Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 1328 (1997)[1]

State of emergency in Albania

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly re-affirms its support for the new Government established in Albania on the basis of the "national reconciliation platform" signed by the leaders of ten political parties on 9 March 1997. It welcomes measures adopted by the National Reconciliation Government to find a political solution to the crisis, in implementation of several of the proposals in Recommendation 1316. It notes that in the interval between its missions of 6-7 March and 4-5 April 1997, the political climate in Tirana had improved.

2. The Assembly welcomes the rapid mobilisation mid-April 1997 of a 6 000-strong multinational European force for protecting humanitarian aid, as requested by the Albanian Government and authorised by the UN Security Council. The deployment of this force, under Italian leadership, has had a significant psychological impact, has released resources for restoring order and thus for paving the way for fresh elections, and - above all - is relieving acute distress among the most vulnerable parts of the population.

3. Concerned by the mass outflow of Albanian asylum-seekers, who tried in the first phase of the crisis to cross the borders of neighbouring countries, the Assembly welcomes the Italian Government's prompt decision to admit all arrivals to its territory, with quick legal regulation of their status. However, policies and practices of some neighbouring countries give rise to serious concern: the principles set forth in Recommendation 1179 (1992) on the exodus of Albanian nationals must be respected.

4. The Assembly welcomes the decision of the Socialist Party to take up its seats in parliament and to join Albania's parliamentary delegation to the Council of Europe.

5. The Assembly welcomes the all-party agreement on fresh elections and the president's proposal for all-party talks on a new constitution. The framing and implementation of a new constitution can form the basis for further reforms. Constructive dialogue with all political parties is the only way forward.

6. The Assembly notes that free and fair elections will, inter alia, require :

6.1. freedom of movement and association throughout the country;

6.2. access for political parties to the media on a reasonably agreed basis;

6.3. the proper functioning of central, regional and local election commissions;

6.4. security throughout the country and the restoration of authority to the legitimate regional and local authority structures, regularly elected in October 1996. The target date of 29 June 1997 should accelerate progress in meeting these requirements, and should be reviewed in the light of progress accomplished.

7. The Assembly considers that the "citizens' committees", which have taken power illegally in parts of the country, should undertake to restore the normal functioning of regularly elected local and regional authorities, and contribute to the recovery of weapons, as preconditions for free and fair elections. The Assembly condemns attempts to repress legitimate authority through armed violence.

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1. Assembly debate on 24 April 1997 (15th Sitting) (see Doc. 7806, report of the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mr Van der Linden ; Doc. 7807, opinion of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography, rapporteur: Mr Iwinski ; and Doc. 7810, opinion of the Committee on Relations with the European Non-Member Countries, rapporteur : Mr Ruffy). Text adopted by the Assembly on 24April 1997 (15th Sitting).

8. The Assembly welcomes the concerted efforts of Europe's international institutions, as called for in Recommendation 1316, in the form of a "multi-institutional initiative" to which the Council of Europe is making a significant contribution :

8.1. the OSCE is establishing an office, and will seek to provide a "co-ordinating framework" for all international initiatives, further to the three missions of former Austrian Chancellor Franz Vranitzky as personal representative of the OSCE chairmanship;

8.2. the European Union is establishing an advisory mission, further to the initial mission of 7 March 1997 of Dutch Foreign Minister Hans van Mierlo on behalf of the European Union Presidency, and to which the Western European Union (WEU) will contribute expertise;

8.3. the Council of Europe, in liaison with these structures, will play a central role in the preparation of elections and in dealing with requests for expertise. These concerted efforts must be pursued, on the basis of a common political position.

9. Recalling that the Council of Europe has a statutory duty to help a Member State which seeks to surmount a severe political crisis by constitutional and democratic means, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers :

9.1. give the highest priority to its monitoring of developments in Albania, in close co-operation with the European Union and the OSCE, in accordance with Assembly Resolution 1114 and Recommendation 1312 (1997);

9.2. re-direct its programmes of assistance to Albania (election legislation and observation, media reform, law enforcement and respect for human rights, constitutional law), and allocate resources to them on the scale made necessary by the crisis and with a view to optimising the concerted efforts of Europe's international institutions.