

Short biography of Albin Kurti

Resisting Milosevic

In August 1997, when Albin Kurti was 22 years old, he joined presidency of the Students Independent Union of the University of Prishtina (SIUUP), and soon after he became its International Officer. Kurti was also a member of the SIUUP's Organizing Board tasked with arranging peaceful nonviolent protests for the release of university buildings held by the authorities of the oppressive Slobodan Milosevic regime. During the historic student demonstration in Prishtina on October 1, 1997, brutally repressed by Milosevic's police, Kurti was one of the protest leaders.

When war began in Kosova, in August 1998, Kurti began working as Secretary of the Office of the General Political Representative of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), Adem Demaçi. Here, Kurti was engaged in seeking a political solution to Kosova's crisis. When the NATO bombing of Serbia and Kosovo commenced in March 1999, Kurti remained in Prishtina, and was arrested by Serbian police on April 27, 1999. When Serbian forces withdrew from Kosova on June 10, Kurti and many other Albanians were transferred to Serbian prisons.

On March 13, 2000, Kurti was sentenced to 15 years in prison for "threatening Yugoslavia's territorial integrity". During the trial against him, he refused to recognize the legitimacy of the court, serving, as it did, not justice, but the Milosevic regime which had kept Kosovo under harsh occupation. Due to international pressure, Kurti was released on December 7, 2001.

Resisting UNMIK (the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosova)

On April 23, 2003, Kurti graduated in Computer Science and Telecommunications from the University of Prishtina, and continued to work as an activist of Kosova Action Network (KAN). Formed in 1997, KAN consisted of activists working for social change and active citizenry. Its activities focused on human rights and social justice; education; culture and art. In particular he was engaged in organizing nonviolent protests in support of the families of those whose relatives disappeared in the war.

On June 12 2005, activists sprayed the slogan "NO NEGOTIATIONS, SELF-DETERMINATION!" on the walls of UNMIK's premises in Prishtina, marking the transformation of KAN into the Movement for SELF-DETERMINATION! (Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!). The writing of slogans continued all over Kosova, and was soon complemented by other creative nonviolent measures such as blockades, symbolic actions and mass demonstrations. Despite its non-violent nature, VETËVENDOSJE! activists, including Kurti, continue to be arrested, imprisoned and fined, sometimes on illegitimate grounds, and have been subjected to abuse during arrest or imprisonment.

VETËVENDOSJE! is a non-violent, voluntary, political opposition movement, against the international rule over Kosova and against the obedience, incompetence and corruption of the local leadership. VETËVENDOSJE! believes it is crucial that the dissatisfaction of people in Kosova is directed against the political system and the neo-colonial UNMIK administration, not against other ethnic groups. VETËVENDOSJE! argues that only through a referendum as an exercise of the right to self-determination can a truly independent and sovereign democracy be established in Kosova. VETËVENDOSJE! represents the only real voice of opposition in Kosova.

UNMIK's case against Albin Kurti

VETËVENDOSJE!'s main demonstration took place on 10 February 2007, and was against the status negotiations with Serbia and the Ahtisaari status proposal. This proposal, now part of Kosova's constitution, will divide Kosova's territory, institutions and people through ethnically based decentralization. During this peaceful demonstration, Romanian UN police shot dead two demonstrators and injured over 80 others with outdated rubber bullets fired at short range to the heads of protesters. The UN later proved that the police action was criminal, unnecessary and avoidable. But instead of the responsible being prosecuted, Kurti was arrested, kept in prison for five months, and in house arrest for another five and a half months. On 7 February 2008, the politically motivated case against Kurti was suspended when the Bar Association of Kosova, recognizing the political nature of the case, refused to appoint him a defense. Kurti never accepted any of the defense councils because they were all appointed by UNMIK – which was also the judge, prosecutor and an offended part in the case. The case against Kurti has been restarted and latter on closed by EULEX by dropping two out of three counts of the indictment.

VETËVENDOSJE! today

In 2010 Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE! added to its strategy of civil resistance, participation in elections and Kosova's institutions. In the December 2010 elections Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE! came third. Albin Kurti is currently an MP, the Chair of the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee in the Republic of Kosova, as well as the leader of VETËVENDOSJE!. Main goals of VETËVENDOSJE! today are adding sovereignty to independence, production to economy, democracy to institutions and rule of law to the state.