

## **The Fight against the Cultivation of Cannabis- A challenge for the New Government**

**By Xhavit Shala  
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*The new Albanian Government<sup>1</sup> that came in power after the July 3 elections, in keeping with its commitments to fight trafficking, informed the public that it would propose a three year moratorium on the movement of small boats. Following is an interview given to VOA with comments on the government's draft law.*

### **The Anti-cannabis effort under the focus of Voice of America**

The Albanian Government determined today to curtail for a period of three years the movement of small navigable boats in its seawaters in an effort to stamp the trafficking of human beings and narcotics.<sup>2</sup>

Prime Minister Berisha said in a meeting of the government that the fight against trafficking will be strengthened via the reconsideration of strategies and laws aimed at targeting trafficking and traffickers. He said that Albania will become a safe place and will no longer be an arch-bridge where trafficking from the East to the West flow.

**PM Berisha:** "We must cleanse our waters of the merchants of death. We cannot allow any longer that these merchants of death take people's lives and transport poison to the children of Italy and other European countries. We can not allow them while filling their sacks with black and dirty money brings shame upon the image of Albania, bringing upon it an irreparable damage."

Public Order experts in Tirana see the recent strengthening in the effort against narcotics as necessary. They say that the fight against trafficking is a chain process that must be examined at every stage, starting with the organization of criminal groups and not just with the last stage, with the transportation of clandestine when it takes upon itself a visible form.

At the Albanian Center for national Security Studies, Xhavit Shala is one of persons best acquainted with the strategies in the fight against trafficking of narcotics and human beings. Mr. Shala, who has just published a book about narcotics, says that, like in

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<sup>2</sup> The intention to enforce a three year moratorium on boats was announced in October of 2005. In December 14 of 2005, the Government approved the draft bill and sent it to Parliament. The Moratorium on Boat's bill was passed by the Albanian Parliament by Law 9509, in March 4, 2006.

every electoral year, even this year there is a notable increase in the cultivation of narcotic plants.

**Mr. Shala** said: “In view of the past experiences during the electoral season when there has been an intensification of cultivation, measures should have been taken to prevent the cultivation of narcotic plants. Such actions were not taken this year. This year again showed that the cultivation instead of being reduced was intensified. At a time when the cultivation of narcotic plants was limited only in the south of the country, now the cultivation is taking place in Shkodra, Kukës, and other parts of Albania. In my opinion the fight against this phenomenon has become a political challenge for the new government”.

The draft law on the three year moratorium on boat navigation provides for the handing over of speed boats voluntarily and punishment for those who do not hand them over. New amendments are planned to strengthen judicial sanctions against trafficker declaring them as dangerous criminals. The government will also seek to enter into an extradition treaty with Italy to enable a swift extradition of Albanian speedboaters that will be apprehended in the Adriatic to bring them to justice in Albania... According to the annual report by the United States, Albania remains for the fourth consecutive year in the tier two group of countries that are making minimal efforts to fight human and other types of trafficking.

