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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Tahiri: EU says Mitrovica wall should be removed (*Koha*)**

Kosovo’s Minister for Dialogue, Edita Tahiri, following a meeting with representatives of Mitrovica municipalities and the EU about the wall that authorities in Mitrovica North have erected, said that the results of the meeting were positive. “The EU’s position is that the agreement should be fully respected and the wall is illegal and should be removed,” Tahiri told KTV. She said she presented the view of the government of Kosovo that the wall needs to be removed without delays.

**Media Headlines: EU does not say the wall in Mitrovica will be removed (*Koha, Lajmi, Gazetametro*)**

The European Union issued a press release on the meeting with Kosovo officials stating that the agreement on the Mitrovica bridge was reached within the context of the EU facilitated Dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina in August 2015. “The EU has met with both sides today to clarify pending issues related to the implementation of this agreement. Both sides agreed to harmonise the designs for the project to revitalise the Mitrovica Bridge and the project to pedestrianise the King Petar Street. They agreed that the roundabout in Mitrovica north will be connected with the pedestrianised King Petar street, allowing for full and unhindered freedom of movement, while addressing concerns related to road safety. Parties also agreed that the initial design of the roundabout, as agreed in Brussels in August 2015, will be fully adhered to. The EU will remain in close touch with both sides to ensure implementation of the agreement of August 2015, the implementing agreement of August 2016 and the operational understanding reached today with both sides so that the 20 January deadline for the re-opening of the bridge and the pedestrian street will be met,” reads the press release.

**Wall in Mitrovica to become an amphitheater (*gazetametro.net*)**

The news website reports that it appears the game of the Serbian party with the wall which divides north and south Mitrovica is going on, with another scandalous proposal from the cabinet of the Mitrovica North mayor, Goran Rakić. “The cabinet proposes not to ruin the wall in Mitrovica, but to transform it into an amphitheater, that would be part of the promenade area in the northern part of the city,” was said by the cabinet of the mayor of Mitrovica North. ***Gazeta Metro*** claims that this statement was taken from the meeting of the Mitrovica North mayor with officials of the European Union. The wall that divides Mitrovica was built two days ago and caused major reaction of the people.

**Selimi: Wall in northern Mitrovica a result of Brussels dialogue (*Zeri*)**

The Vetevendosje Movement MP, Rexhep Selimi, said on Thursday that the wall in northern Mitrovica is being built with high intensity and that it seems its construction was part of the dialogue in Brussels. He said the government of Kosovo is incapable to prevent the construction of this wall. “At a time when people remove borders, a wall is being built in Mitrovica. The negotiating parties have reached a secret agreement and it seems that the wall was part of the agreement,” Selimi said.

**KLA veterans warn situation could escalate if wall is not demolished (*Koha*)**

The association of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) veterans warned that the situation in Kosovo could escalate if the wall in Mitrovica North is not demolished. The veterans called on the government of Kosovo to clarify to the public whether the wall is part of the Brussels agreement on revitalization of the Iber River bridge and to not allow further provocations.

**Mustafa: Those who hindered visa liberalisation should be ashamed (*Koha*)**

The Prime Minister of Kosovo Isa Mustafa accused all those who opposed demarcation of the border with Montenegro as being responsible for no visa liberalization for Kosovo. “Today is the day when all those who invented and became lawyers to a false cause should be ashamed for impeding liberalization of visas for Kosovo, while Ukraine and Georgia won for their citizens,” Mustafa wrote on his Facebook page.

**Lunacek: Kosovo to fulfill criteria for visa liberalisation (*Zeri*/*RFE*)**

The European Parliament Rapporteur for Kosovo, Ulrike Lunacek, said on Thursday that Kosovo Assembly and government must behave in a responsible way towards the citizens of Kosovo, adding that Kosovo must urgently fulfill the two remaining criteria for visa liberalisation. Lunacek’s statement comes after the European Parliament and Council agreed on EU suspension mechanism for visas. “The decision on suspension means that Ukraine and Georgia are moving forward and Kosovo must seize this opportunity. It is a big opportunity and I call on the Kosovo Assembly and government to act in a responsible manner towards their citizens who deserve visa-free travel,” Lunacek said. The review of the visa suspension mechanism, which has existed since 2013, is linked to the proposals to grant visa-free access to the EU to Ukraine, Georgia and Kosovo, currently under discussion.

**Fajon: There is still hope for visas (*Epoka e Re*)**

The Rapporteur for Kosovo at the European Parliament, Tanja Fajon, said on Thursday that there is still hope for removal of visas for Kosovo, and made an urgent appeal to the institutions of Kosovo to fulfill the remaining criteria. “I appeal to Kosovo to urgently fulfill the remaining criteria for visa. There is still a window of opportunity,” Fajon said.

**NATO confirms eight new activities with Kosovo (*Koha Ditore*)**

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg informed Kosovo Prime Minister Isa Mustafa that as part of the growing cooperation with Kosovo, the alliance plans to carry out eight new activities but according to the paper, none indicates that Kosovo is close to beginning membership process. Nevertheless, Kosovo government officials hailed the letter saying it heralds a new stage in relations with NATO. In a press conference yesterday, Prime Minister Isa Mustafa said Stoltenberg confirmed “substantial advancement” of cooperation with Kosovo.

**O’Connell: Missing persons issue cannot be negotiated (*Koha Ditore*)**

British Ambassador to Kosovo, Ruairi O’Connell, said that the process of determining the fate of the missing persons has stalled and requires more effort. He also said he didn’t believe the missing persons issue should be up for negotiation. “Technically, it is up to the government of Kosovo and that of Serbia to decide if they want to include the issue of missing persons in the Brussels dialogue. Personally, I am not convinced this would be a good step as the dialogue process in Brussels is a negotiation. I don’t think the fate of the missing should be subject of negotiations,” said the British ambassador. O’Connell made the comments at the launch of a project for determining the fate of missing persons that the British Government is supporting.

**Gecaj: Demarcation must be ratified this month (*Zeri*)**

Kosovo’s Deputy Minister of Local Government Administration, Bajram Gecaj, said on Thursday that opposition parties must reconsider their position in regards to border demarcation agreement with Montenegro in order for the process of visa liberalisation to move forward. “This month is the time for the opposition to reflect because Kosovo citizens do not deserve to be the only ones isolated,” he said. According to him, Serb MPs were not present the day that border demarcation agreement was put to a vote because “they felt threatened by Vetevendosje’s anarchy calls.” Gecaj also said that the agreement will be sent to the Assembly only when the ruling coalition partners manage to secure the necessary votes for its ratification.

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