



Albania 2012 Crime and Safety Report

Stolen items; Theft; Bombing; Murder; Assault; Riots/Civil Unrest; NGO; Elections; Travel Health and Safety; Bribery; Threats; Employee Health Safety

Europe > Albania > Tirana

3/2/2012

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Crime Threats

Although the overall security situation in Albania has improved in recent years, organized criminal groups continue to operate in all regions. For the first time in more than a decade, four people were killed on January 21, 2011 when an opposition demonstration turned violent. Anti-American sentiment is rare in Albania. Members of the American community are generally well liked by the Albanian populace and are not targeted because of nationality.

Street crime is fairly common in urban areas, particularly at night, and vehicle theft is also a major issue. Caution should be exercised in Tirana bars, as violent incidents involving the use of firearms have occurred in the recent past, particularly in the early morning hours. Crime issues recently encountered by Americans and other members of the international community include: a dependent was robbed and a U.S. volunteer was assaulted and robbed.

Organized crime remains a serious problem in Albania, but the violence related to it rarely affects the international community.

Recent crime statistics indicate an increase in violent crimes, the majority of which were either from remotely detonated car bombs or explosives placed at private residences, throughout Albania and show an increase in the use of explosives. Additionally, criminal activity has increased overall, as exemplified by the rise in recorded homicides and armed robberies – though such incidents generally do not end in violence. Most armed crime occurs in the northern part of the country. Domestic violence continues to be a major issue, as many murders and assaults come as a direct result of domestic conflict.

Political Violence



Historical Perspective

In the late 1990s, Albania had two distinct periods of significant civil unrest: the first, in 1997, was due to the collapse of nationwide pyramid schemes that sparked a major financial crisis; the second, in 1998, was due to the assassination of an opposition party leader.

Approximately 70 percent of Albania's population identifies itself as Muslim, but radical Islam has few adherents. The vast majority of Albanians are strongly secular, regardless of their religious beliefs. In recent years, several Islamic non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have made attempts to increase their popularity in Albania, but have met with very limited success.

Civil Unrest

Sporadic protest activity related to the 2009 Albanian parliamentary elections, which were disputed by opposition parties but deemed by OSCE as having met most OSCE commitments, caused traffic difficulties and general inconvenience near several government buildings in downtown Tirana.

On January 21, 2011 government security forces killed four protestors during a violent opposition demonstration and more than 100 were injured, including many police, in the rioting. Two Republican Guards were later charged in the shootings. Protests on the one year anniversary of the January 21 shootings were peaceful and occurred without incident.

The May 2011 local elections occurred without incident.

Apart from domestic political concerns, demonstration activity is usually small in size and is aimed at power shortages, property rights, and other domestic economic complaints.

Post-Specific Concerns

Industrial and Transportation Accidents

The most dangerous aspect of living and working in Albania is the unsafe driving regularly encountered on roads nationwide and the generally poor condition in which most roads are kept. Road conditions are especially poor in rural areas in winter months and during inclement weather. Additionally, sporadic electricity shortages sometimes result in blackouts affecting road lighting and traffic signals.



Police Response

Overall, the Albanian government has improved the country's law enforcement and security institutions. Police have a visible presence throughout Tirana and other Albanian cities. Due to limited resources and manpower, however, their response is often delayed. Police tend to respond more rapidly when contacted by members of the international community. One concern regarding police performance is their low salaries and the resulting potential for corruption. Regardless, Albanian law enforcement capabilities continue to improve, especially in the areas of counter-narcotics and organized crime training. Albanian police and security forces continue to achieve success in combating the illegal weapons and drug trade.

The police emergency number in Albania is 129, though response times vary. The Albanian government is implementing a plan to place English-speaking officers in a number of accessible police stations throughout Tirana to facilitate communication with foreigners in the event of an emergency.

Medical Emergencies

Healthcare is a serious problem in Albania, and medical care beyond first aid is limited. Individuals under continuing medical supervision should consult their physician prior to travel.

Contact Information for Local Hospitals and Clinics

ABC Clinic at Rr. Qemal Stafa, No.260. Tel: 223-4105. Mob: 068-260-0405 Open M-F 0900-1300

Private Hospitals

Hygeia Hospital

Address: Km 01 of the Second road of Tirana-Durres Highway Fushe-Mezez, Kashar Commune, Tirana

Tel: +355-04-238-0640, +355-04-239-0000

<http://www.hygeia.al>

Six operating rooms; 16 ICU beds; 24hr ER with pediatric capabilities

Can Coordinate Air Ambulance services as well.

German Hospital (Cardiac Specialty)



Address: Rr. Nikolla Lena / Rr.e Kavajes
Telephone: +355 (0) 422 74 577, +355 (0) 422 58930
FAX: +355 (0) 422 71 747; +355 (0) 422 58930
E-mail: info@spitaligjerman.com; heart-centre@spitaligjerman.com
www.german-hospital-tirana.com

American Hospital
Address: American Hospital, at Military Hospital, Laprake, Tirane
Tel: +355- 04-235-7535; +355-04-235-7011
<http://www.spitaliamerikan.com/al/index.php>

Public Hospitals

University Hospital Center "Mother Theresa"
Military Hospital (National Trauma Center)

CDC Guidance

Visitors are recommended to be inoculated against Hepatitis A and B, typhoid, and to receive other vaccinations as a precaution prior to traveling to Albania. Visitors are also advised to bring a sufficient supply of any required medications. Visitors are advised to drink only bottled water, as local tap water is not purified to U.S. standards.

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Individuals should use normal security precautions: maintain a low profile, be aware of surroundings, and travel in groups whenever possible. Visitors are advised to not resist and to comply with demands if confronted by assailants. Individuals are also encouraged to avoid traveling at night between cities because of the risk of automobile accidents and to avoid any demonstration or protest activity. There are very few areas in Albania not recommended for American visitors.

Further Information

U.S. Embassy Tirana is located at Rr. Elbasanit 103 in Tirana and can be contacted at (+355) 4 2247 285.

Prior to travel, U.S citizens visiting Albania should register with the State Department at <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs>. Travelers can obtain updated travel information at the



Embassy's website, <http://tirana.usembassy.gov>, or via the Department's Country-Specific Information sheet for Albania at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1076.html.

OSAC Country Council

There is currently no active OSAC Country Council in Albania.