



Alleged violations of international human rights standards by the Albanian State Police during the student protests of 13–20 October 2026, with particular attention to girls and young women

Request for urgent action

Submitted by: Center for Gender Justice in Albania

1. The Center for Gender Justice in Albania's interest in submitting this letter

The Center for Gender Justice in Albania (CGJA) submits this letter in furtherance of its mission to protect the rights of women and girls, prevent gender-based violence and discrimination, and promote equal and safe participation in public life. Through this letter, CGJA seeks to bring to the attention of international organizations and institutions concerns regarding the reported actions of the State Police during the student protests of October 2026, with particular attention to the safety, dignity and protection of girls and young women.

CGJA is an independent, non-profit and non-partisan organization, registered with the Tirana Judicial District Court under Decision No. 1738 of 28 June 2022. It was founded by three women civil society activists with more than fifteen years of experience in protecting and promoting women's rights in Albania. Although headquartered in Tirana, CGJA operates nationwide. Its work includes raising awareness of rights, providing legal aid and psychological support, promoting social and economic empowerment, building professionals' capacities, and advocating for improvements in legislation and its implementation.

CGJA's interest in addressing these events stems directly from the connection between protection from violence and the ability of women and girls to participate in public life. Safety and respect for physical and psychological integrity are essential conditions for them to express their views and participate in peaceful assemblies. The alleged use of excessive force, ill-treatment or intimidation during protests raises serious concerns both for those directly affected and for the chilling effect such actions may have on the participation of other girls and women.

CGJA's experience working with women and girls affected by violence, as well as with female school pupils, university students and support service professionals, makes examining the gender dimension of these events particularly important. Reported actions such as grabbing individuals by the neck, forcibly dragging them, using chemical irritants at close range, or taking them away without displaying visible identification may create a profound sense of insecurity and fear of further violence. These circumstances require careful assessment of their impact on girls and young women, without prejudging the findings of investigations or assuming that every incident involving them is necessarily motivated by gender.



The situation of girls under the age of eighteen requires particular attention. Their age and protection needs must be considered in every interaction with the authorities, including police interventions during assemblies, taking them into police custody, detention and questioning. For CGJA, concerns regarding compliance with these safeguards are directly connected to its work to protect girls from violence and ensure their access to legal aid, psychological support and effective complaints mechanisms.

CGJA's engagement in this matter is independent of the political demands of the protests and the affiliations or beliefs of their participants. It rests on a clear public interest: protecting human rights and ensuring that the actions of the authorities towards girls and young women are subject to independent scrutiny and accountability.

For these reasons, CGJA considers that it has a direct, professional and public interest in documenting the reported concerns, providing legal analysis and seeking the attention of international mechanisms. This intervention seeks to contribute to preventing further violations, ensuring effective investigation of the allegations, and securing protection, support and access to justice for the girls and young women affected.

2. Executive summary

We write to ask for your urgent attention to serious and repeated violations of international human rights standards committed by the Albanian State Police during the student-led protests that began in Tirana on 13 October 2026 and have since spread to at least eight other towns. Girls and young women, including secondary-school pupils and university students, took part. They have been struck in the head by tear gas canisters, beaten with batons, pepper-sprayed while seated, seized by the neck by men in plain clothes, dragged by both arms between uniformed officers and men without insignia, and questioned in custody without a parent or psychologist present. This letter concerns force used against people who posed no threat, who were already on the ground or under control, who were bystanders, children or journalists, and the means and methods of force used in a crowd where, by the police's own warnings, women and children were present.

Our principal concerns are:

1. Girls and young women injured by projectiles and chemical irritants. At least two young women suffered bleeding head wounds on 15 and 16 October attributed to tear gas canisters fired by police. On 16 October police reportedly fired gas again towards people giving first aid to one of them. On



18 October a young woman lost consciousness near the Ministry of Interior after tear gas and water cannon were used.

2. Gender-specific forms of force and intimidation. Young women were seized by the neck from behind by men in plain clothes in Durrës. A girl reported to be 15 was pulled by both arms in Korçë between a uniformed officer and a man in a camouflage jacket without insignia. Seated young women were pepper-sprayed at close range by a masked officer in Tirana. Video of a person forced into a van by plain-clothes men, reported online as a girl, circulated widely; Tirana Police confirmed that the men were Criminal Police officers.

3. Children. Police figures show that dozens of children aged 15 to 17 were arrested. The People's Advocate found minors questioned without a parent, guardian or psychologist and is verifying testimony that about 12 minors were held isolated in the premises of a ministry.

4. Rubber bullets. From 17 October police fired rubber bullets, including from shotguns, towards crowds of protesters. Two Reuters journalists and several protesters were hit. None of the minimum safeguards laid down by the *Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights in Tsaava and Others v. Georgia (December 2025)* appears to have been met.

5. Impunity. The Director General of Police reported on 17 October that seven officers had been suspended; the suspensions made public followed videos that circulated widely. The Tirana Prosecutor's Office has registered three complaint files, concerning L.B., M.S. and other police actions. We are not aware of any officer having been charged, or of any investigation announced into an injury suffered by a girl or young woman.

We ask the mechanisms addressed to communicate urgently with the Government of Albania, to request the information set out in Section 8, and to consider country visits. We ask our donors and partners to raise these concerns in their dialogue with the Albanian authorities.

3. Context, scope and methodology

3.1 Background and chronology

The protests began on 13 October 2026 outside the Ministry of Education on Rruga e Durrësit in Tirana. Students raised university conditions, tuition costs and alleged corruption, and called for the Government's resignation. Within two days, secondary-school pupils had joined and



demonstrations had spread to Durrës, Elbasan, Shkodër, Vlorë, Korçë, Lezhë, Pogradec and Kamëz.

Date	Principal events relevant to this letter
13 Oct	Water cannon and tear gas used near the Ministry of Education and Parliament. L.B. (19) carried away with a broken leg. K.M. (22), a law student, handcuffed to railings with a bloodied face. A female journalist is hit on the leg by a smoke device; the editor of Dosja.al is beaten while filming.
14 Oct	89 people treated, including 61 officers and 18 protesters. 55 arrests announced, including children aged 15 and 17. A first-year female student tells BIRN she was struck on the arm with a baton though she had not joined the clashes.
15 Oct	A student activist, E.P., suffers a bleeding head wound, suspected from a tear gas canister. Plain-clothes men force people into vans. In Korçë a girl reported to be 15 is pulled by both arms; Korçë Police prosecute 23 people, 15 of them minors. In Durrës, young women are grabbed by the neck from behind. The Director General of Police calls the response "right and proportionate".
16 Oct	A young woman is wounded in the head on the main boulevard; police reportedly fire gas again towards those helping her. In Lezhë two girls are among the injured; protesters say police beat them with batons. M.S. (21) suffers skull and spinal fractures. The People's Advocate reports 214 detainees met, 26 with signs of violence, and minors questioned without a parent or psychologist.
17 Oct	Police fire rubber bullets for the first time, including from shotguns outside the Ministry of Education. Two Reuters journalists are hit. The Director General reports 1,067 arrests and 388 prosecutions and does not deny the use of rubber bullets.
18 Oct	A young woman loses consciousness near the Ministry of Interior after tear gas and water cannon. 68 arrests, including 7 minors aged 15 to 17.
19 Oct	Rubber bullets fired again; A2 CNN journalist A.B. hit in the shoulder. Police use water cannon against students sitting in Rinia Park. Police call for "women and children" to leave the road before water and gas are used.



Date	Principal events relevant to this letter
19 Oct	The Prime Minister states that 295 people have been injured (BIRN).

3.2 Sources and method

This letter draws on four kinds of material, which we keep distinct:

- **Official information:** statements by the State Police, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Health, and the preliminary findings of the People's Advocate acting as the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture.
- **Civil society documentation:** the open letter of Qendra "Res Publica" and co-signatories of 17 October 2026, with an annex of 32 cases, and the report *Albania: Police Use of Force and Accountability During the October 2026 Student Protests* by Av. Dea Nini (18 October 2026), based on an evidence log of 93 items.
- **Media reporting:** Albanian and international outlets, cited as the accounts of those outlets.
- **Audiovisual material:** publicly available videos and photographs on YouTube and on news websites.

3.3 Limitations and protection of victims

We have not forensically examined any material and present each fact according to its source. Where a fact rests only on a media report or a single witness, we say so. Injured persons are referred to by initials and children by age and place only, consistent with Albanian law prohibiting the publication of information that could identify a child. We ask the mechanisms not to publish names or identifying details without first confirming consent through us.

4. Applicable international standards

Albania is party to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention against Torture (CAT), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). As a candidate for EU membership, it has also committed to the rule-of-law standards of Chapter 23 of the accession negotiations.



Qendra për Drejtësi Gjinore në Shqipëri

Standard	What it requires	Relevance to these events
ECHR Art. 3; ICCPR Art. 7; CAT	Absolute prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment, with no exception for public order. Any force against a person under police control that is not made strictly necessary by their conduct diminishes dignity and in principle breaches Art. 3 (<i>Bouyid v. Belgium</i> [GC], no. 23380/09, 28 September 2015).	Beatings of people on the ground; blows to the head; public exposure of a handcuffed student; rubber bullets fired into crowds.
ECHR Art. 3 - tear gas	A tear gas canister fired directly at a person can breach Art. 3 (<i>Abdullah Yaşa and Others v. Turkey</i> , no. 44827/08, 16 July 2013, concerning a 13-year-old struck in the face). Gas sprayed on a person under control breaches Art. 3 (<i>Ali Güneş v. Turkey</i> , no. 9829/07, 10 April 2012).	Head wounds to young women on 15 and 16 October; pepper spray on seated young women.
ECHR Arts. 3 and 11 - women at demonstrations	Disproportionate force, including tear gas and beatings, against women taking part in a demonstration breaches Arts. 3 and 11 (<i>İzci v. Turkey</i> , no. 42606/05, 23 July 2013, concerning a Women's Day march).	Force against female students and pupils; chilling effect on girls' participation.
ECHR Art. 3 - effective investigation and identification	Where officers cannot be identified, the State is responsible for the resulting impossibility of an effective investigation (<i>Hentschel and Stark v. Germany</i> , no. 47274/15, 9 November 2017; <i>Cestaro v. Italy</i> , no. 6884/11, 7 April 2015).	Masked officers; plain-clothes men without insignia; helmets showing only unit codes.
ECHR Art. 3 – public exposure in handcuffs	Displaying a restrained person to the public as a spectacle breaches Art. 3 (<i>Archip v. Romania</i> , no. 49608/08, 27 September 2011).	K.M. handcuffed to railings in the street with a bloodied face.
ECHR Arts. 3, 10, 11 - kinetic impact projectiles	Rubber bullets must be strictly regulated and used only as a last resort, in a targeted way, with warning, by trained officers and under strict command (<i>Tsaava and Others v. Georgia</i> [GC],	Rubber bullets fired from 17 October; see Section 6.



Qendra për Drejtësi Gjinore në Shqipëri

Standard	What it requires	Relevance to these events
	nos. 13186/20 and 4 others, 11 December 2025, § 342).	
ECHR Arts. 5, 8, 10, 11, 14	Lawful arrest only; respect for physical and psychological integrity; protection of journalists and the right to record; peaceful assembly; non-discrimination, including on grounds of sex and age.	Mass arrests; journalists struck; gendered impact.
ICCPR Arts. 9, 19, 21, 24, 26; HRC General Comment No. 37 (2020)	Peaceful assembly is protected even when others are violent. Less-lethal weapons only where strictly necessary, never indiscriminately. Particular protection for women, children and journalists.	Force against peaceful participants and bystanders.
CEDAW Arts. 2, 7; CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 (2017)	States must refrain from gender-based violence by their own agents and ensure women's equal participation in public and political life.	Girls and young women targeted with force and intimidation.
Istanbul Convention Arts. 3, 5	Violence against women includes acts that cause physical or psychological harm; State actors must refrain from it, and the State must exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and punish it.	Neck holds and seizures of young women by plain-clothes men; no investigation of injuries to women.
CRC Arts. 3, 15, 19, 37, 40; CRC General Comment No. 24 (2019)	Best interests of the child; children's right to peaceful assembly; detention only as a last resort; parents informed at once; questioning in the presence of a parent and lawyer.	Dozens of minors arrested; questioned without a parent or psychologist; about 12 held isolated.
UN Basic	Non-violent means first; force only when	M.S. held about three



Qendra për Drejtësi Gjinore në Shqipëri

Standard	What it requires	Relevance to these events
Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms (1990); UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials (1979)	unavoidable and proportionate; medical aid at the earliest moment; reporting and review of every use of force.	hours before an ambulance was called.
UN Human Rights Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons (2020)	Tear gas only against violent groups, fired at a high angle, never directly at a person. Kinetic impact projectiles never at the head, face or neck; never multiple projectiles or metal pellets from shotguns.	Canisters striking heads; shotguns firing rubber balls; buckshot shell reportedly found.
UN Bangkok Rules (2010); UN Havana Rules (1990); Beijing Rules (1985)	Women and girls in custody are searched and supervised by female staff only; children held separately from adults, with immediate access to family.	No public information on how arrested girls were searched, held and supervised.
OSCE/ODIHR– Venice Commission Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly (3rd ed., 2019); European Code of Police Ethics (2001)	Visible individual identification of officers; facilitation of children's and women's participation; protection of journalists and monitors.	Masked and plain-clothes officers acting without identification.



Domestic law sets the same limits. Article 25 of the Constitution prohibits ill-treatment absolutely. Law No. 82/2024 *On the State Police* defines "use of force" as action that is proportionate and consistent with Article 3 ECHR (Art. 3(11)). It requires officers to identify themselves before acting (Art. 10(2)), to notify a parent and assign a trained officer when a child is involved (Art. 10(3)), and to seek medical aid immediately for an injured person (Art. 91(h)).

5. Girls and young women: documented cases and gender-specific harms

Girls and young women took part in these protests. They were also exposed to forms of force that carry a specific gendered harm: head injuries from projectiles fired into crowds, holds around the neck, being seized by men without insignia, and the threat of being taken away in unmarked vans. We have identified at least 15 incidents involving girls or young women between 13 and 19 October. We are not aware of any investigation announced into any of them.

5.1 Head injuries from tear gas canisters

Case G1 – E.P., student activist, Rruga e Elbasanit, Tirana, 15 October. A young woman suffered a heavily bleeding head wound during clashes and was taken urgently to the University Trauma Hospital. Media reported that she was suspected to have been struck by a tear gas canister fired by police. She was kept under neurosurgical observation and later described as stable. One early report suggested a stone. No public explanation has been given of how gas was fired at that location.

Sources:

Protestat e dhunshme në Tiranë, dëmtohet në kokë një vajzë! Dyshohet se u godit nga bombola e gazit lotsjellës (EMRI+VIDEO) <<https://shqiptarja.com/lajm/protestat-e-dhunshme-ne-tirane-demtohet-ne-koke-nje-vajze-dyshohet-se-eshte-goditur-me-gur>>

Përplasje në Rrugën e Elbasanit, vajza plagoset në kokë pas goditjes së dyshuar nga bombola e gazit lotsjellës <<https://albeu.com/lajme/perplasje-ne-rrugen-e-elbasanit-vajza-plagoset-ne-koke-pas-goditjes-se-dyshuar-nga-bombola-e-gazit-lotsjelles/1056512/>>

Plagoset një vajzë gjatë protestës, dyshohet se u godit në kokë nga bombola e gazit lotsjellës <<https://newsmaxbalkans.al/shqiperi/aktualitet/75795/vajze-plagoset-ne-koke-gjate-protestes-ne-tirane/news>>

VIDEO/ Protester hit in the face by tear gas, sent bleeding to Trauma Hospital <<https://www.balkanweb.com/en/video-protestuesja-goditet-nga-gazi-lotsjelles-ne-fytyre-dergohet-e-gjakosur-te-spitali-i-traumes/#gsc.tab=0>>



Case G2 – Female student, boulevard "Dëshmorët e Kombit", Tirana, 16 October. A second young woman was wounded in the head in the middle of the crowd and lay bleeding on the ground. Panorama attributed the injury to a tear gas canister thrown by police. Young people called for an ambulance and carried her to a quieter spot.

Sources:

VIDEO/ Policia hodhi një bombul me gaz lotsjellës, plagoset në kokë studentja! Pamje të rënda nga vendngjarja <<https://www.panorama.com.al/video-policia-hodhi-nje-bombul-me-gaz-lotsjelles-plagoset-ne-koke-studentja-pamje-te-renda-nga-vendngjarja/>>

Tensione në bulevardin “Dëshmorët e Kombit”, Policia hedh gaz lotsjellës drejt protestuesve, plagoset një vajzë <<https://albeu.com/lajme/tensione-ne-bulevardin-deshmoret-e-kombit-policia-hedh-gaz-lotsjelles-drejt-protestuesve-plagoset-nje-vajze/1058363/>>

PAMJE të rënda/ Policia hodhi një bombul me gaz lotsjellës, plagoset në kokë studentja <<https://boldnews.al/2026/10/16/pamje-te-renda-policia-hodhi-nje-bombul-me-gaz-lotsjelles-plagoset-ne-koke-studentja/>>

Kaos dhe panik në bulevardin “Dëshmorët e Kombit”/ Policia hedh gaz lotsjellës, plagoset një vajzë <<https://www.standard.al/kaos-dhe-panik-ne-bulevardin-deshmoret-e-kombit-policia-hedh-gaz-lotsjelles-plagoset-nje-vajze/>>

Case G3 – Young woman loses consciousness, near the Ministry of Interior, 18 October. A young woman collapsed unconscious after police used tear gas and water cannon on the boulevard. Her condition has not been made public.

Source:

Policia hodhi gaz lotsjellës, protestuesja bie në tokë <<https://boldnews.al/2026/10/18/policia-hodhi-gaz-lotsjelles-protestuesja-bie-ne-toke/>>

These injuries are what the international standards are designed to prevent. Tear gas canisters must be fired at a high angle and never directly at people. Firing gas towards people helping an injured woman serves no lawful purpose. In *Abdullah Yaşa v. Turkey* the European Court found that a canister fired directly at a child's face breached Article 3.



5.2 Holds, seizures and pepper spray against girls and young women

Case G4 – Girl reported to be 15, Korçë, 15 October. Footage shows a girl with long dark hair surrounded by uniformed officers and a heavy-set man in a camouflage jacket with no police insignia. She is pulled by both arms in opposite directions, by an officer on one side and the man in camouflage on the other, and then walked away held by the arms, shouting "let me go". Korçë Police later announced that 23 people were prosecuted for that day, 15 of them minors, without explaining this intervention.

Sources:

Av. D. Nini report, items 17 and 42 (video published by the Piranjat portal);

Korçë/Arrestohen në flagrancë 2 shtetas, procedohen penalisht 23 të tjerë, kryen veprime të kundërligjshme gjatë tubimit të djeshëm <<https://asp.gov.al/korce-arrestohen-ne-flagrance-2-shtetas-procedohen-penalisht-23-te-tjere-kryen-veprime-te-kunderligjshme-gjate-tubimit-te-djeshem/>>

Case G5 – Young woman taken away while protesting peacefully, Ministry of Education, Tirana, 14 October. Video published by News24 shows police forcibly escorting a young woman, who says as she is taken away that she was protesting peacefully.

Sources:

Policia shoqëron me forcë një vajzë të re në protestë, qytetarja: Po protestoja në mënyrë paqësore (VIDEO) <<https://durreslajm.al/policia-shoqeron-me-force-nje-vajze-te-re-ne-proteste-qytetarja-po-protestoja-ne-menyre-paqesore/>>

VIDEO/ Policia shoqëron me forcë një vajzë të re: Po protestoja në mënyrë paqësore <<https://dosja.al/policia-shoqeron-me-force-nje-vajze-te-re-po-protestoja-ne-menyre-paqesore-i519406>>

5.3 Baton blows to girls who were not involved in violence

Case G6 – First-year student, Tirana, 13–14 October. A female first-year student told BIRN she was struck on the arm with a baton although she had not joined the clashes.

Source:



Mes gazit lotsjellës dhe barrikadave në flakë, revolta e studentëve trondit Tiranën
<<https://www.reporter.al/2026/10/14/mes-gazit-lotsjelles-dhe-barrikadave-ne-flake-revolta-e-studenteve-trondit-tiranen/>>

Case G7 – Two girls injured, Lezhë, 16 October. Euronews Albania reported that two girls were injured in clashes at the youth protest in Lezhë and that protesters declared police had beaten them with rubber batons. The same day an adolescent hit his head on the pavement during a police intervention

Sources:

Përplasje mes policisë dhe protestuesve në Lezhë, disa të lënduar! Një i ri humb ndjenjat (VIDEO)
<<https://euronews.al/perplasje-mes-policise-dhe-protestuesve-ne-lezhe-disa-te-lenduar-nje-i-ri-humb-ndjenjat-video/>>

5.4 Women and girls in the crowd, as journalists and as mothers

- **Case G8 – A mother shouting "he is a child, don't hit him"** as officers used batons on secondary-school pupils on 15 October.

Sources:

VIDEOLAJM/ Policët dhunojnë gjimnazistët me shkopa gome! Ulërimat e nënës: Është fëmijë, mos e godit <<https://www.panorama.com.al/videolajm-policet-dhunojne-gjimnazistet-me-shkopa-gome-ulerimat-e-nenes-eshte-femije-mos-e-godit/>>

VIDEO/ Policia dhunon gjimnazistët me shkopa gome! Ulërimat e nënës: Është fëmijë, mos e godit <<https://albeu.com/lajme/video-policia-dhunon-gjimnazistet-me-shkopa-gome-ulerimat-e-nenes-eshte-femije-mos-e-godit/1055761/>>

- **Case G9 – Women journalists and women in the crowd.** On 13 October a female journalist was hit on the leg by a smoke device thrown by police. On 18 October a female journalist was among those injured, according to Top Channel. On 19 October police sprayed a woman in Skanderbeg Square, and an officer threatened a Top Channel reporter.

Source:

Gazetarët përballen me dhunë dhe kërcënime nga policia gjatë protestës studentore
<<https://maska.al/gazetar-et-perballen-me-dhune-dhe-kercenime-nga-policia-gjate-protestes-studentore/>>

- **Case G14 – Girls standing in front of the police line, 19 October,** as police used gas and force to clear the area.

Source:



Rina e patrembur kundër gazit dhe dhunës! Vajza që thyejnë frikën, qëndrojnë përballë turmës së policisë (VIDEO) <<https://www.balkanweb.com/rina-e-patrembur-kunder-gazit-dhe-dhunes-vajza-qe-thyejne-friken-qendrojne-perballe-turmes-se-policise-video/#gsc.tab=0>>

- **Case G15 – A 17-year-old schoolgirl** who handed out water and saline to people affected by gas described police provoking the crowd before gas was used.

Source:

Gjimnazistja: Jam 17 vjeçe, në protestë; prindërit e dinë, mami ka lokacionin, i ndihmoj ata që janë keq <<https://timoni.al/gjimnazistja-jam-17-vjece-ne-proteste-prinderit-e-dine-mami-ka-lokacionin-i-ndihmoj-ata-qe-jane-keq/>>

5.5 Abductions by men without insignia and the climate of fear

On 15 October, News24 footage showed three or four men in plain clothes surround a person on the main boulevard and force them into a van while bystanders screamed. Online the person was reported as a girl. Tirana Police replied that the person was male and that the arrest was carried out by Criminal Police officers. That reply confirms the central problem: **police officers without uniform or identification are seizing people in the street and putting them into vehicles.** A girl or her family who sees this cannot tell a lawful arrest from an abduction. The same night, four men in plain clothes pulled a man off a motorcycle carrying a couple and pushed him into a white van with ordinary plates

Sources:

VIDEO/ Pamje shqetësuese nga protesta në Tiranë, civilë pa identifikim fusin me forcë një person në furgon <<https://albeu.com/lajme/pamje-shqetesuese-nga-protesta-ne-tirane-civile-pa-identifikim-fusin-me-force-nje-person-ne-furgon/1056896/>>

Një vajzë u shoqërua nga civilët? Reagon Policia: Ja e vërteta... <<https://kohajone.com/lajme/nje-vajze-u-shoqerua-nga-civilet-reagon-policia-ja-e-verteta/>>

Protesta, mister mbi episodin në bulevard (VIDEO) <<https://shqiptarja.com/lajm/protesta-mister-mbi-episodin-ne-bulevard>>

For girls and young women, this practice carries a distinct and serious harm. The fear of being seized by unidentified men, taken in an unmarked vehicle and held without parents being informed is a fear of gender-based violence. It can deter girls from exercising their rights under CEDAW Article 7 and CRC Article 15. Under Article 5 of the Istanbul Convention, the State must ensure that its own agents refrain from such conduct.



5.6 What we do not know about girls in custody

We have found no published information on how many girls and women were arrested, where they were held, whether they were searched and supervised by female officers, whether they were held separately from adult men, and whether their parents were informed. The Albanian Helsinki Committee found rooms designed for one person holding three or four people, mostly children. The People's Advocate found minors questioned without a parent or psychologist. These gaps must be filled before anyone can say that the Bangkok and Havana Rules were respected.

6. Children: arrests, force and questioning without safeguards

Secondary-school pupils, boys and girls, joined the protests from 14 October. The State Police's own figures show that children were arrested in large numbers.

Date	Place	Children arrested or prosecuted, by official figures	Source
14 Oct	Tirana	2 (aged 15 and 17) of 55 arrested	Shqiptarja.com
15 Oct	Korçë	15 of 23 prosecuted	State Police
18 Oct	Tirana	7 (aged 15–17) of 68 arrested	Top Channel ; Qendra.info

The authorities have not published a total for children, nor a breakdown by sex. Deputy Minister of Interior Anisa Ruseti stated that "a minor's age does not automatically exclude criminal responsibility". That is correct, but it does not address the State's duties towards children in its custody (Java News).

Force against children. Footage shows an officer putting his hand on an adolescent's throat near the Ministry of Education on 16 October (Balkan Web); officers dragging secondary-school pupils and one officer kicking a pupil (Albeu); police pushing minors back inside a vocational school in Kamëz (Dures Lajm); an adolescent hitting his head on the pavement in Lezhë (Balkan Web); Two children aged 16 and 17 were treated at the Trauma Hospital on 16 October (Gazeta Express), and a minor protester was among those injured on 18 October (Top Channel).

Questioning and detention. On 16 October the People's Advocate, acting as the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture, reported that minors had been questioned without a parent or guardian and without a psychologist, and that it was verifying testimony that about 12 minors had been held isolated in the premises of a ministry (Telegrafi; Koha Jonë). If confirmed,



holding children in such premises, outside the registers and safeguards of a police station, would raise grave concern under CRC Article 37, the Havana Rules and Article 10(3) of Law No. 82/2024. In Durrës a mother told Vox News that police had taken her 16-year-old son and she could not find out where he was ([Vox News](#)).

These facts indicate breaches of the best-interests principle (CRC Art. 3), the requirement that detention of children be a measure of last resort and for the shortest time (CRC Art. 37(b)), the right to have parents informed and present (CRC Art. 40(2)(b); General Comment No. 24), and the special protection owed to children under Article 3 ECHR.

7. Rubber bullets (kinetic impact projectiles): breach of the Tsaava standards

From 17 October 2026, after four days of clashes, the State Police began firing rubber bullets at protesters. Reuters video showed an officer firing a shotgun towards crowds outside the Ministry of Education. Reuters reporters found rubber pellets on the ground; pellets hit two Reuters journalists and several protesters, leaving round marks. Asked about it, the Director General of the State Police did not deny the use of rubber bullets and said that "all means that were used were employed in a limited manner, including the most recent ones". Rubber bullets were fired again on 18 and 19 October; on 19 October a journalist of A2 CNN was hit in the shoulder. The State Police contested the reports of rubber bullets and stated that distraction devices had been used. Sources: [Reuters via Cyprus Mail](#); [Al Jazeera](#); [Euronews](#); [Newsmax Balkans](#); [CNA](#); [Publik Media](#).

Photographs circulated on 16 and 17 October show small, round, bleeding wounds about 1 cm across on the neck just below the ear, on the chest and on the thigh of young people, including two wounds on one thigh. Spent 12-gauge shells printed "PALLA IN GOMMA" (Italian for "rubber ball") and a Fiocchi shell marked "LAW ENFORCEMENT – PLASTIC GRANULI" were photographed. A further fired shell appears, from partly legible markings, to have contained buckshot, which is firearm ammunition. None of these objects has yet been forensically examined (**Av. D. Nini report, section 4.3**).



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Figure 1. Spent tear gas cartridges photographed in Tirana, October 2026: (a) ICEMAK IM40CCS-1P, lot 001-24; (b) 40 mm cartridge marked "TRIPLE CHARGE CS" with no manufacturer, lot or date; (c) SMD004, manufactured 07/2019, expiry 07/2023 (#74; the red frame and arrow were added by the original publisher). Places and dates of recovery were stated by the publishers and have not been independently verified.



7.1 The standard: *Tsaava and Others v. Georgia* [GC], 11 December 2025

In December 2025 the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights examined the use of rubber bullets to disperse a demonstration outside the Georgian Parliament. It found violations of Article 3 in respect of applicants injured by kinetic impact projectiles or otherwise ill-treated, and violations of Articles 10 and 11. It also set out, for the first time, the minimum requirements that domestic law must lay down. At paragraph 342 the Court held:

In the light of all this, and the principles which have emerged from the Court's case-law in this area (see paragraphs 338-340 above), the Grand Chamber

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reiterates that States must have in place rules and precautions ensuring that if kinetic impact projectiles are deployed by the police during a demonstration, their use is appropriately circumscribed. In 2016 and 2020 respectively, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the ODIHR of the OSCE made a number of recommendations in that connection (see paragraphs 201-202 and 207 above). The Venice Commission has also done so (see paragraph 206 above). One of the third-party interveners in the present case – the nine members of INCLO – also made detailed submissions on this point (see paragraphs 321-325 above). Informed by these standards, which largely coincide with the Court’s case-law, in the Grand Chamber’s view, domestic law must, at a minimum, lay down the following requirements:

- (a) that kinetic impact projectiles be used only as a last resort, in response to genuine and imminent threats to life or limb (compare Abdullah Yaşa and Others, § 38; Kılıcı, § 32; and Geylani and Others, § 86, all cited above);*
- (b) that they be deployed only in a targeted manner, rather than as a means of general crowd control, and in such a way (having due regard to the technical characteristics of the model used) as to minimise the risk to the targeted person’s life and health (compare Abdullah Yaşa and Others, §§ 47 in fine and 48; Geylani and Others, § 87; and İşik, §§ 57 and 79, all cited above);*
- (c) that multiple projectiles (on account of their inherent imprecision) and projectiles containing metal (on account of their increased capacity to cause serious injury) not be used (compare Abdullah Yaşa and Others, § 48; Geylani and Others, § 87; and İşik, §§ 57 and 79, all cited above);*
- (d) that their use must follow an appropriate warning, unless such warning is clearly unfeasible (compare Alkhatib and Others v. Greece, no. 3566/16, § 127, 16 January 2024);*
- (e) that kinetic impact projectiles be deployed only by law-enforcement officers who have been properly instructed and trained, not only about the projectiles’ technical characteristics, but also about the risks that they may pose to life and health (compare Abdullah Yaşa and Others, § 49, and İşik, § 57, both cited above);*



(f) that the deployment of kinetic impact projectiles be subjected, in so far as possible, to a strict chain of command and control (compare Kılıcı, § 35; Geylani and Others, § 86; and İşik, § 58, all cited above).

These requirements reflect the UN Human Rights Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement (2020), which states that kinetic impact projectiles may be aimed only at the lower abdomen or legs of a violent individual posing an imminent threat of injury, never at the head, face or neck, and that multiple-projectile munitions and metal pellets fired from shotguns should never be used.

7.2 Assessment against each requirement

Tsaava requirement	What the evidence shows in Albania	Met?
(a) Last resort, only against a real and imminent threat to life or physical integrity	Fired at crowds outside the Ministry of Education and on the boulevard; journalists and bystanders hit. No public account links any shot to an imminent threat to life.	No
(b) Targeted, not for general crowd control; minimise risk to life and health	Shotguns fired "towards crowds" (Reuters). Wounds on the neck below the ear and on the chest show impacts on the upper body and head area.	No
(c) No multiple projectiles; no metal	12-gauge shells loaded with multiple rubber balls and plastic granules; a shell reportedly containing buckshot. Two wounds on one thigh show multiple projectiles.	No
(d) Appropriate warning	No evidence of warnings before rubber bullets were fired. The warning reported on 19 October referred to water and gas.	No evidence
(e) Only trained and instructed officers	No information published on which units fired, or on their training.	No evidence
(f) Strict chain of command and control	The Director General did not deny their use but has not said who authorised it, under what rules	No evidence



Tsaava requirement	What the evidence shows in Albania	Met?
	or orders. No legal basis has been made public.	

Albanian legislation sets general requirements of necessity and proportionality, but the operational rules on the authorisation, technical specifications and deployment of kinetic impact projectiles have not been made public. The State Police Regulation refers to "means with neuromuscular substances" without defining them. No published rule of domestic law lays down the minimum safeguards the Grand Chamber requires. In our view, **none of the six requirements was met**. On the standard set in *Tsaava*, the use of rubber bullets from 17 October engages Albania's responsibility under Article 3 ECHR, and, as regards journalists and peaceful participants, under Articles 10 and 11.

7.3 The wider picture: tear gas, batons and arrests without limit

Rubber bullets came on top of an unrestrained use of other force. Tear gas was used every day, including in streets with café customers seated outside, onto a café terrace, and at intervals of 20 to 25 minutes as police advanced. Of four spent tear gas cartridges photographed in Tirana, two lack markings identifying their manufacturer, batch or date, and a third bears a printed expiry date of July 2023. Batons, fists and kicks were used on people already on the ground. Arrests reached 1,067 by 17 October, with 388 criminal prosecutions. Taken together, these facts suggest that force was not used as a measured last resort, but as a general means of dispersing and punishing protesters.

8. Closing

The girls and young women who took to the streets of Tirana, Durrës, Korçë, Lezhë and other towns in October 2026 were exercising rights that Albania has promised, in every treaty listed above, to protect. Many were children. At least two suffered head wounds attributed to tear gas canisters fired by the police. Others were seized by the neck, pepper-sprayed while sitting down, or pulled away by men without insignia. We are not aware of any investigation into their injuries. The State is entitled to respond to violence. It is not entitled to answer it with violence of its own against people who pose no threat. Precisely when a crowd turns violent, the State must stand apart from it: its force must be necessary, proportionate, identifiable and controlled.

We remain available to provide further information, the original audiovisual material, and contact with victims, families and lawyers, subject to their consent. The confidential material, including



identities of victims and witnesses, will be shared only with the mechanisms on request and on a confidential basis. We would be grateful for an acknowledgement of this letter and for information on any action taken.

Yours faithfully,

Audiovisual evidence and sources

A. Videos on YouTube

Date	Content	Link
13.10	Clashes, tear gas and arrests outside the Ministry of Education	YouTube
14.10	Day two: protest escalates, police escort protesters (Ora News)	YouTube
14.10	"Albania in Flames": tear gas and clashes in Tirana	YouTube
15.10	Day three: violent clashes between protesters and police	YouTube
16.10	Live coverage of the protest	YouTube
17.10	Euronews: police fire rubber bullets and arrest hundreds	YouTube

C. Legal and documentary sources

- European Court of Human Rights, *Tsaava and Others v. Georgia* [GC], nos. 13186/20, 16757/20, 20129/21, 20175/21 and 39382/21, judgment of 11 December 2025, § 342 – [HUDOC](#); summary by [ASIL](#)
- OHCHR, UN Human Rights Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement (United Nations, 2020)
- UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 37 on the right of peaceful assembly (2020); CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 (2017); CRC General Comment No. 24 (2019)
- UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials (1990); UN Bangkok Rules (2010); UN Havana Rules (1990)
- OSCE/ODIHR and Venice Commission, Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, 3rd ed. (2019)
- Law No. 82/2024 *On the State Police*; Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 112 of 24 February 2025 (State Police Regulation)



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- Qendra "Res Publica" and co-signatories, open letter to the Director General of the State Police and the Director of Tirana Police, 17 October 2026
- Av. Dea Nini, *Albania: Police Use of Force and Accountability During the October 2026 Student Protests*, public version, 18 October 2026
- People's Advocate of Albania, preliminary findings of the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture, 16 October 2026 (as reported by [Telegrafi](#))