

Remarks of the Head of Presence
On the 65th anniversary of the executions related to the ‘Bomb at the Soviet Embassy’
incident of 26 February 1951
Presidency, Skanderbeg Room, Tirana
26 February 2016, 11:00

Honourable Mr President,
Dear Ms Kaminsky
Dear Mr Tufa
Dear Ambassador Hoffmann,
Dear witnesses and families,
Dear Guests,

Mr President, thank you for welcoming us today. My sincere thanks as well to the Institute for the Study of Communist Crimes [Instituti i Studimeve për Krimet dhe Pasojat e Komunizmit], not only for today's event, but for their tireless work in producing academic research about this painful part of Albania's history.

Today, we are here to remember the events of the 'Bomb at the Soviet Embassy', to bear witness to personal suffering and to the impact of these events on society. Both are crucial. We must never forget the individuals: those that were arrested, those that were executed, and their families that were sent into internment. Also, we must never forget the larger purpose and impact of these horrific crimes, the terror that these acts were meant to instill in the population, and in particular in intellectuals.

Recently, we saw intensified efforts in the Albanian society to seriously remember and face Albania's totalitarian past. This is why the OSCE Presence joined these efforts and launched an initiative in 2015, with support from the German government, to promote an inclusive national dialogue about how to deal with this past. We are working especially with youth to share more information about the Communist past with them, including the stories of persecuted people.

Young people often still lack knowledge about even basic elements of the Communist regime. Therefore, we feel that the educational curriculum should be carefully revised, in an inclusive process, to ensure that young people not only learn about facts and events such as the executions related to the ‘Bomb at the Soviet Embassy’ incident, but also learn to critically evaluate historical events and their role in larger systems of governance and oppression.

Commemorating important days from history is part of a broader process to deal with the legacy of the totalitarian regime in Albania. We commend initiatives to transform some sites associated with this era into sites of remembrance, such as the House of Leaves in Tirana and in particular Spaç prison. Furthermore, the OSCE Presence is also providing advice and

expertise on initiatives to encourage fair and transparent access to the files of the former *Sigurimi*.

Remembering, studying, teaching and talking about the totalitarian past are ways of ensuring Albania's democratic future. This history belongs to all of society, but it is also deeply personal, obliging us to work at both levels to fully come to terms with this past.

Thank you.