

Address of the Head of Presence

Training of prison staff of the Special Regime on the Human Rights Compliant
Management of High-Risk Prisoners

30 November 2021

Venue: Xheko Imperial Hotel, Grand Imperial meeting room
Tirana, Albania

Let me take this opportunity before we get started, before I deliver my speech, to reiterate my congratulations on each and every Albanian citizen, here represented by the Minister and the People's Advocate, for their Independence Day and Liberation Day.

Dear Mr. Minister, dear Ombudsperson, dear participants,

It is a real satisfaction for me to be here today with you. And I see that we continue to harvest the benefits of our co-operation in the field of Special Regime in prisons through a concrete training based on the concrete findings of a thorough Needs Assessment. I thank the Minister of Justice for his presence here today, (Faleminderit!) but also for the continued co-operation with us. Thank you Minister Manja!

And thank you to the Peoples' Advocate, Ms. Ballanca, whose contribution to today's works is also very valuable and meaningful, and from whom I had the opportunity to learn a lot on this topic during one of my first meetings.

My satisfaction is further compounded by noticing how Albania is capitalizing on its already solid international integration through the adoption and practice of international standards that address its own realities, in concrete, Albanian-relevant ways.

And this is one year after Albania successfully chaired the OSCE and only a few weeks before Albania will become a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the first time in its history. I believe our work on the Special Regime is fully aligned to these achievements, and actually, it is contributing to some extent to further strengthening Albania's international credentials.

I am particularly glad to see the international exchange of knowledge and practice with Italy, a country I know "relatively well"...with a very specific experience in this policy area. *And I salute Brigadier General Mauro D'Amico: nel darle il benvenuto, le rinnovo la mia gratitudine per il suo contributo e la nostra collaborazione, Generale. Grazie e benvenuto a Tirana!*

And thank you to you, Prof. Kurti, for your meaningful contribution today.

I commend the concreteness of this training, because it avoids purely theoretical elaborations on the topic, by immersing into the actual hard-fact reality. This is resonant of our mandate: provide support to our host country on its own clearly identified needs!

And it happens that these needs are on a sensitive topic, because it is about balancing security measures and human rights in the field of treatment of prisoners. Both, security and safety constitute an integral part of the State's responsibility to protect persons deprived of their liberty.

I don't want to be banal when I say that the overarching principles and legal provisions on human rights in prison environments have to be concretely implemented into practice, that security and control are best ensured in environments that respect the inherent dignity of detainees, that legality, necessity and proportionality principles have to be factored in when finding concrete solutions that ensure prison security while respecting the human rights of inmates. But in which concrete ways do we accommodate them and the need for security in prison?

At the OSCE we have a whole-of-society approach to projects and activities. How the law-abiding citizens see crime, the legal system and the penitentiary system is important. It has to be taken into account in a balanced way when designing and implementing specific measures of prison special regime.

Prison work is tough and I take this opportunity to praise the great work that prison staff and police are doing every single day, all year round, even now when we are speaking. They deserve all our respect. The safety and security of prison staff and police officers themselves, yourselves, is equally very important.

I am sure this training will offer you the opportunity to find answers to a number of questions, the kind of answers that reflect Albanian realities while fully compliant with international law and commitments. Please use the Needs Assessment Report as a guiding tool. Considering that the special high security regime in Albania was introduced rather recently and there are still very few prisoners subjected to this measure, it is important to make sure the system operates properly and in compliance with international human rights standards. And since the Albanian special regime is at its first steps, it might also be easier, I'm wondering, to address now a number of challenges, taking inspiration (not copy pasting) from other countries with longer experience in this field.

I wish you a very productive experience and encourage you to exchange views that address your specific needs! Thank you very much!