

## **The Prevention of Cannabis Cultivation a Challenge for the Police**

**By Xhavit Shala  
Tirana, 17 April 2006**

*The messages that were given by the political leaders on penalizing the cannabis politics were not being processed properly by the technical level personnel in the police<sup>1</sup>. The monitoring of the anti cannabis campaign by the ACNSS identified delays in taking proper action for preventing the cultivation of cannabis. The following interview given to VOA aimed at drawing attention to the problem and considers the campaign a test for the Albanian police.*

### **Call to prevent the cultivation of cannabis Voice of America**

While the arrests of several individuals suspected for murder and trafficking in Albanian have boosted the optimism of analysts for an improved public order situation.<sup>2</sup> However, they still think that aside from a greater engagement in the fight against crime, the results are still insufficient and the public order structures are faced with an important challenge in their efforts to fight crime, narcotics and human trafficking.

Our correspondent Ilirian Agolli talked to two analysts and prepared the following report:

The crime world has been given serious and consecutive blows in recent weeks, with arrests taking place inside and out of the country of persons accused of having committed notorious crimes and a series of murders.

The analysts are of the opinion that public order forces are marking an important turn thanks to a greater engagement and greater determination by the authorities demonstrated in swift arrests and extraditions to neighboring countries.

A former police director, well known in Albania, Xhavit Shala, who now heads an independent research center on national security, makes the following comments on the situation:

"The recent operations taken by the Albanian police are very serious actions. Several criminal organization with political connections have been given a blow; there have been given a blow to organizations that have attempted to enter politics and run for political office and in a certain manner of speaking they also tabled their representatives.

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<sup>2</sup> Comment prepared by the VOA correspondent in Tirana, Ilirian Agolli

Some of the recent operations have been truly spectacular. This indicates that the Albanian police possess all the necessary professional resources to achieve results in the fight against organized crime, Mr. Shala said.

Kreshnik Spahiu, the director of the Citizens Advocacy Office, says that the police are to be congratulated for their work during this period but this is only the beginning of a difficult process and full of challenges in the fight against organized crime.

"The CAO is of the opinion that the State Police should demonstrate coherence and a good approach to the new state of criminality and the fight against trafficking and mafia in Albania. I say this because the Albanian police is present only in Tirana and some other main towns and its presence is not felt in rural areas and villages where the map of trafficking is scattered.

But which are the challenges that await the public order forces in the coming fight against organized crime?

Mr. Shala says: "The fight should be focused on human and narcotics trafficking that have drawn the attention of European opinion in particular. I have in mind here the trafficking of narcotic substances and cannabis, with the latter being an original Albanian product. Cannabis is planted and matures within three to four months. Once cultivation is allowed it will open the way for other problems because the quantities produced will be exported. Presently, we are at the most delicate stage, that of preventing the cultivation of cannabis cultivation. "

Mr. Spahiu says that the Albanian police should increase its professionalism to face the continually more sophisticated forms of crime.

"The penetration of crime, trafficking and mafia into politics, media, police and the judiciary is higher than the penetration of police or intelligence officers inside the criminal organizations to fully rout the bands and these criminal organizations. The fight against the mafia, trafficking and organized crime is a challenge for Albania. There needs to be a new flux of cadres into the police who possess a contemporary formation and education. The old nomenclature of the State Police can not be successful in the fight against organized crime and mafia in the country, Mr. Spahiu says.

The Albanian authorities have been called on to wage an uncompromised fight against organized crime and trafficking not only by domestic public opinion but by the western bodies, like NATO and the EU, also, as a precondition for the integration of Albania into the Euro-Atlantic structures.

