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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Haradinaj: AAK to vote in favour of repealing specialist court (*Telegrafi*)**

Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, said in an interview to ***RTV Dukagjini*** that he would respect any decision the Assembly takes on the specialist court and that his party would vote in favour of the bill if it is put to vote. He said however that if endorsed, the law would not “undo” the court but would disable its functioning in certain aspects.

**Delawie warns against abolishment of specialist court (*Bota Sot*)**

In an interview for the New Year’s edition of the paper, the U.S. Ambassador Greg Delawie has warned about consequences if Kosovo Assembly repeals law on specialist chambers saying the move would have serious repercussions for Kosovo’s EU perspective and its relations with the U.S. “The United States do no support this or any effort to undermine cooperation with the Court which I think is crucial as it will bring justice to victims of war crimes and shows Kosovo’s readiness to become a fully-fledged member of the international community,” Delawie said. He noted that it was clear the process for abolishing the court was initiated by certain individuals. “I am extremely disappointed at anyone who would sacrifice the interest of the state for promotion of personal interests,” Delawie said further.

**Apostolova: Kosovo leaders should put people first (*Kosova Sot*)**

Head of the EU Office in Kosovo, Nalyia Apostolova, wrote in an editorial for the paper that the elected officials and Kosovo leaders should do the utmost to fulfill the conditions for visa liberalization. “They should not keep their people hostage. They should not interrupt dreams of the youth for better opportunities on education and new experiences,” Apostolova wrote.

**MPs do not give up abolishment of the Special Court (*Epoka*)**

The 22 December request of 43 MPs for an extraordinary session to abolish the Law on Special Chambers and Office of the Specialized Prosecutor will be voted, claim the MPs of both government and opposition political parties. Nait Hasani from the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), said the request was made to change the ethnic character of the court in order to treat all alleged crimes including those from other ethnic communities and not only the Kosovo Liberation Army. “I objected and will continue to object such court because it does not condemn crime but the Kosovo Liberation Army,” Hasani said.

Opposition remains divided on the matter. While the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) is against this initiative, Rexhep Selimi from Vetevendosje Movement said the position of this political party has not changed since 2015 and that despite the fact that the initiative came from the governing political parties, Vetevendosje will continue to consider the court as an injustice to Kosovo.

**Trendafilova: No official position amnesties from criminal liability (*Kosova Sot*)**

The paper carries an interview with head of the Specialist Chambers, Ekaterina Trendafilova who said that the Court will be dealing with serious, widespread crimes committed during a three-year period of time in a wide territory, not only at one place or event. “Therefore, the duration of a judicial matter or matters will depend on the concrete circumstances…I do not know and there is no way for me to know what crimes does the prosecutor investigate, how many suspects will be and who from the suspects will be accused and for what crimes. The law defines it clearly that the official position of an individual, be him the President of the country or the government, does not release from criminal liability.

**Soltes: Reforms should take place for the sake of Kosovo and its people (*Kosova*)**

In an exclusive editorial for the paper, Igor Soltes, Rapporteur for Kosovo at the European Parliament, wrote that the conditions to be fulfilled for liberalization of visas are demarcation of the border with Montenegro and efficient combatting of corruption and organized crime. “I know that you might ask why the border matters were not the main request for the other countries of the region. You might also be right, but it is also right for you to know that this pledge was agreed and signed in the past by EU representatives and Kosovo politicians,” Soltes wrote.

**Impunity of judges and prosecutors to be challenged by new law (*Koha*)**

The paper reports on the front page that the government of Kosovo is expected to send to Assembly a draft law consisting of punitive measures for judges and prosecutors who commit disciplinary offences. The measures include written warning, temporary pay reduction, temporary demotion or even dismissal. Ehat Miftaraj from the Kosovo Democratic Institute (KDI) said the measures have been devised as a response to the failures of the justice system to hold accountable judges and prosecutors for violating the law. However, Miftaraj said he was skeptical the law would be adequately implemented.

**Judges and prosecutors welcome news of pay raise (*Koha*)**

Kosovo judges and prosecutors have hailed the statement of Justice Minister Abelard Tahiri who announced that the recent decision on pay raise for government staff will also extend to the judicial sector. “Based on this decision, we will be able to say that Kosovo judges and prosecutors have the best salaries in the region,” Tahiri said. Nehat Idrizi from the Kosovo Judicial Council said the move will increase efficiency and accountability while Kosovo Law Institute said the government’s decision to increase salaries only for certain categories is unlawful as it has bypassed the Assembly.

**Expropriation cost of coal-rich areas nears €27 million (*Koha Ditore*)**

The cost for expropriation of privately-owned properties near the Obiliq coal mine has neared €27 million, said Minister of Economic Development Valdrin Lluka at the end-of-year press briefing. “€15.5 million were allocated initially for expropriation purposes. Now the cost is estimated between 23 and 27 million euro,” Lluka said adding that this will be covered by the Kosovo Energy Corporation (KEK) and there will be no need for the government to step in.

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