

# Human Rights in a Dictatorship: The Juridical Paradox of the Albanian State under Communism

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**Abstract:** *This article analyzes the systematic violation of human rights in communist Albania (1944-1992) under the guise of a formal legal and constitutional framework. The central thesis posits that the Albanian state under Enver Hoxha constitutes a profound juridical paradox: a constitution guaranteeing fundamental rights was instrumentalized to legitimize a totalitarian regime that brutally suppressed those same rights. Through a historical analysis of constitutional documents, legal statutes, reports from international organizations, and academic research, this paper demonstrates how the regime institutionalized illegality, with the ruling Albanian Party of Labour itself operating outside the law. The judiciary and the secret police (Sigurimi) were the primary instruments of repression, leading to widespread executions, imprisonments, and the complete abolition of political, economic, and religious freedoms. The study concludes that the post-communist transitional justice efforts have mainly been inadequate in addressing the scale of these atrocities, leaving a complex legacy that continues to affect Albanian society. This examination of Albania's unique case offers critical insights into the mechanisms by which totalitarian regimes co-opt the language and form of law to perpetuate oppression.*

**Keywords:** Albania, communism, Enver Hoxha, human rights, juridical paradox, Sigurimi, transitional justice, totalitarianism.

## INTRODUCTION

For nearly half a century, the People's Socialist Republic of Albania existed in a state of extreme isolation, governed by one of the most repressive totalitarian regimes of the 20th century (see Human Rights Watch, 1996). Under the iron-fisted rule of Enver Hoxha, who led the Albanian Party of Labour from the end of World War II until his death in 1985, the country was transformed into a vast prison, sealed off from the world and subjected to relentless state control (see Britannica, 2025). The regime's brutality was systematic and all-encompassing, yet it was meticulously documented and justified through a complex legal and constitutional apparatus. This created a profound and disturbing contradiction: a state that, on paper, adhered to the principles of socialist legality and constitutional order, while in practice, it perpetrated a campaign of terror against its own population, resulting in the deaths, disappearances, and imprisonment of tens of thousands (see International Commission on Missing People, 2021; see ISKK, 2020).

This article examines the juridical paradox at the heart of the Albanian communist state. It investigates how a regime could simultaneously possess a constitution containing provisions for fundamental rights and freedoms while orchestrating their complete and violent negation. The core

problem lies in understanding how law, typically conceived as a shield for the individual against arbitrary power, was forged into a weapon of the state. This study argues that the Albanian communist state, under the guise of a constitutionally grounded legal framework, systematically violated fundamental human rights, creating a juridical paradox where the law served as an instrument of oppression rather than protection. By analyzing the constitutional texts, the structure of the state security apparatus, the role of the judiciary, and the specific categories of human rights abuses, this paper will demonstrate that the Albanian experience represents a unique and extreme case of legal instrumentalization in the service of totalitarianism. The subsequent failure of post-communist transitional justice to adequately confront this legacy further complicates the narrative, highlighting the enduring challenges of achieving accountability after decades of institutionalized criminality.

The primary aim of this article is to dissect the mechanisms through which the Albanian communist state subverted the rule of law to create and sustain a system of total repression. It seeks to move beyond a mere description of atrocities by providing a structural analysis of the juridical framework that enabled them. By examining the interplay between constitutional theory and state practice, the article intends to demonstrate how legal language and institutions were systematically weaponized. Ultimately, the goal is to provide a comprehensive account of how a modern European state, in the latter half of the 20th century, perfected a system of totalitarian control by paradoxically grounding its legitimacy in a constitution that it flagrantly and comprehensively violated.

To achieve this aim, the article is structured into several key sections. It begins by deconstructing the constitutional façade of the Hoxha regime, analyzing the legal texts that promised rights while simultaneously authorizing their negation. The subsequent section details the primary instruments of repression, focusing on the role of the secret police, the Sigurimi, and its integration with a subservient judiciary. Following this, the paper provides a systematic overview of the state's human rights violations, categorized by political, economic, social, and personal domains. The analysis then delves into the legacy of this period, examining the failures of post-communist transitional justice and the enduring social and psychological impacts of the regime. Finally, the article offers a comparative perspective, situating Albania's experience within the broader context of European communist states to highlight its unique and extreme characteristics, and concludes with a summary of the findings.

### **The Façade of Legality: Constitutionalism under Hoxha**

The Albanian communist regime's claim to legitimacy was anchored in its formal constitutional and legal structures. The first communist-era constitution, adopted in 1946, and its successor, the 1976 Constitution of the People's Socialist Republic of Albania, were crafted to present the state as a sovereign entity governed by the rule of law (see The Constitution of the People's Socialist Republic of Albania, 1976). These documents contained language that, on the surface, appeared to guarantee a range of fundamental rights. For instance, the 1946 Constitution affirmed freedoms of speech, press, organization, assembly, and public demonstration. However, these provisions were rendered meaningless by clauses that subordinated all rights to the interests of the state and the "building of socialism" (Bregu, 2016). This framework established the core of the juridical paradox: the law was not a source of rights for the individual but a tool for the Party to exercise absolute power.

The concept of "socialist legality" was central to this subversion. In theory, it meant the strict observance of laws by all state bodies and citizens. In practice, it meant that the law itself was an expression of the ruling Albanian Party of Labour (APL). As Enver Hoxha himself articulated, the courts were to be an instrument of the Party's revolution, a "dictatorship of the proletariat in action" (Gjevori, 2018). Consequently, any act, however brutal, could be deemed "legal" if it served the Party's political objectives. This principle effectively erased the distinction between law and arbitrary power, creating a system where no genuine legal constraints bound the state.

A striking illustration of this institutionalized hypocrisy is the status of the APL itself. The regime's own laws, passed in 1946, required all political and social organizations to register with the state to be recognized as legal entities. The APL, the sole and absolute power in the country, never subjected itself to this procedure(see Communist Crimes,2022). It operated as a de facto illegal organization, ruling outside the very legal framework it had created and imposed on the rest of society. This fundamental illegality at the heart of the state underscores the purely instrumental nature of law under the Hoxha regime. The constitution was not a charter for governance, but a carefully constructed façade designed to legitimize a power that recognized no higher authority than itself.

**Table 1:** The Contradiction Between Constitutional Guarantees and State Practice in Communist Albania.

| Constitutional Guarantee (1946/1976) | Nullifying Law or Practice   | Consequence   |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Freedom of Speech and Press          | Penal Code articles criminalizing "anti-state agitation and propaganda."                             | Any form of dissent or criticism was punishable by lengthy prison sentences or execution.   |
| Freedom of Religion                  | Decree No. 4337 (1967) annulled all previous religious laws and charters.                            | Albania was declared the world's first atheist state; all churches and mosques were closed, and clergy were persecuted.             |
| Freedom of Assembly and Association  | The APL was the only permitted political organization; all other associations were state-controlled. | Independent civil society was impossible; all social life was monitored and directed by the Party.                                  |
| Right to Private Property            | Laws on nationalization and collectivization (1945-1960s).   | Complete abolition of private property, making the entire population economically dependent on the state.                           |
| Freedom of Movement                  | Law No. 5863 (1978), which defined illegal border crossing as "treason against the fatherland."      | The country was sealed. Attempting to leave was punishable by death or decades of imprisonment for the individual and their family. |

**Instruments of Repression: The State Security Apparatus**

The juridical paradox of the Albanian state was enforced not by consent, but by fear. At the center of this system of terror was the Directorate of State Security, colloquially known as the Sigurimi. Established in 1944, the Sigurimi was the "shield and sword of the Party," an omnipresent secret police force tasked with identifying and eliminating any perceived enemies of the state (Hodo, 2024). It was accountable not to the law or the constitution, but solely to Enver Hoxha and the highest echelons of the Party leadership. Its structure and methods were modeled on the Soviet

NKVD and later refined to suit Albania's unique brand of paranoid totalitarianism, making it one of the most brutally efficient secret police forces in the Eastern Bloc(Fevziu,2016).

The Sigurimi's power was derived from its vast network of surveillance, which penetrated every corner of Albanian life. With an estimated 15,000 collaborators, including approximately 1,000 full-time agents and over 11,000 informants, no one was beyond its reach (see ISKK,2020). Neighbors spied on neighbors, colleagues reported on coworkers, and even family members were coerced into becoming informants. This pervasive atmosphere of mistrust was a deliberate tool of social control, designed to atomize society and prevent the formation of any opposition. The Sigurimi's methods were ruthless and varied, ranging from wiretaps and mail interception to psychological terror, blackmail, and the use of torture to extract confessions or information(see Balkan Insights,2018).

This apparatus of repression operated in perfect synergy with the judicial system. The Sigurimi would identify and arrest a target, fabricate a case based on coerced confessions or the testimony of informants, and hand the file over to the prosecutor. The subsequent trial was merely a formality, a public performance designed to ratify the Sigurimi's decision and legitimize the predetermined sentence. In this sense, the courts functioned as the final, public-facing stage of Sigurimi's repressive process. This integration of the secret police and the judiciary exemplifies the complete subordination of legal institutions to the political will of the Party, ensuring that the state's campaign of terror could be carried out under the veneer of legal procedure.

### **Systematic Human Rights Violations**

The legal and security apparatus of the Hoxha regime was directed towards a single goal: the total subjugation of the Albanian people through the systematic violation of their fundamental human rights. The repression was not random but was meticulously categorized and applied to every segment of the population, leaving no aspect of life untouched by the state's intrusive and violent control. These abuses can be broadly classified into political, economic, social, and personal domains, collectively representing a comprehensive assault on human dignity.

Politically, the regime was merciless. Any perceived opposition, no matter how trivial, was branded as a "crime against the state." The primary targets were the pre-communist intellectual and political elites, landowners, clan leaders, and anyone with ties to the West or Yugoslavia (see Human Rights Watch, 2016). The methods of persecution were varied and brutal. Official statistics reveal a horrifying scale: an estimated 6,000 people forcibly disappeared or executed without a trace, their families left without answers for decades(see International Committee on Missing People,2021). Over 34,000 individuals were sentenced to political imprisonment, often in brutal labor camps such as the infamous Spaç prison, where they were subjected to starvation, torture, and forced labor in mines(see ISKK,2020). In the first decade of the regime alone (1945-1955), military and special courts handed down tens of thousands of convictions, with thousands executed for political crimes(see Communist Crimes,2022). A ruthless tactic was the system of internment and internal exile (internim-dëbim), where the families of political prisoners, including children and the elderly, were forcibly relocated to remote villages and subjected to constant surveillance and forced labor. This punishment often lasted for generations.

Economically, the regime engineered the complete destruction of private property and individual enterprise. Beginning in 1945, a series of laws on nationalization and forced collectivization stripped citizens of their land, businesses, and homes, rendering the entire population dependent on the state for survival (see the Constitution of the People's Socialist Republic of Albania, 1976). This policy was not merely an economic strategy but a tool of social engineering designed to eliminate the “bourgeoisie” and create a homogenous, proletarian society that was easier to control. The result was the effective enslavement of the population, where one’s livelihood was contingent on absolute loyalty to the Party.

Perhaps the most radical and defining feature of the Albanian regime was its assault on social and religious life. In 1967, Hoxha declared Albania the world’s first atheist state, a proclamation followed by a violent campaign to eradicate all forms of spiritual expression (Bregu, 1996). Decree No. 4337 annulled all previous religious laws, and a “cultural revolution” saw the closure, demolition, or repurposing of over 2,000 churches, mosques, and monasteries. Clergy were defrocked, imprisoned, tortured, or executed. This policy aimed to sever the population’s ties to any authority or identity outside of the Party, replacing spiritual faith with a cult of personality centered on Hoxha himself.

Finally, the regime imposed a total lockdown on personal freedoms. The right to movement was abolished entirely. Albania’s borders were sealed with barbed wire and minefields, and any attempt to flee the country was classified as treason, punishable by death (Tokri, 2024). Freedom of thought and expression was non-existent, with Sigurimi monitoring conversations and correspondence for any hint of dissent. The state dictated what people could read, what music they could listen to, and even how they could dress, creating a society suffocated by fear and conformity. This comprehensive system of repression, justified by a paradoxical legal framework, ensured that for forty-eight years, Albania remained a society where human rights were not merely violated, but entirely extinguished. Figure 1, as a comprehensive visualization, presents four key aspects of the human rights crisis in communist Albania. The pie chart (top left) illustrates the distribution of victims across categories, with imprisoned individuals comprising the most significant segment at 45.4%, followed by those executed or disappeared (8.0%), those subjected to internment and exile (20.0%), and other victims (26.6%). The bar chart (top right) shows the dramatic scale of judicial convictions across different court types between 1945 and 1955, with civil courts issuing 38,372 convictions during this period alone. The horizontal bar chart (bottom left) depicts the structure of the Sigurimi secret police, revealing that the regime maintained a vast network of approximately 15,000 collaborators, including 1,000 full-time agents and 11,000 informants. Finally, the timeline (bottom right) marks the critical junctures in the regime's history, from the communist takeover in 1944 through the regime's collapse in 1991-1992, including key breaks with Yugoslavia (1948), the Soviet Union (1961), and China (1978).

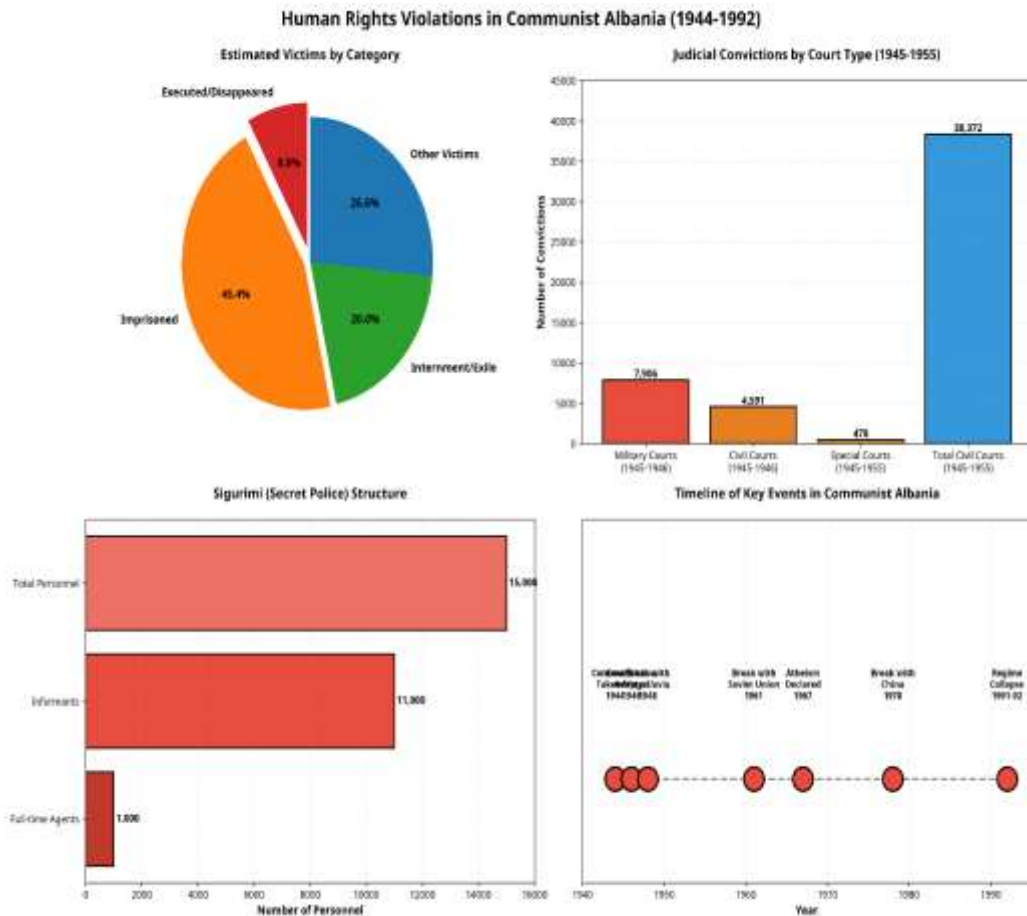


Figure 1: Human Rights Violations in Communist Albania (1944-1992)

**The Juridical Paradox in Practice: The Courts as Tools of the State**

The Albanian judiciary under communism provides the most vivid illustration of the juridical paradox in practice. While the constitution formally established a system of courts, the principle of judicial independence was entirely nonexistent. The courts were not impartial arbiters of justice but were explicitly defined as instruments of the Party’s power, tasked with enforcing its political will and suppressing its enemies (Gjevori, 2018). This instrumentalization of the judiciary was a core feature of the regime, transforming the legal process into a ritualized performance of state-sanctioned terror. The paradox lay in the regime’s insistence on using the language and procedures of law to carry out acts of profound illegality and injustice.

The subordination of the judiciary was absolute. Judges were Party appointees, selected for their political loyalty rather than their legal expertise. Their role was not to interpret the law but to apply it as directed by the Party and the Sigurimi. In political cases, the verdict was often decided before the trial even began. The Sigurimi would conduct the investigation, extract a confession through torture or coercion, and deliver the file to the prosecutor. The subsequent court proceeding was a show trial, a public spectacle designed to create the illusion of due process while sending a clear message of deterrence to the population (see Human Rights Watch, 2016). The defendant had no meaningful right to a defense, and the judge’s function was simply to read out the pre-approved sentence, which could range from a long prison term in a labor camp to death by firing squad.

This process was particularly evident in the early years of the regime, when special and military courts were used to swiftly eliminate thousands of political opponents, including former government officials, intellectuals, and clan leaders who resisted the communist takeover(see Communist Crimes,2022). Even after these functions were transferred mainly to civilian courts, the substance of the process remained the same. The courts were a key mechanism in the state’s repressive apparatus, working in lockstep with the Sigurimi to persecute citizens for “crimes” such as “anti-state agitation and propaganda,” attempting to flee the country, or possessing a banned book. The legal framework, with its detailed penal code and constitutional provisions, was thus weaponized. It provided a veneer of legitimacy for what were, in essence, acts of political terror, perfectly encapsulating the juridical paradox where the institutions of justice became the primary agents of injustice. Figure 2 provides a comprehensive view of these constructions.

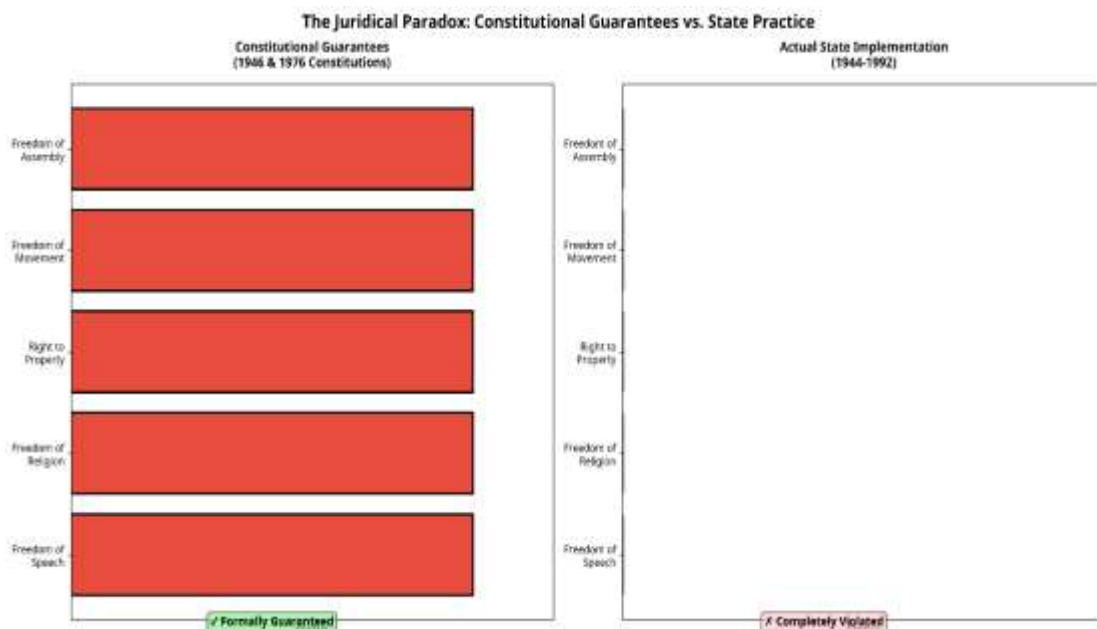


Figure 2: The Juridical Paradox: Constitutional Guarantees vs. State Practice

As the visualization starkly illustrates, the Albanian communist state faced a central paradox. The left panel of Figure 2 shows the fundamental rights that were formally guaranteed in the 1946 and 1976 constitutions, including freedom of speech, freedom of religion, the right to property, freedom of movement, and freedom of assembly. The right panel demonstrates the actual state practice during the communist era (1944-1992), where all these rights were completely violated. The contrast between the two panels encapsulates the juridical paradox: a state that maintained the legal and constitutional form of a rights-protecting regime while systematically and comprehensively denying those rights to its population. This visualization represents the fundamental contradiction at the heart of this analysis.

### International Law and Albanian Isolation

The Albanian regime’s assault on human rights was facilitated by its extreme and self-imposed isolation from the international community. After breaking with Yugoslavia in 1948, the Soviet Union in 1961, and finally China in 1978, Albania became a hermit kingdom. This rogue state

rejected the post-war international order and its emerging human rights framework(see Britannica,2025). This isolation was a deliberate strategy by Enver Hoxha to maintain absolute control, preventing any external influences or legal norms from penetrating the country's sealed borders. By spurning both the Western and Soviet blocs, Albania was free to construct its own reality, one in which the state's sovereignty was absolute and its actions beyond international scrutiny.

This rejection of international law, however, was not absolute but was itself subject to the regime's paradoxical logic. While Albania ignored or denounced key international human rights instruments, it selectively ratified others when it served a political purpose. A prime example is its ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Prohibition of Forced Labor in 1957(see Communist Crimes,2022). This act, likely intended to project an image of a progressive workers' state, stood in stark contradiction to the reality of the country's vast network of labor camps, where tens of thousands of political prisoners were forced to work in brutal conditions. This hypocrisy highlights the regime's cynical and purely instrumental approach to international law, treating it not as a set of binding obligations but as a tool to be selectively used for propaganda purposes.

The consequences of this isolation were devastating for the Albanian people. With no external pressure, no foreign media, and no international human rights organizations able to monitor the situation, the regime was able to commit atrocities with impunity. The international community remained largely unaware of the accurate scale of the repression until the regime's collapse in the early 1990s. Albania's isolation thus served as both a shield and a sword: it shielded the regime from accountability while allowing it to wield the sword of absolute power against a defenseless population, ensuring that the juridical paradox at home was protected by a wall of silence abroad.

### **The Legacy of Repression and the Failures of Transitional Justice**

The collapse of the communist regime in 1991-1992 left Albania with a legacy of profound trauma and a deeply fractured society. The task of confronting the crimes of the past proved to be as challenging as the process of democratization itself. Unlike some other post-communist nations in Eastern Europe that initiated comprehensive lustration processes or high-profile trials of former leaders, Albania's approach to transitional justice has been characterized by ambivalence, political compromise, and a fundamental failure to achieve meaningful accountability(see OSCE,2020). This has resulted in a situation where the perpetrators of some of the worst human rights abuses of the 20th century have largely escaped justice. At the same time, the victims and their families continue to fight for recognition and redress.

Immediately following the regime's fall, there was a public demand for justice. However, the process was quickly politicized and became selective. While some former high-ranking officials were prosecuted, the trials were often criticized for lacking due process and for being motivated by political revenge rather than a genuine commitment to the rule of law(Elezi,2017). In a grim irony, some of the legal proceedings against former communist officials were seen as violating international fair trial standards, thereby mirroring the very abuses the new democratic state was supposed to be rectifying. More significantly, there were no comprehensive trials for crimes against humanity, and the vast network of Sigurimi agents, informants, prosecutors, and judges who were directly responsible for the regime's terror largely remained unpunished.

The mechanisms for dealing with the past have been inadequate. The opening of the Sigurimi files has been a slow and contentious process, with many documents remaining classified or having been destroyed. This not only has hampered historical research but has also allowed former collaborators to stay in positions of influence, poisoning the political and social landscape. Furthermore, the critical issues of property restitution and locating the remains of the approximately 6,000 people who had forcibly disappeared remain largely unresolved(see International Commission on Missing People,2021). Decades after the fall of communism, families still search for the graves of their loved ones, and property disputes confiscated by the regime continue to clog the courts, hindering economic development and perpetuating a sense of injustice.

Compared to countries like Germany, which undertook a thorough process of confronting its Stasi past, or the Czech Republic with its lustration laws, Albania's failure to implement a robust and impartial transitional justice framework stands out. This failure is rooted in a combination of factors, including the continued influence of old elites, a lack of political will, and a society still grappling with the psychological legacy of decades of fear and mistrust. The result is a stalled and incomplete reckoning, one that has prevented national healing and continues to cast a long shadow over Albania's democratic consolidation.

### **Comparative Analysis: Albania and Other Communist Regimes**

To fully appreciate the severity and uniqueness of the Albanian case, it is instructive to compare it with other communist regimes in Eastern Europe. While all communist states employed repressive mechanisms and violated human rights, the Albanian regime under Hoxha stood out for its extreme isolation, the comprehensiveness of its control, and the brutality of its methods. Unlike the Soviet Union, which maintained a veneer of legality through show trials and formal procedures, or Yugoslavia, which allowed for greater regional autonomy and cultural diversity, Albania created a totalitarian system that was arguably more pervasive and suffocating than any other in the region.

The scale of repression in Albania was comparable to or exceeded that of other Eastern European communist states. While the Soviet Union under Stalin killed millions, the percentage of the Albanian population subjected to political imprisonment, execution, or forced displacement was among the highest in the communist world. The Sigurimi's network of informants, proportional to the country's population, was denser than even the East German Stasi, the secret police force that has become synonymous with totalitarian surveillance. This comparison underscores the fact that Albania was not merely a communist dictatorship but represented a particularly extreme and comprehensive form of totalitarian control.

Furthermore, Albania's isolation from the international community, which was unique among Eastern European communist states, allowed the regime to operate with virtually no external constraints or scrutiny. While other communist countries were subject to some degree of international pressure or at least international awareness of their actions, Albania existed in near-complete obscurity. This isolation, combined with the regime's paranoia and ideological rigidity, created conditions for a ruthless and comprehensive system of repression. The Albanian experience thus offers a cautionary tale about what totalitarianism can become when it is unchecked by international pressure, internal opposition, or ideological flexibility.

### **The Role of Ideology and Personality Cult**

The juridical paradox of the Albanian state cannot be fully understood without examining the ideological framework that justified it and the personality cult that sustained it. Enver Hoxha was not merely a political leader but a quasi-religious figure, whose words and decisions were treated as infallible. The regime constructed an elaborate ideology that combined Marxism-Leninism with Hoxha's interpretations, creating a unique form of "Hoxhaism" presented as the purest and most authentic form of communism [15]. This ideology was used to justify every action of the state, from the most brutal repression to the most absurd economic policies.

The cult of personality surrounding Hoxha served multiple functions. It provided a focal point for loyalty and obedience, replacing traditional sources of authority such as family, religion, or community. It also served to legitimize the regime's actions, since any criticism of Hoxha or his policies was automatically branded as treason. The regime invested enormous resources in promoting Hoxha's image, through propaganda, monuments, and mandatory participation in state rituals. This cult of personality was not incidental to the regime's repression. Still, it was integral to it, creating a psychological framework in which the population internalized the regime's values and accepted its authority as legitimate.

The ideological justification for human rights violations was particularly insidious. The regime did not merely deny that it was violating rights; instead, it reframed violations as necessary steps in the construction of socialism. Political imprisonment was justified as a means of eliminating "class enemies." Religious persecution was framed as the liberation of the people from superstition. The abolition of private property was presented as the emancipation of the working class. In this way, the regime's ideology provided a complete rationalization for its actions, making it possible for Party members and state officials to commit atrocities while genuinely believing they were serving the interests of the people and the cause of communism.

### **The Psychological and Social Impact of Totalitarian Control**

Beyond the immediate physical harms of imprisonment, execution, and forced labor, the Hoxha regime's system of total control had profound psychological and social consequences that persisted long after the regime's collapse. The pervasive surveillance, the constant threat of denunciation, and the omnipresence of Sigurimi created a society characterized by deep mistrust, fear, and psychological trauma. Families were divided, with members forced to spy on one another. Friendships were impossible, as any intimate conversation could be reported to the authorities. The population lived in a state of perpetual anxiety, never knowing when they or their loved ones might be arrested.

This psychological impact was particularly severe for children born and raised under the regime. An entire generation grew up in an environment where the state controlled every aspect of their lives, from education to employment to leisure activities. The regime's monopoly on information meant that most Albanians had no knowledge of the outside world and no conception of alternative ways of living. The cult of personality and constant propaganda created a distorted reality in which the regime's narrative was the only available truth. For many, the psychological damage of this experience has never fully healed, and the legacy of mistrust and trauma continues to affect Albanian society decades after the regime's fall.

The social fabric of Albanian society was also severely damaged by the regime's policies. Traditional community structures were destroyed, replaced by state-controlled organizations. The

extended family, which had been central to Albanian culture, was fragmented by forced relocations and internments. Religious communities, which had provided social cohesion and meaning, were eradicated. The result was a society that was atomized and isolated, with individuals having no source of support or solidarity outside of the state. This social disintegration made it easier for the regime to maintain control, but it also created a legacy of social dysfunction that has complicated Albania's post-communist transition.

### **International Legal Obligations and Violations**

While Albania's self-imposed isolation meant that the regime operated with minimal international scrutiny, it did not exempt the country from international legal obligations. Albania was a member of the United Nations and had ratified various international treaties, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Force. These ratifications created legal obligations that the regime systematically violated with impunity.

The case of forced labor is particularly instructive. Albania ratified the UN Convention on the Prohibition of Forced Labor in 1957, yet the regime continued to operate extensive labor camps where political prisoners were forced to work under brutal conditions. This hypocrisy—ratifying a convention while simultaneously violating its core provisions—exemplifies the regime's cynical approach to international law. The regime used the ratification to project an image of a progressive workers' state while ignoring the actual obligations it had undertaken.

The failure of the international community to hold Albania accountable for these violations reflects both the regime's effective isolation and the limitations of international human rights enforcement during the Cold War. While the Soviet Union and China were regularly condemned for human rights abuses, Albania's extreme isolation and its lack of strategic importance meant that it received minimal international attention. This allowed the regime to commit atrocities with virtual impunity, further demonstrating how isolation and the absence of international pressure can enable totalitarian regimes to pursue their repressive agendas without constraint.

### **CONCLUSION**

The history of the Albanian state under Enver Hoxha is a stark and chilling case study in the perversion of law. The regime's meticulous construction of a constitutional and legal framework served not to limit power but to legitimize its absolute and brutal exercise. This juridical paradox, where the language of rights was used to justify their systematic annihilation, stands as the defining feature of Albanian communism. The 1946 and 1976 constitutions, with their hollow guarantees of freedom, provided a veneer of legitimacy for a system in which the ruling Party operated above and outside the law, and where the judiciary was reduced to an administrative arm of the secret police.

This article has demonstrated that the violation of human rights in Albania was not an incidental byproduct of the regime but its core function. From the political executions and vast network of labor camps to the complete eradication of private property and religious life, every aspect of the state's machinery was geared towards total control. The Sigurimi, with its pervasive surveillance, and the courts, with their predetermined show trials, were the primary instruments of this control, enforcing a reality where any deviation from the Party line was a crime punishable by imprisonment, torture, or death. The country's self-imposed isolation further enabled these

atrocities, shielding the regime from international scrutiny and allowing it to cultivate a unique and exceptionally cruel form of totalitarianism.

The legacy of this period is one of unresolved trauma and incomplete justice. The failure of post-communist Albania to implement a comprehensive and impartial process of transitional justice has meant that the perpetrators have largely escaped accountability, while the victims continue to await redress. This incomplete reckoning has hindered national reconciliation and continues to impact the country's democratic development. The Albanian experience, therefore, offers a critical and enduring lesson: the existence of a constitution and a legal system is no guarantee of human rights. When the rule of law is subordinated to political ideology, it becomes a powerful tool of oppression, creating a paradoxical reality where the very institutions designed to protect citizens are turned into the instruments of their suffering.

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