Main Stories                          17 August 2016

* **U.S. Vice President Joe Biden arrives in Kosovo (media)**
* **Biden in Belgrade: Kosovo–Serbia dialogue should continue (Epoka)**
* **Grabovci resigns as PDK caucus chief (dailies)**
* **Vetëvendosje calls for Thaçi and Veseli’s resignations (dailies)**
* **Haliti: I have a plan for demarcation (RTK)**
* **Removal of barricade on Ibar, “a deal over a deal” (Koha)**
* **One month detention for Serb who demolished the minaret (dailies)**
* **Nikolic admits Serbia cannot join EU without recognising Kosovo (Lajmi)**

**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**U.S. Vice President Joe Biden arrives in Kosovo (*media*)**

All media report that U.S. Vice President Joe Biden arrived in Pristina on Tuesday evening. Biden was received with high state honours by the Honour Guard of the Kosovo Security Force and President Hashim Thaçi at Pristina Airport. Biden is scheduled to meet leaders of Kosovo institutions and visit the U.S. military camp Bondsteel today. ***Kosova Sot*** reports on the front page that Biden will encourage democratic developments in Kosovo and the resumption of talks between Pristina and Belgrade in Brussels. According to ***Bota Sot***, “Biden’s historic visit will help resolve political disputes in Kosovo”. In its front-page article, ***Epoka e Re*** refers to Vice President Biden as “a great friend of Kosovo”.

**Biden in Belgrade: Kosovo–Serbia dialogue should continue (*Epoka*)**

The U.S. Vice President Joe Biden said that during the meeting with the Prime Minister of Serbia, Aleksandar Vucic, he requested continuation of the Brussels dialogue and added that he will raise the issue also in Pristina. He said that peaceful Western Balkans region is extremely important for the entire Europe. “Some moments were painful, however our relations were created based on mutual respect. I am happy that we opened a new chapter. We have discussed today the importance of moving forward with discussions in Brussels between Kosovo and Serbia. There are many issues here that have to be overcome. Much effort and political will is required,” Biden said.

**Grabovci resigns as PDK caucus chief (*dailies*)**

The Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) deputy leader, Adem Grabovci, has resigned from the position of PDK parliamentary group chief. Grabovci said he resigned following the publication of wiretap conversations between senior PDK officials. “These conversations have created an unpleasant situation for the public, institutions, PDK, and also for me and my family. As a moral and political reaction to such a matter and with the possibility of legal measures, which has affected my privacy and the authority of the PDK, I offer my resignation from the post of the PDK parliamentary group chief,” Grabovci wrote in his resignation letter. According to Pristina-based news website ***Lajmi***, PDK official Zenun Pajaziti is expected to replace Grabovci as head of the PDK parliamentary group.

**Vetëvendosje calls for Thaçi and Veseli’s resignation (*dailies*)**

The Vetëvendosje Movement reacted after the resignation of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) parliamentary group chief, Adem Grabovci, saying that Grabovci’s resignation implies admitting guilt for organised crime and corruption. “However, Grabovci’s resignation from the post of parliamentary group chief is not enough. He must also resign as deputy leader of PDK and every other public function. Grabovci should be prosecuted and held accountable for his crime. The Vetëvendosje Movement also calls for the urgent resignations of Hashim Thaçi and Kadri Veseli,” Vetëvendosje said in a press release.

**Haliti: I have a plan for demarcation (*RTK*)**

Kosovo Assembly Deputy Speaker and senior official of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), Xhavit Haliti, said on Tuesday that he has a plan for the border-demarcation agreement with Montenegro which, according to him, will be accepted by the government and the opposition. “I don’t want to give away any formulas, but very soon I will present something which I think will be acceptable to both parties. There are some people that want the demarcation deal to fail. Our main priority should be Kosovo’s security,” Haliti said.

**Removal of barricade on Ibar, “a deal over a deal” (*Koha*)**

In its leading front-page article, the paper quotes Mitrovica-based political analyst Nexhmedin Spahiu as saying that the implementation of the agreement on the revitalisation of the Ibar Bridge is “a deal over a deal”. According to Spahiu, the road will remain blocked and Serbs will continue to withstand the agreement. “Serbia’s primary objective was for the road to remain blocked, thus having only a square for pedestrians only,” he added. The paper further reports that a hand grenade was thrown on Tuesday at midnight near the bridge. Law enforcement authorities did not rule out the possibility of the attack being related to the removal of the barricade.

**One month detention for Serb who demolished the minaret (*dailies*)**

The Basic Court in Gjilan/Gnjilane has decided on a one-month detention for the 35-year old Serb from Pasjan who attempted to demolish the minaret of a mosque in the village of Velekincë. Media also report that Kosovo Deputy Prime Minister, Branimir Stojanovic, condemned the act and criticized security institutions for failing to protect religious sites.

**Nikolic admits Serbia cannot join EU without recognising Kosovo (*Lajmi*)**

The President of Serbia, Tomislav Nikolic, said on Tuesday after his meeting with the Prime Minister of Sweden, that Chapter 35 of Serbia’s negotiations with the European Union for EU membership represents an obstacle if it means recognition of Kosovo. “I have initiated discussions with the most senior level in Pristina, while Kosovo is not willing to implement everything that was agreed, especially on the establishment of the Association of the Serb-majority Municipalities.  Serbia is a small country with a big nation, it has its own state, history, tradition and culture. It is impossible to give up one thousand years of history,” Nikolic said.