



INSTITUTE FOR DEMOCRACY AND MEDIATION  
Center for European and Security Affairs (CESA)

## FORETOLD INSECURITY

*Crime Trends in Albania 2008 – 2011*



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## Methodology

Actions to prevent and fight crime in any modern society will be neither complete nor sustainable as long as the burden and responsibility for this mission is exclusively identified with the public order agencies – the State Police. This report and the data analysis of certain figures on crime in Albania seek, first of all, to establish the required awareness among policymakers and the public at large on the need for a more complete and comprehensive response to criminality.

To achieve the above objective and based on the understanding of the very role of institutional and social stakeholders, IDM undertook this research work earlier this year to analyze crime trends in the country and to promote public debate on potential options to improve the performance in preventing and fighting crime. The primary focus of this study was placed in the official statistics on certain criminal offenses (not part of the organized crime category) with considerable impact on the public order or the public perception, such as theft, illegal possession of weapons, intimidation, robbery, burglary, homicide, injury, etc. In addition, the research work and analysis were further expanded to incorporate those crime figures that during 2008-2011 have been stable as indicated in the police records but that are considerably higher than the figures of other criminal offenses.

**The first phase** of the research work consisted primarily in the identification of the modern literature on potential methodological approaches and development of methodology on IDM's research work by considering the various experiences and studies on criminality. **The second phase** was developed in the context of cooperation with the State Police General Directorate (SPGD) and regular communications between IDM staff and SPGD experts about data on certain figures of crimes recorded by the police. **The final phase** of this initiative consisted in data processing and analysis on the basis of the above criteria and on research analysis of crime tendencies over time and space (e.g. comparative analysis of crime trends in Albania with those of the regional countries).

## Introduction

The latest media reports on fatal consequences of a series of robberies and violent burglaries, in the capital city in particular, have augmented the public awareness and attention to debates on public security. Similar reports, on even more serious crimes, have generally triggered public debates that target state police only. Yet, in almost no case has this awareness influenced in the promotion of a well-informed debate on public security and crime prevention policies, and, even less, in concretization of alternatives to address these challenges in a more comprehensive approach from the viewpoint of responsibilities of state institutions.

This analysis of the Center for European and Security Affairs at the Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM) seeks to promote and feed to the institutional and broader debate with real data on the crime trends in Albania for a 4-year period, 2008-2011. The study intends to create the necessary awareness among policymakers, state institutions at local and central level, circles of national and international expertise in the framework of donor-funded assistance missions, and the country's partners that are providing support to strengthen institutional capacities and the practice of law enforcement in Albania.

An analysis of the report suggests that the series of grave crimes recorded during 2012 has been warned long before. It also calls for attention to the issue that the crime trends will continue to increase unless institutional response to crime is based on a comprehensive analysis viewed in a long-term perspective focused in prevention strategies as an option to the state institutions' "sporadic and inconstant blow against crime".



## Foretold Insecurity: Main Findings

The increase of the crime rate in Albania, particularly its fatal consequences during 2012, was in fact a **“warning signal” blinking at least two years ago**. The analysis of IDM’s research report on the trends (and figures) of various criminal offenses for the 4-year period, 2008-2011, firmly confirm this finding.

The increasing average of trends of criminal offenses, such as homicide, intentional bodily injury, violent burglary, or other burglaries during 2010-2011, suggests, besides poor institutional performance, **an indirect link with other factors**, such as economic conditions or political climate in Albania. Particularly distinct is **the correlation of the increase of number of criminal offenses from 2009 and on with the “political situation of the country”**. The latter transformed from a peaceful situation and ruling coalition-opposition cooperation in 2008 to a typical political crisis from 2010 and on. The only **exception** to this correlation is the criminal offense “Crime against freedom of a person”, the average rate of which from second half of 2010 and on is **0.6 criminal cases per quarter**, while during January 2008 – June 2010 this rate was **12.9 criminal cases** per quarter.

More concretely, the main findings that directly suggest the title of this study “Foretold Insecurity” include the following:

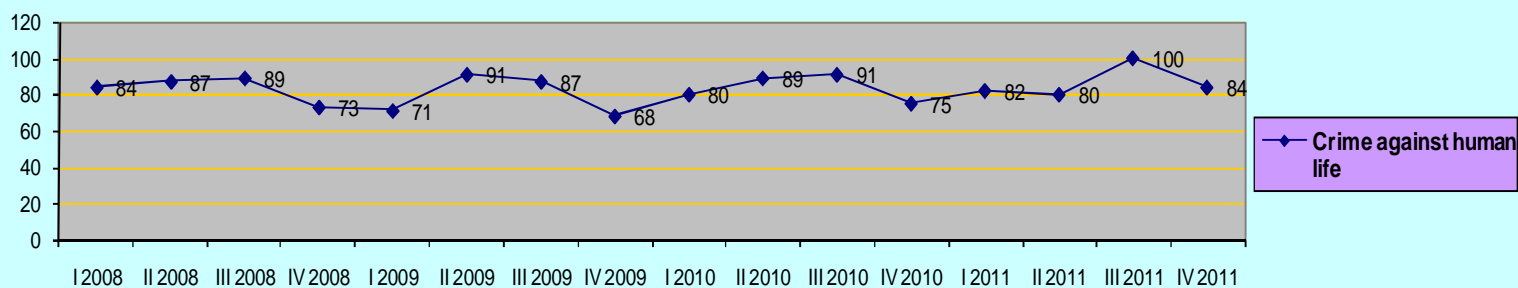
- The “Crime against human life” offense (including “Homicide”, “Murder of negligence”, and “Attempted murder” offenses) **show a trend of slight increase in the last two years** (2010-2011). The highest number of “crimes against human life” is recorded **in the second and third quarters of the year (during April-September)** with the largest share (about 2/3 of the total) of “crimes against human life” category belonging to of “attempted murder” criminal offense.
- Of particular concern is **the increase by almost 40% of the crime rate of “Homicide” criminal offense in the last two years (2010-2011)** compared with the period 2008-2009. International statistics on Albania confirm a ‘jump’ from the rate of 2.9 and 2.7 homicides per 100,000 population for 2008 and 2009 respectively to a rate of 4 crimes per 100,000 population during 2010. **The number of homicides per 100,000 population in Albania is among the highest in the region**. Concretely speaking, **Albania is second to Montenegro for the period 2008-2009, whereas for 2010 it has the highest rate of homicides in the entire region**.
- **“Intentional bodily injury”** is another criminal offense that has marked significant increase (starting from 2009 and on). The lowest number of instances of this offense **recorded in the first quarter of year 2008 (115 cases) has more than tripled for most quarters of the last two years**.

- Almost **80% of the total number of 'injuries'** during the 4-year period has occurred in the years **2009-2011** and year **2011 has marked the highest increase** with a total of recorded injury cases reaching as **high as 1/3 of the overall number of the four years**. It should be note that there is a correlation between the curve of this criminal offense with the rate of recorded cases of "illegal possession of weapons" during the last four years.
- The "store burglary" criminal offense is of interest in terms of the approach of police intervention rather than its trend. In fact, **almost each 'peak' of the number of instances of this offense is followed by a drastic drop**. The philosophy of "Police-responsibility-only", on the other hand, **has led to a subsequent increase of this crime rate at an even higher intensity**.
- Unlike in instances of "Store burglary" where police response is quick, there is a complete lack of attention to "**Other burglary**" offense, which has been **increasing uninterruptedly since 2008**. For example, the data on "Other Burglary" rate in the last quarter of 2011 compared with the last quarter of 2008 indicates an increase of **about 500%**.
- Last, both "Other burglary" trend and the increasing curve of the "**Violent burglary**" offense for the last four years suggest that **fatal violence** in the recently-recorded cases of burglary during the last months of 2012 **was warned two years ago at least**. Violent burglary in Albania is also increasing as a trend with the rate rising as high as 100% in certain quarters.

## Crime against Human Life: The Message Disguised in “Normality”

This category of criminal offenses includes these crimes: a) homicide; b) murder of negligence; and, c) attempted murder. The following graph shows a **trend of slight increase of the annual average** of these figures of crime in **the last two years** (2010-2011). In addition, what is common for the four years under consideration is the fact that **the highest number of “crimes against human life” is recorded in the second and third quarters of the year (during April-September)**. Crime trends shown in Graph 1 give the first impression of “normality” in the curve of “crimes against human life”, with slight differences among the years.

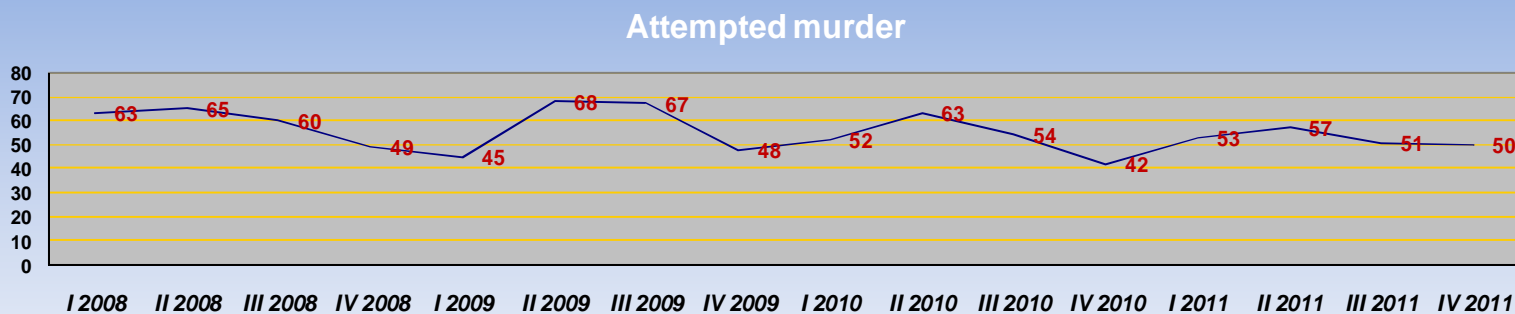
**Graph 1. “Crime against human life” in Albania 2008 – 2011**



**Note:** Crime against human life includes: a) Homicide; b) Murder of negligence; c) Attempted murder.

The largest share (about 2/3 of the total) of “crimes against human life” category belongs to “attempted murder” criminal offense whose fluctuations have considerably imposed the dominating trends and similarities in the ‘normality’ of the curve shown in the above graph. Graph 2 provides graphical data.

**Graph 2. “Attempted murder” Criminal offense (2008 – 2011)**

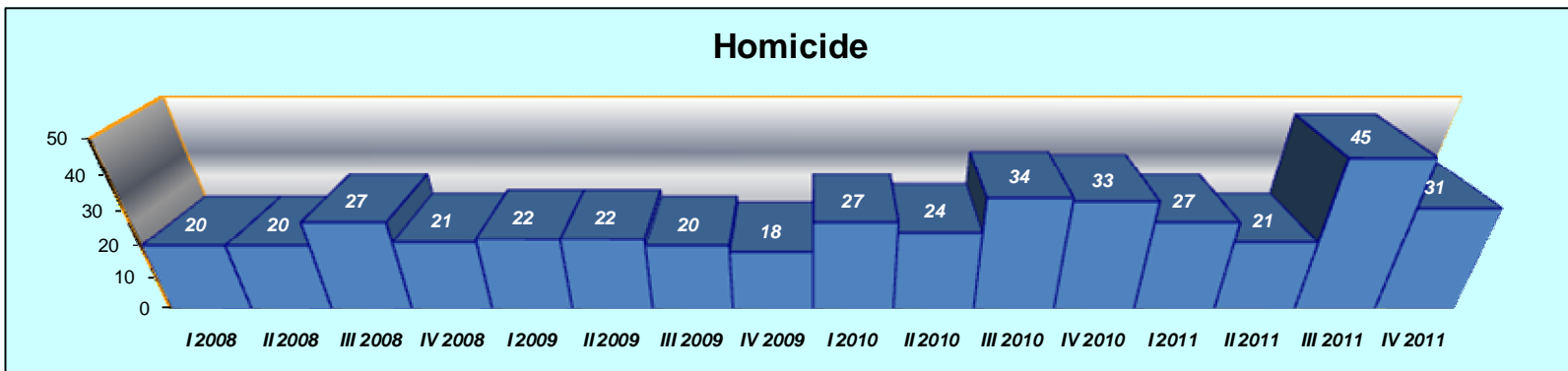


While “murders of negligence” with a limited number (32 records) for the 4-year period is insignificant in the crime trends, it is disturbing to note an increase by almost 40% in the rate of “Homicide” criminal offense in the last two years (2010-2011) as compared with the period 2008-2009. It is this very criminal



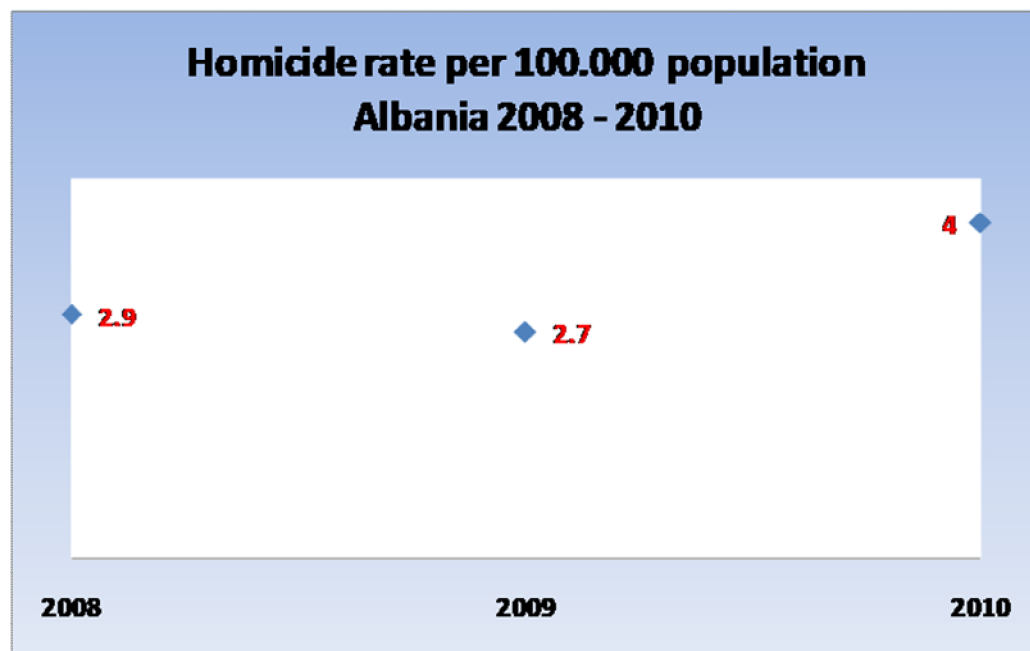
offense (the gravest compared to the other two offenses of the “crime against human life” category”) that sounds the alarms for crime rate in the country.

**Graph 3. Criminal offense “Homicide” (2008 – 2011)**



This increasing trend is also confirmed when reading the data of UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) for the period 2008 - 2010<sup>1</sup>. Concretely speaking, statistics on Albania confirm a ‘jump’ from the rate of 2.9 and 2.7 homicides per 100,000 population for 2008 and 2009 respectively to a rate of 4 crimes per 100,000 population during 2010. Graph 4 gives a graphical description.

**Graph 4. Number of homicides per 100,000 population, Albania 2008 - 2010**



To better understand these figures, it is necessary to compare the crime trends in other countries similar to Albania in terms of development parameters and processes which Albania and these countries are going through.

<sup>1</sup>See “Intentional homicide, number and rate per 100,000 population” available in the website <http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=UNODC&f=tableCode%3A1>. Accessed in August 2012.

The neighboring countries of the Western Balkans, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia<sup>2</sup>, all serves as the most utilized “context” for such comparative analysis.

As indicated in the following table, **Albania is second only to Serbia in terms of murders for 2008-2010. The number of homicides per 100,000 population in Albania is among the highest in the region. Concretely speaking, Albania is second to Montenegro for the period 2008-2009, whereas for 2010 it has the highest rate of homicides in the entire region.**<sup>3</sup>

**Table 1. Figures of criminal offense “Homicide” in the Western Balkan countries**

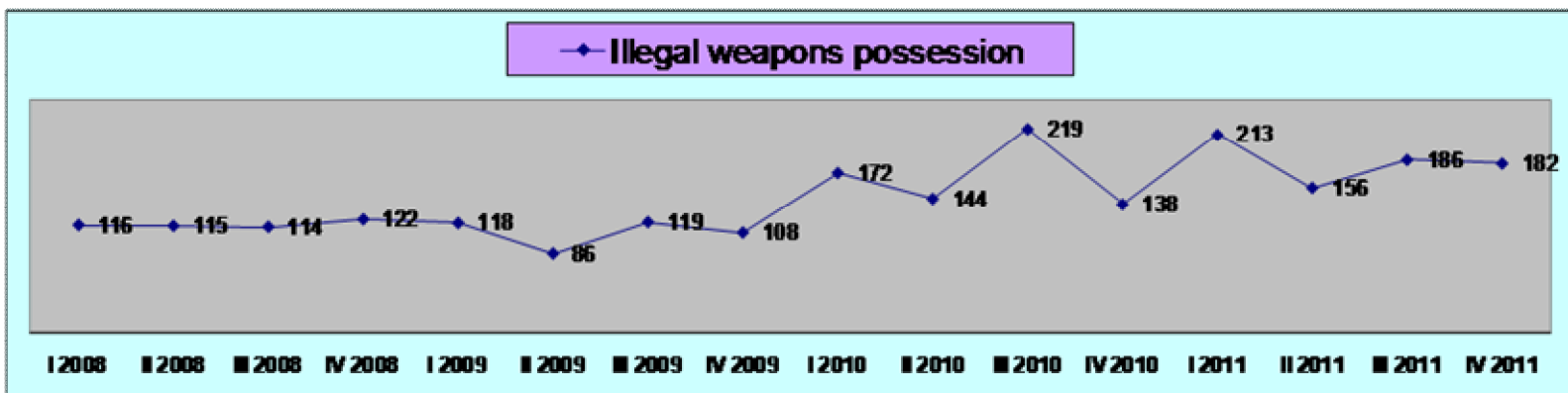
Country	Year	Count	Rate per 100.000 population
Albania	2010	127	4
Albania	2009	85	2.7
Albania	2008	93	2.9
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2010	56	1.5
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2009	67	1.8
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2008	66	1.7
Croatia	2010	62	1.4
Croatia	2009	49	1.1
Croatia	2008	71	1.6
Montenegro	2009	22	3.5
Montenegro	2008	23	3.7
Serbia	2010	123	1.2
Serbia	2009	145	1.5
Serbia	2008	140	1.4
Macedonia	2010	40	1.9
Macedonia	2009	36	1.8
Macedonia	2008	36	1.8

**Irrespective of the increasing rate of criminal prosecutions for the criminal offense of “illegal possession of weapons” (see Graph 5 below), particularly from year 2010 and on, Albanian institutions will have to revisit their crime prevention strategy** to decrease the rate of homicides per 100,000 population, to come at least to the region’s average rate.

<sup>2</sup> The UNODC database does not possess statistics on crime trends in Kosovo.

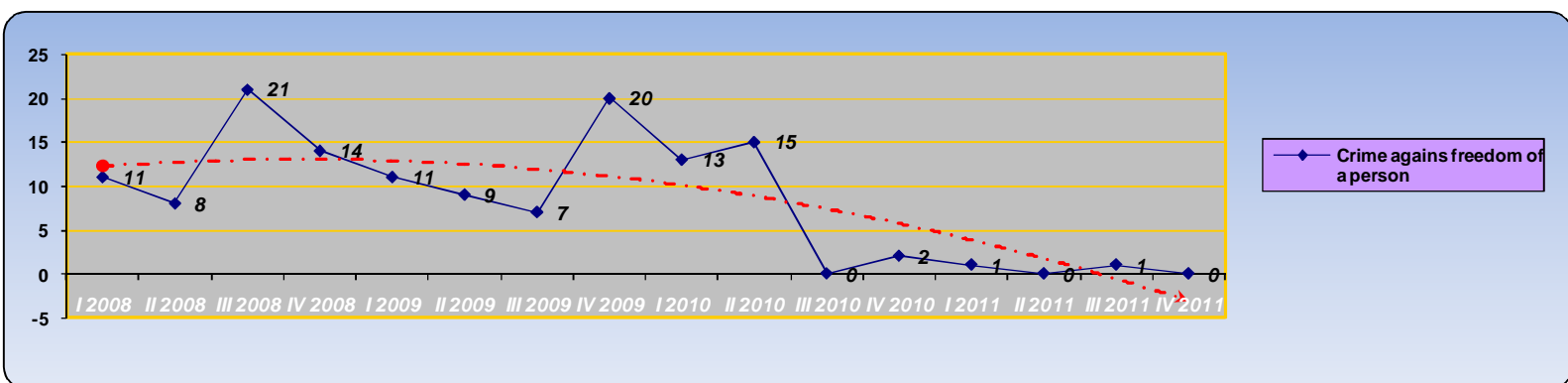
<sup>3</sup> UNODC does not possess data on this criminal offense for Montenegro for year 2010.

Graph 5. Number of criminal prosecutions for “Illegal possession of weapons” (2008 – 2011)



Apart from the increase of the number of criminal prosecutions for “illegal possession of weapons”, another **exception** to the alarming trends of crime rates analyzed in this report is the criminal offense of “**crime against freedom of a person**”. As indicated in Graph 6 below, the trend of this offense (shown with the red dotted line in the graphic) is visibly decreasing. In figures, the average rate of this crime is **0.6 criminal offenses per quarter from the second half of 2010 and on**, whereas during January 2008 – June 2010 this rate was **12.9 criminal cases per quarter**.

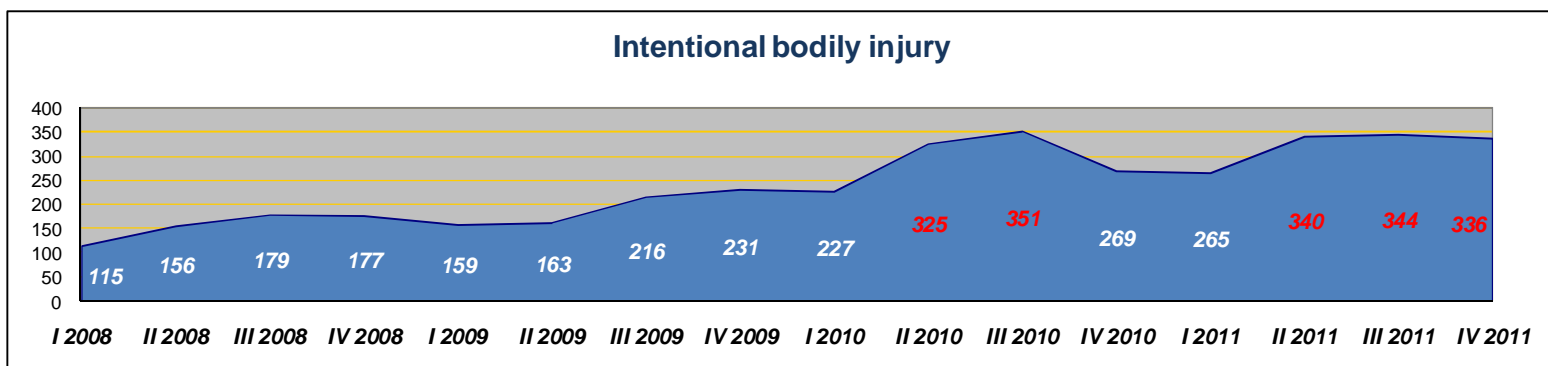
Graph 6. Criminal offense “Crime against freedom of a person” (2008 – 2011)



## Injuries in “Expansion”

“**Intentional bodily injury**” is another criminal offense that has marked significant increase (starting from 2009 and on) and which, in the absence of a clear crime prevention strategy, warns the same trend for 2012. The lowest number of instances of this offense recorded **in the first quarter of year 2008** has more than **tripled for most quarters of the last two years**. The numbers are provided in Graph 7 below.

Graph 7. Criminal offense “Intentional bodily injury” (2008 – 2011)



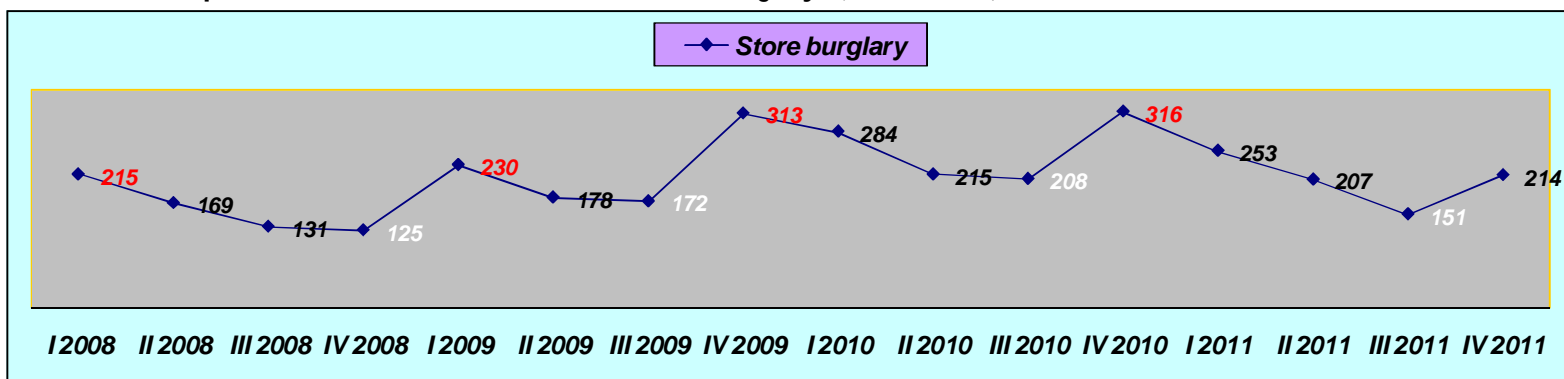
As shown in Graph 7, almost **80% of the total of ‘injuries’** during the 4-year period has occurred in the years 2009-2011. The last year of this study (2011) has marked the highest increase with the total of recorded injuries reaching as high as 1/3 of the overall number of the four years.

## The “Foretold” Violence of Burglaries

One of the criminal offenses, whose prevention strategy is particularly problematic, is “Burglary”. A series of instances of this criminal offense during the first half of 2012 reconfirms that the state institutions’ strategy poses great deficiencies in their (nonexistent) comprehensive approach for the prevention of this crime. In consideration of the data on this offense for the last four years (2008-2011), it is interesting to analyze the curve of the recorded cases of the criminal offense “Store burglary”.

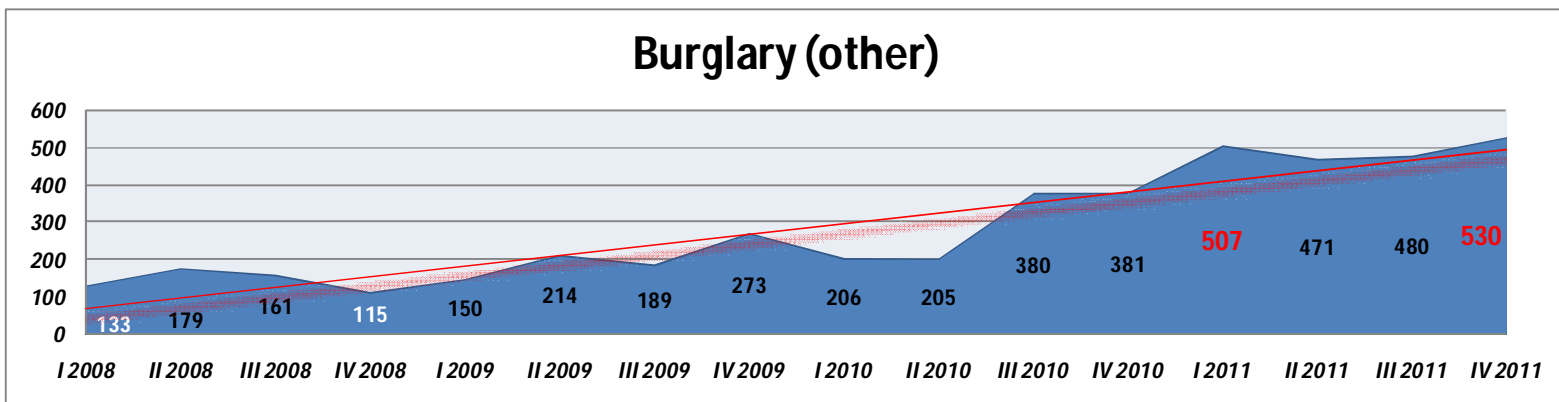
Graph 8 below shows that **almost each ‘peak’ of the number of instances of this offense is followed by a drastic drop**. This may be due to the focus of police and their presence almost everywhere. However, the police cannot keep pace of such rhythm in continuity. Lack of broader partnership for a more sustainable response with the local governance or other agencies has led to **an increase of this crime rate at an even higher intensity**.

Graph 8. Criminal Offense “Commercial store burglary” (2008 – 2011)



While sensitivity towards economic operators' security has, regardless of its instability, been higher after each and every increasing series of burglaries, we cannot make the same statement about the data categories under 'Other Burglary'. Graph 9 provides supporting evidence.

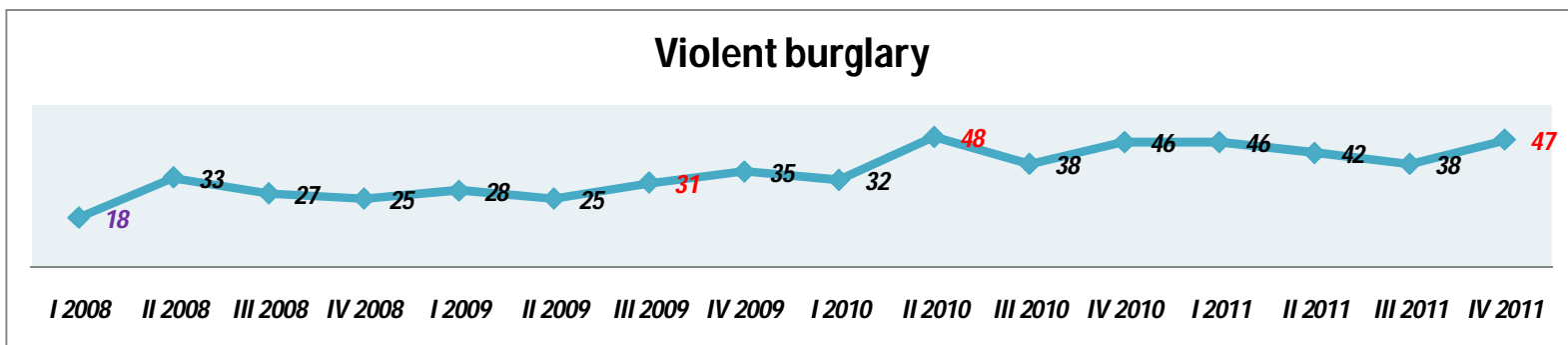
**Graph 9. Criminal Offense "Other burglary" (2008 – 2011)**



While the trend line (see red line in Graph 9) clearly shows the "power of crime", total lack of attention to this issue on the part of responsible institutions is still inexplicable, particularly in consideration of figures that **for certain quarters have quintupled**. For example, the data on "Other Burglary" rate in the last quarter of 2011 compared with the last quarter of 2008 indicates an **increase of about 500%**.

Equally alarming is the situation with the trends of **the criminal offense "violent burglary"** during the last 4-year period. Graph 10 indicates that the rate of this criminal offense has gradually increased by more than 100% in certain quarters. In addition, since the third quarter of year **2009**, the rate of this offense has jumped **to over 30 instances of violent burglary per quarter**.

**Graph 10. Criminal offense "Violent burglary" (2008 – 2011)**



Lack of a clear prevention strategy and other factors (such as dire economic conditions affected by world crisis to a certain extent, the conflicting domestic policy, which, unlike in 2008, has considerably shifted the energies of state institutions during 2010-2011, etc.) have had their impact on this situation. A further analysis in correlation with the increasing figures of other criminal offenses makes it clear that **fatal violence in the recently-recorded cases of burglary was foretold two years ago at least**.