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to Parliamentary Election in Albania 2005**

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**Special Narrative report for Roma and  
Egyptian community**

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## FOREWORD

According to the Special Service Agreement No. 332/2005- 1300136 (line 1.2.3.- Short Term Observers) made on June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2005, between ODIHR of the OSCE from Warsaw, Poland and Rubin Zemon Ph.D. from Ohrid, FYROM, as well as the Term of References and Project Description that were an integral part of the mentioned Special Service Agreement, were determinate and defined my mission tasks, duties and rights as an Expert/National Minorities Analyst of the Election Observation Mission to Albania.

My project (mission) objectives on relation with mentioned documents were split on 2 different fields, as the following:

### Connected to OSCE ODIHR EOM mandate in Albania

- In connection with ODIHR Election Unit and OSCE ODIHR EOM, to explore and consolidate the role of a National Minorities Analyst coming from Roma or Egyptian communities, associated with OSCE ODIHR Election Observation Mission and the roles of Long Term Observers; Short Term Observers, Core team member in relation with participation of Roma and Egyptians in the election process;

### Connected to ODIHR CPRSI and European Commission project “Roma, use you ballot wisely!” – RUBW

- To illustrate and practice this role during the Parliamentary Elections in Albania 2005 and to produce a report about this for the project “Roma, use your ballot wisely!” - RUBW, in particular with the Cluster of action I: Increased participation of Roma in the election process, on its various stages, with focus on the local elections;
- To cooperate in elaboration of a working methodology for the observations, analysis, assessments of participation of Roma and Egyptians in various types of elections, according to the Cluster I from project RUBW; to make use of the subscriber’s previous experience in observing, analyzing, assessing elections, while repeatedly seconded by ODIHR CPRSI in the project RUBW during 2001-2005.

For these reasons the following activities were defined and taken:

### Connected to OSCE ODIHR EOM mandate in Albania

- Perform the tasks of national minorities analyst within the OSCE ODIHR EOM in Albania;
- Work under the supervision of the Deputy Head of the OSCE ODIHR EOM in Albania;
- Participate in all necessary briefings and meeting that will be organize by the OSCE ODIHR EOM;

- Exchange information with other members of Core Team in OSCE/ODIHR EOM, LTOs and STOs, concerning the national minority issues, especially for Roma and Egyptians communities, with aim for making a quality reports, conclusion and press release issued by OSCE ODIHR EOM in Albania;
- Visit national minority communities especially Roma and Egyptians in Albania and to meet different leaders and coordinators of different NGOs and projects;
- Contact the governmental authorities and departments for national minorities, especially those who are dealing and working with a national minority issues, especially for Roma and Egyptians;
- Collect information on the electoral behavior of individuals, groups and communities, that are belonging to the national minorities, especially to the Roma and Egyptians, as well as potentially problematic issues regarding the participation of national minority populations in the elections in question;
- Document how Governmental Policy for Roma and Egyptians in Albania is connected with the electoral process, as documented in the Local Elections in 2003 and Parliamentary Elections in 2005;
- Contact the Governmental Department in charge with the implementation of the specific provisions related to Roma and Egyptians in areas as employment, housing, health, and cultural activities.

Connected to ODIHR CPRSI and European Commission project “Roma, use you ballot wisely!” – RUBW

- Issue a final narrative report containing conclusions and recommendations concerning participation of national minorities, as both voters and candidates. This analysis will contain the references to the previous reports of the elections in Albania, Croatia and Bulgaria;
- Produce a concept paper about the relation between activities of Clusters I and II of RUBW, in particular, the case of Roma and Egyptians in Albania;
- Present to the ODIHR and to the implementation team of RUBW project, precise proposals on how to further promote the implementation of the Governmental Policy mentioned above, by enhancing the participation of Roma and Egyptians in activities of elected bodies resulted from local-general elections; in particular, suggest localities, Roma and Egyptians NGOs, persons, who may implement particular activities in RUBW in the period of June – November 2005 (persons as Local Contact Points, member of Task Forces, as described in the Cluster II of RUBW).

The working methods for the preparation of the report involve **documentary and bibliography analyses of the issued publications and reports** by the different Governmental Institutions and bodies of R. of Albania, domestic and international working groups, commissions, committees and NGOs, **contact visit and confident dialogues** with governmental authorities, community represents, candidates and voters. The **weekly reports in EOM by the Long-Term Observers (LTO)** are a solid

documentation to fix some processes and situations related with the election process among the minority communities, especially among the Roma and Egyptians over the country, bearing in mind that physically is possible to visit all the local communities during the mission time.

Bearing in mind that the LTOs are coming from different countries and with different professional background, I prepare a **questioner for National Minorities (NM) and Guide for leading an interview with NM representatives**, with aim to make it easier the LTOs work related with NM in a field and to gain some relevant and useful information. The questioner and Guide are attached to this report. But, unfortunately our mission probably started little late for this kind of activities with LTOs, because in a last weeks before the E-day, they had a lot of obligation and other activities related directly with an election process, and the most of them hadn't time to fulfill the questioner, so we got response only from a few LTO teams (Shkodra, Korca, Elbasan). Other LTO teams said that all that succeed to observe related with NM is written in their weekly reports. As attachment of this report are the parts of LTOs weekly reports related with NM and sorted by us to particular minorities.

During our mission we had more than 40 official meetings with state authorities, NM representatives, NGO leaders and coordinator and voters, as well as we visited some rallies, round-tables and other meeting related with election among the NM, especially among the Roma and Egyptians. The notes and minutes from this meetings are attached to this report.

I will like to express my thanks to the Core Team members of ODIHR EOM in Albania 2005, for the excellent cooperation and understanding the sensitivity of the minority issues in Albania, especially related with the election process among the Roma and Egyptians minorities.

Ohrid, 06 August 2005

Rubin Zemon Ph.D.

## Summary and Recommendations

Albania, *classifies minorities into two groups: National (Greeks, Macedonians and Montenegrins/Serbian) and Ethno-linguistic (Roma and Arumenians/Vlachs).*

Roma in Albania are unofficial “recognized” as ethno-linguistic minority. The state is implementing the “National Strategy for Improvement the Living conditions of Roma in Albania”, as well as in Special State Committee for National Minorities is one member from Roma community.

*Egyptians* are not classified and are “not recognized” by the authorities, although some committees and commissions of Council of Europe are advising the Government of Albania to find a way of recognition and also a way of protection of this community, especially from racial discrimination.

However, our opinion is that even Albania signed and adopted the Framework Convention for protection of National Minorities of Council of Europe they are not ready yet, to implement the article of that Convention especially the Article 3.

One of the biggest contradictions in Albania related with the minorities is number and percent of minorities in the country. The official state data are saying that in Albania are living little more than 2% of minorities, and the domestic NGOs especially those from the minorities are saying that in Albania are living around 30% of minorities. UNDP is saying that there are more than 120 thousand Roma in Albania, which is 4% of total population only for the Roma. Another contradiction related with minorities in Albania is that always from official and unofficial source is saying that the biggest minority in Albania are the Greeks, even that in reality and according to some particular studies that biggest ethnic community in Albania are Egyptians (more that 200.000) and Roma (more than 120.000).

There is no legal impediment to create a political party on an ethnic, religious or regional basis, as long as they do not encourage and support racial, religious or ethnic hatred. No seats in parliament or local government are reserved for minorities. In Albania is exists a lack of effective participation of persons belonging to some minority groups in the country’s decision-making processes at the national as well as local levels, especially to Roma and Egyptians communities, which are grossly under-represented in political decision-making bodies.

Related with the National Strategy for improvement of the living conditions of Roma in Albania, we don’t have a clean picture of the implementation of the Strategy, even that some activities to achieve the objectives are taken, but without the necessary transparency. The Albanian authorities have to ensure the participation of Roma representatives in all aspects of the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy at national and local level. We are recommending **the Special State Committee for Minorities in Albania** to propose to the Government a model for monitoring the implementation of the National Strategy for improvement of the living conditions of Roma. **The experiences of the Croatian model for implementation and monitoring the National Program for Roma, and the participation of Roma representatives, may to be very useful for solving of this crucial problem for Roma in Albania.**

The Third Report for Albania of European Commission against the Racism and Intolerance of CoE, published on June 14<sup>th</sup> 2005, is presenting the real situation,

especially related with Roma and Egyptians communities, and the implementation of the recommendations that are given by the Commission have to be fully observing with much more attention by the international community, especially by the OSCE Presence mission in Albania.

The new Albanian authorities have to take the “Egyptian issue” in Albania very serious, with respecting the recommendations of various commissions and committees by the international organizations, especially bearing in mind that this group is one of the biggest minority in Albania. To avoid the confusions related with this minority and its official identification, and bearing in mind the circumstances, ethnic origin and the position of some scholars are recommending the official identification of this group in Albania to be “Balkan Egyptians in Albania”.

By 1996 while the country’s overall unemployment rate was 18%, it was between 80-90% percent in the Roma and Egyptians communities. An average of 46 % of their decreasing household income comes from casual work or self-employment. Roma and Egyptians household income are less than half of “white” Albanian urban household incomes at the national level (37, 232 leks- or US\$ 286). Based on the socioeconomic survey, the average household income is 16,492 leks (US\$ 127) for Roma and, 17, 769 leks (US\$ 137) for Egyptians. Average monthly household expenditures are 25,867 leks (US\$199) for Roma and 25, 641 leks (US\$ 197) for Egyptians. More than 40% of Roma and 30% of Egyptians families do not have running water in their homes, because water connection have not been installed. Much like Albanian household survey in 2000, 39% of the Roma and 45% of Egyptians household highlighted that the health of household members has declined over the past five years. Only 25% of Roma and 29% of Egyptians said they have enough money to buy medicines. Besides the mentioned, 64% of Roma and 24% of Egyptians ages 7-20 are illiterate, while 40% of Roma and 11.3 % of Egyptians ages 20-40 are illiterate. The biggest barrier to education is poverty. Families cannot afford to pay schoolbooks or supplies, or to feed and clothe children sufficient for them to attend school. In fact, 67% of Roma and 60% of Egyptian families cannot afford the costs of books and school supplies. While the national unemployment rate was around 16% at the end of 2002, the rates for Roma and Egyptians derived from the socioeconomic survey were 71% and 67%, respectively, for the working age population. Further, 88% of Roma and 83% of Egyptians have been unemployed for more than a year.

All the this statistical data, that are published in a edition of the World Bank is saying the situation of Roma and Egyptians in Albania is a terrible, and these problems can’t be solved without active political and state decision-making participation of these communities.

For election in Albania 2005, Movement for Human Rights Party gave 7 candidates for MP from the Roma community, in its proportional lists. In the list was 1 female candidate from the Egyptian community Mrs. Flutura Luka.

Even that the Human Right Union Party known as “minority party” in former election fielded a large number of Roma and Egyptians candidates, for this election has not any Roma candidate, and has only 1 Egyptians candidate: Mr. Fuat Mehmeti in electoral zone No. 81 in Korca.

On this election and other two political subjects, a political Party “Democratic Alliance, and “Future of Albania” gave Egyptians candidates in single-majority constituencies. They are, respectively, Mr. Skender Kamberi in Zone No. 94 in Vlora, and Mr, Arben Veizi that was a candidate in zone 91, Tepelena, as well as Mr. Adrijan Lila in zone No. 35 in Tirana, from the “Future of Albania”..

Two candidatures of Mrs. Zaneta Veizaj (Egyptian) from Vlora in zone No. 94, and Mr. Qemal Guri (Shegin) in zone no. 14 in Lezha, were refused by the adequate ZECs, and the candidates made complains, to the CEC, but CEC refused the complains.

From the mainstream parties only the Democratic Party (DP), lead by Dr. Sali Berisha, for this election take in consideration the minority issues, especially for Roma and Egyptians, during the electoral campaign. This is maybe a consequence of the **agreement that was sign on 26<sup>th</sup> of May 2005 between DP and Association of Egyptians in Albania “Nefreta”**. According to this agreement **in a proportional candidates list of DP under the number 29 is Mr. Behar Sadiku**.

As a conclusion, for this election Roma community hadn't any candidate in single-majority lists for MP, and had **7 candidates** in proportional lists for MPs, fielded by MHRF. The Egyptians for this election had **4 candidates in a single-majority lists**, by the 3 different political parties, and **2 rejected candidates**. In a **proportional lists Egyptians had 2 candidates** by the different political parties, which one is from a mainstream parties.

The rejections of the candidatures of Mrs. Zaneta Veizaj and Mr. Qemal Guri, in generally, don't have ethnic discrimination dimension, even that are exist a lot of indication elements for ethnic and racial discrimination.

Albania has a chronic problem with a voters list, from former elections. Not existing of a system of ID cards, with eternal personal number of the people during a life, in Albania maybe is one of the crucial reasons for a problem with voters list. Responsibility for the compilation and maintenance of voter lists was transferred from CEC and state ministries to local government authorities, and the lists were drawn from civil register. But, in civil register a lot of Roma and Egyptians are not registered. The solution of problems with voter lists in Albania, we are seeing to the Albanian authorities with taking steps to ensure that all Roma and Egyptian children are registered in the civil register. These could include positive measures such as targeted awareness raising campaigns, as extension of the 45-day time limit for registering, prolonging the fee waiver, or other similar facilitative measurers. This is much more, because in a National Strategy for Improving the Living Conditions of Roma, in area of Civil registrars as an objective is determinate a “registration of the Roma population in the Civil Registrars Offices”, the responsible actors are the Ministry of Local Government and Decentralization, with Ministry of Finances and Roma NGOs, and the time frame is 2004-2005. Implementation of this objective has to be financed by the State Budget.

Generally, political parties devoted a very little time in a political campaign to the minorities' issues in Albania. Even a Human Right Union Party that is known as a “minority party” for this election devoted a very small time for the minority issues mainly oriented as a citizen party for establishing of Euro-Atlantic criteria in Albanian society. A

political party Movement for Human Rights and Freedoms was the only party that in its platform includes calls for the enactment of enhanced minority rights.

For the first time on this election, one of the mainstream parties in Albania-Democratic Party, in its campaign is started to mention and to comment the social problems faced by Roma and Egyptian populations. The Roma and Egyptians problems and issues in Albania were mentioned in media presentations of DP, in a rallies and in a printed campaign materials.

In our observation we didn't saw any good organization of the Roma and Egyptians candidates (in sigle-majority constituencies or in proportional lists) of their electoral campaign. We didn't saw any election staff of the candidates, electoral strategy (mainly was a door-to-door campaign), media plan, action plan etc. For that reason for the future elections the Roma and Egyptians candidates need trainings how to manage the electoral campaigns, if they really want to be a serious candidates in elections. **The experiences from Bulgaria with realization of the "Roma Political Academy" may to be very creative for improvement of this issue in Albania.**

Albanian media in generally, devoted a very small space to the minorities. The analyze of the media unit by the OSCE/ODIHR EOM in Albania is saying that the media during the news in and special news, related only to direct speech, to the national minorities devoted only 0.35% of the air-space. The question of presentation in media is very complicated issue, and especially the Roma and Egyptian leaders in Albania have to gain an training for dealing, managing and communication with media, or to engage special person that will be educated to work with media.

The participation of women in elections was very low. Only 95 female candidates were registered in a single-mandate constituencies (less than 8%) and only 141 on party lists (less than 9%). The situation with women participation among the minorities, especially, amongst the Roma and Egyptians, is much more worse than in mentioned general situation in a country. No, Roma women didn't was any candidate on this election in Albania. The situation to be more worse I hadn't any chance to meet any Roma women in a organized political meetings, round-table and rallies. The situation is not much better among the Egyptians in Albania. In single-mandate constituencies from 7 Egyptian candidates, were no any women. In a party lists the only Egyptian candidate was Mrs. Flutura Luka.

. Almost all of the candidates from the Roma and Egyptian community said that on E-day in field were serious irregularities from variety of quarters, including allegations of vote buying. According to the candidates a price for one vote was from 1000-2000 Albanian lekes (approximately EUR 10-20).

We didn't find anybody from Roma or Egyptians that is a member of any election commission from the Central Election Commission to the VCC level.

The only domestic observation among the Roma was organized by Romani Baxt branch organization in Korca, coordinated by Mrs. Miranda Fejzo. Engaged were 25 Roma observers in voter centers. The observers didn't observe the atmosphere out the VCs. But, they are aware that in Saturday before the E-day, were happened a lot of activities for buying of votes of Roma and Egyptians, as well as in a Sunday afternoon (E-day).

Roma and Egyptians NGOs in Albania have to be encourage and trained to take much more activities in observation of the full election process, not only the E-day, because the

most of problems, irregularities and violations amongst the Roma and Egyptians in election are not in E-day, like are the problems with voters lists, buying of votes, observing of the election campaign, media etc.

## **General remarks about Albania**

### **8. Population and national minorities**

According to the official data in Albania are living 3,069,275 people<sup>1</sup>. There are a lot of contradictions about the structure, number and percent of national minorities in Albania. The official data from the census of 1989 says that there are a total of 64.816 people (belonging to a minority) living in Albania or 2.01% of the total population.

Domestic NGOs especially those from the minorities are saying that in Albania currently live more that 900 thousand people or around 30% of the population. . Questions on ethnicity were absent from the 2001 census. Some international organizations have made some reports and studies for particular communities, and they mention a much greater number than the officials. For example, UNDP is saying that there are more than 120 thousand Roma in Albania, which is 4% of total population only for the Roma. Committees and commission of Council of Europe are advising the Government of Albania to carry out a national census in which a question is included pertaining to ethnic identity, respecting the principles of confidentiality and voluntary self-identification.

However, Albania, *classifies minorities into two groups: National (Greeks, Macedonians and Montenegrins/Serbians) and Ethno-linguistic (Roma and Arumenians/Vlachs)*. Egyptians are not classified and are “not recognized” officially by the authorities, although some committees and commissions of Council of Europe are advising the Government of Albania to find a way of recognition and also a way of protection of this community, especially from racial discrimination. But, from other side in Albania is not exists any special amendment in Constitution of R. of Albania, Law or any Government Decision about the recognitions of particular minorities or the criteria for recognitions. Even and the classification on “national” and “ethno-linguistic” minorities is not base on any legal act. The only official way for recognition or “not recognition” is participation in a Special State Committee for Minorities, where the representatives have the Greeks, Macedonians, Montenegrins/Serbians, Aromanians (Vlachs) and Roma. An unofficial criteria for recognition as national minority is “minorities to have countries of origin with which have in common characteristics as: ethnic identity, language, culture, customs, traditions, religious confession etc”<sup>2</sup>. However, our opinion is that even Albania signed and adopted the Framework Convection for protection of National Minorities of Council of Europe they are not ready yet, to implement the article of that Convection especially the Article 3: “*Every person*

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<sup>1</sup> Albania Human Rights Group, Minorities: The present and the future, Tirana, 2003, page. 145.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, page.141

*belonging to a national minority shall have the right freely to choose to be treated or not to be treated as such and no disadvantage shall result from this choice or from the exercise of the rights which are connected to that choice. Persons belonging to national minorities may exercise the rights and enjoy the freedoms flowing from the principles enshrined in the present framework Convention individually as well as in community with others”.*

Another contradiction related with minorities in Albania is that always from official and unofficial source is saying that the biggest minority in Albania are the Greeks. This issue is elaborated and by some domestic journalist and analyst, bearing in mind that unofficial in reality and according to some particular studies that biggest ethnic community in Albania are Egyptians (more that 200.000) and Roma (more than 120.000)<sup>3</sup>. The position of an Albanian analyst Blendi Kajsii, about this phonomema is that in Albania is still exists the myth of homogenous Albanian society and the state that the Roma and Egyptians are substantial or important part of this society would be to add insult to the injury caused by saying that Albania is not a homogenous society. With emphasizing that the Greeks are the biggest minority means that there cannot be another bigger one, such are Roma and Egyptians, since Albania is a homogenous society. Second, if worse come to worse, if the society is not really such homogenous, better be more Greek than Gypsy<sup>4</sup>.

**Greek** minority is mainly located in the south of the country: in the regions of Saranda, Gjirokastrro, Vlora and Korca, but we may also find people belonging to this community in other regions. Some minority rights guaranteed by the international conventions (for example public using of the language, education on their language etc.) are only enjoyed by the Greeks that are living in previously so-called “minority zones”.

**Macedonians** are mainly located in the municipality of Liqenas (region of Korca, the villages near the Prespa Lake), in Golo Bordo (region of Librazhd) and in Gora (region of Kukes), but we may also find people belonging to this community in other regions. The issues of the minority rights are similar to those experienced by the Greek minority. In the region of Librazhd one part of these population declare themselves as **Bulgarian** and generally they are Muslims.

The majority of **Montenegrins and Serbians** minorities are living in the city and in the region of Shkodra. The issue of these minorities in Albania is less complicated than that of the other minorities in the country.

The roots of **Aromanian/Vlach** community in Albania are from the south-east part of the country. Today they are totally integrated in the society and are spread over all the territory of the state and wider in other Balkan states. The scientific conflict about the origin of this community has its reflection in the present orientation of their cultural, educational and political situation. One part of the people of this community prefer to develop a collaboration with Romania, the second part a collaboration with Greece and the third part wants to develop their identity and their life as an independent authentic community.

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<sup>3</sup> H. De Soto, S. Beddies, I.Gedeshi; Roma and Egyptians in Albania-from Social exclusion to social inclusion; World Bank working paper no. 53; The World Bank, Washington D.C., March 2005, page.xxiv.

<sup>4</sup> See, Blendi Kajsii, Arrows aimed at Greece, Denial of Roma, Partisans wars, Hate speech in Albanian media, Media Online, 2005.

**Roma and Egyptians** are two different communities present in the entire territory of the country. Even though they are very different communities, they both are usually facing discrimination and poverty, and are permanently targets of manipulations of their voting rights.

There are other smaller minorities currently living in Albania like the **Bosnians** located in the area of Shijak (near Durres), some **Croats** and some **Austrians** in Shkodra region etc.

In 2000, an **Office of National Minorities** (ONM) was created in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The ONM was established to monitor Albania's conformity with minority-related international commitments.

In 2004 the Government approved establishment of a **Special State Committee for Minorities** with task for making recommendations to the government with respect to the promotion of the rights of minorities in all fields of life. The current members of this committee are: Mrs. Konstantina Bezhani- chairperson (Greek), Mr. Kristofor Kamberi (Greek), Mr. Foto Nikola (Macedonian), Mr. Bledar Belja (Serb-Montenegrin), Mr. Ropos Burri (Aromenian/Vlach), and Mr. Refik Tare (Roma). However, the Committee is currently functioning without a Secretariat or other support and is also operating with minimal financial resources.

## **9. Legal Framework**

The Constitution of Albania was adopted in a referendum on 22 November 1998. The constitution has highest legal force and is the legal basis of all other pieces of legislation. The constitution may be amended by not less than two-thirds of all members of the 140 members Assembly. The constitution may also be amended by a referendum election. Article 17 of the constitution specifically references the rights and protections granted in the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Constitution protects suffrage rights and rights correlative to the exercise of suffrage rights. Article 45(1) grants the right to vote and to be elected to every citizen who has reached the age of 18 years on the date of elections. The right to vote is surrendered by a citizen who has been declared mentally incompetent by a final court decision, or who is serving a prison sentence. The right to vote is personal, equal, free and secret.

In connection with the exercise of suffrage rights and campaign activities, the constitution protects the right to organize collectively for any lawful purpose and to have peaceful meetings, without arms, and to participate in meetings. Further, Article 48 of the constitution guarantees that everyone, by himself or together with others, may address requests, complaints or comments to the public organs, which are obliged to answer within the time periods and under the conditions set by law.

### **3. The system of government**

The President is the Head of State. The constitution requires that the President be an Albanian citizen by birth who has resided in Albania for not less than 10 years and who has reached the age of 40. The Assembly elects the President, by secret ballot and without debate. It requires a majority vote of three-fifths of the members of the Assembly. If the

President is not elected after five ballots, then the Assembly is dissolved and new general elections take place within 60 days. The President is elected for a 5-year term and can be re-elected only once.

The Council of Ministers is led by the Prime Minister and must receive a vote of confidence by the Assembly. The Council of Ministers determines the principal general policies of the state. It makes decisions upon the proposal of the Prime Minister or the respective minister. Acts of the Council of Ministers are valid when signed by the Prime Minister and the proposing minister. The Council of Ministers issues decisions and instructions to implement law.

The judicial power is vested in courts of first instance, courts of appeal, the High Court, and the Constitutional Court.

The legislative power is vested in the Assembly. The Assembly consists of 140 deputies.

#### **4. The electoral system**

Citizens of Albania elect the members of the National Assembly (deputies) by direct and secret ballot for the term of office of four years. The mandate of the National Assembly, under Article 65 of the Constitution, continues until the first meeting of the newly elected National Assembly.

Article 64 of the Constitution provides that the National Assembly is composed of 140 deputies. One hundred are elected directly in single mandate election constituencies in a single election round with candidates requiring a plurality, but not an absolute majority, of the votes to be elected. The remaining 40 deputies are elected from political party and coalition lists. In order to participate in the allocation of these 40 mandates, political parties and coalitions have to pass a threshold of 2.5 and 4 percent of the valid votes, respectively.

While the Constitution establishes an election system in which over 71% of the mandates are awarded on the “majoritarian” principle, Article 64.2 of the Constitution requires that “**the total number** of deputies of a party or party coalition shall be, to the closest possible extent, proportional to the votes won by them on the national scale in the first round of elections”.

Article 67 of the Electoral Code provides a complicated formula for allocating the 40 supplemental mandates to candidates on the multi-name lists. In effect, the allocation of these 40 mandates is linked to the number of majority seats won by a party or coalition in single mandate constituencies. For each party or coalition, if the number of majority seats won exceeds the total number of seats it would be entitled to according to proportional votes, such a party or coalition does not qualify for participation in the allocation of the 40 supplementary mandates. For each party or coalition, if the number of majority seats won is less than the number of seats it would be entitled to according to proportional votes, such a party or coalition is eligible for participation in the allocation of the 40 supplemental mandates. These are subsequently distributed so as to approximate the number of seats the respective party or coalition would be entitled to according to the proportional votes.

Article 90 of the Electoral Code provides that a voter is presented with two ballots: one for the majoritarian contest in the single member constituency in which the

voter resides and a second for the national-level proportional contest. Therefore, voters are permitted to make two separate electoral choices.

### **5. The right to vote**

Every Albanian citizen who has reached the age of 18 years on the date of the elections, and who fulfils the voter registration requirements of the Electoral Code, has the right to vote in elections for the National Assembly. A citizen who has been declared by a final judicial decision as incapable of acting because of mental incapacity is excluded from the right to vote. A voter who lives in another state has the right to vote only in the territory of the Republic of Albania at the place where the person is registered in the registry of civil status, provided the person is also registered as a voter in accordance with the Electoral Code.

### **6. The electoral administration**

Parliamentary elections in Albania are administered by a three-tier election administration:

- The Central Election Commission (CEC);
- 100 Zone Election Commissions (ZECs);
- 4,762 Voting Centre Commissions (VCCs).

Unlike in previous election, where ballots were counted in the voting centers, counting will take place in 100 counting centers (one for each zone) and will be conducted by counting groups under the authority of the ZECs. In addition to this three-tiered structure envisaged by the Election Code, the CEC has also established 12 Regional Election Offices for these elections (one in each prefecture).

### **7. Voter registration**

The quality of voter lists has been a source of concerns and complaints in past Albanian elections. The poor quality of the lists repeatedly led to allegations that errors or omissions were politically manipulated rather than of a technical nature. Several attempts to reform the voter registration system were undertaken, often at the cost of starting from scratch.

Before the 2005 parliamentary elections, another major reform of the voter registration system was agreed, and the new legislation was adopted in late 2004 and early 2005. The responsibility for voter lists was shifted from the CEC to local government units, which are in charge of maintaining the lists on the basis of the civil register, which local governments already maintain. The Ministry of Local Government and Decentralization (MLGD) assisted local governments by playing a coordinating role in establishing possible duplicate records in the voter lists, incomplete data, errors etc.

The adoption of a new system of voter registration has been a major challenge for the institutions involved. Major population movements over the past years – including emigration as well as migration within the country –, the emergence of ‘informal areas’ in particular in and around major cities, as well as reluctance on the part of some citizens to formally register their new place of residence are major obstacles in the development

of accurate civil registers and voter lists. The computerization of the civil registers also posed major challenges. Finally, the short timeframe available before the 2005 parliamentary elections due to the late amendments to the Election Code further complicated the work of local administrations.

A major problem in developing a proper computerized civil register is that in many places, no address system exists. To tackle this issue, a system was developed under which each voter was assigned a ten-digit 'numerical address' containing information on the civil status office (three digits), the voting center the citizen is assigned to (four digits), and the number of the building in which he or she lives (three digits). Civil registers were updated to include this information. If eligible voters were not found during the verification process, they were assigned '999' as the last three digits of their numerical address (or in some cases, '888'). According to the MLGD, around 528,000 citizens were assigned such addresses. The ministry also claims, however, that "each voter is guaranteed the right to vote within the relevant local government unit".

Under the new rules, the General Directorate of the Civil Registry at MLGD sends updated voter lists extracted from the National Civil Registry to local government (normally nine months before end of term of the organ to be elected; for these elections, the initial steps of the process were compressed since preliminary voter lists had to be posted by 31 March.). Civil registry offices update the lists received from the General Directorate. This is done under the authority of the mayor and within 2 months of receipt of the list from the MLGD. Within 30 days of updating the lists, the mayor assigns voters to voting centers, and at the latest six months before the end of the term, the mayors must post preliminary voter lists publicly. Copies of the preliminary voter lists are sent to the General Directorate of the Civil Registry and to the local civil registry office.

Within 30 days of the publication of the preliminary voter lists, notifications must be delivered to all persons on the list. Changes to the preliminary voter list can be requested by the General Directorate of the Civil Registry, by voters and their family, and in some cases by third persons. The mayor must decide on requests for changes within five days. The mayor's decision can be appealed in court within five days of receipt of notification, and courts then have five days to decide on such appeals. The court's decision is binding and must be implemented by the mayor.

**After incorporating all changes, the mayor prepares the final voter list and sends it to the ZEC no later than 25 days before election day**, in three copies: a list by voting center, which has to be posted for public display no later than 20 days before election day; a list by voting center which will be used by the VCC of that voting center; and a list for the whole zone or local government unit (as appropriate).

**Voters who are not on the final voter list can request to be added by a decision of the competent district court. Requests to the court can be made up to 24 hours before Election Day.** Voters added by court decision receive a personal certificate with their picture and are added to a special voter list on Election Day. The certificate and the court decision are retained by the VCC and attached to the special voter list.

Mayors must make voter lists available to electoral subjects upon request and free of charge. Parties and coalitions registered with the CEC as electoral subjects are entitled to the nationwide voter list from the General Directorate of Civil Registry; one copy of this list is free of charge. Mayors and the CEC must make voter lists available to interested electoral subjects within three days of their request.

## *General remarks about the Roma and Balkan Egyptians in Albania*

### **a) Roma**

The Roma have been living in Albania for more than 600 years (Kolsti, 1991). They arrived from Asia shortly before the Ottoman Turks in the middle of the fifteenth century. They started from India, traveled towards the direction of Persia, Syria, Iraq and through Armenia into the Western Byzantine territories, then through the Balkans into Europe. Their origins are known not because of clear-cut historical evidences, but mostly from linguistic analysis of the development of the Romani language, and also because of comparative physical anthropology surveys (Fraser, 1992:41-45).

In a 1938 article in the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, Margaret Hasluck suggested another version of the origins of the Albanian nomad Roma -- they came from Spain. Without citing any specific date, she wrote that they lived in Spain where “they followed the King of that country to wars with Italy. There they behaved so badly that the king forbade them to return to Spain and also cursed them saying: May you never take root anywhere” (Hasluck, 1938:50).

In the Ottoman time, many Roma had converted to Islam for safety reasons, as many ethnic Albanians did or were forced to do so. Nevertheless, the former were not treated on an equal basis with the other Muslims in their millet, but as “second class” people. The official Ottoman policy levied the “gjjizie” tax on the Roma along with all other non-Muslim subjects of the empire. The Muslim Roma were no exception from this rule, since they were considered as schismatics straying from the Muslim law on many points connected to rite and morals. By the 17th century, the financial pressure on the Roma, as well as on other subjects of the empire, increased. It reached such a state that Sultan Mehmed IV exacted a tax from dead Gypsies until live ones were found to replace them. Some rulers made sporadic attempts to “reeducate” Gypsies in their “public order” activities (Fraser, 1992:174-175). In addition, there are claims that Roma were not accepted inside the mosques, and as a consequence – inside the Muslim cemeteries (Kolsti, 1991:51). There are opposing arguments claiming the invalidity of the above, the Roma were accepted in the mosques and buried as all other people; such arguments are usually based on some “Albanian myths” on the subject (Courthiades, 2000).

It is widely claimed that in the four Albanian *villayets* – Shkodra, Kosovo, Janina and Monastir – Roma shared the faith of other nomad people such as the Arumanians. Roma inhabited in caravan camps in the vicinity of Albanian settlements (Kovacs, 1996:18). However, counter-arguments exist that these interpretations are mostly based on stereotypes about the Roma since this particular group of Roma were never nomads (Courthiades, 2000). During the Ottoman time, Roma enjoyed a relatively peaceful cohabitation with the rest of the ethnically different groups. This sense of equality was based on the fact that Roma were only one of the many oppressed minorities (Kovacs, 1996:18). “Vlachs, Gypsies and Albanians alike were ethnic minorities in the periphery of a crumbling empire” (Kolsti, 1991:51-52). By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the four Ottoman villayets, administered by Albanian Muslims, became a refuge for Roma families that had either adopted Islam and, therefore, fled from persecution in areas

recently liberated from Ottoman control, or of those who had escaped from slavery, particularly from the Romanian principalities (ibid. 51).

After the establishment of the Albanian independent republic in 1912 and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the life of many Albanians and Albanian Roma living outside the boundaries of the republic became harsher. They faced persecution, due to their Muslim faith, by the Slavic majorities in inter-war Yugoslavia, Macedonia and Kosovo, as they were identified as the collaborators of the Turks. Albanian Roma living within the boundaries of the Albanian state faced a relatively benign treatment (ibid:52-52). Their situation did not change much since they kept their traditional occupational roles, and the religious discrimination against them continued. The large social gaps between the Roma and the non-Roma remained. Roma continued to live in segregated neighborhoods and there were practically no intermarriages between Roma and non-Roma (Kolsti,1991:53-54).

During the Second world war, Albania was under Italian rule within the territories of "Greater Albania." Albanian Roma were not persecuted or deported to death camps, unlike the Roma in many countries in Eastern Europe. However, Albanian Roma participated in the war and many of them were fighting in the Albanian military (Kolsti, 1991:53-54). Until the German occupation of the Greater Albania in 1943, neither the Italians nor the Albanian nationalist persecuted the Albanian Roma because of their increasingly problematic international political situation. The German army's occupation of Albania lasted no longer than one year, there was insufficient time and capacity to pursue a policy of deportation or extermination of the Roma (Kovacs, 1996:19). Moreover, Roma were supportive of pro-German (Italian) forces, like all other Albanian and Slavic Muslims in Greater Albania. They all shared a common enemy, the Serbs, under whose rule they suffered significantly decades ago (Kolsti, 1991: 53-54). However, the Roma's primary motivation of action was their own survival (Courthiades, 2000).

Albania emerged out of the Second World War without territorial losses compared to the pre-war Albania. After the war, the communist leader Enver Hoxha borrowed the policy of assimilation and the idea of a homogeneous Albanian nation from the Albanian nationalists of the pre-war period (Kovacs, 1996: 20). Hoxha imposed a strict Stalinist regime, attempting to homogenize Albania's population through banning all religious practices and suppressing all cultural differences. It was again during the communist time that the Roma, along with the whole Albanian population, were forbidden to travel abroad, not even to the other former communist countries (Fonseca, 1995: 87). Although the Roma enjoyed certain benefits from the regime, like employment and the general notion of "security for tomorrow", they were not treated on an equal basis with the majority. For example, there was an unsuccessful attempt in the 1960s' by Prime Minister Mehmet Shehu to ban Roma from entering the Albanian towns (Kurtiade, 1995: 10).

With the collapse of communism, and the start of economic and political transition to democracy, the Roma were the first to become unemployed and to go rapidly to the bottom of the society. Roma, in line with the general post-communist mentality, feel nostalgic about their lost security and think that they had enjoyed better life style during communism (ERRC Report, 1997:9).

During the communist time, both Romani men and women were obliged to work according to the policy of full employment of the state. Roma were employed as non-

skilled workers in some low-level public activities (Fonseca, 1995:88). In the villages, most of them worked in the agriculture and in the mines, while in the larger cities, they worked on constructions and in the public services (Kovacs, 1996:20).

Like in other East-European countries, Roma in Albania were the big losers of the economic and political changes of 1989-1990. Being undereducated and unskilled, their position in the society changed drastically – while being fully employed during communism, their participation in the mainstream economy diminished to a quasi total unemployment after 1990. As a result of that, the new generations of Romani children are unable to go to school due to the inability of their families to afford their children's education (Kovacs, 1996:21), with only a small number of individual exceptions (Courthiades, 2000).

Roma in Albania are especially appreciated as musicians today, but they are also involved in small business and palmistry (Kurtiade, 1995:10). The four Roma tribes – Meckars, Kurtofs, Kabuzis and Cergars -- have their own particular professions, more or less distinctive from one another (Albanian Human Rights Group, 1997). The *Meckar* tribe, which has been sedentary for many centuries, is involved mainly in agriculture and live stock breeding (Courthiades, 1990s:31-32). The *Kurtofs* are inclined to small-scale trading and handicrafts, while the *Kabuzis* are mainly musicians and artisans. The *Cergars* men are travelers and traders and their women are usually fortune-tellers (Kovacs, 1996:18).

The economic situation of the Roma in Albania at present resembles that of the Roma in other Central and East European countries in various ways. They are poor and the rate of unemployment is several times higher than that of the non-Roma. The housing conditions are very bad. However, what is different in Albania is that the country is poorer than any other countries in Europe in the first place. Therefore, the poverty of the Roma vis-à-vis the majority is relatively smaller than that of their ethnic brethren in countries with better developed economies (Kovacs, 1996:5).

The Minority Rights Group International estimated the number of Roma at between 90,000 and 100,000 people (Minority Rights Group International, 1995). The US Department of State claimed that they are 100,000, while Roma sources claimed that there are between 80,000 and 120,000 Roma (ERRC Report, 1996: 89). The Minorities at Risk Project of the Center for International Development and Conflict Management at the University of Maryland claimed in 1995 that there are between 10,000 and 120,000 Roma living in Albania. A last research of UNDP saying the number of Roma in Albania is 121 800 people.

Roma live in almost all areas of the country. However, the strongest communities are situated mainly in central and southeast Albania: Tirana, Durrës and Berat. According to a 1997 European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) Report, Roma live either in the big towns, mainly in separate headquarters, on the towns outskirts or in villages close to the respective towns. Roma live in four districts of Tirana, the largest of which is the “Kinostudio” neighborhood. At least 5,000 Roma live in four quarters of Tirana. In separate town neighborhoods live also Roma in the southern towns of Delvine and Gjirokaster -- 800 people and 2,000 people respectively. Approximately 1200 Roma live in Fueshe-Kruje, 25 kilometers north-west of Tirana. In Berat, 200-300 Roma live in the suburbs, but in recent years, some of them moved to the large urban community of Elbasan. There are other big Roma communities around the town of Fier. Almost half of

them (2,000-2,200) live in the town and in its suburbs, while the other half is based in the neighboring village of Levan (2,400). Rural communities are to be found in some villages around the southeastern town of Korce (ERRC Report, 1997:7-8).

- **National Strategy for Improving the living conditions of the Roma**

Since 18 September 2003, a Government of Albania is implementing the National Strategy for “Improving the living conditions of the Roma Minority”. An inter-ministerial group under the leadership of Mr. Ahmet Ceni, Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Affairs has formulated this national strategy. The inter ministerial working group was coordinated by Merita Gjashta. The National Strategy for “Improving the living conditions of the Roma minority” has been designed with the contribution of Mr. Refik Tare, representing the Roma organizations on inter ministerial group. Also, the Strategy has benefited from inputs made by the Roma non-profit organizations (NPO-s), such as Roma for Integration, Amaro Drom, Romani Baht, Shanci Rom, Amaro Dives, Disutni Albania. Responsibilities for implementation of the objectives and task of the national strategy are separated to the different ministries depending to the respective field of action (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labor and Social affairs, ministry of Justice, etc). This kind of implementation of the national strategy is making a confusion about the monitoring of the implementation, and there is no authorized body or commission that monitoring in generally the implementation of full strategy, but only are existing a particular monitoring teams in a particular ministries for their area or field of responsibility for the national strategy. From other side Roma NGOs, especially those that participate in a formulation and designed of the national strategy are not involved in a process of implementation and monitoring, and accusing the Government that non-Roma NGOs are dealing with the National Strategy. With an aim to disseminate and to understand how the implementation and monitoring are going I had a meetings with some Roma and non-Roma authorities that are related with an issue of the National Strategy:

On June 14, 2005 I had a meeting with Mr. Refik Tare, who is a Roma member of Special State Committee for Minorities by the government of the Republic of Albania. He told me that Mr. Ahmet Ceni is a president of a group for the implementation of Roma Strategy. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Work and Social Issues are working on monitoring of the strategy, and one group is on the frame of the Ministry for education. It is necessary and crucial one Roma to be a member in a monitoring team. This strategy is not functioning because the different ministries are not well coordinated among themselves and also the Roma representatives are not participating.

On June 16<sup>th</sup> 2005 I had a meeting with Mrs. Arlinda Gjata from the Office for National Minorities by the Ministry of foreign affairs. Among the other discussion I made the question about who's dealing, managing, and monitoring the national strategy for improving the living conditions of the Roma in Albania? Her answer was the institute for social services, and Mrs. Blerina Tepelena - who is in charge of monitoring and implementing the Roma strategy. Then, I made a comment that Roma NGOs are not satisfied with Roma strategy because they are not involved within the implementation. She said that doesn't know why, but 20 NGOs created a network group for this issue and is not working well.

On June 18<sup>th</sup> I had a meeting in State Social Services with Mrs. Natasha Hodaj (General Director) and Mrs. Blerina Tepelena (chief of the monitoring team of the National Strategy). From these meeting we got the following information: Mrs. Hodaj said that they agree and it is good to see Mr. Refik Tare, or any other Roma representative in a Monitoring team for implementation of National Strategy for improving of living conditions of Roma. The monitoring team does not monitor the finances, but only the objectives of the National Strategy. The doors are open to the Roma NGOs for implementation of the Roma strategy. They cooperated with NGO “Nene Tereza”, “Amaro Drom”, and the “Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports” for publishing of the newspaper. The members of monitoring team for the Roma strategy are: Mrs. Blerina Tepelena, Mrs. Eva Lena, Mrs. Anisa Sofija, and Mr. Ahmet Ceni.

On June 20<sup>th</sup> I meet Mr. Ahmet Ceni Deputy minister for Social works. He said that he just drafted and signed the strategy for the Roma. The Ministry of Culture made some activities as well as the Ministry of Education has made some kindergartens. The Roma kids have problems with the Albanian language. Mrs. Kostandina Bezhani (chair person of the Special State Committee for Minorities) is delegated to follow the implementation of the program and also monitor the situation?!

After all these meeting related with the National Strategy for improvement of the living conditions of Roma, in Albania, my conclusions is that until now we don't have a clean picture of the implementation of the Strategy, even that some activities to achieve the objectives are taken, but without the necessary transparency, as have to be for such State project. However, in future activities for implementation and monitoring the National Strategy a participation of the Roma representatives must be provided. The international organizations such OSCE present mission, ODIHR and the mission of CoE in Europe, have to devote much more attention on this issue, bearing in mind that the representatives of these organizations take a part in early phases of preparation of this Strategy.

*Comparably with experiences from Croatia and its National Program for Roma, an Office for National Minorities proposed to the Government of the Republic of Croatia to establish a Commission for Monitoring the Implementation of the National Program for Roma. This Commission is composed by: Deputy Prime Minister (President of the Commission), by one representative of all ministries and state institutes that are involved in a implementation of the National Program for Roma, by one representative of the counties (region)<sup>5</sup> where are living a large number of Roma, one representative of NGOs from the field of human rights, and seven representatives from Roma councils<sup>6</sup>, at the local and regional levels, and of Roma associations.*

We think that **similar model may to be proposed by the Special State Committee for Minorities in Albania to the Government for monitoring the implementation** of the National Strategy for improvement of the living conditions of Roma.

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<sup>5</sup> A local self-government in Croatian is divided on two levels municipalities and counties (region).

<sup>6</sup> In Croatia minorities on local may to establish national minority councils with a consultative status to the local governments.

## **- Other minority issues of Roma**

European Commission against the Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) of Council of Europe in its report from 14 June 2005, stress a large number of remarks, comments, concerns and recommendations related with Roma population in Albania, and the most of them are common and for the Egyptian community. The following outlines are only a part of that:

- ECRI is concerned about the reports that a disproportional number of Roma and Egyptian children are not registered in the civil register. This problem impinges upon the rights of these persons in many sectors of life, such as their access to various services, including education, social services and healthcare as well as their ability to exercise civil rights, such as voting.
- Roma and Egyptians in a large percent are discriminated in a filed of housing, bearing in mind that a part of these population were evicted from houses in which they had been living for many years, and were not given the same possibilities of an alternative location to live or housing credits as their non-Roma and non-Egyptians counterparts in a similar situation.
- ECRI encouraged the Albanian authorities to make special efforts to address to high drop-out rate amongst Roma and Egyptians children and to increase the participation of members of these groups at all levels of education. ECRI recommended to the Albanian authorities to undertake the measures for financial provision to assist poorer families in covering the costs associated with education; awareness raising of parents as to the importance of sending their children to school; recruitment of Roma and Egyptians teachers and school directors; special training for teachers to raise their awareness of discrimination and the needs of Roma and Egyptians children; ensuring textbooks do not promote negative stereotypes about Roma and Egyptians and instead include information about Roma and Egyptian cultures and the positive contribution of these communities to Albanian society.
- ECRI is concern about the fact that some media in Albania promoting racism and discrimination, although on some occasion they promote negative stereotypes about minorities, particularly Roma.
- ECRI is deeply concerned over the deplorable living conditions, extreme poverty and social and economic marginalisation of many Roma and Egyptians in Albania. A large number of Roma and Egyptians live in ramshackle shacks in neighborhoods lacking basic utilities, with particularly high rates of unemployment and difficulties in accessing social services, such as health care. Especially high rate of school drop-out of children from these communities and they are particularly vulnerable to becoming victims of trafficking. Adding to the general difficulties and problems experienced by the Albanians related to the political, social and economic changes, these communities have suffered the additional burden of marginalisation and neglect. Their inadequate

representation and participation in public life, has clearly exacerbated this situation.

- ECRI recommending to the Albanian authorities to analyze the manner in which Roma and Egyptians may experience forms of indirect discrimination in different fields of life, as well as to assess the impact of negative stereotypes and prejudice towards these minority groups.
- ECRI recommends to the Albanian authorities to take steps to ensure that Roma and Egyptian communities are not discriminated against through their neglect by decision-makers and other public officials. ECRI urges national and local decision-making and other officials to ensure that due attention is paid to the particular problems and needs of these communities in all fields of life and to ensure their full inclusion in economic, social and political life.
- ECRI is concerned over the lack of effective participation of persons belonging to some minority groups in the country's decision-making processes at the national as well as local level. The persons belonging to the minority groups, and in particular Roma and Egyptians, are grossly under-represented in political decision-making bodies. Even in municipalities and regions where Roma and Egyptians constitute a significant portion of the population, their communities tend to either not be represented within local councils, or be represented in a very limited manner.
- This situation seems to be exacerbated by the generally low participation of Roma and Egyptians in the political process, as representatives of political parties and as voters. Reports following the last local election indicate that there was a very low turnout by registered voters from minority groups, especially Roma and Egyptians. In addition, many Roma and Egyptians are not registered to vote. This low participation seems at least in part to be connected to a lack of trust in political parties and a feeling that these parties do not represent the interest of their communities. Electoral candidates exploit the poverty, difficult living conditions and low levels of education of many Roma and Egyptians by buying votes or making promises before elections only to forget about these voters once they come to power.
- ECRI has not received information that would indicate an increase in their representation in state institutions since its second report. Number of Egyptians and Roma in state institutions seems particularly low, with those few persons that are employed in the public sector for the most part filling functions such as cleaning and maintenance. It has been stressed to ECRI that this cannot be explained purely by education levels as there are qualified and educated people within Roma and Egyptians communities.
- ECRI notes the importance of ensuring that persons belonging to minority groups are adequately prepared to effectively articulate their needs and effectively take part in political decision-making. There seems to be significant need in Albania for members of minority groups,

particularly the more marginalized Roma and Egyptians, to be supported in developing the necessary knowledge, skills and structure in order to participate effectively in public decisions.

- ECRI recommends that the Albanian authorities ensure that Roma are consistently involved in all aspects of the implementation and evaluation of the “National Strategy for the Improvement of Living Conditions of the Roma” at national and local level. It urges the authorities to ensure that those involved include Roma communities directly affected by the Strategy as well as diverse grassroots Roma organizations.
- ECRI is deeply concerned over the relatively widespread phenomenon of trafficking in Albanian children for purposes of exploitation. More specifically ECRI is concerned that a disproportionate number of Roma and Egyptian children are victims of this phenomenon. In fact, the majority of those children trafficked come from Roma and Egyptian community.
- ECRI strongly recommends that representatives of Egyptian and Roma communities be directly involved in developing and carrying out measures aimed at combating the trafficking of their children.

### **Balkan Egyptians**

The newest scientific research shows that the Balkan Egyptians have their roots from Ancient Egypt, and they came in Balkans during the time of pharaoh Ramsess the Second. This knowledge is based on historical sources from the ancient time especially from the scripts of Herodotus, in 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. The history is giving to us a lot of data to trace arrival of these people from Egypt to Balkans. From the mentioned ancient historian in his book “History” the second chapter called “Euterpa” we may see his descriptions about the concourses of the pharaoh Sesostrid (Ramsess the Second) and the migrations of Egyptians in Balkans made on that time. In a same book we may find that the tribe of Dorians (antic Hellenic tribes in Peloponnesian) had the Egyptians origin. From the ancient Hellenic legend for Cadmo and Harmony, we may make a lot of connections between Balkans and Egypt, but and we may make the reconstruction of the migration waves of Egyptians in Balkans, especially for those that are living in the present territory of Albania.

There are existing and large number of historical evidences and sources about the presence of Egyptians also for other periods on the time of Macedonian Empire, Roman Empire, Byzantine Empire and Ottoman Empire.

The archeology gives evidences for the existence of people with Egyptian origin in Balkans, too. There are preserved a lot of temples of Isis and other Egyptians gods around the Balkans, but the most famous are the temples of Isis in Lihnidos (Ohrid) and Heraclea (Bitola), as well as for the Albanian territory in Apolonia and other regions . Also, on the ornaments of Balkan’s people could be observed the scarab (holly insect in Egyptian mythology) etc.

The Balkans Egyptians have three types of ethno-names (folk appellation):

- a) The ethno-names that are related or point to the Egypt (**Gjyp, Egjyp, Magjyp, Evgjit, Jevg-** on Albanian language; **Gjupci, Egjupci, Jupci, Ejupci, Ojupci-** in Macedonia; **Agupti-** in Bulgaria; **Kepti / K'pti/ Kiptijani, Misirli** on Turkish language.
- b) The ethno-names that are related with the profession: **Kovaci** (Blacksmith), **Esnaf** (guild), **Ashkali** (coal-maker).
- c) Other ethno-names: **Faraon, Firaon, Farvan** (Pharaon), **Airli** ( the old inhabitants, aborigine on Turksuh language), **Gjivagjani, Latini**, etc.

With some of these ethno-names (especially with the first group) in a European society but and in scientist bibliography are co-identified and the Roma community. It is very hard through the ethno-names to be making a determination and recognizing, is it worked for the people that are belonging to the Roma or Balkans Egyptians community. Why, how and when is came to this confusion and co-identification with these ethno-names for this different communities is very hard to verify, but are exist some hypothesis.

Our opinion is that the Egyptians, as we told before, were inhabited and integrated in Balkans and European society, much more before the Roma came in Middle Age. When the Roma came in Balkans and Europe, with their ethnic specifics (wondering life and their professions) they didn't were accepted well by the people. For these not accepting are exists a lot superstitions, folk stories and even some laws that were brought from some middle age states with discriminatory norms. The Romas, to overcome a lot of unpleasant situations and with the goal to be accepted by the population and integrated in the society, probably were "pushed" to identify themselves as Egyptians (people from Egypt- Gypsies), because somatically (by the color of the skin) are similar with the Egyptians. These "usurpation" of ethno-names, ethnic mimicry and wrong identification, have their consequences until today in the society, science and finally in the politic international community and particularly states.

In this context is important to say that the ethno-names that are related with Egypt for the members of the Balkans Egyptians community are endo-names<sup>7</sup>, but for the Romas are egzo-names<sup>8</sup>.

The Balkans Egyptians don't have own and unify language. They are speaking the languages of the surrounding where they are living or from where they immigrated inside the Balkans in a close past. They are speaking the Albanian, Macedonian, Serbian, Turkish etc. But, the Balkans Egyptians never spoke and don't speaking the Roma language.

Many Balkans and European scientist (Gussepe Catapano, Nermin Vlora Falaschi, Skender Rizaj, Olga Lukovic Pjanovic, Tasko Belcev, Risto Ivanoski) are saying that in Balkans languages exist a lot of elements of Ancient Egyptians language.

The main traditional professions of Balkans Egyptians were: blacksmith profession, agro-culture, musicians, reed makers (cattail), pottery, brick-makers, coal

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<sup>7</sup> Endo-name is mean the folk appellation that are using the members of the community for self-identification in-side of the community

<sup>8</sup> Egzo-name is mean the appellation (sometimes a stereotype) that the other communities are using to identifying the members of one community, but the members of that community are not using that appellation for self-identification and accepting that appellation as pejorative

workers etc. The blacksmith profession is with a great importance in the life of Balkans Egyptians, all the material, spiritual and social culture in some way is related with the blacksmith profession.

The Balkans Egyptians are living the stationary life, and they never in the history lived so called “wondering” or “nomadic” life. For the old settlements from the oldest times of Balkans Egyptians we may find a lot historical documents and in the terrain a lot of names of geographic localities and archeological localities related with this community, which are dated from the neolith, ancient and middle age time. The quarts and the settlements of Balkans Egyptians mainly are in the centers of the towns (cities) or near to the old castles.

The economic situation of the Egyptians in Albania at present is very similar and maybe we may to say is the same with the situation of Roma. They are poor and the rate of unemployment is several times higher than that of the non- Egyptians and non-Roma. The housing conditions are very bad. All the element of socio-economic life are similar or the same like the Roma and that is making more bigger the similarity and equality between these two communities.

But, in Albania, both Roma and Jevgs (Egyptians) make a sharp distinction between themselves. There is seldom intermarriage or contact of any significant kind between them (US Department of State Report, 1993:695). On the one hand, Roma strongly deny a common identity with the Jevgs. It considers the Jevgs as being rich and even of having some millionaires among them (ERRC Report, 1997:12). One of the millionaires, Maksude Kasemi, was of Jevg origin. She was involved in the pyramid investment schemes, which dramatically collapsed in early 1997 and had drawn the whole Albanian society into turmoil. Jevgs are ironically called “sir” in Romani slang, meaning “garlic” (Courthiades,1990s:31). They are even considered *gadjo* by the Roma, since they intermarry with Albanians and other ethnic groups and speak Albanian, and not Romani.

The main regions/cities in Albania with Egyptians population are<sup>9</sup>: Shkodra with around 3.000 people, Elbasan around 10.000, Durres around 20.000, Korca around 28.000, Vlora with around 30.000, Berat around 10.000, Gjirokastra around 5.000, and Delvina around 1000. The capital Tirana has around 30.000 people that are belonging that are belonging to the Egyptian community.

The Egyptians in Albania are suffering the same discrimination and neglects as the Roma community, both they have and one very important special issue that is discrimination related to the Egyptian identity. ECRI devoted a special chapter to this issue in its last report from 14 June 2005, where is written:

*“...ECRI notes that de facto Egyptians seem to be perceived as a distinct minority in Albanian society, by the public, the media as well as some Albanian officials, who perceive Egyptians as distinct and commonly refer to them with specific group designation. In this connection ECRI is concerned that the specific terms by the which Egyptians are designated in Albanian society often contain pejorative connotation, and may to refer simply to their dark skin color.*

*ECRI is deeply concerned that this situation has resulted in the discrimination of the Egyptians as compared to other minorities in Albania with respect to their ability to bring their specific problems and concerns to the attention of the authorities. The*

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<sup>9</sup> H. De Soto, S. Beedies, I.Gedeshi; Roma and Egyptians in Albania-from Social exclusion to social inclusion; World Bank working paper no. 53; The World Bank, Washington D.C., March 2005, page.xxiv.

*Egyptians therefore face a position of particular marginalisation in public life as well as a general neglect of their specific problems and needs by the Albanian authorities. The Egyptians seem to be overlooked in the development of the policies in different fields of the life. This have meant that no steps have been taken to determine whether Egyptian communities face direct or indirect discrimination in different fields of life or suffer from racism in society... Furthermore, Egyptians tend to be excluded from state structures specifically established in order to address the needs of the countries' minority. For instance, the Special State Committee on Minorities responsible for making recommendations to the Government on minority issues does not include a representatives of Egyptian minority...*

*ECRI urges the Albanian authorities to ensure that the principle of non-discrimination is fully respected as concerns Egyptians in Albania.*

*ECRI recommends to the Albanian authorities to ensure that there is no discrimination against Egyptians with respect to their participation and access to official State institution dealing with the needs and concerns of the countries' minorities. In particular, ECRI recommends that the Egyptians be represented on the Special State Committee on Minorities, and be taken into account by the Office of National Minorities.*

*ECRI recommend that the Albanian authorities devote specific attention to the problems faced by the Egyptian communities, and develop in co-operation with these communities measures targeted to their particular needs, including measures to address any indirect discrimination or racism that they experience. The Albanian authorities may wish to consider the adoption of a specific National Strategy aimed at improving the situation of Egyptians in Albania..."*

The comments of the Government of R. Albania, about the Egyptian issue, are the following:

*"...Relating to the status issues of Egyptian community, in the determining as national minority of a certain group, exist the subjective criterion which undermines the personal choice to be part of this community, exist even some objective criteria provided in international acts like as: a) existence in this group of ethnic, cultural, religious, linguistic characteristic, b) the obvious will to keep the culture, tradition, religion or their language..."*

*...Historically "gypsies" have arrived in Balkans (including Albania) from India through Egypt and this fact is the sole element, which relates them with this country...They do not have their own language and can speak only in Albanian language. They have been integrated completely in the Albanian population and their only difference from the other part of Albanian people is the color of their skin..."*

*...The allegation of a group of people that is so called "Egyptians" and requires to be considered as minority group exists only in Albania..."*

*...For this issue we mention again the fact which is expressed even before that the Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt in Tirana has declared that does not acknowledge any Egyptian minority in Albania and this community which lives in Albania has no ethnic relation to the Egyptian people.*

*...Based on all the international acts regarding to the national minorities and considering objective and subjective criteria determined in them for the status of the national minorities, criteria accepted even from the Council of Europe, we consider that*

*there do not exist fundamental elements which can obligate the Albanian state to acknowledge to Egyptian community the status of national minority.”*

On this occasion we will comment that the mentioned Governmental position and explanations about the “Egyptian issue” in Albania, are not stable and on false basic because of the following:

1. The existence of objective ethnic, cultural, religious, linguistic characteristic of the Egyptians in the Balkans, and especially in Albania, are mentioned in a large number of scientific book, even in a Albanian science, from the famous Albanian scientist like: Faik Konica, Sami Fresheri, Zija Shkodra etc., as well as by Albanian Academy of Science by its Institute for Language and Letters. From other side the researching of the objective parameters of one ethnic groups in not on the domain of the Government or ministries, but on the domain of the Scientific Institutes for ethnology or anthropology. Unfortunately, in Albania are not existing such Scientific Institutes.

2. Is not true that the “gypsies” have arrived in Balkans (including Albania) from India through Egypt. For this position does not exist any scientific proof or argument. Roma when arrived in Egypt in 12-13 century, continued their way through north Africa to Spain, and they didn’t come to Balkan. In Balkans the Roma came though Anadolia (today Turkey), and this stream don’t have any relation with Egypt. Opposite to this, the relations between Balkans and Egypt are on large number from the ancient time until the collapsing of Ottoman Empire.

3. Is not true that in only in Albania do exist a people that declare them selves as Egyptians. Opposite to that, the process of identification of this group like “Egyptians” started in former Yugoslavia in 1980s. Today organizations of Egyptians are registered in Serbia, Kosovo and Macedonia, and as well as in west-European countries by the emigrants from the Balkans. In former and in a present parliament of Kosovo are 2 MP that declare themselves like “Egyptians”, and are elected by the IRDK political party that is declared like Egyptian party.

4. During my mission in Albania I visited the Embassy of AR Egypt in Tirana, and I had a conversation with H.E. Dr. Refaat Ansary, Ambassador. He informed me that the Embassy never were asked by the Albanian authorities about the “Egyptians issue” in Albania, and they never gave any official declaration as is mentioned in comments of the Government of Albania. From other side the Balkan Egyptians don’t have relation with the present population in Egypt, where the majority are the Arabs, but with the minority of the population with Hamid origin, like current Copts in Egypt.

According to all of these our recommendation is that the new Albanian authorities have to take the “Egyptian issue” in Albania very serious, with respecting the recommendations of various commissions and committees by the international organizations, especially bearing in mind that this group is one of the biggest minority in Albania.

Our second recommendation is that this group officially has to identify maybe with another name that will avoid the unexpected confusion with the name, but will show their relation with Egypt and the authentic in the Balkan area. For that purpose some of scholars are using the name “Balkan Egyptians” that is acceptable for us. On that way for

identifying this group in Albania will be used the reference “Balkan Egyptians in Albania”.

### **c) Socio-economic situation of Roma and Balkan Egyptians in Albania**

During the period between the world wars, the first reliable sources on Egyptians and Roma in Albania describe two peoples who were distinct in the terms of traditional occupation, skills, crafts, language, religion and other anthropological categories. Relations were distant between Egyptians and Roma, and among Roma, Egyptians and Albanians. Both Roma and Egyptians rejected the notion of being a single community. According to Hasluck (1938) “nomads regarded sedentary groups (Egyptians) as their inferiors, “while these sedentary groups “despised” the Roma. Generally, Egyptians felt that they were “above the Roma” (Mann 1937). Some sources claim that Albanians despised both groups (Kolsti 1999) but sometimes preferred Egyptians over Roma, since the former were “so much the nearer to Albanians” (Hasluck 1938)<sup>10</sup>.

During the socialist period, everyone, including the Roma and Egyptians, was guaranteed lifetime employment. Some were integrated into agricultural cooperatives and the state farms. Others were employed in state-owned handicraft and forest enterprises. In the cities, members of both groups worked as unskilled laborers alongside Albanians in the street sweeping and cleaning, industrial enterprises and construction. In Constitutional changes of 1976 the Government attempts to construct a socialist state. All private businesses and private property, including livestock, were outlawed, which created hardship for most Albanian. Many Roma were allowed to continue their involvement in small-scale private enterprises, including trading horses and selling traditional copper, wickerwork and other products that they purchased in cities and in villages across Albania. The Egyptians who are generally more educated than Roma, were better integrated into the state during this period. In addition to having workers economic sectors, the Egyptian community also produced engineers, doctors, teachers, economists, military officers and state employees. Egyptian instrumentalists and vocalists contributed to the developing of music in Albania<sup>11</sup>.

The fall of communist regime in 1991 marked the begging of the Roma’s and Egyptians decline from relative well-being to extreme poverty. By 1996 while the country’s overall unemployment rate was 18%, it was between 80-90% percent in the Roma and Egyptians communities<sup>12</sup>. Low employment skills, discrimination and the collapse of various state-owned industrial and agricultural enterprises contributed to their mass unemployment. Roma and Egyptians coped with economic insecurity in different ways. Socialist- era trends partly explain these variances. The Albanian-speaking Egyptians worked as skilled laborers in the industrial and services sectors. Roma, on the other hand, continued to be employed in their clan-specific occupations, and those Roma who lived near the Greek border began to migrate.

Because of high unemployment in the formal labor market, Roma and Egyptians seek employment in the informal labor market. When income from informal labor is

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, page xxii

<sup>11</sup> Ibid page xxii-xxiii.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid page xxiii

insufficient to meet daily needs, Roma and Egyptians seek alternative poverty coping methods such as international migration and, as last resort, prostitution and trafficking of children and drugs. According to collected empirical data, the causes of poverty and social exclusion for Roma and Egyptians in Albania are lack of education, lack of employment and weak basic infrastructure. The symptoms of poverty and social exclusion are seen in their informal sector activities- migration, dependence on aid, and prostitution-, which they employ, as coping strategies in their daily lives<sup>13</sup>.

According to the survey that is published in edition of the World Bank, Roma in Albania have identified distinguishing cultural markers as language (99%), music (80%), community celebration (80%), family ceremonies (74%), wickerwork (67%), and women's dress (63%). Egyptians have identified metal work (75%) and music (45%). In interviews, both Roma and Egyptians expressed the importance of supporting culture and identity through the establishment of cultural centers. However, poverty and other socioeconomic changes during the transition period have contributed to the decline of their cultures, particularly in the areas of the transmission of folktales, handicrafts, and music<sup>14</sup>.

In mentioned study is staying that since the begging of the transition, ever- earlier ages for marriages and childbearing have become common, and some are beginning to relate these marriage practices directly to increasing poverty. The majority do not receive formal family-planning education at school, because family planning in school is provided during higher primary school grades, which the majority of Roma and Egyptians do not attend. Only 10% of Roma and 8% of Egyptians respondents used birth control. One consequence of lack of information is that average number of children – 6.4 for Roma and 5.2 for Egyptians- is larger than the national average 4.2 . Roma women have the lowest average marriage age (15.5 years) of all ethnic groups in Albania<sup>15</sup>.

Both groups, Roma and Egyptians have fewer opportunities for formal employment than the majority population. An average of 46 % of their decreasing household income comes from casual work or self-employment. Roma and Egyptians household income are less than half of “white” Albanian urban household incomes at the national level (37, 232 leks- or US\$ 286). Based on the socioeconomic survey, the average household income is 16,492 leks (US\$ 127) for Roma and, 17, 769 leks (US\$ 137) for Egyptians. Average monthly household expenditures are 25,867 leks (US\$199) for Roma and 25, 641 leks (US\$ 197) for Egyptians<sup>16</sup>.

The state's inability to provide infrastructure and public services contributes to the poverty of Roma and Egyptians. More than 40% of Roma and 30% of Egyptians families do not have running water in their home, because water connection have not been installed<sup>17</sup>.

Much like Albanian household survey in 2000, 39% of the Roma and 45% of Egyptians household highlighted that the health of household members has declined over

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid page xxv

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, page xxvi

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, page xxvii.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, page xxviii

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

the past five years. Only 25% of Roma and 29% of Egyptians said they have enough money to buy medicines<sup>18</sup>.

Educational attainment level of the Albanian population has decreased during transition and is most pronounced amongst the Roma and Egyptian community. 64% of Roma and 24% of Egyptians ages 7-20 are illiterate, while 40% of Roma and 11.3 % of Egyptians ages 20-40 are illiterate. The biggest barrier to education is poverty. Families cannot afford to pay schoolbooks or supplies, or to feed and clothe children sufficient for them to attend school. In fact, 67% of Roma and 60% of Egyptian families cannot afford the costs of books and school supplies.

While the national unemployment rate was around 16% at the end of 2002, the rates for Roma and Egyptians derived from the socioeconomic survey were 71% and 67%, respectively, for the working age population. Further, 88% of Roma and 83% of Egyptians have been unemployed for more than a year.

## **Political participation and election process amongst the Roma and Balkan Egyptians in Albania**

### **a) Roma and Egyptians organizations**

The lack of strong racial persecution of Roma and Egyptians in Albania, unlike in other countries, has created no need for self-defense. Thus, the Albanian Roma and Egyptians have not been organized in any kind of organized movement [until the end of the Cold War]. (Courthiades, 1990s:34). However, the relatively peaceful cohabitation between Roma, Egyptians and non-Roma or non-Egyptians is rooted mainly in the lack of social interaction between them (Kovacs, 1996:7) and not so much in the lack of need for self-defense.

It is only now that the Roma and Egyptians are beginning to insist on their minority rights (Courthiades, 1990s:34). The political representation of the Roma and Egyptians is still very weak in Albania. There is no member of the parliament that declares himself as Roma or Egyptian. There are no Roma or Egyptian in the public administration and the judicial bodies of the country (Kovacs, 1996: 23-24).

The Roma and Egyptians in Albania, unlike the Roma or Egyptians in neighbor countries, do not have political representation in the form of political party. The Unity Party for Human Rights (UPHR), formed in 1992 after the Greek-minority based party OMONIA was declared illegal, depicted itself as representing the interests of all minorities in Albania (Kolsti, 1991). UPHR's Romani candidate for the 1996 elections Esat Bastriu told ERRC that the party had a program addressing Roma issues, especially concerning the official recognition of the Roma minority and the preservation of the Romani language and culture. However, in practice, UPHR's activities are based again predominantly within the Greek community (Bugajski, 1995), thus it cannot be ruled out that including Romani or Egyptian issues in their program was used in order to de-ethnicize their party (Courthiades, 2000). The continual political marginalization of the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

Roma and Egyptians within the party is due to the lack of actual power within the Roma and Egyptians community itself and the vulnerability of the group as a whole. UPHR's former chair Vasil Melo said in a Human Rights Project Interview, that Roma have very few demands, stick to their traditions and do not claim to study their mother-tongue in school (ERRC Report, 1997: 69-72).

Nevertheless, after 1990 three non-governmental organizations were established to represent the Roma on the national level: the Democratic Union of Roma in Albania Amaro Dives [Our Day], Rromani Baht [Romani Chance] and Amaro Drom [Our Way]. Amaro Dives, founded in 1991, was close to the Democratic Party [ruling Albania between 1992-1997]. However, it did not introduce programs responding to the needs of the Roma minority – either due to the lack of power or the lack of willingness -- although it made efforts to inaugurate projects for the improvement of infrastructure in Romani neighborhoods and in organizing Romani language schools (Kovacs, 1996:23-24, Courthiades, 2000).

Rromani Baxt, founded also in 1991, has been a member of an international network of Romani organizations with local members in France and Poland. Its program is quite complex – it consists of the efforts to develop Romani culture through promoting language schools, Romani music and culture to the national and international public. It is headed by Marcel Courthiades, an internationally known expert in the Romani language. The organization aims also at the development of basic infrastructure projects designed for the improvement of the living conditions in some Romani neighborhoods (Kovacs, 1996:24). On certain occasions, this organization provided food and medicines to some Roma in Albania, it also helped some Roma and Albanians in Kosovo (Courthiades, 2000).

Amaro Drom is the third national Romani organization. It also works on developmental and cultural projects concerning the Roma. It focuses on the problems of Roma on the local level (Kovacs, 1996:25) through its branches in Tirana, Elbasan, Korce, Fier, Berat and Durres. During the Kosovo crisis of March-June 1999, “Amaro Drom” helped around 260 Romani refugee families from Kosovo through giving them shelter in Albania. The organization collected foreign financial and material aid and distributed it among the Romani refugees (Ylli I Karvanit, 27/1999:8).

Today are existing a large number of Roma NGOs in Albania: Roma for Integration, Amaro Drom, Romani Baht, Shanci Rom, Amaro Dives, Disutni Albania, Nena Tereza (Mother Tereza) and others.

Romani organizations in general feel threatened to articulate the need of the Roma for official recognition. There are many reasons behind that behavior. Roma leaders are afraid that the present indifference of the authorities towards the Roma could transform into a violent rejection, if they stress too much on Romani rights. Roma leaders are aware of the persisting negative stereotypes against their people, so their strategy is to [first] empower the Roma with a strong identity and raise their consciousness. Thus, they adopt a “cooperative” rather than a “confrontational” stance towards the authorities. According to the President of Amaro Dives Guraliu Mejdani, “the government does not discriminate against Roma. Roma are integrated in the society to such an extent as that we can gain nothing from confrontation.” In addition, it is difficult to Romani leaders to articulate themselves well in legalistic terms. Moreover, Roma in Albania have also a very opportunistic attitude towards own situation. Many of them accept their second-class

treatment by the authorities and the discrimination against them by the majority as “normal” (Kovacs, 1996:16, 23-24, 26-27).

Roma defend their culture beyond the NGO level through maintaining cultural activities. For example, there is a Romani musical group called “Romani Dives” which plays Romani music of Albania, Albanian music – both traditional and contemporary – and Balkan and oriental music. It is run by the composer Alaban Furtuna who also operates the independent studio “Tirana 2000” and who makes compact discs of that music. This group goes regularly on tour outside Albania, mostly to western European countries (Courthiades, 2000).

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The ideals for developing and strengthen the organizations of the separate Balkan Egyptian community on the territory of Albania appeared immediately after the collapsing of communist system. The first association of Balkan Egyptians in Albania one was founded in Korcha on June 28 1992, but the authorities in that time didn't let to registered organization with a title “Association of Egyptians in Albania”. Later this organization was registered with a name “Association Kabaja” lead by Mr. Resul Duro. “Kabaja” is a kind of a traditional folk melody, which mainly is playing by the Egyptians in Albania. This organization was followed by regional associations such as the cultural and educational association “Orient” in Vlora, a Students' Egyptian Association in Albania, which was later united in a “Cultural association of the Egyptians in Albania-Nefreta” (i.e. Nefertiti), registered on March 22, 1993, with chairman Mr. Behar Sadiku. In December 1992 in Tirana Committee of the Albanian Egyptians was founded, which later on became the “Organizational Party- Equality, Dignity and Rights”. According to the legislative in that time in Albania the Organizational Parties may to deal with political issues, but they didn't had a rights to participate on elections. This Organizational Party is not functioning anymore. In 1999 was formed and the Association “Drita” (Light), which is publishing a newspaper “Papyrus”. This organization from 2002 is named as Organization “Vellazerim” (Brotherhood) lead by Mr. Fuad Mehmeti.

Egyptians organizations in Albania manly are dealing with issues of protecting of cultural identity, human and minority rights, fights against the poverty and discriminations. Egyptians leaders in Albania are maybe the most “aggressive” from the all minority leaders in Albania, in asking of their minority rights with “their way” of public presentations, organizing the protests with asking of minority rights etc., but from other side with the most lack of results in enjoying of minority rights.

Albanian Worker Movement Party is known in a society as party of Egyptian minority. Its chairman Shefqet Musarai is elected on 25<sup>th</sup> December 2004, and a former president of the party was Mr. Sokol Qendro. He is elected member of a local Council of municipality of Vlora. But, even that this party is known as an “Egyptian” party, in public the authorities of this party never identified as minority party, they are not dealing with minority issues of Egyptians in Albania. Only the members of this party mainly are from the Egyptian community, and they are asking the votes from the Egyptians voters as citizens. The seat of this party is in Vlora, and some not-so-powerful branch organizations in other sites. For this election a party didn't participate with their candidates for MP in single-majority lists or in proportional list. LTO team in Vlora meet Mr. Sokol Qendro and he inform them about the political issues of Egyptian community in Albania. They claimed 2,700 voters in Vlora Town, and they listed numerous

complaints from previous elections, including allegations of vote stealing at count in Tirana They are in process of better political organisation and to campaign for a 'proportional' system in elections. I also meet Mr.Sokol Qendro on my visit of Vlora. He repeat the same thinks on our conversations and he told me that now they are planning to make some changes of the Statute of the Party with changing of the name by putting any reference "Egyptians" and with changing of some amendments to provide a dealing with minority issues of Egyptians in Albania.

### **b) Roma and Egyptians candidates for the parliamentary election 2005**

For this election a Political party "A future of Albania" gave some candidates from the Egyptian community in Tepelena zone 91. **Mr. Arben Veizaj**, in Lezha zone No. 14 Mr. **Qemal Guri**, in Vlora zone No. 94 Mrs. **Zaneta Veizaj** and in Tirana zone no. 35 Mr. **Arijan Lila**. A candidatures of Mrs. Zaneta Veizaj and Mr. Qemal Guri were rejected by the ZEC, as well as the complains by the CEC. They didn't proceed complains to the Electoral College. The justifications for their rejection by the ZEC were that they have a false signature from the voters for their candidature, even that they collected twice more signatures that were asked. From Mrs. Zaneta Veizaj we were informed that the decision for rejection of her candidature were delivered to her 3 day after the deadline for response of the ZEC, and on a last day for complains in CEC. During her protest in a ZEC 94 for a breaking of deadline for delivering of rejections, she got a lot of insult words on ethnic base from the members of ZEC. From other side she told us that the members of ZEC 94 and the police inspectors put pressure on her supporters to cancel their signatures. Some of the people that sign a support for her were thrown out from the voter list.

In the same zone 94 was another Egyptian candidate **Mr. Skender Kamberi**, one of the famous painter in Albania, a candidate of a Democratic Aliance. But, on his campaign and platform we didn't note any concern or message about the minority issues of Egyptians.

Another candidate from the Egyptian community in a single-majority list was **Mr. Fuat Mehmedi** in zone No.81 in Korca, fielded by the HRUP. His campaign was strictly devoted to the Egyptians minority issues, especially to the promises for improvement of the terrible hard socio-economic life of Egyptians. LTO team from Korca meets him and he informs them about the number of Egyptians (8000) and Roma (1200) voters in his zone. He predicts; Egyptian turn out to be 70%. He said that personally financed his, mainly door-to-door campaign.

**For this election no one was a candidate in single-majority list from a Roma community in Albania.** On parliamentary election 2001 were 4 candidates from the Roma community in different electoral zones by the Human Rights Union Party (HRUP). Some of the Roma leaders broke the cooperation with this party, because as they are saying this party used the Roma votes only for supporting the Greeks candidate in a proportional list to become MP, and latter nobody didn't show any interest from this party for a Roma problems and issues.

At the begging of 2005, part of the members of HRUP established a new party named "Movement for Human Rights and Freedoms" (MHRF) with Chairman Mr. Ligoraq Karamelo. The political platform of this political party is totally devoted to the

human and minority rights in Albania. The political platform of this party is mentioned the minorities that are living in Albania (Greeks, Aromanians/Vlachs, Roma, Macedonians, Egyptians, Serbs-Montenegrins and Boshnjaks). This party has an aim an official recognition and registration of all minorities, exact determination of dispersion and number of minorities in whole territory of the state, implementation of right for education on minority language, in all zones where they are in considerable number etc.

A Movement for Human Rights and Freedoms gave candidatures for MPs only in **a proportional list**. With a inter-party agreement was précised the division of the candidates by the electoral zones, and according to the votes that will be won in a field and the seats that this party will get in a Parliament, they will decide to persons that will get the mandates in a Parliament. According to this agreement the **Roma candidates in the list of MHRF were: for zone No. 24 Fushe Kruje, Mr. Durim Gatalji; for zone No. 31 Tirana, Mr. Dilaver Mejdani, for zone No. 35 Tirana, Mr. Hamdi Demiri, for zone No. 36, Tirana, Mr. Istref Pellumbi, for zone No. 39 Tirana, Mr. Astrit Sallai, for zone No. 71, Levan, Mr. Petrit Cela, and for zone No. 75, Kucove, Mr. Alit Xhelali.**

In list of MHRF was and one Egyptians lady for electoral zone 34 in Tirana **Mrs. Flutura Luka.**

From the mainstream parties only the Democratic Party (DP), lead by Dr. Sali Berisha, for this election take in consideration the minority issues., especially for Roma and Egyptians, during the electoral campaign. This is maybe a consequence of the **agreement that was sign on 26<sup>th</sup> of May 2005 between DP and Association of Egyptians in Albania “Nefreta”**. With this agreement “Nefreta” will make a call and will work with Egyptians in Albania to support the DP party on the election, and DP party politically will protect the Egyptian minority, institutionally will recognize the Egyptians, will gave the status of National Minority to the Egyptians in Albania, will implement a National Strategy for development of Egyptians, and will provide one MP by the proportional list from Egyptians community. According to this agreement **in a proportional candidates list of DP under the number 29 is Mr. Behar Sadiku.**

As a conclusion, for this election Roma community hadn't any candidate in single-majority lists for MP, and had **7 candidates** in proportional lists for MPs, fielded by MHRF. Comparably with the former parliamentary election in **2001**, when were **4 candidates** from a single-majority lists fielded by HRUP, and no one candidate in proportional lists, by a numbers of candidates we have an improvement of the situation, but we can't say that we have any improvement in quality of the candidates, as we will se bellow.

The Egyptians for this election had **4 candidates in a single-majority lists**, by the 3 different political parties, and **2 rejected candidates**. In a **proportional lists Egyptians had 2 candidates** by the different political parties, which one is from a mainstream parties. Comparably, with the election **2001**, when were **3 candidatures** by two different parties, in numbers of candidates we have an increasing. Getting a candidature in one of mainstream political parties based on a political agreement with determinate rights and duties is an qualitative improvement of the participation in a electoral process.

The rejections of the candidatures of Mrs. Zaneta Veizaj and Mr. Qemal Guri, in generally, don't have ethnic discrimination dimension, even that are exist a lot of indication elements for ethnic and racial discrimination. But, until the allegations for ethnical insulting and pressure to the supporters of minority candidatures haven't any documentary proof, is not possible to undertake any procedure or other official reaction. However, making a pressure for canceling the signatures for supporting of a candidates is "hot issue" and after the election process, human right NGOs maybe can work now on finding a proofs a and accusing the people that are involved on that kind of "crime" and corruption.

#### **b) Roma and Egyptians as voters in Albania**

Albania has a chronic problem with a voters list, from former elections. Not existing of a system of ID cards, with eternal personal number of the people during a life, in Albania maybe is one of the crucial reasons for a problem with voters list. Responsibility for the compilation and maintenance of voter lists was transferred from CEC and state ministries to local government authorities, and the lists were drawn from civil register.

But, in civil register a lot of Roma and Egyptians are not registered. According to the Albanian law, all citizens have the obligation and right to register their children at the civil registry office within 45 days of the child's birth. In order to be registered, parents must present a range documents, such as: the child birth certificate or testimonial proof of the birth and certificates of the parents in cases where parents are not legally married. Following the 45-day-period, registration requires a court procedure and there is also a fine for late registration.

While the criteria and procedures are the same for all, in practice they indirectly discriminate against Roma and Egyptian communities as they have the effect of excluding a disproportional number of Roma and Egyptian children. Problems stem in part from a lack of awareness amongst Roma and Egyptians parents of the need to register children within 45 days of birth. However, even where parents are aware of this, sometimes it is difficult for them to provide the necessary documentation. Also, Roma and Egyptians tend to marry and have children before the legal age and therefore do not believe that they can register their children. Once the 45-day period is over, Court costs and problems with functioning of the justice system prove prohibitive for most Roma and Egyptians.

The president of NGO "Amaro Dives", Mr. Gurali Mejdani, when we discussed about this issue in 2003, pointed and to the problem that the large number of Roma in Albania still has the wandering/nomadic life, and these migrations are not registered. The Roma don't feel any obligation to register their migration, so it is normal if they will not been in voting list in the places where they are living at the moment.

The LTOs teams find a lot of irregularities in voters lists, and the most of them are mentioned in Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions of ODIHR EOM in Albania. Some of irregularities are found and in the areas where the most are Roma or Egyptians, for example:

- In Shodra with help of OSCE 650 Roma and Egyptians were included in VL, before the elections.

- In Lezha region are living approx. 3000 Egyptians and Shigans, and 3200 Roma, and only 1000 are registered votes from the mentioned communities.
- In Elbasan in VC 2321 , where the most are Roma members, LTOs reported that discovered from approx. 1200 names 800 missed, bearing in mind that VL started with no. 1 and ended with 1200, so from no. 200-800 there where no names at all. From the existed names in 1/3 was code 999 (is meant that the person is not present- maybe he/she emigrated).

Bearing in mind the socio-economic situation and condition of Roma and Egyptians, the most them totally is not interested for the elections, without any voters' responsibility. For this situation a big part of "merits" have and the various political parties, that in a former election promised a lot of thinks for improvement of their situation, but when they gain the political power didn't show any interest for the Roma and Egyptians voters. This issue was discussed in a training seminar organized by the organization "Romani Baht" branch organization in Korca with title: "Participation of Roma votes in the polls". Followed by a long discussion, where the trainee Mrs. Miranda Fejzo said; that the Roma voters are not interested in the elections, because they have nobody to vote for and what they need is a party or candidate of their own.

Another very practiced phenomenon in Albania is buying of votes. LTOs teams reported for a large number of allegations that attempts were made to influence their electoral choices in certain communes, referred to pressure, vote buying and bribery. Unfortunately, for all of these cases we have only the allegations of the people without any proof. For example, the LTO team from Korca in one its weekly report wrote: "We have heard of widespread manipulations of Roma and Egyptian voters in previous elections. There are some indications that this kind of practise is used again. We are planning to follow up on this, and hopefully, come up with some concrete results". As consequence of these phenomenon the Roma and Egyptians votes in a former, but and on these elections, were split between the mainstream parties SP and DP. Because of these, the majors of the municipalities, that for this election got a right and obligation to issuing the VL, depending on their political belonging and having information about the voting wish of the voters, throw-out the voters that will vote for the opposite party from the VL. About this issue we got a lot allegation from the Roma and Egyptians people.

During my mission, I had a possibility personally to follow two different cases of making an influence to Roma voters.

First, was a case with Roma children in Tirana in zone 36. On June 9, 2005 I attend the rally of DP in zone 36, where are living a large number of Roma and Egyptians in Tirana, together with LTO No.6a. A rally was without any tension or incident. But, on June 10,2005 at 8 pm I received a call from Mr. Fortuna that 3 Roma children had been arrested from the police with the accusation that they broke the windows of a school during the rally of DP on the 9<sup>th</sup> of June. I went to the police near the "Bajram Curri" school. There were a lot of Roma people standing outside of the police station and the kids had been kept in the police station since 10 am. **The Roma people tried to convince me that this was a message from the police not to support the DP and that they had no argument or reason to accuse and to arrest the kids.** In this place I met Mr. Shaban Memia (candidate of DP for MP in zone # 36) who told me that according to the law if

the police will arrest the children they must provide them with a psychologist and also a lawyer. In this case the police don't have the prosecution. They didn't call a psychologist or a lawyer. But he contacted the chief of the police who promised to him that the children would be released by 10 pm. The kids were thereafter released before 10 pm. The police informed me that this case was not related and had nothing to do with the elections. Next day I received an official information by the organization "Romani Baht.

Second was a case in zone 35 in Roma neighborhood, one day before E-day, after the law ending of political campaign., on 2<sup>nd</sup> July. Mr. Ishtref Pellumbi (chairman of NGO "Roma for Integration") informed me that the SP started delivering the money to the Roma community to buy their votes. He said that in zone 35 where SP candidate is Ermelinda Meksi, DP candidate is Apollon Baci, LDLNJ candidate is Hamdi Demiri (he is a Roma) there is a building in which Roma people are getting money and it is assumed that the money is for their vote. Mr. Pellumbi said that Mr. Gurali Mejdani who is a supporter of Mrs. Ermelinda is distributing the money. He said that this situation is very disturbing to him and also to the Roma candidate of the zone Mr. Hamdi Demiri.

I went to the site to check out the situation, and when I was there I saw Roma people gathered in a private building. There we met with DP candidate Apollon Baci who said that he was informed 3 weeks ago of the votes' buying situation. He said that Ishtref Pellumbi contacted him and informed him of the situation. He told us that there is a project managed by Gurali Mejdani (supporter of Ermelinda Meksi), and financed by USAID that deals with a study of AIDS/HIV infected people. Apparently in the house in which I saw Roma people gathered together, a group of people who were involved with the USAID project were taking the blood tests of the volunteer Romas, and then compensating them with 10 Euros per person. Mr. Bace said that he wanted to talk to Mr. Mejdani about the situation but he didn't have the time. He said that word of mouth has it that somebody promised Mr. Mejdani an apartment for this service and for his support, but there is no facts and this is only gossip. He said that this is a very disturbing and weird situation because it is happening the day before the election from a SP supporter. Mr. Bace said that the house in which this activity is happening costs 50,000 Leke in rent. He also said that there is no information on what the people involved with the project are telling the Roma when they pay them after they have taken their blood for the tests. The place where this activity is happening, as mentioned earlier, is a private house. During my talks with Mr. Baca, some people (ladies) that were in a building, left it with some papers.

After the meeting with the DP candidate, I went to the house where this project was taking place and talked to the people who were conducting the study. I spoke with the doctor in charge there and also with the project manager (Ms. Nereida) of that zone. They told me that there are 11 centers in Tirana where this project is taking place. They said that it is financed by USAID, and that it's been a year that the program started. They said that the budget is set so that each person taking part in the study take 10 Euros, which is considered travel expense or maybe an incentive so people can participate. This study is a Behavioral and Biological Study of People Infected with HIV/AIDS or other STDs. It is supported by IPOS (Institute of public opinion). They study several groups of people like men who have sex with men, white people, Roma people, and drug addicts etc. In this zone they said that they had only conducted the tests on 8 people. They said

that there were two groups today working on this project or about 22 staff people in the teams.

After meeting the two ladies the project leaders came to the site: Mr. Arjan Harxhi (project leader) and Mr. Klodian Rjepaj (coordinator). They described the project like the manager of the site, Ms. Nereida, described it. They said that this project is financed from USAID in cooperation with the Family Health International Organization. They repeatedly said that this project has nothing to do with the elections, and neither does the fact that they started the operation yesterday. They said that this project has been meant to start for a while now, and yesterday they managed to start it. It will last till 10<sup>th</sup> of August. They said that they cooperated with Mr. Mejdani to open the site, because otherwise it would not have been possible for them to find the house. This project has been approved by the USID, too. They have 11 sites, among them are sites located in: Poliklinika e Kombinatit, near UFO, 2 sites in Kinostudio, another one in Aprat NGO. Each person doing the tests, and participating in the study received 10 euro for travel costs and time. The participants in this zone are Roma community.

However, my opinion is that in the implementation of this project, there are some people that are supporting the SP party, and they used the opportunity to influence among the Roma, on their votes. We don't have arguments or proofs for buying of the votes, but only indication for manipulation with mentioned project for election issue.

### **c) Electoral campaign amongst the Roma and Egyptians communities**

Generally, political parties devoted a very little time in a political campaign to the minorities' issues in Albania. Even a Human Right Union Party that is known as a "minority party" for this election devoted a very small time for the minority issues mainly oriented as a citizen party for establishing of Euro-Atlantic criteria in Albanian society.

A political party Movement for Human Rights and Freedoms was the only party that in its platform includes calls for the enactment of enhanced minority rights. This party organized meetings with minorities' voters, round-tables, rallies etc. In one of the meetings with voters from the Roma community in Tirana, neighborhood "Kinema" I was present as an observer. There were stressed a lot of Roma problems and issues, on common conversation between candidates for MPs of MHRF and Roma voters. According to the discussions of voter this party is one of few that are mentioning the existence Roma in Albania and as well as Roma problems. This party organized such a meetings with Roma voters and in other cities in Albania.

For the first time on this election, one of the mainstream parties in Albania-Democratic Party, in its campaign is started to mention and to comment the social problems faced by Roma and Egyptian populations. The Roma and Egyptians problems and issues in Albania were mentioned in media presentations of DP, in a rallies and in a printed campaign materials. For our opinion, this is a nice small improvement of the situation with political participation of Roma and Egyptian communities, because through the campaign of the mainstream parties, the society is becoming aware for the terrible position of these communities and for a need of dealing with problems of Roma and Egyptians. From, other side DP party gave some promises for these communities in public and transparently, and on that way they are obligated in public to implement some promises as a Government ruling party.

Soma Roma and non-Roma NGO, during the electoral campaign implemented different projects among the Roma community with a aim to increase the voting turn-out of Roma in E-day as well as to improve the quality of Roma votes. These kinds of project were made in Tirana, Korca and Shkodra.

The first project was implemented by Romani Baxt organization and Association of Egyptians in Albania “Nefreta”, with aim to increase the number of Roma and Egyptian voters with using of their vote rights. Project activities were: producing and distributing audio CD with audio spots calling for “going to vote”, and publishing and delivering pamphlets with presenting the legislation and advantages that the people have with using of their right to vote.

The second project was implemented by Romani Baxt, branch office in Korca together with another three NGOs; Disutni Albania, Roma for Integration and Amaro Dives, part of the USAID financed project: “Participation of Roma votes in the polls”. Aim of the project is to raise Roma voters’ awareness. Their activities include; door to door education program, education posters. They had three working groups checking PVL, they had two appearances on local, private TV station, they organised trainings of E-day observers. They had 20 observers in VCs with predominantly Roma voters, and organised transportation of elderly voters to VCs.

The OSCE Presence in Albania and “Malester Help” in Albania implemented the third project in Shkodra and Lezha, from April to June 2005. A coordinator of the Project was Mr. Maranaj Marku. On our meeting with him in Shkodra, he described the mostly health related projects of the NGO and specifically discussed programme for the Roma population. This project was voter education for the Roma in Shkodra and Lezhe. Mentioned the two major problems of this group, which are names not on VL and many do not have sufficient ID to register. Malteser sponsored a multi candidate meeting with the Roma community in Shkodra. Mr. Marku, even that is aware that in Shkodra are living Roma and Egyptians, as different community, is using a term “Magjupet” to identify the both of communities. This project as a target group had the both communities, but he put in project description only a term Roma, with an aim to get the financial help without any confusion with a terms.

All three projects are a good step forward to improve the situation with participation of Roma and Egyptians in electoral process. At this moment are not available to us the feedback of the projects with some quantities and qualities indicators, with aim to follow the improvement of the situation.

In our observation we didn’t saw any good organization of the Roma and Egyptians candidates (in sigle-majority constituencies or in proportional lists) of their electoral campaign. We didn’t saw any election staff of the candidates, electoral strategy (mainly was a door-to-door campaign), media plan, action plan etc. Even some of the candidates asked for me as an ODIHR expert some financial help for their election campaign in purpose they to distributing some humanitarian aid to Roma and Egyptians voters.

For that reason for the future elections the Roma and Egyptians candidates need trainings how to manage the electoral campaigns, if they really want to be a serious candidates in elections. The election campaign need a collective work with a electoral staff, and of course provided finances for their previously prepared electoral campaign project and budget.

#### **d) Media**

Albanian media in general, devoted a very small space to the minorities. This issue has a special chapter and in last report of ECRI by CoE. ECRI even recommends that members of minority groups be given adequate opportunities for access to the electronic and print media.

For this election the analyze of the media unit by the OSCE/ODIHR EOM in Albania is saying that the media during the news in and special news, related only to direct speech, to the national minorities devoted only 0.35% of the air-space.

About the Roma and Egyptians they were present in a media electoral campaign only when somebody from the mainstream parties will mention their problems, and those in general were DP and MHRF.

An act of signing the agreement between the DP and Association of Egyptians in Albania "Nefreta" was broadcasted and presented almost in all electronic and printed media, especially on those that are under the control or influence of the DP members.

A meeting that was organized by the MHRF with the representative of all minorities in Albania, when they decide to sign the Memorandum for understanding with request for the next election the election law to be change in favor for provide a reserved seat in parliament for minorities, was also presented in almost all electronic and printed media, but with a very small space.

The question of presentation in media is very complicated issue, and the reason for a low presentation of minorities is not only in a prejudice of society, but and in a inability of minorities, especially of Roma and Egyptians organizations, to manage and to invest significantly in a media presentation. Our opinion is that the Roma and Egyptian leaders in Albania have to gain an training for dealing, managing and communication with media, or to engage special person that will be educated to work with media, as the Roma in other countries has such media experts.

#### **e) Gender and children participation in elections**

Equal rights for men and women are guaranteed in Albanian Constitution. Nevertheless, in Albania women are significantly under-represented in public life. Moreover, the presentation of women and their participation in the electoral process has not improved over time. No, significant initiatives have been undertaken to increase the number of women appointed and elected to decision-making position<sup>19</sup>.

The participation of women in elections was very low. Only 95 female candidates were registered in a single-mandate constituencies (less than 8%) and only 141 on party lists (less than 9%)<sup>20</sup>.

The situation with women participation among the minorities, especially, amongst the Roma and Egyptians, is much more worse than in mentioned general situation in a country. No, Roma women didn't was any candidate on this election in Albania. The same situation was and in former elections 2001 and 2003. The situation to be more worse I hadn't any chance to meet any Roma women in a organized political meetings,

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<sup>19</sup> OSCE/ODIHR EOM in Albania 2005, Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions, page 3.

<sup>20</sup> OSCE/ODIHR EOM in Albania 2005, Interim Report 2 (31 May-16 June 2005), page 7.

round-table and rallies. The politic and election among the Roma are understudied as “male issues”. The situation is not much better among the Egyptians in Albania. In a single-mandate constituencies from 7 Egyptian candidates, was no any women (except the reject candidature of Mrs. Zhaneta Veizaj). In a party lists the only Egyptian candidate was Mrs. Flutura Luka.

In election campaign the almost political parties used a lot children without any limit on ages. Observation of this issue by the EOM was initiated in Core Team by my side, after that I was present in rally of DP in zone 36, near to the school “Bajram Curi”, where I saw a large number of children less than 10 years with political T-shirts in a stage, and the most of them were from Roma and Egyptian community. After that the Core Team gave the instruction to LTOs to observe this issue, we started receive some reports that the same situation is over the territory of Albania. However, in Core Team of EOM we hadn’t a consensus to devote a bigger attention to this issue, and in preliminary findings and conclusion we put only the issue that the children were brought to campaign rallies by their teachers<sup>21</sup>.

#### **f) Election Day 3-July**

On this day we went and observed a few voting centers to check out the situation, together with Edeltraud Gatterer (Gender Expert/Analyst in EOM) and Jonida Larti (my assistant). The first VC visited was VC 1821 in zone 35 in “Petronini Luarasi” high school. Generally the voting process in this center was going okay. While we were there we witnessed a few problems that from what we heard had been present not only in this voting center but also in other ones. One of the problems was the problem with the forms of ID. A guy wasn’t allowed to vote because his birth certificate was more than 3 months old, and according to the new rules, he had to have a second form of ID in order to vote. He didn’t have a second form so he couldn’t vote. We also observed some family voting while we were there. When asked if this happened a lot, the observers told us that it did, and it happens mostly with old people because it was hard for them to see, or for people who couldn’t read. Besides these problems things seemed okay in this center.

The other centers that we visited were the 2 voting centers of “Bajram Curri” school of zone 36, 1806 and 1749. This center was the most problematic one from all the centers visited. This was a zone populated mainly by the Roma community. There were problems with the voting lists. A lot of people were present in the preliminary lists and got a confirmation of this by mail, but then when the final voting lists were drafted they were not present. There was confusion because people were very aggravated of the fact that their names were not on the lists, and they were going around trying to figure out what was going on, and why they got a letter saying that they were on the lists. We managed to get from a couple (probably from Roma or Egyptian community- we didn’t asked them about the ethnic origin) the documents that said that they were on the lists and this is what the document said:

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<sup>21</sup> OSCE/ODIHR EOM in Albania 2005, Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions, page 10.

Mr/Mrs SERVETE SNALI MEHMET Born on 18/03/1945

We inform you that for the parliamentary elections of 2005, you are registered with the number 1315 in the preliminary list of the voting center 1806, with address: School “Bajram Curri”, Street “N. Avrami”.

Chairman  
Vaid KALAJA

Mr/Mrs RAMADAN SNOLI BEXHET Born on 20/06/1938

We inform you that for the parliamentary elections of 2005, you are registered with the number 1318 in the preliminary list of the voting center 1806, with address: School “Bajram Curri”, Street “N. Avrami”.

Chairman  
Vaid KALAJA

In our consultation with Stefan Krause, the election analyst in EOM, we were told that this letter referred to the preliminary voters’ list, and that probably these individuals are registered to vote in other voting centers.

We also got information from Mr. Pullumb Furtuna that people from this zone were being denied the issuance of birth certificates. After visiting this center and hearing that the civil registry was not issuing birth certificates, we went to check out the situation at the civil registry of this zone. Zone 36 was covered by the unit 4 civil registry. The unit 3 registry which covers zone 37 was in the same building so we went and visited both of them to see how the issuance of the certificates was working out. The unit 3 registry workers said that the only people that haven’t gotten a certificate were the people that didn’t have a picture ID with them. When asked what type of ID they accept they said that it had to be an official state ID, like school diploma, driver’s license and so on. But then they showed us a diploma that was not a state diploma of a school, and they were accepting it. This was very confusing to us. Another interesting thing was the fact that anybody can come and get a certificate for somebody else if they have a picture ID. So the person requesting the certificate doesn’t have to be personally present. The workers there told us that they had to write down the names of the people who got the certificates. After meeting with the unit 4 workers, we went to unit 3. In this unit the work was more organized and they didn’t have any complaints. This unit informed us that it was required for them to write down not only the names of the people who got the certificates, but also the serial number of the certificate. However such a procedure was not followed in unit 4 because they were not keeping track of the serial number of the certificates. This also put doubts about the work process of this unit.

After this we went and visited the voting center 1102 of zone 42. The voting process was going pretty much okay here. There was some family voting, but no proxy voting. The observers had some complaints about the lack of cooperation with the VCC.

At the night between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> July I was a Duty officer in EOM only from the Core Team, and I made some phone conversations with minority candidates about the E-day. Almost all of the candidates from the Roma and Egyptian community said that in field were serious irregularities from variety of quarters, including allegations of vote buying. According to the candidates a price for one vote was from 1000-2000 Albanian lekes (approximately EUR 10-20). Mr.Fuat Mehmeti Egyptian candidate in zone 81 from HRUP, said that candidates from other parties were going to Egyptian homes and were buying their votes even using violence and threats. It is said that the votes were bought with 500-1000 leks (about 4-8 euros). The people of this community are so poor and it wasn't hard to buy the votes. He said that the candidates that were buying the votes were: Myrvete Pazaj from the RP, Servet Feka from the PDR and Ridvan Bode from the DP. Unfortunately, we have only the allegations, and not the proofs, about this phenomenon among the vulnerable groups such are Roma and Egyptians, not only in Albania but and in other states.

#### **h) Participation on election administration**

We didn't find anybody from Roma or Egyptians that is a member of any election commission from the Central Election Commission to the VCC level. The members in these commissions, according to the law are delegated and elected by the parties that have MPs.

But, in the area where are living a large number of Roma or Egyptians communities, a people from these communities were engaged as the representatives (observers) of some parties (SP, DP, HRUP etc.)

#### **j) Domestic Observation**

The only domestic observation among the Roma was organized by Romani Baxt branch organization in Korca, coordinated by Mrs. Miranda Fejzo. Engaged were 25 Roma observers in voter centers (21 in Korca, 1 in village of Rembec, 1 village of Malic, 1 village of Pojan and 1 in village of Sovjan). According to the report of Romanu Baxt the E-day in a VCs where the observers were went quite and according to the law procedures, without any serious incidents or irregularities. The observers didn't observe the atmosphere out the VCs. But, they are aware that in Saturday before the E-day, were happened a lot of activities for buying of votes of Roma and Egyptians, as well as in a Sunday afternoon (E-day). One of the serious incident was happened in a village of Rembec, where the president of the commune didn't want to issue the certificates to some Roma and Egyptians and to use their right to vote, because he knew that they will not vote for his political party. The Romani Baxt representatives went to the commune of Rembec, and after their reaction the president of commune issued around 30 certifications to Roma and Egyptian people of that village.

However, Roma and Egyptians NGOs in Albania have to be encourage and trained to take much more activities in observation of the full election process, not only the E-day, because the most of problems, irregularities and violations amongst the Roma and Egyptians in election are not in E-day, like are the problems with voters lists, buying of votes, observing of the election campaign, media etc.

Annex 1.

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## Annex 2.

### **Notes and minutes from the meetings and visits of Rubin Zemon-Expert/National Minorities Analyst of the Election Observation Mission of ODIHR to Parliamentary Election in Albania 2005, during his mission.**

#### **June 7, 2005**

Meeting with Mr. **Ishref Pellumbi**, candidate of new founded party “Movement for Human Rights and Freedoms” (MHRF) with Chairman Mr. Ligorag Karamelo. He told me, that doesn't have the money necessary to have a campaign. But according to our talks I think that he doesn't have any strategy for this electoral campaign, he don't have election staff, as well as other necessary thinks for managing with a campaign for MP candidate.

He, inform me that Mr. Behar Sadiku chairman of Egyptians NGO “Nefreta” has a contract with Mr. Sali Berisha (DP) for the proportional list, but Mr. Berisha left the proportional seats to the alliance parties.

Mr. Ilir Beqiri, assistant of Mr. Pullumbi, mentioned the problem with discrimination and trafficking. There is approximately 2500 Roma of Albania who are victims of organ trafficking. He informed me that Mr. Skender Veliu (NGO Roma Union of Albania) is cooperating with Mr. Pascal Milo, (Social Democracy Party), and Mr. Arben Kosturi is with the Republican Party. Mr. Gjeladin Taci is supporting the SP candidate Mr. Andis Harasani.

#### **June 8, 2005**

- Meeting with Mr. Pellumb Fortuna, chairman of NGO “Romani BAXT”. He managing a Roma kindergarten, and in the ministry of education they have a once in two months meeting, about the Roma children issues. He thinks it's good to have one Roma in the parliament to stress the problems of the Roma. From DP in year 2003 there was elected one Egyptian and one Roma candidate in municipality number 4 in Tirana. In Fier there are two Roma in the local council
- In zone # 36 are 1100 people that are not registered in the voting lists. There is no organization to get the birth certificates that people need for voting. There is big trouble waiting for the issuance of the necessary voting documents and people are not waiting.
- Roma and Egyptians are not trained and educated for the politicians, and it is not known who implements the National strategy for Improvement of living conditions of Roma “ in the state.
- The World Bank (Ms. Gjokuta) has expressed interest on working on the “Decade of Roma”
- Mr. REFIK TARE is Roma representative in Special State Committee for Minorities.

## **June 8, 2005**

Meeting with Mrs. Elsa Ballauri, chair person of Albanian Human Rights Group

- AHRG is working for the protection of human rights, and they currently have 3 centers for receiving complaint from the people, located in Tirana, Korca, and Shkodra.
- She is thinks that the problem of the registration of the Roma is a chronic problem. They wanted to make a project for the engagement and development of awareness among the Roma and Egyptians for their registration in civil register.

## **June 9, 2005**

I attend the rally of DP in zone 36, where are living a large number of Roma and Egyptians in Tirana, together with LTO No. 6a. Reported by LTOs. A rally was without any tension or incident.

## **June 10, 2005**

**8:00 pm**

I received a call from Mr. Fortuna that 3 Roma children had been arrested from the police with the accusation that they broke the windows of a school during the rally of DP on the 9<sup>th</sup> of June. I went to the police near the “Bajram Curri” school. There were a lot of Roma people standing outside of the police station and the kids had been kept in the police station since 10 am. The Roma people tried to convince me that this was a message from the police not to support the DP and that they had no argument or reason to accuse and to arrest the kids.

In this place I met Mr. Shaban Memia (candidate of DP for MP in zone # 36) who told me that according to the law if the police will arrest the children they must provide them with a psychologist and also a lawyer. In this case the police don't have the prosecution. They didn't call a psychologist or a lawyer. But he contacted the chief of the police who promised to Mr. Shaban Memia that the children would be released by 10 pm. The kids were thereafter released before 10 pm. The police informed me that this case was not related and had nothing to do with the elections. ( Next day I received and official information by the organization “Romani Baxt).

## **June 11, 2005**

**Korca**

I was in Korca where I met Ms. Petraq Jordani from the Human Rights Union Party (HRUP herein after). He didn't have any complaints about the electoral process but he was concerned about the lack of programs for minorities in the media.

Together with LTOs from Korca we met Mr. Fuat Mehmeti, candidate of HRUP in Korca, who was Egyptian by origin (Minutes from this meeting were taken from LTOs).

Then we met with Mrs. Miranda Fejzo from Romani BAXT association. She was working on trainings for Roma voters in coalition with other NGOs because the turnout of Roma voters has been really low. When I was in the office, there were present a lot of representatives of New Democratic Party (NDP) lead by Mr. Genc Pollo. They were together checking the Voting Lists. After the meeting, on the same night, there was a meeting with Egyptian voters from Korca. They were concerned about their voter rights because their votes have been manipulated in the former elections.

### **June 13, 2005**

#### **Elbasan**

I visited Elbasan and had a meeting with the LTOs there. We commonly identified the minorities in their AoR. I then gave them some contacts from the Roma, Egyptian, and Macedonian communities. Later I also gave them contacts to the Bulgarian community. LTOs informed me that they almost contacted some Macedonians in Librazhd. There are 7 villages of Macedonians there. Ms. Klarita Romani is a candidate for HRUP in the Macedonian community.

Then they met with the Egyptians in Cerrik. There are two villages where the Egyptian community is located : Maleseje, and the village of Ferme. The Egyptians in this area are about 1000 inhabitants, of which 500-600 are voters.

### **June 14, 2005**

I had a Meeting with Mr. Refik Tare, who is a member of Special State Committee for minorities by the government of the Republic of Albania. This committee was established on April 8<sup>th</sup> 2004 with chairperson Kostandina Bezhani (Greek). Members are as follows:

- Mr. Kristofor Kamberi (Greek Community)
- Mr. Foto Nikola (Macedonian Community)
- Mr. Bledar Belja (Serb-Montenegrin Community)
- Mr. Ropos Burri (Aromenian Community)
- Mr. Refik Tare (Roma Community)

The Egyptians are not present in a Committee.

The task of this Committee is the protection of minorities through the cooperation of the NGOs, the state, and the local government. The committee has a suggestion and a recommendation role.

UNDP states that there are 120,800 Romas in Albania. The problem with the Voting Lists among the Roma, is that they mostly emigrated and are not interested to be run for a re-registration.

Roma are not in a situation to get their representatives in parliament because they are dispersed in small number of communities. There is also a small number of high educated Roma.

#### a) Issue of **Roma Strategy**

- Mr. Ahmet Ceni is a president of a group for the implementation of Roma Strategy.
- The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Work and Social Issues are working on monitoring of the strategy, and one group is on the frame of the Ministry for education.
- It is necessary one Roma to be a member in a monitoring team.
- This strategy is not functioning because the different Ministries are not well-coordinated among themselves and also the Roma representatives are not participating.

#### **Meeting with people from #Zone 36 (ex-Police Academy)**

- Zone 36 is a zone populated from the Egyptian community who are living a ghetto.
- They have problems with the naming and also with the registration to vote.
- Around 200 families or 800-1000 people are not registered to vote.
- DP has been the winner of this zone since 1991.
- It is said that the votes are being bought by the SP in the amount of 50,000 Lekes.
- This community always gets promises from infrastructure investitures but they haven't gotten anything yet. They have asked for a school, but nothing has happened yet.

**June 15, 2005**

#### **Meeting with Mr. Foto Nikolla (member of the SSCM)**

On 6<sup>th</sup> of June the court of Tirana made a decision for the registration of the political party Macedonian Aliens for European Integration. According to the law the court need 15 days to make the decision. The committee according to the founded decision by the council has to work more. They made a request to put the Macedonian language in TV shows but they haven't received an answer to this request yet. They are also requesting the establishment of a ministry for the minorities and for this to be adopted by the parliament. The law has to be prepared by the ministry of integration. The committee is also asking for a new census of population. They also informed me that they requested from the CEC that the electoral material be published in Greek language. This request was denied. (COMMENT: There is no official request of this and this subject was only touched by Mr. Vangjel Dule, chairman of HRUP, in a TV-debate.) The Macedonians are asking for a branch to be opened in the University of Korca that can allow studies in Macedonian pedagogy. Mr. Nikolla doesn't have any complaints as far as the electoral process goes, and the Macedonians in the Liqenas are participating. HRUP has Macedonian candidates in Bilisht and Pustrec.

#### **Meeting with Arlinda Gjata, officer in a Ministry for foreign affairs office for minorities**

I asked her the following questions and received the following answers.

- 1) Does the Albanian state have a law or decision of Government for the classification of the minorities on so-called “National” and so-called “cultural” or “linguistic”?
  - There is no law or decision of Government for the classification of the national minorities but there are different laws and decisions that contain or deal with some minority issues.
  
- 2) Who’s dealing, managing, and monitoring the national strategy for improving the living conditions of the Roma in Albania?
  - The institute for social services (Blerina Tepelena - who is in charge of monitoring and implementing the Roma strategy).
  
- 3) Does the state provide election material on minorities’ language?
  - There will not be ballots in minorities’ languages but the CEC will provide some information and booklets for Greeks, Macedonians, and Serbians to inform them. These provisions will not be happen for Roma or Aromanians.
  
- 4) Question about the establishment of minorities’ parties?
  - There is not any legal prohibition for establishing of a political parties with ethnical background, with respecting of the Constitution and legal framework of R. of Albania. Until now no minorities have requested this.
  
- 5) The Roma NGOs are not satisfied with Roma strategy because they are not involved with the implementation. What can you say about that?
  - Don’t know why. But 20 NGOs created a network group for this issue but is not working well.
  
- 6) Is there a census of ethnical belonging of the population?
  - INSTAT has a study for the minorities in Albania.
  
- 7) Question about the Egyptian minority issue in Albania?
  - The state does not recognize their minority because they are well integrated with the Albanian majority. They also don’t have objective parameters to be classified as a different minority. The Egyptian state does not recognize them as a minority.
  
- 8) Do they have any official document from the Egypt government or embassy of Egypt in Tirana?
  - No, but (she) was in Cairo and she mentioned this issue to the minister of foreign affairs there and he wasn’t aware of the presence of any Egyptians in Albania.

- 9) Do you know that the Egyptian population in Albania and in the Balkans does not have any connection with the present Egyptian population in Egypt, because the Balkan-Egyptians do not have an Arab origin like today's Egyptian population?
- No.
- 10) So, how can you say that there are no objective parameters for the particularity of Balkan-Egyptians in Albania when they don't have scientific research on this minority?
- We got a letter from the Albanian academy of science saying that in Albania the Egyptian minority does not exist.

COMMENT: How is it possible that in 1980 the Institute of Literature of the Albanian Academy had in the dictionary of the "Modern Albanian" the word "evgjit" and wrote as an explanation that this word was an appellation for the people that live in Albania and in the Balkans with Egyptian origin.

\* They didn't have knowledge about this.

I also gave an announcement that for giving the objective parameters of the identity they have to consult scientific institutions or scholars that are dealing with ethnical communities, such as ethnological or anthropological institutes or scholars from these fields, and unfortunately as I know in Albania such institutes or scholars do not exist. There is only an institute for folklore and according to my knowledge a lot of scientists from this institute are saying that there is this particular community in Albania called Evgjit, Maxhup, or Jevgjit. I also promised them that I would send them materials about this issue from scholars (also international ones) that have published studies or books regarding this.

- 11) Do they have in their plans to open a ministry for minorities in the future?
- No. But in some ministries they have people dealing with minorities like the Ministry of Foreign Affairs etc.

### **Meeting with Natasha Hodaj**

- Talked about the monitoring of Roma strategy and the National Programs against poverty
- Mrs. Blerina Tepelena is the Chief of monitoring group for Roma strategy
- There is 3 national programs that deal with poverty:
  - 1) Economical Help – cash money is given to poor people. 14% of the population receives this money or 128,000 families. The entire budget is \$4 million, and each family gets about 80,000 leke a year.
  - 2) Payment for disabled people – 56,000 leke a year for people with mental disabilities, and 32,000 leke a year for physically disabled people. The entire budget is \$5.7 million.
  - 3) Institution of social care – there are 10 orphanages (daily ones, and also residential), there are 7 development centers, and there are 7 elderly houses. They have a \$500,000 budget.

- Mrs. Blerina Tepelena deals with the Sector-Monitoring. Mrs. Hodaj said that it is good to see Mr. Refik Tare in our Monitoring Sector.
- Mr. Ilir Gedeshi is the director of the institute for social services
- They have to feedback for the implementation of the Roma strategy. SIDA organized a meeting for letter monitoring.
- 12 offices regional of a sector
- They do not monitor the finances, only the objectives
- The doors are open to the Roma for the implementation of the Roma strategy.
- They cooperated with Nene Tereza, “Amaro Drom”, and the “Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports” for the publishing of the newspaper.
- The monitoring team for the Roma strategy is:
  - o Mrs. Blerina Tepelena
  - o Mrs. Eva Lena
  - o Mrs. Anisa Sofija
  - o Mr. Ahmet Ceni

### **Meeting with Irena Ceko**

She graduates in Faculty of Medicine and she is from Greek minority in Albania. She is a candidate of HRUP in zone 33, where there are 150 Greeks, Aromanians, and 10-20 Egyptian families.

- Mr. Sotir Coka is the chairman of the Heleno-Vlach minority
- Mrs. Ceko does not expect the votes only from the minorities but also from the rest of the Albanian people in her zone.
- Dr. Petraq Mustaqi in Vlora is interested for the Vlach education in Arumanian language.
- Mr. Fuat Mehmeti is the vice-president of the HRUP of branch office in Tirana
- In Greek minority zones (villages of Saranda, Delvina, Gjirokastra, Dropulli, Permeti) there is no improvement of the situation of Greek language out of minority zone.
- Mrs. Kostandina Bezhani is a member of HRUP. She is not invited in TV shows or debates in the main medias. She will not have any media representation. She got only 30,000 leks (250 euros) from the party to run her campaign.

### **Meeting with Ligoraq Karamelo**

- Chairman of the Union for Human Rights and Freedoms Party.
- The party formed in January 5<sup>th</sup> 2005
- It has 4500 members. Among them there is Greeks, Romas, Egyptians, Bosnians, Serbians, Montenegrins, Aromanians, Macedonians, Bulgarians.
- In Golo Brdo the president is Ramazan Tamizi, in Shkodra the president is Mr. Burhan Culic (Montenegrin)
- The HRUP is only a Greek party, and Greeks are only present in the decision-making bodies in the party.
- This party is a party that includes in its decision-making bodies members of all communities.

- They need a formula for the presentation of all minorities in the parliament
- They have 12 female candidates
- The Greek ambassador is interfering in the campaign because he is a supporter of the HRUP. He spoke in the village of Alico (Saranda) in December for this party, and in Dervican (Gjirokastra) on May 29-30, the Greek ambassador made a presentation for Mr. Spiro Ksera (candidate of HRUP).
- The consulate of Greece in Korca and Saranda is giving visas only to the supporters of the HRUP.
- In the village of Memoraq in Gjirokastra area a Greek council together with a candidate of HRUP threatened the people that if they don't vote for HRUP they will lose their Greek pension.

### **Meeting with Bledar Belja (Serbian)**

- Member of Special State Committee
- Works for the Moraca-Rozafa NGO
- Candidates in proportional list for the HRUP are:
  - Mr. Milan Brojovic (zone 2)
  - Mrs. Pranvera Belimovi
  - Mr. Milan Zlaticamin
  - Mr. Kostandin Kola
- They are paying attention to the proportional list.
- Mr. Karamelo has some Serb/Montenegrin Candidates
- In the village "Boric i vogel" there is 1000-1200 inhabitants and 500 of them are voters. The VCC is 3 km far.
- There is around 20,000 voters in Shkodra region , and they are divided into two electoral zones.
- Mr. Brojovic is the director of the directory "Sport for all"
- The Serbian language is not present in primary schools in Shkodra region. No radio or TV in Serbian language. The CEC has to make the election material in Serbian language.
- In the civil registers there is no possibility to identify the ethnicity of people.
- Officially the Serbian/Montenegrins proposed adopting a Law for minority and Special Fund according to the FCPNM and CPMRL conventions.

### **Meeting with Mr. Ahmet Ceni**

- He is a vice minister for social works.
- He just drafted and signed the strategy for the Roma.
- The Ministry of Culture made some activities.
- The Ministry of Education has made some kindergartens. The kids have problems with the Albanian language.
- Mr. Kostandina Bezhani – she is delegated to follow the implementation of the program and also monitor the situation.

## Meeting with Mr. Jorgaq Cufeku

- Aromanians don't have any representation in the parliament that can care for the rights of the minorities.

## June 21, 2005

### Meeting with Mrs. Zhaneta Veizi

- Chairwoman of the NEFRETA association in Vlora.
- The candidate for "Armeria Shqiptare" in electoral zone 94 in Tepelena is Mr. Arben Veizaj.
- The candidate for the "Democratic Alliance" in electoral zone 94 is Mr. Skender Kamberi.
- The commission of the zone (94) and the police inspectors put pressure on the supporters of the Egyptian candidates to cancel their signatures. Some of the people were thrown out of the lists, and there were a lot of code "999".

## June 22, 2005

### Meeting with minority representatives

- Mr. Karamelo presented the memorandum on Egyptians.
- **Mr. Behar Sadiku:**
  - There are consequences of not mentioning the communities in Preamble in the constitution.
  - There is a similar memorandum to this one in Macedonia, but the opinions of that convention are not implemented.
- **Mr. Skender Veliu (Roma):**
  - In Ohrid we made a "constitution" about the minorities in Albania
  - He's afraid that this meeting will not be used by the political parties (the party of Karamelo) in the electoral campaign.
  - Romas know how to manage their political life very well. The success comes when people care for themselves.
- **Mr. Kimet Fetau:** The aim: How can the minorities be represented in the parliament.
  - The parliament of Albania has a commission for the human rights, minority rights, and petition.
  - We can not expect the Government to officially recognize us.
  - The Albanian society and politic is afraid from multi-ethnicity, and this reality is taken as a weakness not as a strength.
  - Two ways for minorities:
    - 1) Organizing of particular minorities in political parties.
    - 2) Asking for "keys" to representing the minorities in parliament and in municipalities.
- **Mr. Sami Guzina**
  - President of the Bosnian Association "Zambak"

- The Bosnians are always excluded from the presentation of the minorities in Albania.
  - There are around 10,000 Bosnians in Albania according to their census.
  - A lot of Bosnians present Albania in many fields like those of culture, sports etc.
  - They are asking for some primary schools in some villages in Shijak and Fier in Bosnian language.
- **Mr. Ishtref Pellumbi**
    - We need representatives in the parliament.
- **Mr. Burhan Culiq**
    - He is a Montenegrin representative and he says that there is about 12,000 people who are Podgorican, Bosnian, Croat, and some Serbian.
    - He is supporting the proposed memorandum.
- **Mr. Ismet Tola (Bulgarian)**
    - From the Prosperity Association Golo Brdo.
    - They asked from the CoE and EU for the recognition of the Bulgarian minority in Albania.
    - In 1993 Mr. Berisha said in Sofia that “Bulgarians exist in Albania”.
- **Mr. Aleksander Camu (Greeks)**
    - Even HRUP did not represent the Greek community.

#### **Meeting of MHRF (Movement for Human Rights and Freedoms) with Roma community in “Bajram Curri”**

- This party is saying that they are advising the Roma “to vote for a Roma person and not other people”
  - Mrs. Alma Thanu – candidate for MP in Korca
- This party has 7 Roma candidates.
- The dream of this party is to have representatives of all minorities in the parliament.
- Rruga “Lana” Issue
- Mr. Karamelo says he is not ashamed of dealing with the Roma issues.
- In this zone the Romas have to vote for Mr. Shaban Memia of DP, and in the proportional list they have to vote for MHRF or for Mr. Ishtref Pellumbi.
- Ishtref Pellumbi: The EU gave a lot of money for the Romas, but they didn’t end up at the Romas, they ended up at the “gaxhijs”.

#### **Meeting with Mr. Foto Nikolla**

- He is from the Special State Committee.
- In Durres there are 7 Macedonian candidates from the Environmental party, but no one of them has a platform for the Macedonian minority.
- HRUP has Macedonian candidates in electoral zone 84.
- DP has Macedonian candidate Mr. Edmond Spaho.

- SP publishes campaign material in Macedonian language in Prespa (region of Liqenas).

**Meeting with Mr. Fatmir Brahim (a protestant pastor) and Mr. Latif Kazanxhiu (“Amaro Drom” NGO)**

- In Saranda at the moment there is 528 Egyptian voters, and 200 Roma voters (in the Roma village Cuk in Saranda)
- There are no problems with the Voting Lists in Saranda.
- In Fier the Roma are not registered in the VL.
- There are 17,000 Roma inhabitants in Fier and there is no Roma candidate in this area.
- In Saranda the Egyptians are “left” oriented.
- DP offered the Roma a project that will be supported by the foreign donors.

**June 27, 2005**

**Lezha**

- The Lezha LTO, Mr. John Dwyer wants to donate \$1000 to the Roma community there.
- The Roma children are thrown out from the schools.
- “Shengjin” is a local appellation of the Egyptians.
- Ms. Natasha Paco is a candidate from Fush Kruja.
- The main part of this community is living in Lezha.
- The Voting Lists are okay.
- Mr. Rauf Selimi (Hope for the poor Egyptians/Romas, NGO) and Mr. Qemal Gurri (candidate of the coalition of the Social Albanian Parties and the Party of the National Unity) said that there have been problems with the signatures of this candidate.

**Meeting with Mr. Francesco Gargjola**

- There are 25 Austrian from South Tirol.
- He was the Demo-Christian candidate for major in 1992. He ended up 3<sup>rd</sup> by votes.
- In 1996 he was a MP candidate for the same party.
- In October 1996-2000 he was councilor in Local Government.
- In 2005 he is the candidate for MP of Austrian nationality for the MHRF party.

- Croatians are present in Shkodra.

**Meeting with Mr. Genti Seknic – Montenegrin**

- He is a candidate for MP.
- Alba-Monte Negro (Podgorican)
  - Around 12,000 inhabitants are in Shkodra with Montenegro origin.

### **Meeting with Mr. Burnham Cucic**

- There are no schools, no newspapers in Montenegrin language.
- The main villages with Montenegrins are:
  - Shtaj i Ri
  - Shtaj i Vjeter
  - Boric i Madh
  - Boric i Vogel
  - Grill
  - Omare
  - Vraka
  - Kramica
  - Grunar
- The votes of Montenegrins are split between 2 zones.
- In VCC Montenegrins are not present.
- The MHRP has 2 Montenegrin candidates in proportional list: Mr. Artan Shpata and Mr. Genti Seknic. (Supporting DP)
- The HRUP has 2 (?) candidates in proportional list. (Supporting SP)
- There have been no problems in the Voting Lists.

### **Meeting with Mr. Milan Vaso**

- Candidate for deputy in Electoral Zone No. 2.
- There are a lot of Montenegrin voters.
- Expecting around 12,000 voters to turn out.
- He is the director of the sector of sports in the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports.
- He is vice-president of HRUP.
- He is afraid about the security in Election Day, and he will provide bodyguards for safety of polling stations and boxes.
- More than 20,000 Montenegrins and Serbs are located in Shkodra region.
- They are split in 3 electoral zones.
- HRUP has candidates in 7 electoral zones, and among them 4 are minority and 1 is a female.
- The initiation of Mr. Karamelo for the memorandum is stolen from the meeting of minorities in Ohrid convention in 2002-2003.
- The issue of Montenegrin minorities can be solved only in a bilateral way between the two states: Albania and Montenegro.

### **Meeting with Astrit Baca**

- NGO "Together with you for equality"
- There are 1,700 Egyptians in Shkodra.
  - In Mirdita there are 700-800 Egyptians.
  - 15-16 Roma families
- A lot of donors give funds for the Roma community only, that's why many people declare themselves as Roma.
- The aim of the NGO is the integration of the society.
- The children are discriminated and are afraid of going to school.

- In the communist regime the Egyptians lived better than now because at that time they were not discriminated.
- Schools do not accept the Egyptians.
- They complained to the Ministry of Education, but they haven't received any answers.
- Discrimination is present in other fields of the society and state.
- Voting Lists Problems:
  - 860 voters were on the preliminary lists
  - 832 voters were on the second lists
  - The number is smaller because the people do not live here. They live in other streets, they have emigrated, or they have died.
- In Electoral Zone No. 6 where the Egyptians are living a lot of MP candidates are coming and making promises.

**June 29, 2005**

**Meeting with the Bosnian Chairman of “Zambak”**

- Luan Botesi: DP candidate from the region of Shijak, which has around 9500 inhabitants.
- The “Zambak” has 8 branches.
- They request to be recognized as a minority by the state institutions and also the internationals.
- In 2000 a round table with the Academy of Science was organized about the history and culture of Bosnians.
- They are well integrated in the society and have contributed to the state of Albania but they want to be recognized as a particular minority.
- They are not included as a minority in the local administration of Shijak.
- They are asking for the right to learn in their mother-tongue (Bosnian) in the primary schools.
- They don't have a candidate in the proportional list or in the majority.
- There are no problems with the Voting Lists, all of them are present.
- Nobody comes or is concerned for the Bosnian minority issues.
- Their NGO is a non-political organization, only a cultural organization.

**June 29, 2005**

**National Museum in Tirana**

- The national day of the Balkan-Egyptian minority in Albania was organized
- The following were among the invitees
  - Greek Embassy representative
  - Bulgarian Embassy representative
  - Damir Topi – Vice president of DP
  - Shaban Memia – Candidate
  - Ligoraq Karameliu – MHRF Chairman

Many of the invitees spoke as follows:

### **Behar Sadiku**

The Egyptian community is facing a lot of discrimination starting from police abuse to the indifferentism of the authorities regarding their issues. They are discriminated based on their Egyptian origin, and are not even considered from the authorities when taking actions or making laws. The national office of the minorities does not even recognize and acknowledge the Egyptian community as a minority.

The European Commission of Racism and Tolerance recommends that this minority be acknowledged, and that their problems be taken into high consideration.

The Egyptian community has faced a lot of violence in the form of beating, humiliation, discrimination. This violence has not only been directed to simple Egyptian citizens but also to the chairman of this association (NEFRETA).

The more we are aware of the problems we are facing the harder we will be hit, but we will face all the difficulties until we are called equals.

Mr. Berisha will take this minority out of the painful discrimination, and Mr. Sadiku feels that there is no doubt that DP will take the power after the elections. Mr. Sadiku had an outline of 9 points with all of the requests to DP when they come into power. Some of the points are as follows:

- for the Egyptians to be free
- for the future of the Egyptians to change
- for the NEFRETA association to be recognized and acknowledged
- that the term Balkan-Egyptians be used when referring to this community
- that a national strategy be compiled to treat the problems of the community such as poverty, healthcare, education, work etc.
- that this community be represented in the parliament by one of their own, and this way break the so-long existed taboos. Only being present themselves and taking their future in their own hands can this community be integrated, and be positioned in the society.

He concluded by saying that it is time that DP take the key to the programs of freedom from slavery.

### **Bamir Topi – vice president of DP**

- this community has lived for a long time with the Albanian population of all times
- He has a very good impression of this community since he was a child because it is a community with a lot of valuable traditions
- The past and also the present have been very discriminating for this community starting from the totalitarian regime and now with the current government
- Blames the SP for not having integrated this community and for having left them alone and unrepresented
- DP has taken Egyptian representatives and this minority will always be represented with dignity this way making possible the equality of all citizens in all aspects of life, be that economical or social
- Up to now the Egyptians have suffered a lot from the police and also from other discriminators
- We don't see your participation just as numbers, but we see it as a very effective participation because you have inherited many talents that we have all witnessed.

We will not allow that these talents disappear. There shouldn't only be people that know how to use an instrument but there should be people that know how to do politics also.

- The government should not only be for only 5% of the population, but it should be for everyone, and it should provide equal economical and social standards.
- The 4<sup>th</sup> of July will bring something new and what up to now has been finalized with an agreement will be accomplished and implemented.

**Shaban Memia- candidate of DP for zone #36**

- You have achieved to maintain your own culture and traditions and have brought irreplaceable values for Albania.
- We will always be involved to solve your problems like the education problem the economic problem, and also that of discrimination.

**Ligoraq Karamelo- chairman of MHRF**

- the upcoming year should and will find us with new developments
- The American department and the council of Europe have recognized the Egyptian community as part of Albania and are hoping that changes will happen in the Albanian society.
- HRUP and DP will cooperate with all they can so that all the rights of the Egyptian community to be acknowledged.

**Kimet Fetahu**

- Works for the center of ethnic studies, he is from the Macedonian minority community.
- congratulates them for the work that they have done and for the increased awareness they have caused in the European communion
- He said that the minority communities are not a question of rights, they are a question of facts. You are a fact!- he said to the Egyptian community
- He told them that they don't need to fight for official recognition because that doesn't matter, they are a fact whether they are recognized or not.

**Hygerta Borova- candidate of NDP**

- She is a candidate of the New Democratic party of Genc Pollo in Zone 43 in Tirana
- She said that we all should be considered equals and this equality can only be obtained from DP....so vote DP, vote only blue.

**Ligoraq Karamelo**

Mr. Karameli met with me after the meeting and he informed me of some discrimination and some differentiations happening with the emigrants and the Greek minority. Apparently the Greek foreign affairs ministry has created funds for the Greek minorities living in the borders to go and vote in Albania. They have created a bus line so that the minorities can take and go vote. Apparently there has been discrimination on these bus lines. 300 people have not been accepted on the bus because they were not going to vote for the SP candidates or the candidates supported by this party. The

candidates that are for the zone where this has happened are: Arjan Dhimitrika of DP, and Spiro Peci of SP.

### **Rauf Selimi**

I met with Mr. Selimi after the meeting and he wanted to discuss the issues of the coalition of “The social Albanian parties and the party of national union”.

He informed me that CEC had dismissed this coalition from the current elections with no valid reason, and then it was decided from the court for them to come back in the game. However, this interruption did not allow them to have a proper campaign and this is negatively influencing their position in the election. Because they don't have any funding the way that they campaign is mostly door to door. The community is extremely poor, and the votes can be sold for very cheap even if you have to vote against your own brother. He said that he doesn't have facts for the phenomenon of the buying of the votes, it's just word of mouth information. He says that he is 100% sure that the buying of the votes occurs, and he believes that it happens from all the parties. He says the poor can be bought very easily.

### **Mrs. Xhaneta Veizaj**

- chairperson of the NEFRETA association in Vlora
- She came with a request that their community move up in the social ladder by attending higher education. She is a teacher and has a lot of students who are very smart and with good grades who come from very low and poor families and have no chance of attending higher education. She asked for 4-5 scholarships to offer possibilities to these students for a better life. She believes that only if some of them get out in the world and try to pursue a better life can their community be integrated in the society.

### **Mr. Arben Veizaj**

- candidate in Tepelena in zone 91, for the Albanian Future Party which got dismissed from the elections so now Mr. Veizaj is Independent.
- he believes there is about 700 voters who are Egyptians
- his SP opponent is Gramoz Ruci
- Mr. Ruci believes he is the winner because he has always been a candidate in this area and therefore people know him.
- Mr. Veizaj has only had door to door campaigning with personal funding. He hasn't had any media coverage or TV-debates. Mr. Ruci doesn't even consider having debates with other candidates because he believes it's unnecessary, since he's the winner.
- Mr. Veizaj has his family as his staff since his family is from Tepelena.
- His brother in law will be present in the counting of the votes.
- People have asked him for money in exchange of their support.

### **July 2, 2005**

Mr. Ishtref Pellumbi (chairman of NGO “Roma for Integration”) informed me that the SP started delivering the money to the Roma community to buy their votes. He said that in zone 35 where SP candidate is Ermelinda Meksi, DP candidate is Apollon

Baci, LDLNJ candidate is Hamdi Demiri (he is a Roma) there is a building in which Roma people are getting money and it is assumed that the money is for their vote. Mr. Pellumbi said that Mr. Gurali Mejdani who is a supporter of Mrs. Ermelinda is distributing the money. He said that this situation is very disturbing to him and also to the Roma candidate of the zone Mr. Hamdi Demiri.

I went to the site to check out the situation, and when I was there I saw Roma people gathered in a private building. There we met with DP candidate Apollon Baci who said that he was informed 3 weeks ago of the votes' buying situation. He said that Ishtref Pellumbi contacted him and informed him of the situation. He told us that there is a project managed by Gurali Mejdani (supporter of Ermelinda Meksi), and financed by USAID that deals with a study of AIDS/HIV infected people. Apparently in the house in which I saw Roma people gathered together, a group of people who were involved with the USAID project were taking the blood tests of the volunteer Romas, and then compensating them with 10 Euros per person. Mr. Bace said that he wanted to talk to Mr. Mejdani about the situation but he didn't have the time. He said that word of mouth has it that somebody promised Mr. Mejdani an apartment for this service and for his support, but there is no facts and this is only gossip. He said that this is a very disturbing and weird situation because it is happening the day before the election from a SP supporter. Mr. Bace said that the house in which this activity is happening costs 50,000 Leke in rent. He also said that there is no information on what the people involved with the project are telling the Roma when they pay them after they have taken their blood for the tests. The place where this activity is happening, as mentioned earlier, is a private house. During my talks with Mr. Baca, some people (ladies) that were in a building, left it with some papers.

After the meeting with the DP candidate, I went to the house where this project was taking place and talked to the people who were conducting the study. I spoke with the doctor in charge there and also with the project manager (Ms. Nereida) of that zone. They told me that there are 11 centers in Tirana where this project is taking place. They said that it is financed by USAID, and that it's been a year that the program started. They said that the budget is set so that each person taking part in the study take 10 Euros, which is considered travel expense or maybe an incentive so people can participate. This study is a Behavioral and Biological Study of People Infected with HIV/AIDS or other STDs. It is supported by IPOS (Institute of public opinion). They study several groups of people like men who have sex with men, white people, Roma people, and drug addicts etc. In this zone they said that they had only conducted the tests on 8 people. They said that there were two groups today working on this project or about 22 staff people in the teams.

After meeting the two ladies the project leaders came to the site: Mr. Arjan Harxhi (project leader) and Mr. Klodian Rjepaj (coordinator). They described the project like the manager of the site, Ms. Nereida, described it. They said that this project is financed from USAID in cooperation with the Family Health International Organization. They repeatedly said that this project has nothing to do with the elections, and neither does the fact that they started the operation yesterday. They said that this project has been meant to start for a while now, and yesterday they managed to start it. It will last till 10<sup>th</sup> of August. They said that they cooperated with Mr. Mejdani to open the site, because otherwise it would not have been possible for them to find the house. This project has

been approved by the USID, too. They have 11 sites, among them are sites located in: Poliklinika e Kombinatit, near UFO, 2 sites in Kinostudio, another one in Aprat NGO. Each person doing the tests, and participating in the study received 10 euro for travel costs and time. The participants in this zone are Roma community.

After this, I went to the site of Kombinat where I met Mrs. Albana Kereci who was in charge of the project there. She said that the project started yesterday, and that they are dealing with the white people study, and they haven't had any problems. She said that this project doesn't have anything to do with the elections, and that they have chosen different target groups like mentioned above. She said that the 10 euro compensation is for the time and also for the travel costs since a lot of people may have to come from different areas. The time to conduct the study is 1 Hr and 15 mins. They have 12 people in this team, and the results of the tests are immediate. The only thing that takes time is the pre-consultation and the interview that the people have before doing the tests. Today they had only 3 people doing the tests, but they would be open till 4pm, so maybe more people will show up.

After these visits I received a call from Mr. Gary Marris (0692088480) the president of USAID Tirana who was explaining to me that this project doesn't have anything to do with the elections. He told me that it was a wrong that they started the project at this time, and he understands the confusion. I told him that the way the situation looked in the Roma community it was understandable that the situation caused doubts and confusion.

However, my opinion is that in the implementation of this project, there are some people that are supporting the SP party, and they used the opportunity to influence among the Roma, on their votes. We don't have arguments or proofs for buying of the votes, but only indication for manipulation with mentioned project for election issue. However, on the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> of July we will visit again this Roma neighborhood, just to check if this project will really continue after the E-day.

### **July 3, 2005**

#### **Election Day**

On this day we went and observed a few voting centers to check out the situation, together with Edeltraud Gatterer (Gender Expert/Analyst) and Jonida Larti (assistant). The first VC visited was VC 1821 in zone 35 in "Petronini Luarasi" high school. Generally the voting process in this center was going okay. While we were there we witnessed a few problems that from what we heard had been present not only in this voting center but also in other ones. One of the problems was the problem with the forms of ID. A guy wasn't allowed to vote because his birth certificate was more than 3 months old, and according to the new rules, he had to have a second form of ID in order to vote. He didn't have a second form so he couldn't vote. We also observed some family voting while we were there. When asked if this happened a lot, the observers told us that it did, and it happens mostly with old people because it was hard for them to see, or for people who couldn't read. Besides these problems things seemed okay in this center.

The other centers that we visited were the 2 voting centers of "Bajram Curri" school of zone 36, 1806 and 1749. This center was the most problematic one from all the centers visited. This was a zone populated mainly by the Roma community. There were problems with the voting lists. A lot of people were present in the preliminary lists and

got a confirmation of this by mail, but then when the final voting lists were drafted they were not present. There was confusion because people were very aggravated of the fact that their names were not on the lists, and they were going around trying to figure out what was going on, and why they got a letter saying that they were on the lists. We managed to get from a couple (who was not in the final lists) the documents that said that they were on the lists and this is what the document said:

Mr/Mrs SERVETE SNALI MEHMET Born on 18/03/1945

We inform you that for the parliamentary elections of 2005, you are registered with the number 1315 in the preliminary list of the voting center 1806, with address: School "Bajram Curri", Street "N. Avrami".

Chairman  
Vaid KALAJA

Mr/Mrs RAMADAN SNOLI BEXHET Born on 20/06/1938

We inform you that for the parliamentary elections of 2005, you are registered with the number 1318 in the preliminary list of the voting center 1806, with address: School "Bajram Curri", Street "N. Avrami".

Chairman  
Vaid KALAJA

In our consultation with Stefan Krause, the election analyst in EOM, we were told that this letter referred to the preliminary voters' list, and that probably these individuals are registered to vote in other voting centers.

We also got information that people from this zone were being denied the issuance of birth certificates.

After visiting this center and hearing that the civil registry was not issuing birth certificates, we went to check out the situation at the civil registry of this zone. Zone 36 was covered by the unit 4 civil registry. The unit 3 registry which covers zone 37 was in the same building so we went and visited both of them to see how the issuance of the certificates was working out. The unit 3 registry workers said that the only people that haven't gotten a certificate were the people that didn't have a picture ID with them. When asked what type of ID they accept they said that it had to be an official state ID, like school diploma, driver's license and so on. But then they showed us a diploma that was not a state diploma of a school, and they were accepting it. This was very confusing to us. Another interesting thing was the fact that anybody can come and get a certificate for somebody else if they have a picture ID. So the person requesting the certificate doesn't have to be personally present. The workers there told us that they had to write down the names of the people who got the certificates. After meeting with the unit 4 workers, we went to unit 3. In this unit the work was more organized and they didn't have any complaints. This unit informed us that it was required for them to write down not only the names of the people who got the certificates, but also the serial number of the certificate.

However such a procedure was not followed in unit 4 because they were not keeping track of the serial number of the certificates. This also put doubts about the work process of this unit.

After this we went and visited the voting center 1102 of zone 42. The voting process was going pretty much okay here. There was some family voting, but no proxy voting. The observers had some complaints about the lack of cooperation with the VCC.

**Phone Conversation with Mr. Fuat Mehmeti on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July**

Mr. Mehmeti is a candidate of the electoral zone 81, where there were a large number of Egyptian voters. Unfortunately, he reported that there was buying of the votes in this area in a very open way. Candidates from other parties were going to Egyptian homes and were buying their votes even using violence and threats. It is said that the votes were bought with 500-1000 leks (about 4-8 euros). The people of this community are so poor and it wasn't hard to buy the votes. He said that the candidates that were buying the votes are:

Myrvete Pazaj from the RP

Servet Feka from the PDR

Ridvan Bode from the DP

**Weekly Report of Long-Term Observer Teams in ODIHR/EOM in Albania 2005, separated and sorted concerning to Roma and Egyptians communities in Albania.**

**Roma**

<b>Team Number: 01</b>	<b>Location Covered: Shkodra</b>
<b>Team Members: Claudia Vollmer &amp; Les Margosian</b>	
<b>Period Covered: 20/05/05- 27/05/05</b>	

- Visited Roma neighbourhood, where in 2003 election problems with voting were observed and reported by STOs. Met with community leader, name unavailable. The municipal representative dealing with VL issues in response to our questions informed us that presently approx. 650 Roma are included on the VL. This conflicts with information from the OSCE office Shkodra, where we were told that the Shkodra Roma were not interested in the electoral process and are not registered on the VL. The preliminary VL was not on display in the voting center. According to the community leader the list was not delivered to them.

<b>Period Covered: 28/05-03/06</b>
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- Revisited the Roma neighbourhood and found VL posted in a prominent and accessible location since our first visit last week. The Roma leader said he had personally picked up the VL at the municipality as it was not delivered to them.
- On 01/06 met with Maranaj Marku executive director of NGO Malteser for Shkodra and Lezhe region. He described the mostly health related projects of the NGO and specifically discussed programme for the Roma population. NGO also involved with a voter education project for the Roma in Shkodra and Lezhe for FS Shkodra. Mentioned the two major problems of this group, which are names not on VL and many do not have sufficient ID to register. Malteser will sponsor a multi candidate meeting with the Roma community in Shkodra, which we will be invited to.

<b>Period Covered: 11/06-17/06</b>
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- See under 3) candidates, meeting with Ramiz Cobo on 13/06.  
*On 13/06 met with Ramiz Cobo, DP candidate zone 3. He is a first time candidate, was born in the Dukajin area but has lived in Tirana for the last 20 years. His campaign consists primarily of support groups in neighbourhoods and villages. He said he is trying to win popular support by explaining “in a modest way” the advantages of his candidacy over his opponent. Discussed specific issues in a detailed way not encountered by us in interviews with other candidates. Some of these issues were corruption on all levels, misuse of funds and credits by the SP at national level, change of “destinations” of funds (the Italian Government gave a grant of 2 Mio Euros for a ringroad around Shkodra and*

*the first 400.000 were converted to personal use by central Government officials). National policy for granting employers credit for hiring new employees subject to much fraud. And finally infrastructure issues mainly road and electric were discussed. Mentioned the **Roma** living across the Buna bridge, which is in his zone 3, but they are registered to vote in Zone 6 together with the Egyptian community across the bridge. This raises concerns, which Team 1 will further investigate in the coming days. Extensive discussion of illegal tactics of his SP opponent. Cobo named two persons (names available upon request) who had been stationed by his opponent in Oblik and Bardhaj villages and were circulating the information that they had significant funds available to buy Voting Center Commissioners. Cobo also talked about Gjoke Miri, director of the Shkodra tax office and candidate for Democratic Alliance and the independent candidate Kole Tonaj, who are offering \$30 per vote for them. Cobo expressed his concern about the experience and educational background of ZEC 3 members ( a concerned shared by Team 1). Areas of special concern regarding e-day problems are in his opinion the villages of Bardhaj, Hoti i Ri and Grude e Re.*

**LTO 03                      Location Covered: Lezhe Region**  
**Team Members: Olga Philippidou and John Dwyer**

**Period Covered: 29 May to 2 June 2005**

The SP candidate reported that there are approximately 350 Romas in Zone 24 (Fushe Kruje) and 300 Shingans<sup>22</sup>. Both communities are registered to vote but Shingans tend to seasonal migrates.

**Period Covered: 3 to 10 June 2005**

There are 2000 Shingans and 500 Romas living in the Liria neighbourhood of Lezhe. One candidate reported that they are discriminated against education. LTO team will visit the community to determine further information

**Period Covered: 11 to 17 June 2005**

The Branch Manager of World Vision reported that they are working with the Roma community. She also reported that she was unaware of a minority named Shingans. The LTO team has received information from the SP candidate in Fushe Kruje that there is a distinction between Romas and “Shingans”. The World Vision representative believes that the Romas and “Shingans” are members of the same minority group.

**Period Covered: 18 to 25 June 2005**

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<sup>22</sup> Shingans is mean people that not have permanent residence in one place (wondering/nomad people), according to the explanation of Ms. Olga Philippidou (LTO tema No.3- Lezhe), as she was informed by Ms. Natasha Paco, candidate for MP from SP.

Team met with two leaders of the Roma/Egyptian community in Lezhe – Rauf Selimi and Qemal Guri. Selimi said that the Egyptian population in Lezhe is 3000 to 3200 and the Roma population is 800 to 1000. There are approximately 1000 registered voters in the combined communities. The leaders stated that discrimination and prejudice are rife in the local community and government. The local government has not paid the scheduled 3000AL to eligible families for two months. Guri said that he attempted to run for deputy in a previous election but that the CEC said initially his list of 600 signatures was invalid. The CEC eventually said the signatures were valid but Guri said he did not have time to mount a political campaign. Selimi and Guri said that they have a political party, which was initially disallowed by the CEC. They said that the name of their party is the Labour Movement Party. They had planned to run a candidate for deputy. The party was subsequently approved by the CEC but Selimi and Guri said it was too late in the campaign to run a candidate. The party is now in coalition with the National Unity Party (PUK) and “Albanian Social Party”- “PSHS” and they said they are number 27 on the Provisional Ballot. Selimi said that he at one time had been a secretary for the DP but he was unable to really participate or run for office due to prejudice. Both leaders stated that the “people in power” and general public opinion prohibit Egyptian/Roma participation in local government. Selimi mentioned that the biggest wound in Albania is the blood feud and that the biggest wound in the Egyptian/Roma community is the lack of equal opportunity for education.

**LTO team 04                      Location Covered:        Diber Region**  
**Team Members:            Elma Sehalic and Jan Hugo Holtan**

<b>Period Covered: 11.06. – 16.06.2005</b>
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Visiting two groups of Roma, Bulqize Distirct, 13 June.

Group 1.

- Resided along a river outside Shupenze for two years. All together it consisted of 25 persons belonging to 5 different families. Basically the families were from Elbasan and were registered there.
- Their daily derived occasional work on the nearby village farms and small scale goods retail. When needed additional begging comprised the income of the families.
- None of the children attended school. A female interlocutor claimed there has been no contact with the local authorities during these two years. No organizations whether national nor international had visited their camp.
- She had not heard anything about the upcoming elections and expressed no interest to vote.

Groups 2.

- Resided close to a little village and consisted of approximately the same amount of presons. Originally the members came from Fushe- Kruje and had been staying in the district just 14 days.
- Their income was mainly based on buying car wrecks and selling them further to recycling small industries.

- 2 male persons claimed the group would return to their residence and administrative unit to vote during the elections 3 July. When passing 16 June the LTOs noticed

**LTO Number: 05**                      **Location Covered: Durres, Kavaje**  
**Team Members: Monica Reintjes, Juliane Markard**

**Period Covered: 03-06-05/10-06-05**

LTOs met with NGO “**Albarom**”, the only Roma association in Durres that claims having all 1,100 Roma as their members. No major problems on registration or notification failures have been reported.

**Team Number: 6a**                      **Location Covered: North of the City of Tirana**  
**Team Members: Panos Lekakis**  
**Katia Glod**  
**Period Covered: 21 – 27 May 2005**

Borough 4, 11: strong Roma presence in the area

**Period Covered: 03.06.2005 – 10.06.2005**

- Andrea Ceko, Head of the HRUP Tirana Headquarters, in the meeting with the OSCE ODIHR observers appeared somewhat reluctant to talk on the role of the Roma and Egyptian communities in the Party as well as on their participation in the electoral process. His position is that it is up to the communities to be either active or disregard the process all together. So far, Andrea Ceko has reported a low willingness on the part of the Roma and the Egyptians as to the participation in the election despite his allegedly numerous attempts to persuade them to be more active.
- OSCE ODIHR Observers attended Berisha’s rally which took place on Thursday, 09<sup>th</sup> June, at 19.30 in the EZ 36. The rally was organized outside the ZEC 36 premises, the “Bajram Curi” Primary School where approximately over 500 DP supporters of Roma ethnicity participated in the rally. The general atmosphere was full of enthusiasm and “vivid” supporting slogans in favor of the Roma DP candidate Mr. Shaban Memia in the specific EZ launched the opening of the rally. The rally was organized for the presentation of the above mentioned candidate by the leader of the DP Mr. Sali Berisha. The rally opened with a concert but due to the late arrival of the DP leader as he had to present other DP candidate in another EZ- the rally begun at 20.15.



**Period Covered: June 11 to June 17**

*(As reported above)* **Buying Roma Votes:** Apollon also reported learning about vote buying from Mr. Istref Pullumbi chairman of NGO "Roma for Integration" at a rally on June 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup>. There are about 200 or 300 Roma in EZ 35 and Meksi has been attempting to bribe this population. We will follow up.

**LTO Number: 07**                      **Location Covered: Elbasan**  
**Team Members: Christina Bergman / Willem van Eekeren**

**Period Covered: 3rd of June to 11<sup>th</sup> of June 2005.**

Visited quarter of Roman people in Elbasan (Zone 52.) The village is divided in one "black" and one "white" part. I.e. black is the same as Roman and white are Albanians. We checked the voter's lists, VC 2321, and we discovered from approx. From 1200 names 800 was

## Egyptians

LTO team No.1 Shkodra: **Claudia Vollmer & Les Margosian**

### **Period Covered: 11/06-17/06**

- See under 3) candidates, meeting with Ramiz Cobo on 13/06.  
*On 13/06 met with Ramiz Cobo, DP candidate zone 3. He is a first time candidate, was born in the Dukajin area but has lived in Tirana for the last 20 years. His campaign consists primarily of support groups in neighbourhoods and villages. He said he is trying to win popular support by explaining “in a modest way” the advantages of his candidacy over his opponent. Discussed specific issues in a detailed way not encountered by us in interviews with other candidates. Some of these issues were corruption on all levels, misuse of funds and credits by the SP at national level, change of “destinations” of funds (the Italian Government gave a grant of 2 Mio Euros for a ringroad around Shkodra and the first 400.000 were converted to personal use by central Government officials). National policy for granting employers credit for hiring new employees subject to much fraud. And finally infrastructure issues mainly road and electric were discussed. Mentioned the **Roma** living across the Buna bridge, which is in his zone 3, but they are registered to vote in Zone 6 together with the Egyptian community across the bridge. This raises concerns, which Team 1 will further investigate in the coming days. Extensive discussion of illegal tactics of his SP opponent. Cobo named two persons (names available upon request) who had been stationed by his opponent in Oblik and Bardhaj villages and were circulating the information that they had significant funds available to buy Voting Center Commissioners. Cobo also talked about Gjoke Miri, director of the Shkodra tax office and candidate for Democratic Alliance and the independent candidate Kole Tonaj, who are offering \$30 per vote for them. Cobo expressed his concern about the experience and educational background of ZEC 3 members ( a concerned shared by Team 1). Areas of special concern regarding e-day problems are in his opinion the villages of Bardhaj, Hoti i Ri and Grude e Re.*
- Attended rally of Monarchical Movement candidate Marin Gurkaj zone 6 on 12/06 in a restaurant in the Egyptian area of zone 6. Attendees: 70 residents of the area believed to be members of the Egyptian minority. Plus 10 “criminals” identified by our interpreter, as members of to the Cafi clan and a group supporting SP candidate Lek Cukaj zone 3. Gurkaj promised to improve living conditions for the Egyptian community if elected.

### **Period Covered: 18/06-25/06**

- On 23/06 met with Astrit Baca, a leader of the Egyptian community and director of the NGO “Together with you for equality”. Discussed general problems the Egyptian community faces in Shkodra. Discussed 2003 election problems, his role in ensuring posting of PVL, and demographic data on the community. He was very vague, bordering on evasive when discussing his community’s political tactics and objectives. He was also non-committal on what role he would play in the forthcoming elections.

LTO team No. 2

**KUKËS (12), PUKË (9), HAS (11); Inge-Maj Lonnqvist, Guillaume Pilet**

LTOs have been informed by the OSCE Field Station and the UNDP office that “minority is not an issue in this area”, however, a group of approximately 1500 Egyptian are living in the region. Our interlocutors have denied any existence of minority communities; therefore it has been extremely difficult to get in touch with representatives of the Egyptian community.

<b>Team Number: 03</b>	<b>Location Covered: Lezhe</b>
<b>Team Members: Olga Philipidou and John Dwyer</b>	
<b>Period Covered: 18 to 25 June 2005</b>	

Team met with two leaders of the Roma/Egyptian community in Lezhe – Rauf Selimi and Qemal Guri. Selimi said that the Egyptian population in Lezhe is 3000 to 3200 and the Roma population is 800 to 1000. There are approximately 1000 registered voters in the combined communities. The leaders stated that discrimination and prejudice are rife in the local community and government. The local government has not paid the scheduled 3000AL to eligible families for two months. Guri said that he attempted to run for deputy in a previous election but that the CEC said initially his list of 600 signatures was invalid. The CEC eventually said the signatures were valid but Guri said he did not have time to mount a political campaign. Selimi and Guri said that they have a political party, which was initially disallowed by the CEC. They said that the name of their party is the Labour Movement Party. They had planned to run a candidate for deputy. The party was subsequently approved by the CEC but Selimi and Guri said it was too late in the campaign to run a candidate. The party is now in coalition with the National Unity Party (PUK) and “Albanian Social Party”- “PSHS” and they said they are number 27 on the Provisional Ballot. Selimi said that he at one time had been a secretary for the DP but he was unable to really participate or run for office due to prejudice. Both leaders stated that the “people in power” and general public opinion prohibit Egyptian/Roma participation in local government. Selimi mentioned that the biggest wound in Albania is the blood feud and that the biggest wound in the Egyptian/Roma community is the lack of equal opportunity for education.

**LTO Number: 6a**

**Location Covered: North of the City of Tirana**

**Team Members: Panos Lekakis**

**Katia Glod**

<b>Period Covered: 03.06.2005 – 10.06.2005</b>
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- Andrea Ceko, Head of the HRUP Tirana Headquarters, in the meeting with the OSCE ODIHR observers appeared somewhat reluctant to talk on the role of the Roma and Egyptian communities in the Party as well as on their participation in the electoral process. His position is that it is up to the communities to be either active or disregard the process all together. So far, Andrea Ceko has reported a low willingness on the part of the Roma and the Egyptians as to the participation in the election despite his allegedly numerous attempts to persuade them to be more active.
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No presentation of the candidate took place since the DP leader gave a general speech on the electoral campaign. Apart from the presentation of the DP Roma candidate, other independent candidates, supported by the DP in a coalition formation, attended the rally. Mr Behar Shabiku of Egyptian ethnicity and Mr. Agim Furtuna of Roma ethnicity joined the so-called presentation of the DP candidate Mr Shaban Memia by Mr. Sali Berisha while the Roma Chairman of the *Movement for Human Rights and Freedoms Party* (Partia Levizja per te Drejtat dhe Lirite e Njeriut), Mr. Ligorac Karamelo was also present at the rally. The above rally was supposed to have a character of promoting the minority issues and the presentation of Roma and other ethnic minorities' candidates. OSCE ODIHR Observers general assessment would be that the rally had a common character like any other rally and not any kind of a particular minority "colour", like the DP officials might want to declare under the context that the DP is the only party in the country which support the national minorities.

It should be noted as well that on the stage where the candidates were supposed to stand up for their presentation to the public, there was a group of children, dressed

up with the DP colours holding DP flags, “used” as part of the general electoral setting of the stage.

**LTO Number: 07**                      **Location Covered: Elbasan**  
**Team Members: Christina Bergman / Willem van Eekeren**

**Period Covered: 11/6 – 17/6 2005**

We met with Mr. Alben Tafa, representative of the Egypcion community in Cerrik. There are app. 1000 inhabitants inside the community, living and contracted in the villages of Malseje (4 VC) and Ferme (5 VC) and they have appr. 5 to 600 voters. +/- 80 % of them are involved in the PBDNJ. There are two representatives in the city council. Meeting have been held to discuss which party they should support. SP did not do so much for them so far. So they will support the PBDNJ as this party is interested in their minority group. He expects that some members of their minority group will be appointed as VC members.

**LTO Number: 09**                      **Location Covered: Vlora (Mallakstra, Fier South)**  
**Team Members: Marie-Christine Aulas; Nicholas Ball**

**Period Covered: 28 May – 3 June**

- Met with Sokol Qendro, Chair of Albanian Workers Movement Party (PLPSH), who represent the so-called Egyptian community in Albania.
- They claimed 2,700 voters in Vlora Town
- They listed numerous complaints from previous elections, including allegations of vote stealing at count in Tirana
- General complaint of discrimination against community
- They are in process of better political organisation and to campaign for a ‘proportional’ system in elections

**LTO Number: 11**                      **Location Covered: Korca**  
**Team Members: Marijana Delic and Jose Menendec**

**Period Covered: 21.05.-28.05.**

- Roma and Egyptian community is not recognised here as a minority which puts them in an especially difficult position. We have received complaints from Roma and Egyptian NGO about pressure and harassment on the members of their community from the main political parties (SP, DP and HRUP) and their candidates to vote in their favour.

**Period Covered: 29<sup>th</sup> of May to 3<sup>rd</sup> of June**

- We have heard of widespread manipulations of Roma and Egyptian voters in previous elections. There are some indications that this kind of practise is used

again. We are planning to follow up on this, and hopefully, come up with some concrete results.

**Period Covered: 11<sup>th</sup> of June to 17<sup>th</sup> of June**

- We have met Mr. Fuat Mehmeti HRUP candidate in EZ 81. He is the head of the Egyptian NGO and dentist by profession. He has already been running in the elections, in a different zone for a different party. There are 8000 Egyptians and 12000 Roma voters in EZ 81. Mr. Mehmeti sees himself as the only candidate running that will represent the Egyptian minority in the parliament.

He thinks that the main problem of the Egyptian minority is ‘openly displayed racism against them in Albania’.

He predicts; Egyptian turn out to be 70%. He is personally financing his, mainly, door to door campaign.

He has complained to us that the DP activists have paid a visit to the owner of his rented E-office, as a result a contract for the office was cancelled. (please see a complaint below)

**Period Covered: 17<sup>th</sup> of June to 25<sup>th</sup> of June**

- We have met the Head of the Egyptian NGO “Kabaja”, Mr. Kesul Duro”. There is not Egyptian NGO involved in the Elections. There is an Egyptian minority HRUP candidate on the proportional list running in the EZ 81, but he doesn’t seem to enjoy significant support. The votes will be split between DP and SP. Very active campaigning from all the electoral subjects in the community, Mr. Duro sad that they are receiving lots of gifts from all significant candidates.

Annex 4.

***A questionnaire form and guide for interviews with national minorities representatives, delivered to LTOs, by the Expert/National Minorities analyst in ODIHR EOM Albania 2005***

THE FORM MUST BE FILLED AND SENT BACK TO HQ (fax 04 234172 or e-mail: [rubin@odih.albaniaonline.net](mailto:rubin@odih.albaniaonline.net))



LTO team number \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of the LTO \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

**1. General remarks about the region(s)/city(ies) of the AoR<sup>23</sup> (s) were you are deployed?**

- a. Name of the region(s)/city(ies) \_\_\_\_\_
- b. General population (official number & source) \_\_\_\_\_
- c. What are the national minorities or ethnic/cultural groups<sup>24</sup>?

No.	Name of the National Minority /ethnic or cultural group	The official number, according to the last census, in your ZEC(s)	The estimated number	Source <sup>25</sup> of estimate number
1.				
2.				

<sup>23</sup> <sup>23</sup> Area of responsibility

<sup>24</sup> Albania classifies minorities into two groups: **National** (Greeks, Macedonians and Serbs/Montenegrins) and **Cultural** (Roma and Arumenians/Vlachs). Egyptians are not classified and officially are not recognized by the authorities, although the Advisory Committee of CoE for implementation of a Framework Convention for Protection of National Minorities has advised the Government of Albania to find a way of recognition and protection of this community. If there is any other minority that is not mentioned please include data in the table.

<sup>25</sup> If for one minority you have many sources with different estimate number than please use the next row for the same minority.

3.				
4.				
5.				

**2. Information about national minorities (NM) compact communities:**

**a. Did you identify any NM compact communities<sup>26</sup> in AoR?**

YES  NO . If yes please fill the table

Name of community	Indicate the name of administrative unit (city, village, quart)	What language is used mostly inside the community (Albanian, ethnic <sup>27</sup> or mixed <sup>28</sup> ). please indicate the language(s)

**3. Information about the organisation structure of minorities**

**Could you identify a community leader?** If yes, please indicate: 1=Traditional leader<sup>29</sup>s; 2= political leaders; 3=elected representatives; 4= NGOs leaders.

Name of community	Indication

Please, indicate, on the separate page, what the understanding of community leader is/how the leader is exercising his/her power, what are his/her responsibilities etc? Also, if you have elected representatives on NM please describe on what level- local councils, national level etc?

<sup>26</sup> When more than 50% of a population in an administrative unit (city, village, district etc) is comprised the same ethnic background

<sup>27</sup> The ethnic language (e.g. Greek, Macedonian, Roma ..?)

<sup>28</sup> Mixed languages is if the community is speaking parallel two or more languages

<sup>29</sup> Traditional leader is if exist any that is respected by the community like a leader/ or family, without any legal institution or elected procedure.

**Did you contact or identify any NM NGOs active inside the community?**

Yes  No

If yes, please indicate what their main activities are<sup>30</sup>:

economic  social  human rights  mass media  Civic education and political participation   
 domestic election observation/ voters awareness  other

**List of contacts:**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organisation</u>	<u>Telephone</u>	<u>e-mail</u>

<sup>30</sup> NGOs may to have multiple activities. Please tick all, which apply.

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**4. Information about the election process among the minorities**

**A.** In general, are final voter lists posted in compact communities as follows:

<b>Community</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>

1= yes (always); 2= yes (mostly); 3= rarely; 4= never; 5= not known; 6 = other (e.g. they were posted but were torn down)

**B.** Is there any information available in minority languages on the election? Y / N

**B.1.** If yes in which languages?

**B.2.** Who was it produced by? \_\_\_\_\_

**c.** Did you receive any allegations of intimidation against minority communities? Y/N

**C.1.** If yes, who was it alleged/proved were the perpetrators? \_\_\_\_\_

**D.** Did you receive any allegations of that payments/inducements were offered to minority communities in return for their votes? Y/N

**D.1.** If yes which minority? \_\_\_\_\_

**D.2.** Are the allegations substantiated? \_\_\_\_\_

**E.** Did you receive any allegations that a minority population sought a payment to vote for a candidate or party? Y/N

**E.1** If yes which minority? \_\_\_\_\_

**E.2.** Are the allegations substantiated? \_\_\_\_\_

**F.** In general, are polling stations located within easy reach of compact communities? Y/N

**F.1.** If No, which community did not have a PS within easy reach

\_\_\_\_\_

**G.** Are there any registered candidates in election zones that are from an ethnic minority and are seeking support of minority communities? Y/N

**G.1.** If Yes, which? \_\_\_\_\_

**H.** Can you identify in you AoR any instance in which the voters of a compact minority community are split between 2 or more election zones  
Y / N

**H.1.** If, YES please indicate the location of community and ZECs number?

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**I. Please indicate which political parties appear to be active in compact communities?**

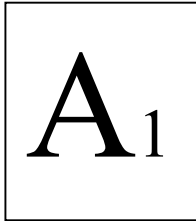
Name of community	Name of Political Party

**J. Please indicate is any political party promoting community rights at the local level?**

Name of community	Name of Political Party

**5. Other comments** (please, add any relevant information, suggestions etc that could be used for the interim/ final report of ODIHR EOM or for other similar missions)

**THIS FORM IS A GUIDE FOR AN INTERVIEW WITH REPRESENTATIVE OF COMMUNITIES OR NGOs. FORM MUST BE FILLED AND SENT BACK TO HQ (fax 04 234172 or e-mail: [rubin@odhr.albaniaonline.net](mailto:rubin@odhr.albaniaonline.net))**



LTO team number \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of the LTO \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

**A. Details of interviewed person**

1. Which community represent the person? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Is the community has other local ethno-names or appellation (please indicate)? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Name of representative of community or NGO: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Contact details: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Profession: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Position in a community/NGO: \_\_\_\_\_

**B. Information about the social -economic status of community**

1. Are social services provided by local authorities inside of the community?
  - School yes  no   
If not, what is the distance to the nearest one? \_\_\_\_\_
  - Hospital yes  no   
If not, what is the distance to the nearest one? \_\_\_\_\_
  - Security/police yes  no

If not, how far is the most appropriated one, and what form of security they have?

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2. What are the general economic conditions of the NM community in your opinion?

very poor       poor       normal       rich

3. What is the unemployment rate in a community?  %

\* Is existing any “black” economy activity among the people in a community?    Y /

N

If YES, what is the rate of the people, which are dealing with that:?

%

**C. Other issues** *(please, add any relevant information, suggestions etc. that you hear from the interviewed person about the election process among the community).*