** United Nations Office in Belgrade**

**Daily Media Highlights**

**Tuesday, 8 April 2014**

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**LOCAL PRESS**

**What was implemented in the agreement with Pristina in one year (*Novosti*)**

On the occasion of the anniversary of the initialing of the “historical agreement” between Belgrade and Pristina, only half of the tasks written in 15 points, which both sides accepted, have been completed. Belgrade claims that the obligations of 18 April last year have been fulfilled and that Pristina is the one that hasn’t finalized many things or either has been trying to interpret them “on the ground” in its own way and implement them differently. The first six points refer to the Union of Serb Municipalities and in this part the agreement has not been implemented yet. The constituting of Serb municipalities in the north still remains to be done, but Pristina is conditioning this with the harmonization of their statutes with the Kosovo laws. Then follows the adoption of the statute of the Union that will define the original jurisdictions of this Union, as well as the transfer of jurisdictions from the central administration in Pristina. The outgoing Secretary General of the Serbian government Veljko **Odalovic**, who is taking part in the Brussels talks, tells ***Novosti*** that the key thing is that Pristina must give consent for the formation of the Union of Serb Municipalities, but it “doesn’t recognize” this it as it had been agreed in the dialogue. “Pristina should also prepare a political ground for the formation of the Union, which didn’t occur,” says Odalovic. According to ***Novosti***, until recently there has been a halt in the flow of money from taxes collected at the administrative crossings that goes into the Fund, and which will be one of the sources for financing the Union. But this has been resolved in the end. The seventh point of the agreement, devoted to the integration of policemen into a single system, has not been completely implemented. What Belgrade had to do – to abolish double salaries and to create a list of Interior Ministry members who would transfer to the single police system - has been completed, but not all of them have been integrated. The problem is also the “transfer” of employees in the Civil Defense since their number is disputed. The next given task: integration of judges in the north will be possible only after the finalization of the agreement that is expected at the end of the month, and there is a halt here as well, ***Novosti*** was told, because Pristina has only recently presented proposals of quotas and criteria for implementing the agreement. The Brussels agreement also stipulated the holding of local elections, establishment of the Serb regional police commander, reaching agreement on electricity and telecommunications and these obligations can be considered as completed.

**New Serbian Constitution according to Brussels’ tailoring (*Novosti*)**

During the mandate of the new government, Serbia will get a new constitution, and the future prime minister Aleksandar **Vucic** also confirmed that the amendment is one of the conditions on the EU path. The highest legal document will certainly be tailored according to the European standards. The list of novelties that will be in the new constitution is long: change of the manner of electing judges, decrees that concern the National Bank of Serbia, reducing the number of MPs who will be elected according to a different system…Brussels requests the reduction of the role of the parliament that, according to present decrees, elects judges. There is also too much supervision over the National Bank of Serbia and the EU insists that the bankers should be the first ones to be completely independent. European laws should also be given advantage in relation to Serbian laws, meaning that the EU regulations will have greater legal power. Serbia will also have to introduce the “European warrant” so it will have to extradite citizens to EU member states that request them over criminal acts. Deputy Chair of the Board for EU Integration Lazlo **Varga** tells ***Novosti*** there will be more changes, but they will be known once Chapters 23 and 24 open: “The reduction of the number of MPs is mentioned more frequently, so this might also require a change of the electoral system. If we are to elect MPs according to present regulations, minorities would not have a sufficient number of representatives. As soon as a debate on Constitutional amendments is launched, the preamble is unavoidable. Varga points out that the amendment of this “introduction” is not on the list of EU requirements: “Nevertheless, the Council of Europe has already stated that Serbia and Kosovo, before joining the EU, must sign a document whereby they commit that they will not block each other on the EU path.” Professor of Constitutional Law Ratko **Markovic** tells ***Novosti*** that the new framers of the Constitution will not have the freedom as the previous ones over the requests that will be arriving from Brussels: “The path we are heading requires that all European values are better developed in the new constitution, so the EU will monitor everything. Here I have in mind the field of human rights and the judiciary.”

**To be a Serb in the province of Kosovo-Metohija (*Politika*, editorial by Ozren Milanovic)**

There is not a day that goes by without an echo of conflict in the northern part of the province of Kosovo-Metohija. Either from a destructive mine, or burst of gunfire, or a bomb, Molotov cocktail… People are killed, cars and houses damaged…The City of Kosovska Mitrovica, or at least the northern part which is inhabited almost exclusively by Serbians, is a synonym for a dangerous town. This is similar to how Belfast and Beirut were once considered, when the condition to broadcast news from these towns was very brutal – minimum five dead.

An unknown attacker fired on Sunday from automatic arms at the vehicle owned by the wife of former Gracanica mayor Bojan **Stojanovic**. The “Citroen” was parked in one of the main streets in North Kosovska Mitrovica. Then, during the night, a passenger vehicle, donated by the Administrative Office of the Kosovo Albanian government to the new municipal leadership in this part of the town, was set on fire. The head of the that office condemned these acts of violence, stressing that such acts lead to destabilization of North Kosovska Mitrovica and are “unacceptable as such”. The night before, unknown persons wrote threatening and vulgar graffiti on several houses owned by Kosovo Serbs in the town of Orahovac, in the Metohija region.

Three Kosovo Serb policemen were wounded a week ago from fire arms, when a Kosovo Police patrol was attacked in Banje, near the northern municipality of Zubin Potok. Before that, the victim was an 86-year-old Serb woman, who was beaten. Whose opponent could she have been or whom could she have threatened or even bothered?

The North Kosovska Mitrovica municipal councilor Dimitrije **Janicijevic** was killed in January this year. After he got out of his car, an unknown person fired at him with five or six bullets from an automatic weapon. Janicijevic was a candidate for North Kosovska Mitrovica mayor at the past local elections.

It does not sound logical that in none of these cases were there any traces, witnesses, or anything else that may point to the attacker, to those intimidating, to those threatening, and what they wish to achieve? Or, let them refute me, as I would love that. The spokespersons of the Kosovo police give inarticulate statements after each such event, while EULEX keeps silent… And so on and so forth, until a new unpunished act transpires…This only makes the remaining Kosovo Serbs think more about fleeing, because, which normal person can bear, watch, count and wait for when he/she or his/her family will become a target?

The list of misdoings is really long. Their motives and perpetrators have so far remained unknown, but it is clear to everyone that the attacks are not out of greed or for robbery! And when this is not the case, what else could it be, other than political terrorism that has its own goals, the key one being that there are as few Serbs in the province of Kosovo-Metohija as possible. The Kosovo Serbs’ voting rights are being narrowed by electoral laws and their ability to represent their people is being conditioned with loyalty to the Pristina’s so-called “independent state” authorities. Additionally, EULEX and the Kosovo authorities are arresting, in a synchronized manner, prominent Kosovo Serbs, including lawyers, political leaders and businessmen, under various, and suspicious, excuses and previously unannounced indictments.

Fear and inquietude are collective “Kosovo Serb feelings” in this province. And they are increasingly spreading.

**REGIONAL PRESS**

**OHR: Entities must refrain from unilateral moves (*Fena*)**

The issue of residency is organized with a state law, and entities have the constitutional obligation to fully respect the adopted laws in the B&H institutions, the Office of the High Representative (OHR) has warned on the occasion of the entity draft law on residency that is on the agenda of the Republika Srpska (RS) parliament. “Entities must refrain from unilateral moves, which would be an attempt at bypassing the B&H state institutions,” OHR spokesperson Eldar **Subasic** told ***Fena***. He stressed that the OHR expects all parties to work together on finding a pragmatic solution for adopting amendments to the law on residency at the state level, which would provide equal implementation of the law in the entire country. “There is always room for that, and we expect participation from all included political parties in constructive and pragmatic talks aimed at adopting the law,” said Subasic. On the other side, the RS officials claim that the draft entity law is identical to the one that should have been passed at the B&H level and that it will be passed. However, the vice president of the RS parliament Ramiz **Salkic** confirmed that the SDA caucus in the entity parliament officially requested on 4 April to remove from today’s session the entity draft law on residency, which was sent for urgent procedure. “We consider this issue not to be in the jurisdiction of entities and that it prevents the freedom of movement, which is a Dayton category,” said Salkic.

**Cvijanovic: Russian loan more favorable than IMF loan (*Politika*’s correspondent in Sarajevo)**

Not one level of authority in B&H has supported the conditions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for extending the loan arrangements because of which negotiations with this world financial organization have reached an impasse and it is uncertain when and whether at all they will continue. Domestic officials have assessed the insisting of the IMF on an urgent passing of new laws on labor, as the key condition for continuing the stand-by arrangement, as an unacceptable and unrealistic request, along with the suggestion that the letter of intentions that was harmonized last year should be amended. The objections from the Republika Srpska (RS) referred not only to the speed of passing the laws but also to some of its decrees set by the IMF as binding, but which may threat the rights of workers. In the meantime, the RS has managed to receive a Russian loan in the amount or around 300 million Euros, which certainly reduces its concern in the event of the termination of the arrangement with the IMF. The RS Prime Minister Zeljka **Cvijanovic** has said a Russian loan for the RS is more favorable than an IMF loan and that it is granted without any political conditions, unlike the IMF arrangement, but that it is certainly more expensive when only the interest rate is viewed in isolation. She notes that the publicly accepted term “Russian loan” refers to the arrangement with two commercial banks with different headquarters in Europe, which was agreed with the support of the people from the Russian Federation, but that this was not a classic loan. The RS Prime Minister estimates that the arrangement with the IMF “will certainly face its end” considering that some phases are hardly predictable in the future period.

**INTERNATIONAL PRESS**

**Serbia’s Vucic May Take Office by April 25 Focusing on Economy (*Bloomberg*, by Gordana Filipovic and Misha Savic, 7 April 2014)**

Aleksandar Vucic, whose Serbian Progressive Party won last month’s elections, began talks with other parliamentary groups to form a new cabinet that will stabilize public finances and overhaul the economy.

The Progressives won 158 seats in the 250-member parliament on March 16, giving Vucic the right to form the new government. His first meeting with the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians, the biggest ethnic minority party to have entered parliament, started at 11 a.m., his party said today. He will meet with outgoing Prime Minister [Ivica Dacic](http://topics.bloomberg.com/ivica-dacic/) and his Socialists tomorrow.

The Progressives offered the Hungarian party to join them in the government as they want to work with them to “transform Serbia to a healthy, normal and decent European country,” Vucic told reporters in Belgrade today. He also plans to talk with the [New Democratic Party](http://topics.bloomberg.com/new-democratic-party/) of former President [Boris Tadic](http://topics.bloomberg.com/boris-tadic/), “which doesn’t mean that we will be entering coalitions,” he said on April 5.

Vucic pledged to embrace painful austerity measures endorsed by the [International Monetary Fund](http://topics.bloomberg.com/international-monetary-fund/) and lead Serbia into the European Union two decades after the bloody Balkan civil wars. Serbia needs to narrow its budget gap, planned at 7.1 percent of economic output this year and reduce spending by around 400 million euros ($549 million) for a new IMF loan.

Asset Sales

He will present his program to lawmakers on April 24 or 25, a week after the new parliament is constituted. His party’s leadership will decide on the cabinet ministers next weekend. Vucic will ask the new parliament to adopt laws on bankruptcy, asset sales, insurance, construction permits and a new labor code by mid-July to improve the business climate and meet IMF and World Bank funding conditions.

“Talks will be tough and we want to reach an agreement,” Vucic said. “Revising the 2014 budget is not a priority.” It could be revised around “mid-year,” he added.

The new cabinet will have as many as 19 members, down from 21, and will focus on new jobs in private businesses as the government seeks to downsize the 780,000-people strong public sector, which combines administration, schools, hospitals, police and state-owned companies.

“In less than a year you will be able to see the light at the end of the tunnel and in two years people will start living better,” Vucic said.

The yield on [Serbia](http://topics.bloomberg.com/serbia/)’s 10-year Eurobond maturing in 2021 rose 3 basis points, or 0.03 percentage point, to 5.378 percent by 3:12 p.m. in Belgrade today and the dinar traded around 0.16 percent stronger at 115.39 per euro, data compiled by Bloomberg show.

Spending Cuts

Instead of cutting pensions, where a 10 percent reduction would save 303 million euros a year, Vucic will try to sell or close 153 unprofitable companies that drain almost 750 million euros a year from the budget. The government will revise per diems for administration and state-company workers that cost around 42 million euros a year and cut the 150 million-euro cost of chauffeured cars.

Vucic said Serbia will try to boost state coffers by seeking a full share in profit from stakes in companies including Naftna Industrija Srbije, or NIS, majority owned by [Russia](http://topics.bloomberg.com/russia/)’s [Gazprom Neft OAO (GAZ)](http://www.bloomberg.com/quote/GAZ:LI), where the state holds a 29 percent stake.

Vucic will have “wholehearted” and “active” support of the National Bank of Serbia, led by his senior party colleague Jorgovanka Tabakovic, who pledged to keep the dinar stable and foreign-currency reserves high, according to Tanjug report today.

**Serbia lacks reform on the way to the EU (*DW.DE*, 8 April 2014)**

Serbia faces major change before it can join the EU. Significant reforms are not in sight, however, although influential Serbian politicians urge rapid accession.

A few years ago, anti-EU Serbs came up with a rather drastic image on the Internet: instead of forming a circle on the blue EU flag, the small yellow stars formed a swastika. Patriotic parties and organizations are still convinced that a "true Serb" can't be pro-EU but must be close to Russia.

At the other end of the political spectrum, numerous NGOs and politicians see no alternative to EU membership. Opinion polls show that the Serb people don't necessarily feel close to the West, but see integration in the EU as a way to end their country's economic plight.

**Marathon with obstacles**

The ouster of Slobodan Milosevic in the year 2000 is regarded as a turning point in Serb history. It spelled the end to a violent decade that started with the Yugoslav Wars and continued with NATO's air strikes in the Kosovo conflict. Milosevic's election defeat put an end to international isolation and painful sanctions. The new democratic government promised a bright European future, and promised EU membership in 2007. The prognosis was far too optimistic - so far, Serbia has merely been granted candidate status.

The path to membership has turned into a marathon, and that's a legacy of the 1990s, says Marko Vujacic of the Belgrade-based NGO European Movement in Serbia.

He argues that, in the Balkans, a generation traumatized by war moved not towards post-nationalist integration, but in the opposite direction. That made it difficult to push through necessary economic and administrative reforms. "One man who tried paid with his life," Vujacic points out, referring to Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic, who was assassinated in 2003 by members of a former Milosevic special unit.

**Common sense victorious**

The current Serbia leader, [Aleksandar Vucic](http://www.dw.de/vucics-campaign-bears-fruit-in-serbian-election/a-17500322), backs Djindjic's reform plans. Just a few years ago, Vucic was regarded as a loud-mouthed nationalist who ranted against Croats and Albanians and advocated protecting Serb war criminals. But since 2008, Vucic has turned into a pragmatist.

When his Radical Party broke apart due to differences on EU integration, he chose the European course. "That simply showed that nationalism no longer is an issue here," says Sonja Licht, a Belgrade-based political scientist. Europe, on the other hand, continued to be relevant.

Last month Vucic, whose party holds an absolute majority in parliament, met with former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl to discuss European policies. Afterwards, he wrote in an editorial that you don't have to love Europe to want to join it.

The Serbians appear to agree. According to recent opinion polls, more than 50 percent of them would vote in favor of EU membership, and merely 25 percent against. While support is significantly lower than it was ten years ago, it is significantly higher than just two years ago. According to Vujacic, that means that common sense is winning the battle against emotions that side with Russia.

Opinion polls also show that the perception that the West is always setting conditions is the biggest obstacle on the path to Europe. The "orders from Brussels" are a "sadistic game of cat and mouse", according to Serb historian Cedomir Antic. Take Kosovo: Serbia's former southern province unilaterally declared independence in 2008 - and is meanwhile recognized by more than 100 states worldwide, including 23 EU member states. While Belgrade has never officially accepted Kosovo's sovereignty, the government has been forced to sign several accords with Pristina to achieve EU candidate status. At this point, Serbia can only accede as a "subject state," Antic told DW. "Is Serbian breakup the price the country has to pay for EU membership?" he wonders.

**Reforms, not wishes**

Serbians see the European Union as a cash machine, a guarantor of reforms and an instrument for the solution of various problems, says Jovan Teokarevic, a political science professor at Belgrade University. But while Serbia will "never be as progressive as Germany," he urges the country to at least reach the level of the Baltic States: "They look totally different today than they did during the Soviet occupation."

Serbia's GDP is about $6,000 (4,366 euros) per person, while Latvia's is twice that and Estonia's three times. In order to reach such levels, the new government in Belgrade must introduce painful measures to improve the climate for investment, strengthen the economy and, most of all, curtail the power of political parties.

To this very day, the parties distribute jobs in the public sector among themselves - 800,000 of 7.1 million citizens are state employees. And none of the parties has shown an interest in changing the system. "Many Serb politicians see the integration process as a wish list - without much of an effort, they want to feel reformed and somehow European," Vujacic points out.

"The illusions have been shattered," says Teokarevic, disappointed by the slow pace of the reform process. "Although the process continues, it will still be a long time before we can join the EU." How long? Politicians avoid predictions, but observers expect another seven, maybe even ten years of negotiations.

**Serbia Re-Starts Examination of Suspected Kosovo Mass Grave (*BIRN*, by Edona Peci, 8 April 2014)**

Serbian authorities re-started the examination of a suspected mass grave near the town of Raska where it is believed ethnic Albanians killed by Serbian forces in the Kosovo war may be buried.

“Today all conditions have been created for the examination to continue,” said Pajazit Nushi, head of the Kosovo delegation in the dialogue on missing persons with Serbia.

Workers were preparing to destroy a building on the site under which a mass grave is believed to be located, he said.

He made his comments on Monday after a working group session in Pristina on persons unaccounted for after the Kosovo conflict, organized by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

The search for buried bodies of victims killed in the 1998-99 conflict started in December last year the village of Rudnica near Raska in southern Serbia on the orders of the country’s war crimes prosecution.

But the examination of the site was delayed several times due to disagreements on technical issues between the two sides.

Veljko Odalovic, the head of the Serbian government’s missing persons commission, said human remains found at the end of last year “belong to Kosovo Albanians who went missing during the conflict of 1999”.

Serbian authorities believe the Raska site contains the bodies of at least 250 Albanians killed during the late 1990s conflict.

But Nushi said “the results can be only seen once the examination is over”.

“There could be some 400 [human remains], but I don’t even believe there are 250. This will be determined at the end of the examination”, he stressed.

Some 15 years after the Kosovo conflict, more than 1,700 people remain missing.

**Bosnia's economy set to grow 2.4 pct in 2014-c.bank governor (*Reuters*, by Maja Zuvela, 7 April 2014)**

SARAJEVO - Bosnia's economy is likely to grow 2.4 percent this year on stronger exports and industrial output after expanding 1.5 percent in 2013, central bank governor Kemal Kozaric said on Monday.

Kozaric told an annual news conference that Bosnia recorded deflation of 1.2 percent in 2013, its first year of negative price changes.

He warned that bad loans stood at a record 15.1 percent of all loans outstanding at the end of 2013, although the banking sector had good liquidity and an average capital adequacy ratio of 17 percent.

Lenders in Bosnia, mainly made up of two branches of Austria's ailing bank Hypo Alpe Adria and three other banks, posted a combined net loss of 36 million Bosnian marka ($25.2 million) in 2013 compared with a profit of 127.3 million marka the previous year.

"Profitability and bad loans are the biggest problems and challenges facing the banking sector," Kozaric said.

He said the economy should grow thanks to stable exports of electricity, wood and food products and because of planned infrastructure projects, such as the construction of new sections of a north-to-south highway.

Industrial output in 2013 was up 6.4 percent on the previous year.

Bosnia could still meet the terms set by the International Monetary Fund for a continuation of its 385 million euro ($527 million) loan deal by April 25 when the lender's board is due to meet, Kozaric said.

The IMF in February froze its standby arrangement with the Balkan country over the governments' failure to implement agreed economic policies.

"The IMF arrangement is not broken, the door still remains open," Kozaric said. He warned, however, the deal would be off if one of Bosnia's two autonomous regions rejected it.

The country's Serb Republic has said it was unwilling to continue the IMF arrangement and has instead secured an alternative Russian loan to fill its budget gap. The terms of the Russian loan have not been disclosed.

The Serb Republic and the other autonomous region, the Federation dominated by Muslim Bosniaks and Croats, need IMF cash to plug their respective budget gaps. The Federation still counts on the lender's money. ($1 = 0.7303 Euros) ($1=1.425 Bosnian marka) (Reporting by Maja Zuvela, writing by Daria Sito-Sucic; Editing by Zoran Radosavljevic and Hugh Lawson)

**Macedonia Election Race Starts on Harsh Note (*BIRN*, by Sinisa Jakov Marusic, 8 April 2014)**

At the official start of the campaign for early general elections, Macedonia's party leaders traded robust accusations, charging each other with cowardice and corruption.

At their respective general election starting rallies at the weekend, government and opposition parties exchanged accusations on a scale not seen in the gentler presidential race that started two weeks earlier.  
While the Prime Minister and head of the ruling VMRO DPMNE party, Nikola Gruevski, accused the opposition of cowardice, the opposition Social Democrats, SDSM, accused the government of corruption for which they said some would pay dear.  
“They will repay everything that they took away from Macedonia [to their alleged off-shore companies] in Panama, Switzerland, Czech Republic and elsewhere. They will repay the people for everything they stole,” the SDSM head, Zoran Zaev, told a rally on Sunday in Skopje.  
The opposition said that ordinary people were suffering from social injustice and from a decline in democracy while the government was doing nothing to expedite EU and NATO membership.  
Under the slogan “Changes for a Fresh Start”, the opposition leader pledged that his party would work on social and economic policies that would boost the middle class and called for people to mobilize against Gruevski who has held power since 2006.  
“To those who are disappointed by economic agony and are not interested in politics, who may have never voted before and who are not sure whether Macedonia can live better, we say, 'Yes, it can!'” Zaev told the rally.  
Gruevski's VMRO DPMNE party marked the start of campaign for the April 27 early general election one day earlier, also in central Skopje. Gruevski said the SDSM leaders were cowards for excluding themselves from the party lists of candidates for parliament.

He said they sought an alibi for what was coming to them - another election defeat.  
“The key people of the SDSM run away from the lists, hoping to avoid responsibility for their election defeat... but they cannot,” Gruevski told the rally on Saturday.  
The party is campaigning under the slogan, “There is a Difference”, thereby urging voters to distinguish between themselves and the opposition.  
“We are heading towards a hitherto unseen victory of principles and productivity over cynicism and greed,” Gruevski maintained.  
Gruevski claimed that since he took over in 2006, more than 120,000 people in the country of just over 2 million people had found employment thanks to their policies.   
Pledging to boost FDI and job creation over the next four years as well as state subsidiaries and social help, Gruevski presented the party platform, called “Verified”.   
The first round in Macedonia's presidential elections takes place next Sunday on April 13. The snap general elections will take place on April 27, alongside the second round of presidential elections, which will pit the two best ranked candidates against each other.

For the purposes of the general elections, the country is divided into six electoral units, each contributing 20 legislators to the 123-seat parliament. Voters in the diaspora have had the right to vote since the 2011 election, and elect three MPs.

**Montenegro Albanians Demand Own Municipality (*BIRN*, by Dusica Tomovic, 7 April 2014)**

About a hundred ethnic Albanians staged a protest on Sunday in Tuzi, near the capital, Podgorica, pressing demands for Tuzi to become a separate municipality.

The protest was organised by Albanian opposition parties, the Democratic Forum for Integration and the Democratic Alliance.

They claim that the government has been "abusing and discriminating against" local Albanians in Tuzi, where they form the majority community.

The protesters called on ethnic Albanian politicians to quit their positions in Montenegro's state institutions until Tuzi is granted the status of a municipality.

"The state has done nothing for the decentralization of Montenegro and for 24 years has ignored the demands of the Albanian parties," Besnik Donaj, from the Democratic Forum for Integration, said.

Sunday's protest was held ahead of the visit of Montenegrin Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic to the US, where some Albanian diaspora groups also announced a protest for April 8.

Some Albanians intend to protest in front of the US Congress against Prime Minister Djukanovic over what they call his "unfulfilled promises" regarding the status of Albanians in Montenegro.

The Montenegrin leader is to meet Vice-President Joseph Biden during the visit on April 8, mainly to discuss Montenegro's ambitions to join NATO.

Montenegro is hoping for an invitation at the NTO summit planned for Wales in the UK this autumn.

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