

## New Cinema Amude: Rebuilding a Wonderful Idea

With this fundraising campaign, we aim to contribute to the reconstruction of a cinema for the communities of Rojava in the city of Amude, where the original cinema was destroyed in 1960. The project is headed by the Commune of Cinema of Rojava, a collective of filmmakers working since 2015 to promote visual arts in the autonomous region of Rojava/North-East Syria. In Italy, the campaign for rebuilding the cinema is supported by **Ya Basta Bologna ODV** in collaboration with Un Ponte per, ARCI, and UIKI Onlus.



### The City of Amude and the Tragic History of the Old Cinema

Amude is a city with a population of just over 56,000, predominantly Kurdish, with a significant Arab minority and a notable Assyrian community. The cinema in Amude was the only one in the region until it was destroyed in a tragic fire in 1960.

### The Fire at the Cinema in Amude

The fire at Amude's cinema is a deeply ingrained tragedy in Kurdish societal memory. On November 13, 1960, hundreds of students were taken to the only cinema in Amude, Şehrazad, to watch the Egyptian film *The Midnight Ghost*. The Ba'athist regime had declared a "solidarity week" with Algeria's struggle for independence from France, collecting donations for the "Algerian brothers." In Amude, all students were required to attend the film screening, paying the entrance fee.

The film had already been shown several times without concern for overcrowding. The cinema had a maximum capacity of 200 seats, but on that day, over 400 children were crammed into the auditorium. Authorities were warned about the cinema's inadequate safety conditions, but they chose to proceed with the screenings. During the showing, a fire broke out, and flames quickly spread to the wooden truss ceiling covered in straw and mud. In the chaotic attempt to escape through narrow, insufficient exits, **282 children between the ages of eight and fourteen lost their lives.**

### The New Cinema Amude

Rebuilding the cinema in Amude means keeping alive the memory of the many children whose lives were tragically cut short on November 13, 1960. It also contributes **to building a collective memory of the diverse peoples and cultures inhabiting the city and, more broadly, the North-East of Syria.**



The new cinema will be designed as a safe, welcoming, and versatile space for art, culture, and community gathering. Drawing on years of professional and personal connections with the Kurdish community and the Commune of Cinema of Rojava—strengthened in 2022 through a traveling film festival with three stops in the city of Mantua—a project for reconstructing the historic Amude cinema has taken shape. This initiative is supported by the "New Cinema Amude Committee," which will actively participate in collaboration with the Commune of Cinema of Rojava by providing financial support and organizing cultural and awareness-raising events to promote the project.

### **Sustainability and Accessibility**

Guided by principles of environmental sustainability, volunteer architects involved in drafting the project will oversee the concept and execution of the structure, ensuring it is safe, comfortable, and fully accessible to people with disabilities.

Key features will include:

- **Capacity:** Designed to comfortably accommodate audiences.
- **Flooring and Lighting:** Energy-efficient solutions for both durability and aesthetics.
- **Multifunctional Stage:** Suitable for presentations, conferences, and theatrical performances.
- **Workshops and Artistic Residencies:** Daily activities for children and adults, supported by rehearsal spaces and equipment.

The new cinema will not only host events but also serve as a hub for creative workshops and artistic residencies, fostering an environment of cultural growth and community engagement.

## The Local Partner: Komîna Fîlm a Rojava



The Commune of Cinema of Rojava (*Komîna Fîlm a Rojava*) is a collective of filmmakers founded in 2015, based in the autonomous region of Rojava/North-East Syria. The Commune actively works in the region to rebuild and organize the infrastructure for cinema and film education. Its mission is to promote local cinematic culture by organizing film screenings, fostering discussions on the role of cinema in society, producing new films, and establishing the Cinema Academy.

The Commune has:

- **Trained a New Generation:** It has nurtured aspiring filmmakers from Rojava through education and hands-on production.
- **Expanded Accessibility:** Organized screenings in cities and villages, bringing cinema to diverse audiences.
- **Produced Films:** Created works that reflect the values and ideals of the Rojava revolution, daily struggles during the Syrian Civil War, and the collective challenge of building a new society.

A cornerstone of their work, the **Rojava Cinema Academy** offers annual courses for aspiring directors and film industry professionals. Local and international cinema experts teach a range of subjects, including International and Kurdish cinema history, Film theory, Photography and cinematography, Screenwriting, Editing and sound design.

**The Academy operates with a self-organized, horizontal structure**, encouraging students to engage in all aspects of its activities. Its overarching goal is to revitalize local cinematic culture by empowering people to tell their own stories and envision new realities. This is especially significant in the context of decades of oppression of Kurdish language and culture.

Through its multifaceted initiatives, Komîna Fîlm a Rojava exemplifies the transformative power of cinema as a medium for cultural expression, education, and societal change.

## Kurdish Cinema





Kurdish cinema, like most forms of Kurdish art, reflects the Kurdish struggle and serves as a voice for the Kurdish cause and occupied Kurdistan. Before the July 19, 2012 revolution, Rojava did not play a key role in Kurdish cinema due to the Ba'ath regime's totalitarian and racist persecution, which suppressed Kurdish culture entirely, including filmmaking.

The development of this art form in Rojava began with the revolution, and many opportunities arose with the establishment of *Komîna Fîlm a Rojava* (The Commune of Cinema of Rojava). Young filmmakers, who previously had no prospects, now have career opportunities and platforms for showcasing their work in the region.

### **The Project and Donations**

The total cost of constructing the *New Cinema Amude* is approximately **€240,000**. This budget accounts for materials and essential labor, while many contributors will support the work on a voluntary basis.

#### **Budget Overview:**

- **Total Budget:** €238,725
- **Our Contribution:** €50,000

This effort seeks to transform not only a physical space but also the cultural landscape of the region, creating a lasting impact for current and future generations of Kurdish artists and audiences.

### **About us**



### Ya Basta! Bologna ODV

Ya Basta! Bologna was founded after returning from the First Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism, held in 1996 in Chiapas, Mexico, and organized by the EZLN (Zapatista Army of National Liberation). Inspired by this experience, the association has grown and today focuses on international solidarity, freedom of movement, social and environmental justice, defense of rights, and access to genuine democracy.

For many years, Ya Basta! Bologna has been supporting the Kurdish liberation movement, participating in national and European solidarity networks that endorse the path of Democratic Confederalism. In 2014, it organized the “On the Routes of the Euro-Mediterranean” caravan, involving fifteen activists from social centers in Emilia-Romagna, Veneto, and Marche in discussions with representatives of local administrations in Kurdish regions. Since then, the association has supported various projects promoting the autonomy of Rojava and the Confederated Northern Syria, including:

- **Kobane Roots:** Revitalizing 15,000 olive trees.
- **Mobile Clinic:** A project of the Free Women’s Foundation in Syria-Rojava.
- **Earthquake Reconstruction Campaign (2023):** Supporting rebuilding efforts.
- **Red Crescent Initiatives:** Various humanitarian projects.

These campaigns also serve as opportunities to organize awareness-raising and fundraising events in Bologna, in collaboration with the *Làbas* and *TPO* Social Municipalities. These events highlight the violations of Kurdish rights by Erdogan’s Turkish regime and advocate for the liberation of Apo Öcalan.

Ya Basta! Bologna is a Volunteer Organization registered with the Association Registry of the Emilia-Romagna Region since 2001.

### The Kurdistan Information Office in Italy (UIKI-Onlus)

Since 1999, the Kurdistan Information Office in Italy (UIKI-Onlus) has worked to promote awareness of the Kurdish movement and its activities, particularly regarding the repression, discrimination, and war against the Kurdish people in the four countries where Kurdistan was divided following the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne.

The voluntary efforts of its members, both Kurdish and Italian, focus on:

- Combating violence against women in all forms.
- Opposing the use of torture in prisons.
- Raising awareness about human rights in Turkey.
- Advocating for peace, freedom of the press, and freedom of opinion.

These goals are pursued through communication, research, the establishment of observatories, cultural events, and monitoring missions in Kurdistan.

UIKI is a member of the Italian Committee for the Development and Cooperation of Southeast Anatolia (CISCASE), based in the Puglia Region, which carries out decentralized international cooperation projects between Italian and Northern Kurdistan local administrations. UIKI is also part of the Italian Solidarity Network with the Kurdish People.

### Un Ponte Per ETS (UPP)

Un Ponte Per ETS (UPP) is an association for international solidarity and a non-governmental organization that has been working since 1991 to prevent armed and violent conflicts, particularly in the Middle East. This is achieved through awareness campaigns, cooperation projects, peacebuilding programs, and networks advocating for social justice.

For over 30 years, UPP has stood by the Kurdish people:

- In 1993, it launched the “Un Ponte per Diyarbakir” campaign to shed light on living conditions in Turkish Kurdistan and promote its culture and history.
- Subsequently, it developed cooperation programs in Iraqi Kurdistan.
- In 2015, it launched the solidarity initiative “Un Ponte per il Rojava” in response to the humanitarian emergency.

The goals of this initiative include rebuilding the healthcare system in northeast Syria, supporting women in their paths to self-determination and rights advocacy, protecting the environment by creating waste disposal systems for urban and hospital waste.

**Help This Project Grow: Share It!**