

Kosovar Civil Society Denounces EU for "Politicized" Trial of Nonviolence Leader

Pristina, Kosovo, February 16, 2010: Civil society leaders in Kosovo have angrily denounced the European Union's mission in Kosovo for moving forward with a "politically motivated" trial against one of Kosovo's best-known activists, and called on the international community to stop the trial immediately.

Albin Kurti (right) is due to appear before international and Kosovar judges next Monday on a charge of having led a demonstration in February 2007, which was suppressed by UN police. Two members of Mr Kurti's organization Vetevendosje (Self-Determination) were killed and more than 80 injured in the protest.



Last week, 42 leading Kosovar organizations announced the formation of a new council to oppose Mr Kurti's trial. They followed this on Monday with a statement describing his indictment as "a legally absurd, political document." The signatories include the [Kosovo Women's Network \(KWN\)](#), a partner of the Advocacy Project.

Instead of prosecuting Mr Kurti, said the statement, the international community should investigate the "murders" of the two protesters in 2007 by UN police. Many Kosovars feel that the UN Mission in Kosovo grossly mishandled the confrontation, to the point of using rubber bullets that were past their expiration date. To this day, no criminal investigation has been launched.

Mr Kurti was a student leader and hero of the nonviolent Albanian movement in the final years of Serbian rule in Kosovo. After organizing several demonstrations, he was arrested by the Serbians in 1999 and sentenced to 15 years in jail, before being released the following year.

In the years that followed, Mr Kurti became a harsh critic of UN rule in Kosovo and an uncompromising opponent of the UN-brokered deal for Kosovo's independence, which has left much of northern Kosovo under Serbian control.

Many Kosovars see Mr Kurti's trial as retaliation. He was detained by the UN for six months following the February 2007 confrontation, and remained under house arrest until

early 2008. Mr Kurti refused to cooperate, but [a report at the time by Amnesty International](#) charged the UN with serious legal irregularities. It noted that Mr Kurti was consistently prevented from speaking in his own defense and denied access to visitors in jail on the grounds that he was a "Category A" prisoner, even though no legal basis existed for such a description. On one occasion he was told to "shut up" by an international judge.

Mr Kurti is the only remaining person charged in connection with the 2007 demonstration, and his trial could enflame opinion in Kosovo against the European Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) which has taken over many of the UN's functions in Kosovo.

"By re-opening this case, EULEX is failing in the fields of rights and justice," said Monday's statement from civil society. "EULEX could have easily closed the case based on the numerous violations, the absence of a legal basis, as well as the political objectives behind it."

- For more information email [Iqballe Rogova](#), Executive Director KWN.
- Learn more about the [Kosova Women's Network](#).