

# **New left party Lëvizja BASHKË (Movement TOGETHER) launched in Albania**

Friday 5 May 2023, by [MUÇI Redi](#) (Date first published: 28 April 2023).

**On 18 December 2022, we - the activists of Organizata Politike - decided to take an important step forward by founding a new political party, which we called [Lëvizja BASHKË \(Movement TOGETHER\)](#).**

This decision had been in the brewing for 12 long years. In our hearts and minds, activism was never about a political career; it was a collective struggle to organise and empower people - at work, in university halls, in the community. That's why in 2013 we set up the Movement for University ([LPU](#)) to organise students around the idea that education must be free and public, and to oppose a privatising reform that aimed to burden students with insurmountable debt. In February 2019, we helped set up the first free and independent trade union in Albania for call centre workers, called [Solidariteti](#), and in November of the same year we helped chromium miners establish their union ([SMBB](#)). In September 2000, in the midst of the pandemic, we helped to found the trade union of petrol refinery workers ([SNB](#)).

In all of these struggles, no matter how committed and ardent the workers and students involved were, we came up against the same wall of established power: the total unwillingness of the state to intervene when our side was being persecuted, the absolute silence of the mainstream media, and occasional police brutality. This realisation led us to take up the challenge of forming the organising structure that best expresses the political will of the masses: a political party.

Since this important decision, the road has not been paved with roses, to put it mildly. After the founding congress, we applied to the Tirana Court for legal recognition of our party. The judge in charge of the case, Mr Agron Zhukri, in flagrant violation of the 30-day deadline set by law, scheduled the court hearing exactly one day after the deadline set by the electoral code for political parties to register for the upcoming elections on 14 May. The fact that, for the first time in 32 years of political pluralism in Albania, a newly formed political party was barred from participating in the elections caused such a public outcry that the court replaced Mr. Zhukri with another judge who legally recognised Lëvizja BASHKË.

Although we were able to submit the legal documents in time, it was the head of Albania's Central Election Commission (CEC), Mr Ilirjan Celibashi, who decided not to consider the court's decision valid because the 15-day appeal period had not been fulfilled. This innovative interpretation of the law is to Mr Celibashi's credit, as there is no mention in any regulation that the court's decision must be final for the CEC to register a party for the elections.

Faced with the concrete possibility of not being able to run as a party, our only option was to collect, in record-breaking time, 7000 signatures from the citizens of Tirana to run as an independent candidate. This task required the full mobilisation of our activists to set up signature collection tents in 4 different locations in the city, working in 3 shifts for 12 hours every day. Normally for such an activity we notify the local authorities in advance, which of course we did, but halfway through the

process the Municipality of Tirana informed us that we could not continue. The reason seemed to have been concocted on the spot: we should have given the authorities 20 days' notice before starting the process. Of course, we ignored them and continued with the collection of signatures.

Once we filed an appeal against the Central Election Commission's decision with its Appeals Commission, the decision not to register our party was again upheld. This was not surprising given that the members of the commission are chosen by the old political parties through parliament. What was surprising, however, was that one of the commissioners approached us after the hearing to confess privately that this was a political decision.

Finally, after the indignation that such repeated institutional obstacles to our movement had caused among the general public, with almost 7000 signatures already collected, it was the Electoral Court of Albania that overturned the decision of the CEC and [allowed Movement TOGETHER to register for the 14 May elections](#). In addition to Arlind Qori's candidacy for mayor, the list for the Tirana City Council includes lecturers, experts, representatives of workers from different sectors, representatives of social communities, pensioners, students, etc.

As activists of the Movement TOGETHER, we will continue the struggle for social justice on a daily basis, in addition to the periodic political campaigns. We proudly position ourselves on the left of the political spectrum, in a country where a genuine left-wing political force has been absent for 30 years. We want to be the voice of the voiceless workers who are confronted with starvation every day, the voice of the unemployed who are begging for work by the side of the pavement, the voice of the disillusioned young people who shall stay and fight against this political elite instead of leaving the country, the voice of the small bakery that is being swallowed up by the oligarchic conglomerate, the voice of the nurses and doctors who are providing their services in depleted working conditions.

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