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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Kosovo Assembly’s constitutive session ends in stalemate (*dailies*)**

Yesterday’s developments at the Assembly of Kosovo dominate paper’s headlines today with most accusing PAN coalition of blocking the Assembly because of their inability to gather enough votes to elect speaker. ***Koha Ditore*** says Assembly’s constitutive session failed because the winning coalition, PAN, refused to nominate a candidate for Assembly Speaker, and vowed not to take part in the session called for today. The paper also quotes legal experts as saying that boycotting of the session by PAN representatives would be in conflict with to the Constitutional Court’s ruling of 2014. ***Zeri*** on the front page carries a portrait of Kadri Veseli in between the tied result of yesterday’s vote: 60 and 60 and asks, *Where are the numbers?* It says that for two months representatives of PAN coalition insisted they have enough votes to form new institutions but that yesterday they showed they did not have enough votes to even postpone the session for two hours let alone elect Veseli to the post of Assembly Speaker. “Their only ‘smuggled’ vote was that of Teuta Rugova,” the paper writes. At the same time, ***Epoka e Re*** reports on the front page that yesterday’s session showed no coalition or party has the majority to form new institutions in contrast to ***Bota Sot*** which writes that PAN coalition was “humiliated” yesterday and that it is now seeking a way out through new elections.

**Veseli: I will withdraw if VV and LAA vote in favor of Haradinaj (*media*)**

Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) leader Kadri Veseli said on Thursday that he is willing to give up the post of Assembly President if Vetevendosje and the LDK-AKR-Alternativa coalition guarantee that they will vote in favor of another PAN candidate for the post and if they agree to vote on the same day in favor of a Ramush Haradinaj-led government. In an interview to ***RTK***, Veseli said: “They [VV and LDK-AKR-Alternativa] claim they will vote in favor of any other candidate except Kadri Veseli. I call on them to stay true to their word and if they come out in public tomorrow and say that Kadri Veseli is an obstacle, I have no problem whatsoever with them and I don’t submit to them, but for the sake of state interests and to unmask them, I will offer another PAN candidate for Assembly President. And on the same day they can vote in favor of Ramush Haradinaj as Prime Minister. We should not delay any further, we should not play games with the sentiments of the people, with their social dissatisfaction. We need peace, communication, respect for lawfulness and the Constitution, and at the same time, we need to fight corruption in all political parties”.

**Vetevendosje welcomes “Veseli’s withdrawal from candidacy” (*media*)**

The Vetevendosje Movement (VV) said on Thursday it “welcomes Kadri Veseli’s withdrawal from the candidacy for Assembly President” saying that “it was high time to reflect”. “We will now wait and see who will be PAN’s candidate for Assembly President. They should propose a person that is as inclusive as possible,” Vetevendosje said in a statement. Commenting on Veseli’s proposal that VV and the LDK-AKR-Alternativa coalition should vote in favor of a Haradinaj-led government, Vetevendosje said they will wait for Haradinaj to fail in his attempt to form a new government. “We cannot reach an agreement with Veseli. Veseli has an agreement with Haradinaj. After Haradinaj fails to form a government, our candidate will then have the right to try to form a new government,” VV said.

**PAN will not attend Assembly’s session today (*Zeri*)**

In a press conference yesterday, Blerand Stavileci from the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) said PAN members will not attend Assembly’s session today. Stavileci said democratic principles were not adhered to yesterday and that today’s session was called “arbitrarily”. He said that for as long as there are public and private pressure on certain MPs, PAN coalition will not be returning to Assembly’s constitutive session.

**Hoxhaj: One vote failed us at the last minute (*Telegrafi/Dukagjini*)**

Deputy leader of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), Enver Hoxhaj, said PAN coalition had enough votes to elect the speaker before Assembly’s constitutive session began but that one MP withdrew its vote at the last minute. Hoxhaj did not reveal which MP he was referring to and that “it is an individual right of each MP to vote for whomever they want”. Hoxhaj said PAN coalition would return to the Assembly given that some conditions are met beforehand. He said that the chairman of the session cannot call one without consulting the “largest” political entity.

**Konjufca: Teuta Rugova’s vote in exchange for judicial favours (*Koha*)**

Vetevendosje’s Glauk Konjufca said in an interview to KTV last night that Teuta Rugova’s vote in support of PAN coalition’s proposal to postpone the Assembly’s session for two hours was exchanged with assurances that the charges her brother Uke is facing would be dropped. Konjufca said that this was a public secret that no one was saying out loud. “I think this is not about Teuta Rugova personally but about Uke Rugova”, he said. Uke Rugova is being tried for involvement into a visa scam affair and according to Konjufca it would be “catastrophic” to have a government in Kosovo which is ready to overturn a judicial process for personal and political ambition.

**Ambassadors disappointed with Assembly’s failure to elect speaker (*Zeri/RFE*)**

The U.S. Ambassador to Kosovo, Greg Delawie, told ***Radio Free Europe*** it was disappointing that Kosovo’s elected representatives failed to constitute the Assembly. “For Kosovo it is important to have a functional Assembly and Government as soon as possible to address urgent priorities”, Delawie said. He called on all parties not to lose time in forming new institutions. At the same time, the German Ambassador Angelika Viets commented on yesterday’s developments by simply stating: “it’s a shame”.

**U.S. confirms death of terrorist Lavdrim Muhaxheri (*Koha*)**

The United States Defense Department said on Thursday that Lavdrim Muhaxheri was killed by a coalition airstrike on June 7 near Mayadin, Syria. A press release issued by the State Department noted that Muhaxheri was an ethnic Albanian from Kacanc, Kosovo, and a self-proclaimed leader of ISIS foreign fighters from Kosovo. “He was known as the most prominent and radical ethnic Albanian fighter in Syria and was directly responsible for inciting jihadist ideology within European communities and encouraging foreign fighters to travel to ISIS-controlled territory, officials said. He was also responsible for planning numerous terrorist attacks, they added, including the failed plot to bomb the 2016 Israel-Albania soccer match in Albania,” the statement said. Four senior ISIS associates of Muhaxheri also are confirmed dead, the statement added. Jetmir Ismaili, an ISIS external terror attack planner, was killed by a coalition airstrike in Raqqah, Syria, in late June. Ismaili had key connections with ISIS external terror attack planners in Europe and Syria, and personally planned and coordinated external ISIS terror attacks. Razim Kastrati, an ISIS external terror attack coordinator, was killed along with five other ISIS fighters by a June 16 coalition airstrike near Mayadin, Syria. Kastrati moved and trained foreign fighters from southeast Europe to Syria and was involved in plotting external attacks. Irfan Hafiqi, a fellow ethnic Albanian and deputy to Muhaxheri, was killed by a June 7 coalition airstrike near Qayira, Syria. Haqifi was involved in plotting terror attacks abroad, and was responsible for recruiting ISIS fighters from Southeast Europe and facilitating their movements to Syria, officials said. Orhan Ramadani was killed by a coalition airstrike on May 21 near Mayadin, Syria. He was responsible for actively planning external terror attacks from Syria.

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