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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS
IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL
AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Letter dated 22 February 1990 from the Chargé d'affaires of the
Permanent Mission of the Socialist People's Republic of Albania
to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Chairman
of the Commission on Human Rights

1. I have the honour to attach herewith the interview granted by Simon Stefani, Minister of the Interior of the Socialist People's Republic of Albania, to the editor of the newspaper Zeri i Popullit, published in its issue of 22 February 1990 and entitled "The Truth about Prisoners in Albania".
2. I would request you kindly to circulate this text as an official document of the Commission on Human Rights under item 12 of the agenda for its forty-sixth session.

(Signed) Alfred Papuçiu
Chargé d'affaires

Annex

THE TRUTH ABOUT PRISONERS IN ALBANIA

Interview granted by Simon Stefani, Minister of the Interior, to the editor of the newspaper Zeri i Popullit and published in its issue of 22 February 1990

Question: Some foreign press agencies periodically report, for malicious purposes, that there are thousands of detainees in the prisons in our country. They say that there are 20,000, 30,000 or even 40,000. What is the truth, Comrade Minister, with regard to this matter?

Answer: This is not the first time that certain circles have deliberately used their propaganda machinery to try to give a distorted picture of the situation in Albania. In this context, there are also the fabrications that there are large numbers of prisoners in our country. The facts are, however, quite different. At present, the Socialist People's Republic of Albania has a total of 3,850 prisoners who have been convicted of all types of ordinary and political crimes and who are serving their sentences in prisons and rehabilitation centres. Only 83 of these persons were found guilty of action to overthrow the people's power by violence. Contrary to the accusations often made against our country, no one has been sentenced for his religious activities or beliefs.

I would like to stress that there have been very few cases of death sentences for serious crimes, as provided for by criminal law. For example, during the period from 1980 to 1990, only four death penalties were handed down for political crimes, whereas, in the case of ordinary crimes which constitute a great threat to society, three or four persons were sentenced to death each year.

Question: Foreign propaganda also claims that there are thousands of members of the Greek minority in prison in Albania. Can you tell us, Comrade Minister, how many members of the Greek minority are now serving prison sentences?

Answer: I must first stress that, on this point as well, anti-Albanian propaganda has let its imagination run wild. In our country, minorities enjoy all the rights guaranteed to them by the Constitution. They are full citizens before the law like all Albanian citizens and are not discriminated against in any way. To answer your question: at present, 35 members of the minority are serving prison terms, none for serious political offences.

Question: One of the many slanderous statements concerns the ill-treatment to which prisoners are subjected in the places where they are serving their sentences. Can you tell us something about this?

Answer: A prison sentence in Albania is markedly educational in nature. It is profoundly humane. Accordingly, the law clearly enunciates the rules and regulations which give prisoners genuine opportunities to become

rehabilitated as useful members of society. While they are serving their sentences, moreover, prisoners are given permission to go home in case of family problems and their sentences are reduced when they do very well in carrying out the tasks assigned to them. By decision of the Presidium of the People's Assembly, prisoners who work and behave well are released before they have served their full sentences. In addition, amnesties are occasionally granted.

As a result of the healthy political situation and economic stability in our country, delinquency has been constantly declining.
