

Good afternoon everyone and thank you for your attendance.

The work of Operazione Colomba in Albania takes into account three main categories of stakeholders: the families involved in the phenomenon of blood feuds, the Albanian civil society, and local institutions.

The monitoring visits to the families in blood feud are the core of our presence in Albania. Through regular visits we build trustworthy relationships with families belonging to both feuding parties. The creation of such bond makes possible the implementation of tailored paths for the overcoming of grief, rage and, ultimately, the desire for revenge. We support the injured party in the reprocessing of sorrow and help them to constructively convey the emotions. On multiple occasions, we have been told by members of families under blood feud that our presence at their side has helped them cope with the hardships that come with their conflict situation (be it the loss of a close relative due to a vendetta or the social isolation that comes from being involved in this phenomenon).

Besides the visits, we also organize self-help groups for women and girls, and recreational activities for young men under blood feud. This kind of activities, which often include the testimonies of people who experienced firsthand loss and forgiveness, support paths of restorative justice, as they help the victims of the phenomenon in the re-elaboration of their pain and conflict history, and promote the use of alternative disputes resolutions.

Another dimension of our work with the families in blood feud is that of the civil escorts. Civil escorts are nonviolent accompaniments that we, as unarmed civilian volunteers, carry out to ensure greater freedom of movement and to enable people at risk of vendetta to access health care, education, recreation opportunities, and visit their relatives in jail due to blood feud. In May and June 2018, for instance, we drove 3 young men affected by the blood feud phenomenon to job interviews in Shkoder. Being involved in a blood feud deepens, or contributes to, the social and economic marginalization of individuals and entire families. For young men this often means that they face discriminations when interviewed for a job or restrictions to their freedom of movements due to fear and anxiety for their safety and, therefore, less opportunities to find a job. On other occasions, accompanying measures have been carried out in order to let families, youth, and women involved in blood feuds enjoy some leisure time, or social events of importance for them with serenity. In many cases, people under blood feud cannot enjoy those simple leisure family moments that would otherwise be normal. Last summer, we escorted a man, who had been self-isolated for a long time because of a blood feud, and his family to a

village in the northern Albanian mountains: it was their first time back in their home village after 20 years.

It is also worth noting that the phenomenon of blood feuds does not solely concern those persons directly involved in a feud. Also the rest of the Albanian society has a stake in it. On one hand, the social changes that Albania has gone through in the last decades have caused the phenomenon to follow internal migrations and, consequently, to consistently manifest itself throughout Albanian territory and even abroad. On the other, social pressure, such as neighborhood talks, sway the choices of families, pushing them towards revenge rather than forgiveness. Therefore, since 2010, Operazione Colomba has been campaigning all over Albania in order to promote a culture of peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation. The 2013 campaign 5000 signatures for life, for instance, has seen the involvement of a number of Albanian MPs and even earned the praise of then Albanian President Bujar Nishani. In the summer 2014, the volunteers of Operazione Colomba, together with other local CSOs and international NGOs, marched from Shkoder to Tirane in order to encourage Albanian institutions to take a strong stand against the phenomenon. On this occasion, a delegation from our association had a private meeting with president Nishani and asked him to support the implementation of the law 9389 of May 4th, 2005.

Finally, on December 10th, 2018, the 70th anniversary of Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Operazione Colomba launched the raising awareness campaign "Kunder Gjakmarrjes" (against the blood feuds) in order to invite all Albanian citizens to stand by, and show solidarity towards people in blood feud and support the creation of a social environment that favors the peaceful resolution of disputes between families and individuals. We ask individuals, groups, associations, organizations and institutions to join the campaign by posting a sticker that contains the logo of the campaign itself on their front doors, their cars, and businesses. By joining the campaign people commit themselves to avoid vengeance, to discourage its use and to promote the use of alternative disputes resolution methods. The Kunder Gjakmarrjes campaign is being further spread through public events, meetings in local schools and parishes, and during meetings with local institutions. Besides, citizens and institutions are encouraged to contribute to the spreading of the campaign by posting, as a symbol of their support and commitment, a picture with this sticker and the #KunderGjakmarrjes on their Facebook and Instagram pages.

Last but not least, we believe that the work of advocacy and networking with local institutions and civil society organization is of the utmost importance. Through several meetings, the organizations of round

tables, and the drafting and distribution of reports we try to actively engage all interested stakeholders in order to raise awareness about the phenomenon of blood feuds and to create a network of local actors able to promptly address the material and psychological needs that may affect families under blood feud (especially their most vulnerable members such as women, children and self-isolated men). Finally, the ultimate goal of our advocacy work with local, national, and international institutions is the joint development of a comprehensive strategy for the overall overcome of the phenomenon as we are aware that long-lasting and sustainable solutions to this phenomenon can only come from the will of the Albanian institutions to take responsibility for the most vulnerable among their citizens.

Thank you for your attention.