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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Serbia threatens with military intervention, Kosovo vows not to allow provocations (*Koha*)**

***Koha Ditore*** reports on the front page that although the Belgrade-Mitrovica train did not reach its destination, tensions between Pristina and Belgrade have only increased more recently. Officials in Serbia, according to the paper, spoke in threatening tones and did not rule out the use of the military in the north of Kosovo if the same train scenario happens again while Kosovo officials vowed not to allow provocations by Serbia. Prime Minister Isa Mustafa said the deployment of special police units to prevent the arrival of the train deemed as a “provocation” was done based on the duties and responsibilities of Kosovo institutions to protect their sovereignty. “The decisions are of the Police and relevant institutions of the Republic of Kosovo because no one takes individual decisions in such cases,” said Mustafa during a visit to the village of Recak to commemorate the 18th anniversary of the killing of 47 Albanians by Serb forces. On the same occasion, Kosovo Assembly President Kadri Veseli pointed out that Serbia’s actions are aimed at provoking Kosovo and its people. “We will not allow the building of walls in our country and will stop trains that come without our permission,” Veseli noted.

**Thaçi: Serbia’s threats endanger Balkans (*Zëri*)**

The President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaçi, said that Serbia’s threats with war endanger peace in Balkans. “These threats with war are unacceptable, in contradiction with dialogue for normalization of the relations and directly endanger peace in Western Balkans,” Thaçi said. He said that despite this kind of old and provoking language from Serbia, the dialogue with this country should continue, and reached agreements should be implemented. “We should work on complete normalization between the Republic of Kosovo and Serbia,” Thaçi said. In another Facebook post, Thaci said he was pleased that the tensioning of the political and security situation in Kosovo and the region was avoided by preventing the arrival of the “propagandistic” train of Serbia. “Kosovo respects the freedom of movement of people and goods. To this end, we have opened new border crossings with neighbours and we have reached agreements that enable the crossing of the border only with IDs,” Thaci wrote adding however that “Serbia has unfortunately launched a continuous provocation campaign aimed at producing tensions in Kosovo and the region.” “We hope authorities in Serbia have realised that their action was illegal and in violation to the spirit of dialogue and cooperation we are promoting in the region.”

**Protest in the north regarding Belgrade-Mitrovica train (*Koha*)**

A day after the Belgrade-Mitrovica train failed to reach its destination, thousands Kosovo Serbs staged a protest in Mitrovica North against the presence of Kosovo Police. Kosovo’s Deputy Prime Minister from the Serbian List Branimir Stojanovic told the crowd that some people seem to have forgotten that Serbs are not afraid while the Minister for Communities and Return, Dalibor Jevtic, said they will continue to pursue their goals in a peaceful manner. Petar Petrovic from Serbian Government’s Office for Kosovo said that the train was sent back to avoid a possible conflict but that Serbia is determined to protect the freedom of Serbs. “We want to convey a message to Pristina to be aware that it cannot prevent the free movement of Serbs or create ghettos,” Petrovic said.

**KFOR ready for intervention (*Zëri*)**

KFOR Spokesperson, Colonel Max Barbacini, told ***Zëri*** that KFOR is ready for any kind of situation that requires their intervention. “KFOR continues to carry out its duties, as mandated by the UN Security Council Resolution 1244, and is prepared to deal with any kind of situation,” Barbacini said. Asked whether KFOR considered increasing security measures in Northern Kosovo after the recent events, Barbacini said that they have not undertaken any step for tactical changes in the field so far. Asked whether Serbia’s attempt to send the train to Kosovo violated Kosovo’s territorial integrity, Barbacini said that this is a matter between Pristina and Belgrade. “We appeal to both parties to restrain and engage in dialogue,” he said.

**Brussels calls for dialogue (*Koha Ditore*)**

The European Commission foreign policy spokesperson, Maja Kocijancic, told the paper that they are in contact with both Pristina and Belgrade following Saturday’s events and that the High Representative Federica Mogherini has already spoken to Serbian Prime Minister, Aleksandar Vucic. “The EU calls on both sides to show restraint and reason and resume dialogue,” Kocijancic said.

**US respects the right of Kosovo to intervene in the north (*Koha Ditore*)**

The US has come out in support of Kosovo institutions’ action to prevent the arrival of the Belgrade-Mitrovica train. The US Embassy spokesperson J. Michelle Schohn told the paper that the US respects the right of Kosovo to manage its borders. “The US has recognised Kosovo as a sovereign and independent country since 2008 and we respect the right of Kosovo to manage who and what goes through its borders,” Schohn said.

**Bahtiri hails the action of stopping the train (*Bota Sot*)**

Mitrovica mayor Agim Bahtiri strongly supported the measures of Kosovo institutions to stop Serbia’s train from entering Kosovo territory. "On my behalf and on behalf of the citizens of Mitrovica, I welcome the action of the legal and constitutional institutions of the Republic of Kosovo to prevent entry of the Serbian train into our country, with which Belgrade government aimed to provoke, increase tensions and even conflict in the state of Kosovo. By undertaking this necessary and reasonable action, the state institutions of Kosovo and their leaders were at the line of duty to protect the sovereignty and not allow the violation of a territorial space of ​​the Republic of Kosovo and therefore they deserve recognition for their wise and legal and constitutional response towards open provocation of the Government of Serbia, because this avoided tensions and destabilization of the country,” Bahtiri wrote.

**Deda: Vučić’s threat is preparation for a Crimea scenario (*Bota Sot*)**

Independent MP of the Assembly of Kosovo, Ilir Deda, compared the threat of the Serbian Prime Minister, Alksandar Vučić, with Russia’s scenario to annex Crimea. “Vučić’s ‘Last warning’ that if Kosovo Serbs are attacked then Serbia will defend them, is Belgrade’s and its allies’ warning and intention for a Crimea scenario in northern Kosovo. We should stand together in defending our state, and face this major challenge together,” Deda said.

**Leaders in Tirana comment recent developments in Kosovo (*Koha*)**

Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama and two former prime ministers, Pandeli Majko and Sali Berisha, commented on Facebook on the recent events in Kosovo regarding the Belgrade-Mitrovica train. Rama accused Serbia of using “political maneuvers” and said that the only way Serbia can save itself from its past is by recognising independence of Kosovo. Majko at the same time said that statements such as that of the Serbian President Tomislav Nikolic who warned of the use of military in the north of Kosovo have caused bloodshed in the region in the past and added that dialogue is the only way to resolve differences. Berisha on the other hand said the train was a dangerous provocation and that Serbia is a “real threat to peace in the region.”

**Northern Assembly to “legalize” the wall today (*Zëri*)**

Head of the Mitrovica North Assembly, Dejan Gurešić, invited municipal advisers in the north for an extraordinary session with only one point on the agenda, “endorsement of the project for urban improvement of the pedestrian zone in ‘King Peter I’ in accordance with the Brussels agreement.” The paper notes that this action officially makes the wall in Mitrovica North legal.

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