



**Australian Government**

**Refugee Review Tribunal**

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# Country Advice

## Albania

Albania – ALB37554 – Democratic Party of  
Albania – Relationship with the Italian  
government

29 October 2010

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### **1. What relationship is there, if any, between the Italian government and the Democratic Party in Albania?**

Searches of English language sources have found no reference to any relationship between the Italian government and the Democratic Party of Albania (Partia Demokratike e Shqipërisë, or PDS), other than usual official contacts.

In 2003, for example, the chairman of the Democratic Party, then in opposition, met with the head of the Italian Parliament Foreign Policy Commission who was on an official visit to Tirana, and “discussed the possibility of bilateral cooperation and support Italy is providing to Albania on the road to Euro Atlantic integration”. It was reported that countering organised crime and trafficking and “possible relations of these elements to politics” was discussed and that the Italian representative confirmed the support of the Italian government in the process of Albania’s integration with the European Union.<sup>1</sup>

Since the 2005 elections, the Democratic Party has led the government in Albania and during these years Albania has continued to view Italy as its main strategic political and economic partner.<sup>2 3</sup>

No reports were found of immigrant Albanians in Italy being targeted by members or supporters of the Democratic Party, and no information was found to indicate that the Italian authorities have tolerated unlawful targeting of immigrant Albanians or failed to provide protection against such harm.

During research, the following other information of interest and possible relevance was found.

#### **Christian Democratic Party and the Democratic Party of Albania**

The Christian Democratic Party of Albania (Partia Demokristiane e Shqipërisë, or PDK) was a minor party in alliance with the Democratic Party in the 2005 assembly elections and joined the Democratic Party in forming government.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Trajko, K. 2003, ‘Italy supports Albania on its road towards integration – Berisha’, *Albanian-ATA English News Service*, 29 March – Attachment 1.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Albanian president, Italian opposition leader discuss bilateral cooperation’ 2008, *BBC Monitoring Europe*, source: ATA, 16 October – Attachment 2.

<sup>3</sup> ‘President Topi, meets with the President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, Mr. Gianfranco Fini’ 2010, Presidenti i Republikës së Shqipërisë website, 6 May <http://www.president.al/english/pub/info.asp?id=2315> – Accessed 27 October 2010 – Attachment 3.

In 2006, however, the political coordinator of the Christian Democratic Party expressed the view that “the Democratic Party of Albania is predominated by Muslims and that the Socialist party [Partia Socialiste e Shqipërisë, or PSS] is mostly Orthodox” and that these two major parties had been “excluding the Catholics” since 1992.<sup>5</sup>

Prior to the June 2009 assembly elections, Albania adopted a new electoral code which many considered likely to impair the ability of the smaller parties to compete with the Democratic Party and the Socialist Party. According to the *Political Handbook of the World*, the 2009 elections consequently “produced a broad decline in the fortunes of smaller parties, despite the involvement of nearly every such party in large electoral coalitions”.<sup>6</sup> The Christian Democratic Party had founded a coalition called the Pole of Freedom (Poli i Lirisë, or PL) as “a center-right ‘third force’ in domestic politics” in the lead up to the elections, but won less than 2 percent of the nationwide vote.<sup>7</sup>

In the same month as the elections, a local head of the PDK was killed in a bomb attack, although it reportedly was not confirmed that the attack was politically motivated.<sup>8</sup>

### **Anticipated change enhancing freedom of movement within Europe**

On 7 October 2010, *Agence Europe* reported that the European Parliament had given the go-ahead for removing visa requirements for passport-holders of Albania by the end of the year. According to the report the draft decision to lift the visa requirement still needed to be approved by the Council of Ministers in a qualified majority vote in November.<sup>9</sup> The President of Albania has welcomed the European Parliament having opened the way to “free movement” of Albanian citizens.<sup>10</sup>

### **Attachments**

1. Trajko, K. 2003, ‘Italy supports Albania on its road towards integration – Berisha’, *Albanian-ATA English News Service*, 29 March. (FACTIVA)
2. ‘Albanian president, Italian opposition leader discuss bilateral cooperation’ 2008, *BBC Monitoring Europe*, source: *ATA*, 16 October. (FACTIVA)

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<sup>4</sup> ‘Albania’ 2010, *Political Handbook of the World Online Edition*, originally published in *Political Handbook of the World 2010*, edited by Arthur S. Banks, Thomas C. Muller, William R. Overstreet, and Judith F. Isacoff, Washington: CQ Press, p. 18 – Attachment 4.

<sup>5</sup> Zefi, M. 2006, ‘Albania Needs a Third Political Force It Should be the Christian Democratic Party’, Shqiperia-etnike website, 3 August <http://www.shqiperia-etnike.com/she94/she94eng.htm> – Accessed 27 October 2010 – Attachment 5.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Albania’ 2010, *Political Handbook of the World Online Edition*, originally published in *Political Handbook of the World 2010*, edited by Arthur S. Banks, Thomas C. Muller, William R. Overstreet, and Judith F. Isacoff, Washington: CQ Press, p. 17 – Attachment 4.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Albania’ 2010, *Political Handbook of the World Online Edition*, originally published in *Political Handbook of the World 2010*, edited by Arthur S. Banks, Thomas C. Muller, William R. Overstreet, and Judith F. Isacoff, Washington: CQ Press, pp. 21-22 – Attachment 4.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Albania’ 2010, *Political Handbook of the World Online Edition*, originally published in *Political Handbook of the World 2010*, edited by Arthur S. Banks, Thomas C. Muller, William R. Overstreet, and Judith F. Isacoff, Washington: CQ Press, p. 22 – Attachment 4.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina, green light for scrapping visas’ 2010, *Agence Europe*, 8 October – Attachment 6.

<sup>10</sup> ‘The address of President Topi after the passing of the report on visas liberalization for Albania’ 2010, Presidenti i Republikës së Shqipërisë website, 7 October <http://www.president.al/english/pub/info.asp?id=2351> – Accessed 27 October 2010 – Attachment 7.

3. 'President Topi, meets with the President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, Mr. Gianfranco Fini' 2010, Presidenti i Republikes se Shqiperise website, 6 May <http://www.president.al/english/pub/info.asp?id=2315> – Accessed 27 October 2010.
4. 'Albania' 2010, Political Handbook of the World Online Edition, originally published in *Political Handbook of the World 2010*, edited by Arthur S. Banks, Thomas C. Muller, William R. Overstreet, and Judith F. Isacoff, Washington: CQ Press.
5. Zefi, M. 2006, 'Albania Needs a Third Political Force It Should be the Christian Democratic Party', Shqiperia-etnike website, 3 August <http://www.shqiperia-etnike.com/she94/she94eng.htm> – Accessed 27 October 2010.
6. 'Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina, green light for scrapping visas' 2010, *Agence Europe*, 8 October. (FACTIVA)
7. 'The address of President Topi after the passing of the report on visas liberalization for Albania' 2010, Presidenti i Republikes se Shqiperise website, 7 October <http://www.president.al/english/pub/info.asp?id=2351> – Accessed 27 October 2010.