

## **Printed Media**

Albanian print media is viewed as an extension of political parties

After thirteen years of struggle for democracy and its consolidation, Albanian media has found itself in a situation when there is freedom of the press, but no free press. The activity of media business can hardly be called transparent, and there is little or no state control, combined with problems of implementation of existing media legislation.

Since the early nineties, Albanian media, like the rest of society, has been faced with a freedom never experienced before, and with equally unfamiliar problems. The advent of a new political system brought about the emergence of new media and, consequently, the need to regulate this chaotic situation.

### **Media in Transition**

The press, radio, and television urged implementation of communist economic programs and supported antireligious campaigns and literacy promotion. The media was instructed to appeal to Albanian nationalism to force the public's acceptance of the communist dictatorship's agenda. All newspapers were under the control of the communist government and printed only what they were told. Albania's few radio and television stations spoke only the communist credo.

All journalists, editors, film directors, and television and radio producers were either communist party members or severely subjected to the discipline and guidelines of the party. For the next four decades Albania under President and Communist Party leader Enver Hoxha brutally suppressed all dissent, denied the Albanian people human rights, and isolated Albania from all European countries with only distant China, little Albania's primary ally. The communist party published the nation's most important newspaper, *Zeri I Popullit* (Voice of the People). A 1984-study commissioned by Amnesty International identified Hoxha's Albania as one of the world's most repressive regimes. Albanians were denied the freedoms of expression, religion, movement, and association in contradiction to the country's 1976 constitution, which stated the nation's political liberties. The only information available to the Albanian people came from the government-controlled media. Hoxha's death in 1985 led to minor improvements in the communist rule of Albania under Hoxha successor, Ramiz Alia.

Alia loosened some of the nation's harshest restrictions on human rights and the media. Internal dissent and mounting demonstrations in Albania led Alia to sign the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which guaranteed Albanians both human and political rights as part of the Helsinki accords of 1975. After press laws were liberalized in 1990, *Zeri I Popullit* rapidly lost circulation. Opposition papers were printed; the most popular newspaper became *Rilindja Demokratike*. To regain subscribers *Zeri I Popullit* removed the hammer and sickle and the Marxist slogan from its masthead and relinquished its role as the mouthpiece of the Communist Party.

In 1990 Albania reorganized itself into a multiparty democracy. Student unrest in 1990 led to violent clashes. The political party, the Democratic

Front and its daily newspaper, *Bashkimi*, covered the clashes, arrests, and police activity. This was Albania's first public criticism in the media since the 1944 communist takeover. Albania's government acted with a new sense of responsibility, and the Council of Ministers proceeded to liberalize the laws regulating the media, reduced the Communist Party's control of the press, and legalized the nation's first privately owned opposition newspaper, *Rilindja Demokratike*.

Albania adopted a new constitution in 1998 to bring the nation into full compliance with the constitutions of Europe's other nations and to facilitate Albania's need for foreign investment in the nation's financial future. Part Two of the constitution, *The Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms*, guarantees the Albanian people human rights and freedoms that are indivisible, inalienable, and inviolable, and protected by the judicial order. Article 22 provides for freedom of expression, and freedom of the press, radio, and television. Prior censorship of a means of communication is prohibited. The operation of radio and television stations may require the granting of a government authorization. Article 23 guarantees the right to information. All Albanians have the right, in compliance with the law, to get information about the activities of the government and about the individuals exercising governmental authority.

In 1996 Albania published five national dailies with a combined circulation of 116,000. In 1995 the four largest newspapers were the Albanian language morning dailies *Zeri I Popullit*, 35,000 circulation; *Koha Jone*, 30,000 circulation; *Rilindja Demokratike*, 10,000 circulation; and the Albanian and Italian language morning daily *Gazeta Shqiptare*, 11,000 circulation. *Dy Drina* is published in northern Albania and has a circulation of 1,000.

According to 1995 statistics, general-interest biweekly periodicals circulated as follows: *Alternativa*, published by the Social Democratic Party, 5,000 readers; *Bashkimi*, published by the Democratic Front, 5,000 readers; and *Republika*, published by the Republican Party, 8,000 readers. Weekly general interest periodicals are *Ax*, 6,000 readers; *Drita*, 4,000 readers; and *Zeri I Rinise*, a Youth Confederation publication, 4,000 readers. *Lajmi I Dites*, published by the ATS News Agency, has three issues per week and a circulation of 5,000.

Special interest publications are the monthlies *Albanian Economic Tribune* in both Albanian and English with 5,000 readers; *Arber*, published by the Ministry of Culture with 5,000 readers, and *Bujqesia Shqiptare*, published by the Ministry of Agriculture with 3,000 readers. Weekly special interest periodicals are *Mesuesi*, published by the Ministry of Education, 3,000 circulation, and *Sindikalisti*, circulation 5,000. The University of Triana publishes the biweekly *Studenti*, with a circulation of 5,000, and the quarterly *Gruaja Dhe Koha* has 1,000 readers. The quarterly *Media Shqiptare*, founded in 1999, caters to journalists and provides news about the profession.

The Albanian print media is generally characterized as an extension of political parties. It is perceived as more opinion than factually based. Albanian newspapers have distribution problems. They are sold in the cities, which omit 60 percent of the population residing in the countryside. Newspapers lack adequate revenue to cover printing costs and salaries for a

professional staff. Since 1999 newspaper circulation has dropped from 75,000 to 50,000 readers. A majority of Albanians believe that the print media are a negative national influence. Polls indicate that Albanians prefer to receive their news via electronic means.

Albania's rapid transition from an isolationist communist state to western-style democracy was fraught with difficulties. The 1999 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices reported that the nation's security forces usually respected Albania's Law on Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms, but there were incidents in 1999 where journalists were beaten.

The report noted that the media were given the freedom to express views, but the press seldom used self-restraint in what it printed. News stories were given to sensationalism and lacked professional integrity, contained unsubstantiated accusations, and sometimes included complete fabrications. In 1999 Albania's political parties, labor unions, and professional and fraternal groups and organizations published their own newspapers and magazines. In that year, there were at least 200 such publications available on a daily or weekly basis. Newspaper sales were falling because the public lacked trust in what was being reported.

The 2001 World Press Freedom Review noted that the Albanian press showed increased maturity and professionalism in reporting the news. Professional standards for the hiring of journalists reflected a significant improvement. In 2001, the media's professionalism was increasingly evident in their reporting on the conflict in neighboring Macedonia with its large ethnic Albanian population and Albania's general elections of June 2001. A lack of financial resources forced the Albanian media to increasingly depend on foreign news sources for international coverage. Journalists' bias and opinion are now more likely to appear in newspaper editorial pages than in the newspapers front-page articles.

In 2001, Albania's government debated a new media law, Article 19 for Freedom of the Press, to regulate the media. Opposition lawmakers feared Article 19 might compromise press freedom by making journalists responsible for what was printed regardless of who authorized the article. Article 19 also required all journalists to register with a Journalists' Registry and to be experienced before being licensed by the state, and made publishers legally liable for hiring unlicensed journalists.

Article 19 required journalists to report only truthful and carefully checked news stories. False news articles would be considered a criminal offense. A national debate concluded that Article 19 was likely to be in contradiction to European Union media practices, which required the media to police and discipline itself.

Source: <http://pressreference.com/A-Be/Albania.html>

## List of Printed Media in Albania

### Magazine

Monitor

<http://www.monitor.al>

Magazine

Shqip

<http://www.shqip.al>

Magazine

Spekter

<http://www.spekter.com.al>

Magazine

Mehr Licht

<http://www.eurozine.com/journals/mehrlicht/selfdescription.html>

Magazine

Përpjekja

<http://www.ceeol.com>

Newspaper

Gazeta Shqiptare

<http://www.balkanweb.com/gazetav4/>

Newspaper

Korrieri

<http://www.korrieri.com>

Newspaper

Shekulli

<http://www.shekulli.com.al>

Newspaper

Veriu Observer

<http://www.gazetaveriu.netfirms.com/>

Newspaper

ABC

<http://www.abc.com.al>

Newspaper

Albania

<http://www.gazeta-albania.net>

Newspaper

Albanian Daily News

<http://www.albanianews.com>

Newspaper

Balli i Kombit

<http://www.ballikombit.albanet.org>

Newspaper

Biznesi

<http://www.biznesi.com.al>

Newspaper

Gazeta 55

<http://www.gazeta55.net>

Newspaper

Gazeta Ballkan

<http://www.ballkan.com>

Newspaper

Gazeta Start

<http://www.gazetastart.com>

Newspaper  
Iliria Post  
<http://www.iliriapost.net>  
Newspaper  
Integrimi  
<http://www.integrimi.com>  
Newspaper  
Koha Jone  
<http://www.kohajone.com>  
Newspaper  
Metropol  
<http://www.gazetametropol.com>  
Newspaper  
Panorama  
<http://www.panorama.com.al>  
Newspaper  
Rilindja Demokratike  
<http://www.rilindjademokratike.com>  
Newspaper  
Sot  
<http://www.sot.com.al>  
Newspaper  
Sporti Shqiptar  
<http://www.sportishqiptar.com.al>  
Newspaper  
Tema  
<http://www.gazetatema.net>  
Newspaper  
Tirana Observer  
<http://www.tiranaobserver.com.al>  
Newspaper  
Tirana Times  
<http://www.tiranatimes.com>  
Newspaper  
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