

Besa

Besa* was born in rural Albania, a country which is troubled by political violence and sex trafficking. According to the Trafficking In Persons Report (TIPs), released annually by the U.S. Department of State:

Albania is a source country for women and girls trafficked for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. Approximately half of all Albanian trafficking victims are under age 18. Internal sex trafficking of women and children is on the rise. (TIPs Report 2008, United States Department of State).

In 2000, when Besa was 16 years old, her father—a well-known pro-democracy activist—was detained and beaten by Albanian police. A few days later, walking home from church with her brother, Besa was grabbed and violently dragged toward a van by three men. Yelling, and with the help of her brother and some bystanders, she escaped. The thugs fired guns at her as they drove away.

Besa knew that many young women in Albania had been kidnapped and sold into prostitution in order to punish their families for political activism, and she believed the men who tried to kidnap her had the same intentions. With her father's recent beating in mind, Besa did not believe going to the police would help. She fled to the United States and immediately requested asylum. (Left is one of many Albanian teenaged girls forced into sexual slavery every year. Photo courtesy of the U.S. Department of State, TIPs Report).

In 2002, Besa's application for asylum was initially denied because her Immigration Judge did not agree that there was a nexus between a protected ground and the harm she had faced in Albania. After succeeding in a remand from the Second Circuit Court of Appeals, Human Rights USA, along with co-counsel Attorney Thomas Massucci, argued to the Immigration Judge that Besa faced persecution in Albania as a young, unmarried Albanian woman from a family known for its political opposition activities. On October 25, 2007, the Immigration Judge granted Besa asylum.

Besa continues to live in the United States. Her parents remain in Albania.

Besa's case is a hopeful sign for hundreds of women who are threatened with kidnapping and sex trafficking. Human Rights USA remains on the

forefront
of asylum cases dealing with gender-based forms of persecution.

*Besa is a pseudonym. Her name in legal documents is P-C-.

Please go here for copies of the decision and relevant
briefs.