

RIVER UNIVERSITY

LITHUANIA

Freshwater biodiversity, sustainable nature tourism, River University development

Skavica Case- Protecting Drin River

OPPOSITION TO SKAVICA DAM
COALITION

Ferzileta Gjika



Protecting Drin River and defending the rights of Dibran community that depends on it.



Concerns regarding Skavica Hydropower Project

- **Flooding/displacement:** The dam's reservoir would submerge dozens of villages, displace thousands of residents, flood large areas of agricultural land, forest, meadows.
- **Isolation of villages** (e.g. roads cut off), affecting access to services.
- Possibly impacts on microclimate (fog patterns etc.), affecting crops etc. Communities have reported fears of worsened conditions
- **Loss of biodiversity / habitats:** Threat to species endemic to the region (e.g. Balkan lynx, fish species), damage to riparian forests, floodplain forest, meadows, etc. It's argued that this stretch may be the last free-flowing part of the Black Drin
- **Cultural / heritage loss:** graves, historical sites, ancestral lands, community identity and tradition in Dibra would be compromised

Skavica Case-Significance & Broader Relevance

- The project would affect **one of the last free-flowing stretches** of the Black Drin in Albania, which is ecologically very important.
- The case is seen as representative of tensions between large-scale hydropower as a solution for “green energy” vs environmental / social costs. It raises questions about how “renewable” projects are evaluated.
- Use of international legal frameworks (Bern Convention, environmental treaties) is giving local activists leverage and putting pressure on the government.

Reports of a “doubling” from previous high estimate

- The earlier well-quoted range was **€308-€510 million** depending on dam height.
- Key cost drivers: dam height, access / infrastructure investment, expropriation, environmental & social mitigation, and feasibility/legal/administrative delays.
- Bechtel’s more recent preliminary estimate **doubles** the €510 million figure, suggesting up to **€1 billion**.
- These higher figures seem to come from concerns about expanded scope, inflation, logistical difficulties, possibly more expropriation/infrastructure, and environmental mitigation

Lack of Clarity in design and Location

- There are multiple technical scenarios being considered (e.g. different dam heights, reservoir volumes) without clear public data
- Two possible “quotas” (water levels) are being discussed: 388 meters above sea level vs 443 m. With the higher one, many more villages and lands would be affected.

Legal Challenges



Legal Challenges & Lobbying/Resolutions

- Submitted a constitutional complaint against Law 38/2021 granting special rights to build Skavica.
- Filed complaint under Bern Convention arguing violation of articles on habitats, species, etc.
- Municipal council of Dibra passed a resolution (signed by majority of councilors) against Skavica HPP.
- Opposition to Skavica Dam coalition have organized protests in various places (local villages, Tirana, abroad) calling for protection of land, culture, environment.

Raising awareness

- Shedding light through media, reports, workshops. Using international NGOs' reports to highlight environmental risks.
- Engaging local community, including younger people, to document what would be lost (nature, identity).
- Using treaties / conventions (e.g. Bern Convention) to force monitoring of the project.
- Seeking that relevant sites be declared protected under international categorizations (e.g. Emerald Network) to trigger legal protection.

KEY recent wins /impacts

- The **Constitutional Court** accepted the complaint challenging the special law (Law 38/2021) related to Skavica, meaning the law is under judicial review.
- As part of that, the court ruled that the law breached constitutional guarantees: for example, the right to information about the environment.
- The **Bern Convention's Bureau / Standing Committee** is now monitoring the Skavica project. They have asked the Albanian government to respond to concerns about impacts to protected species, habitats, and compliance with treaty obligations
- Local political bodies (Dibra Municipality) have formally adopted resolutions against the project.

Remaining Challenges/What is Uncertain

- Despite some legal successes, the final outcome of the Constitutional Court case is not yet decided.
- Environmental & Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) documents are still in process; sometimes lack of transparency or clarity about location, flood levels, compensation.
- The law / special contracts (e.g. with Bechtel) are controversial for how they were awarded (no open tender), and this is a point of contention.
- Mobilizing the local population is hard in face of fear (job loss, retribution), lack of trust in institutions, or lack of information.

Alternative Energy & Climate Arguments

- We argue hydropower here is not “clean” in the sense that it destroys ecosystems, alters river flow, traps sediment, and will generate greenhouse gas emissions.
- We also assert that other renewable options (solar, wind, etc.) should be considered instead.
- Albania’s electricity production is already very renewable in aggregate (roughly ~95 %), almost entirely from **hydropower**.
- However, over-reliance on hydropower exposes Albania to climate risk (e.g. droughts) and seasonal variability. There is a growing need to **diversify** the renewables mix.

Solar & Wind-better alternatives

- Albania has strong solar potential: good number of sunshine hours annually. This gives it a comparative advantage if solar is properly developed.
- Expansion of **solar + storage** could help manage variability and improve grid stability.

New York City Protest November 4, 2021



New York City Protest

June 12th, 2022



LONDON PROTEST

October 20, 2022



A drop of water is worth more than a sack of gold to a thirsty man!

Sub-Contractors Break Ties with Bechtel Corporations financing the injustice of Dibra community!

Honor Drin River, Honor Life, Honor Dibra, Honor Community!

Rivers rights are human rights! Human Rights are rivers rights!

Drin River Someday will Wash Skavica Dam away!

Bechtel Go Home, Leave Dibra Alone

Skavica Dam Divide, Drin River Unite!

Large Dams are Injustice to Rivers!

Subcontractors if you are Clever - Say No DAM

Sub-contractors should fire Bechtel, not be hired to build Dibra

OPPOSITION TO SKAVICA DAM

BECHTEL GO HOME LEAVE OUR DIBRA ALONE

SAVE

OUR FUTURE IS NOT FOR SALE

No more Dams! Save Our Rivers, Save our Future!

Stop Investing Bechtel! Sub-contractors don't waste time and Money No Dam No Methane

Protest in front of Ministry of Energy Tirana, Albania April 14th, 2022



Protest in front of Ministry of Energy April 14th, 2022 Tirana, Albania

Proteste perballe Ministrise se Energjise dhe Kryeministrise 14 Prill 2022

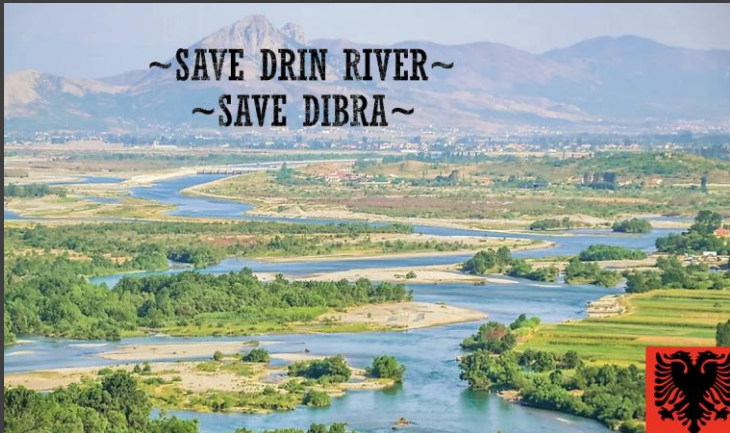




Proteste perballe
Kryeministrise dhe
Ministrise se Energjitikes
14 Prill 2022

~SAVE DRIN RIVER~
~SAVE DIBRA~





The wars of the
twenty-first
century will be
fought over
water.

Stop Skavica
Dam!

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Save Our
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Future!

DFC Stop invest
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Skavica Dam
Divide, Drin
River Unite!

Honor Drin
River, Honor
Life, Honor
Dibra, Honor
Community!

If a man fails to
honor the
rivers, he shall
not gain the
from them.

Large Dams
are Injustice

Rivers rights are
human rights!
Human Rights
are rivers rights!

Subcontractors
if you are Clever
- Say No DAM

Sub-contractors
should fire Bechtel,
not be hired to
destroy Dibra.

Drin River
Someday will
Wash Skavica
Dam away!

Never G
Up!

 **OPPOSITION TO
SKAVICA DAM**

O SOT O KURRE
Per Dibren!
20 Tetor, Londer

