. Jet Gudden, international expert from the Dutch Agency of Correction Institutions, and Ms. Klejda Ngjela, AHC program assistant, drafted a concrete training program with the topics: safe environment, professional conduct, motivating interviews, daily programs, social skills.

The Albanian Helsinki Committee recommends the involvement of trainers from Albanian prison institutions trained by AHC in providing training in the future.

### **5.6 INTRODUCTION OF THE REGIME IMPLEMENTATION MANUAL**

On *April 11, 2008*, and *May 23, 2008*, AHC organized two working sessions with the senior leading staff of the Vlorë pre-trial detention institution and the institution for the execution of penal decisions of Fushë-Krujë. Mr. Jan van den Brand, an expert of the penitentiary field, gave his expertise in these support sessions. Ms. Edlira Papavangjeli, Program Manager at AHC, moderated the sessions.

During the sessions, instructors offered good practices for the process of opening and good functioning of these institutions. Part of the sessions was the familiarization of participants with the regime implementation manual at the institution and the advantages of drafting this manual for the respective institutions. The working groups of these institutions are working to draft written procedures that will help the good functioning of the institutions.

### **5.7 MEETINGS WITH DIFFERENT ACTORS AND STATE AUTHORITIES IN THE PENITENTIARY AREA**



During the period **April – June 2008**, AHC realized different working sessions with representatives of UNICEF and the network of organizations cooperating in the area of juvenile justice. AHC has offered legal views on proposals for amendments to the Penal Code and the law on the execution of penal decisions, regarding the establishment and functioning of the evidence service.

In the context of assessments on the juvenile justice system in Albania, realized by UNICEF, AHC offered its views and suggestions on the treatment of juveniles in detention institutions and prisons, as well as the needs, problems, challenges, and suggestions for improving the situation in this area. Ms. Edlira Papavangjeli, Program Manager at AHC, represented the Committee in the meeting.

Besides training for prison staffs, AHC representatives and experts have held meetings with representatives of the Ministry of Justice and the General Directory of Prisons regarding different problems in prison management. Ms. Edlira Papavangjeli, Program Manager at AHC, and Mr. Jan van den Brand, an expert in the penitentiary area and representative of the Correction Institutions Agency of the Netherlands.

AHC participated in several meetings with the representative responsible for the penitentiary area in the Euralius mission and members of the International Consortium, of which AHC is a member.

## **6.0 NEW PROJECTS**

### **6.1 FOR BETTER RESPECT FOR THE RIGHTS OF VICTIMS OF VIOLATIONS BY STATE INSTITUTIONS – LEGAL CLINIC**

In April 2008, AHC began the implementation of the second phase of the project for offering free legal services. The main goal of the project is to strengthen the rule of law through the protection of the rights of vulnerable groups against abusive actions by the state administration.

The services to be offered are: training, verification, legal counseling, assistance with the completion of legal documentation, interventions with state institutions and, in special cases, representation in Albanian Courts and the European Court of Human Rights. Beneficiaries of the free legal service are victims of violence, inhuman treatment and degradation, persons discriminated by the personnel of state institutions, as well as those violated as a result of undue legal process.

The free legal service is focused in Tiranë, Korçë, Shkodër, Vlorë, Elbasan, Fier, and Gjirokastër. However, other citizens may benefit from these services.

The free legal service is made possible thanks to the financial support by the Swedish Helsinki Committee.

### **6.2 AHC MONITORS RESPECT FOR CITIZENS' RIGHTS IN THE HEALTH SECTOR**

In the context of fulfilling our mission, on July 1, 2008, AHC began the implementation of the project “For better respect of human rights, health and

social services in Albania,” funded by the U.S. Department of State, the Federal Assistance Fund.

Through this initiative, AHC will monitor how citizens’ rights are respected at health institutions at the central and local levels, particularly the rights and treatment of permanent patients and those suffering from mental problems at psychiatric institutions, the rights and treatment of orphans at orphanages, and of the elderly in asylums for the elderly. The project will be implemented in the course of one year and its total budget is \$ 18,890.

AHC is open to and appreciates cooperation with other organizations and institutions in this initiative.

## **7.0 AHC’S INSTITUTIONAL EMPOWERMENT**

### **7.1 ALBANIAN HELSINKI COMMITTEE PRESENTS ITS 2008-2010 STRATEGIC PLAN**

In the context of transparency and of encouraging cooperation with state actors, civil society actors, and donors, on **September 2008**, AHC organized a friendly meeting with partners, representatives of local and international organizations, donors, representatives of the media, and human rights activists, in order to present its Strategic Plan for the period 2008-2010.

Monitoring respect for human rights in areas such as: police, pre-trial detention, prisons, and the justice system, handling violations of human rights and their reinstatement through legal assistance, non-discrimination and minorities, monitoring SAA implementation will be priorities of AHC in the next three years.

AHC will continue to strengthen its sustainability by expanding cooperation with other counterpart domestic and foreign organizations and with the media. The Committee will pay attention to strengthening cooperation at the local level and through AHC correspondents.

Partners of the Committee, including representatives of state institutions, local and international organizations, and donors, expressed the need to increase the role of the civil society in its cooperation with state institutions toward the country’s democratization.

## **7.2 INCREASING THE CAPACITY OF AHC’S STAFF**

### **7.2.1 TRAINING ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 8 OF THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE PRACTICE OF THE COURT OF STRASBOURG**

In order to build the professional capacities of jurists of human rights organizations in the Balkan Region, on **May 16-18, 2008**, a training program was organized on the practice of the Court of Strasbourg and particularly regarding the meaning and implementation of article 8 of the ECHR.

The concept of the right to family life, privacy, location, and correspondence; the meaning, broadness of content and the limitations of these rights by state institutions were themes discussed during the program.

Ms. E.Sefa participated in the training. The program was supported by the Swedish Helsinki Committee.

## **7.2.2 TRAINING AT THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

During **April 28-29, 2008**, the training “12<sup>th</sup> research session on the European Convention of Human Rights” was organized **in Strasbourg, France**. The training program was organized at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg by the European Roma Right Center and the Council of Europe. Participating in the program were representatives of organizations working to protect human rights in European countries.

Articles 6, 8, 13, and 14 of the Convention were discussed during the training program, with an emphasis on procedural aspects of representing cases at the European Court of Human Rights. Ms. Etilda Saliu, Project Coordinator for Free Legal Aid at AHC, participated in the training.

## **7.2.3 TRAINING ON NGOs’ ACTIVE ROLE IN THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

On **June 4-5, 2008**, AHC participated in the training “NGOs’ active role in procedures before the European Court of Human Rights, relevant substantial and procedural issues,” organized by the Council of Europe. Ms. Ersida Sefa, Project Coordinator, and Ms. Etilda Saliu, Coordinator of the Legal Clinic, participated in the training, representing AHC.

## **7.3 STRENGTHENING COOPERATION BETWEEN AHC AND OTHER STATE INSTITUTIONS, CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS, AND THE MEDIA**

### **7.3.1 PARTICIPATIONS IN COORDINATING MEETINGS**

In order to strengthen cooperation and coordination for joint initiatives, AHC, during April-June 2008, organized different meetings with representatives of state institutions and different civil society actors. Coordinating meetings were held with senior officials of the National Diaspora Institute and representatives of the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

AHC also participated in the meeting of the **International Consortium** for Integrated Border Management, whereby it raised the concern regarding respect for human rights at border crossing points and improvement of conditions at border facilities. AHC also pointed out progress made in this area in accordance with international engagements envisioned in the context of the European integration process.

### **7.3.2 RESPECT FOR JOURNALISM ETHICS IN PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS**

On May 8, 2008, AHC organized at the premises of the Albanian Media Institute a training seminar with print and broadcast reporters on the role of journalists in respecting human rights. The purpose of the training seminar was

to increase the awareness of reporters for better respect for human rights and freedoms as the foundation of the communication deontology.

Problems encountered by the Albanian media and the influence of politics on the objectivity, independence, and neutrality of reporting, the need for better respect for the Code of Ethics of reporters in carrying out their duties, and the encouragement of more efficacious cooperation between the media and the civil society as important actors for the democratization of the country were some of the main issues addressed in the training program.

Participants in the training were also informed about the rapport that should exist between respecting professional journalism rules and the ethics of news reporting, at the foundation of which stays respect for human rights.

### **7.3.3 INCREASING THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA FOR BETTER SENSITIZATION AND RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN ALBANIA**

On **April 15, 2008**, AHC organized a training seminar with students of the Journalism Department with a view to increasing their capacities in the area of human rights for encouraging new reporters' access to AHC activities.

The role of the press in a democratic society, media and respect for human rights; AHC's rapport with the media; the need for cooperation between the media and the civil society were some of the issues addressed in the training seminar. Students were particularly informed about respect for human rights and different aspects of non-discrimination. They were also provided with instructions on how to prepare feature stories in this area.

Participating students prepared and published essays in the print media and the best three were awarded with special prizes by an evaluation commission. The prizes for the best pieces helped motivate and encourage reportage writings in respect of human rights.

## **8.0 PUBLICATIONS**

### **8.0.1 PARTICIPATION OF MINORITIES IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES**

Based on monitoring carried out by AHC on the participation of minorities in local government bodies and on improving services for them, during June, AHC prepared four special publications with the conclusions of surveys and monitoring carried out in the municipalities of Elbasan, Fier, Gjirokastër and Tiranë.

Besides the general assessment of the situation of respect for minority rights, through these publications, AHC sought to offer local government bodies conclusions and concrete recommendations on the access of minorities to local government bodies and ways to improve such access.

The reports are of interest as, on the one hand, they reflect citizens' perceptions regarding problems encountered by minorities and their participation in local governance, and, on the other, they reflect the perceptions of the local administration and local government bodies about the situation of minorities in the territories under their authority, as well as the need to increase

the contribution of minorities to draft and implement local development policies to their benefit.

The reports have been published in Albanian and are accompanied with summaries in English.