

POLSIS Mother Teresa Expert on a Sister Act Mission

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Dr Gëzim Alpion (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/government-society/staff/profiles.aspx?Referenceld=4441>), Lecturer in Sociology in the Department of Political Science and International Studies, was interviewed by the Australian Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) Radio on 23 May 2013.



In the first part of the thirteen-minute interview, the SBS anchor-man Sani Kajtazi asked Dr Alpion to comment on the highlights of his visit to Australia in April.

On 19 April Dr Alpion was a special guest in Melbourne at the fundraising dinner for Moira Kelly's children. Melbourne-born humanitarian Kelly is known as the Mother Teresa of Australia. Since setting up the Children First Foundation in 1999, Kelly has sent children to Australia for medical treatment from countries around the world.

On 22 April Dr Alpion gave a lecture at the University of Melbourne on the initial resistance to Mother Teresa's charisma as a 'natural leader' from a post-Weberian perspective, a topic he approached also in his lecture at the University of Delhi on 17 April.

During his stay in Melbourne, Dr Alpion, who is considered "the most authoritative English-language author" on Mother Teresa, visited the home of sisters of the Missionaries of Charity, which Mother Teresa opened on 27 April 1970, where he was informed of the sisters' work with alcoholic and homeless men and women and children in crisis. He also visited the soup kitchen run by the Missionaries of Charity nuns and volunteers in Fitzroy.

In the second half of the SBS Radio interview, Dr Alpion concentrated on the online petition for the construction of the Arbëri Road, which he started on Change.org on 18 March. The road, which will connect Tirana with Peshkopi, Dr Alpion's native city in the North East of Albania, will improve significantly the lives of some 200,000 people in the Dibra region, and the infrastructure between Albania, Macedonia Kosovo and Bulgaria, thus contributing significantly to the European integration of this part of the Balkans.

The petition, which will be delivered to the new Albanian government after the general election on 23 June, has been signed by thousands of people across the world, including a number of leading academics from the University of Birmingham. The petition has been supported by a large number of newspapers, television channels and radio stations in Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia and the Albanian Diaspora in the UK, the USA, Australia, Canada, Italy, Greece, Romania and Bulgaria.

Dr Alpion emphasised at the end of the SBS interview that the growing support for this non-political petition indicates clearly the important role of social media in creating an effective virtual public sphere in a country like Albania where civil society is still at a rudimentary stage.

Listen to the interview (SBS Albanian):

<http://www.sbs.com.au/yourlanguage/albanian/highlight/page/id/268636/t/Interview-with-Prof-Dr-Gezim-Aplion/>
(<http://www.sbs.com.au/yourlanguage/albanian/highlight/page/id/268636/t/Interview-with-Prof-Dr-Gezim-Aplion/>)

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