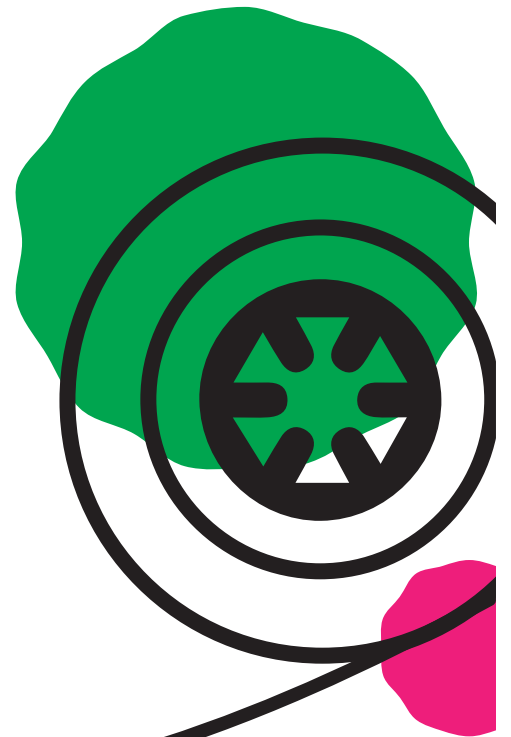


ORAL TESTIMONIES PLATFORM

THEIR COLLECTION METHOD

Sustainable developments of any society are underpinned in by balanced rapports. After fifty-years of totalitarian and vicious rule, the Albanian society must undergo self-purification to fully heal and recover.



Issue

Rehabilitating victims of communist crimes, re-dimensioning innocent figures and paying homage to the sacrifices of those who managed to uphold their human dignity are huge steps to be taken at the soonest.

Future generations' education and the establishment of a healthy social dialog related to the past and communist crimes is aided by the collation of documents produced by the very state of dictatorship of the proletariat itself. These documents are naturally supplemented by testimonies of totalitarian violence and communist crimes survivors. Up to date, little has been done to collect the testimonies of survivors and much less to make their voice heard by the public.

Role of the Authority

Besides opening the former state security files to make them available to the public and researchers, the Authority is working in two directions: 1. Identifying survivors and collecting their testimonies 2. Creating an archive bearing genuine documentary values available to the public and any individual interested for research purposes.

Despite its research work in Albanian territory, the Authority is working to extend its cooperation over the international arena focusing mainly on Albanian associations in immigration which will ensure contacts with survivors who have left the country, aiming to expand the oral testimonies project, thus enriching considerably the institution's digital archive. On the other hand, the aim is to establish a continuous co-operation with well-known international news agencies to give more voice and space to the evidence of survivors of communist crimes, raising the audience at the international level.

Milestones

The platform of testimonies collected by the Authority is called “Even walls have ears”, which gives a voice to unknown testimonies untold up to date.

- The Authority contacted with many survivors and witnesses of communist violence and terror and is working to obtain and document their testimonies. The necessary methods and tools to collect testimonies from field scientific researchers have been already defined. Semi-structured interviews enable both witnesses’ free expression and the collection of data relevant to specific events related to communist crimes.
- Testimonies are recorded in the Authority offices, where administration and arrangement is carried out with the standard of a historical archive, open to anyone, in compliance with archives rules in the Republic of Albania, by observing the expressed will of citizens who have entrusted their narrations to the Authority.
- A team of scientific research and communication experts have been working to record the testimonies of 38 persons with evidence for themselves or their family members, suffering in the former internment camp Tepelena. Witnesses interned at a young age have provided more holistic testimonies, owing that they were able to fully understand what was happening to them and which were the main reasons for their family persecution. Testimonies from individuals interned in childhood are rather limited as they generally recall personal events.
- The work for documenting such testimonies has been crowned by the publishing of Volume I “Tepelena Camp - Testimonies of Survivors”, consisting of a summary of testimonies from 12 survivors, interned first in Tepelena labor camp and then to internment camps in Lushnja villages. The Authority will continue to collect testimonies and publishing them in series.
- Platform for collection of testimonies has reached witnesses abroad, who have been invited to sent their memories in writing through email.
- Alongside recorded testimonies, artifacts such as witnesses and their family members photos and copies of documents in their possession have been collected as well.



Valbona Mirakaj



Lek Pervizi



Publication “Tepelena Camp - Testimonies of Survivors”

Future work

- The Authority empowerment as a platform for public commitment and understanding Albania’s communist past.
- Furthering the work on consolidating the scientific criteria of collecting testimonies from survivors or family members of those who suffered in internment camps and prisons, focusing on collecting testimonies on forced labor.
- Periodical publications of the survivors and witnesses of communist crimes should be enriched with new publications on an ongoing basis, as an important and complementary source of files and archive data.