

Why Self-determination?

Self-determination is the right of all colonized peoples. The absence of preparation in the fields of politics, economics, society or education cannot be used as a pretext to delay independence. (UN SC Resolution 1514, 1960)

VETËVENDOSJE!
<http://www.vetevendosje.org>

Newsletter from the Movement for SELF-DETERMINATION!

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THIS WEEK:

- **Protesting against decentralization**
- **Political punishments**
- **Photographic exhibition in Prizren**
- **Why do we oppose negotiations?**
- **Explaining the decentralization plan**

Protesting against decentralization

On Wednesday 23rd August Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE! protested against negotiations over Kosova's future. The UN chief mediator, Marti Ahtisaari visited only Prishtina this week, not Belgrade, in order to pressure the Kosovar team to compromise further over decentralization.

Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE! blockaded the five entrances of the Assembly Building in Kosova, and UNMIK where Mr. Ahtisaari was meeting with the negotiation team. Using a chain and padlock, we symbolically tied the gates of all the entrances and then formed a human chain to prevent his entrance or exit.

For this act of protest, the Kosova Police Service (KPS) was ordered to arrest us and to disperse our blockade. We resisted by linking arms. A number of police used violence to arrest activists and their identification numbers have been published on our website. Following this, ROSU (Regional Operation Support Units), the Special Police Unit of Prishtina, intervened with intense force at both the Assembly and UNMIK. They arrested activists by dragging them along the ground, pushing, and twisting arms and necks. But, it was inside the police station and away from public eyes that the real violence took place.

Inside the police station, and in the presence of a senior officer, 2 activists were beaten with their arms still in handcuffs, one of whom sustained a broken nose and injured eye. Neither were allowed access to a doctor for at least 4 hours at which point they were sent to casualty. At least 10 other activists were also beaten by the Special Police inside the station when they were being interviewed. One

activist was beaten when he went to drink some water. This is how nonviolent protest is dealt with by the UN in Kosova.

The Special Police beat our activists in the presence of a senior officer, demonstrating that the use of violence against our activists is sanctioned by the authorities, and that means UNMIK. The very institution that talks about 'standards' for Kosova, is encouraging the violent repression of nonviolent protestors. As the Council for Human Rights and Freedoms pointed out, people have the right to protest, yet it is becoming standard practice to call out the Special Police to disperse our activities.

UNMIK is a nondemocratic regime. That's why it does not respect the right to protest in Kosova; it does not condemn the use of violence against our activists; it does not identify the police involved in order to punish them.

Political Punishments

You would think UNMIK had no serious criminals in Kosova to deal with, and too much empty space in its prisons. Over 70 of our activists were arrested for a nonviolent blockade, 12 of whom were sentenced to 20 days in Lypjan prison.

Another 7 were held in detention for over 50 hours in Prishtina jail. When they were finally sent to court, 4 were released without charge and 3 were sentenced to house arrest for 30 days. This last group of activists, which included Albin Kurti, were not released until late in the afternoon on Friday, conveniently after Ahtisaari and his team had completed their visit to Kosova.

There is much talk at the moment of the need for Kosova to continue to have an international presence here to safeguard the rights of minorities. Yet, it is the international presence here at the moment that is quietly encouraging the use of violence and the manipulation of the justice system against those who are exercising their democratic right to protest against political processes they believe will destroy Kosova.

Photographic Exhibition in Prizren

This week, the exhibition of 220 photographs about the work of our movement was in Prizren. The exhibition was held for 3 days in the 'Marash' restaurant from the 23rd to

the 26th August because the local municipality prevented us from displaying our photographs in the House of Culture and the 'Hamam'. Despite this, local people have visited the exhibition and over 400 people have signed the visitor's book.

Why do we oppose negotiations?

Negotiations imply compromise. Negotiations with Serbia mean compromising sovereignty.

This is not a negotiation between equals, but between an aggressor and a victim; a state and a colonized territory.

Serbia has a criminal past in Kosova and criminal intentions for the future.

Negotiations are not equal because they are only about our home, Kosova, not Serbia.

What is the decentralization plan?

This map shows the geographical position of the new municipalities that Serbia is seeking to create in Kosova. These municipalities will have a majority Serbian population and will create a territorially contiguous area in the east and the north of Kosova. With competences that include policing and justice, direct financing from Belgrade and the legalization of parallel structures, these areas will constitute an autonomous ethnic entity within Kosova, as in Bosnia.

The map shows the existing 5 municipalities with Serbian majorities: Leposaviq, Zubin Potok, Zveçan, Novo Bërdë and Shtërpçë. On top of these, the Kosovar team has agreed to create 5 new municipalities: North Mitrovica, Graçanica, Partesh, Ranillug, Kllokot and the expansion of Novo Bërdë. This week, it was reported that Ahtisaari asked them to include also 4 extra municipalities in the north east: Bajë, Osojan, Binçë, Gorazhdec and Hoçë e Madhe. If the new municipalities are given competences in policing, judiciary, education, health and privatization, these powers will make them effectively autonomous from central government.

This brings the total of Serbian majority municipalities to 14 out of 39, yet the Serbian population in Kosova is estimated at only 5 or 6%. In the name of decentralization, Albanians are going to be returned under Belgrade's administration. This plan will undermine the sovereignty of Kosova and is a recipe for partition and new wars.

[See map attached]

