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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Thaci: Local and international exaggerations on special court (*VOA*)**

Kosovo President Hashim Thaci said in an interview to ***Voice of America*** that the decision to establish the special court is in force, and added that there have been exaggerated and unnecessary reactions “which have created panic among the people”. Thaci said: “Kosovo has demonstrated the best cooperation from all countries of former Yugoslavia with the Hague Tribunal, by voluntarily giving in to the first allegations that came up, although all the accused persons were again proven innocent. Therefore, even today, Kosovo is not against the justice system, it is not in favour of intervening in the justice system; now the opinions presented in the debates should be understood as a spirit of democracy, as an internal debate and expressed opinions by anyone”. Thaci also said he understood and respected “the negative opinions in 2015 that were contradictive and hostile as a democratic debate”. “The process that I led aimed at establishing the special court, although it is historically unjust, I did only to maintain our partnership with the United States of America, the European Union and NATO. Therefore, even today, the opinions expressed by the MPs are opinions of the elected, legitimate and representatives of the people. These opinions are procedurally correct, legal and constitutional; I think there is an approach of exaggeration of the opinion of Members of Kosovo Assembly, because that same Assembly approved it in 2015. People’s representatives today have different opinions on this issue, but from what I have read, no one is against the justice system, against the Court, but they see it as an alternative option,” he said. Asked if he is ready to sign the decree for revoking the law on the special court if MPs vote against it, Thaci said he would be violating the Constitution by not signing it. “It is my constitutional and legal obligation, and I cannot deny or turn down the will of the MPs,” he added. Asked to comment on reactions by the international community and foreign ambassadors in Pristina against the initiative to revoke the law, Thaci was quoted as saying, “I am worried with the exaggerations in this initiative of Kosovo MPs. It should be understood that MPs take decisions in the Assembly; people who are directly elected by the citizens, and not by brutal or violent interference against caucuses, or the calls of a certain ambassador that tonight is the time to fire teargas in the Assembly. I think that these calls seriously violate democracy in Kosovo.”

**Berlin, Paris warn Kosovo leaders of grave consequences over special court (*Koha*)**

The paper reports on its front page that a delegation of French and German officials arrived in Kosovo on Wednesday on an urgent mission to quench any initiative aimed at revoking the special court. The delegation met Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj and President Hashim Thaci, and according to reliable sources warned them that if the special court is revoked Kosovo’s leaders would face “grave consequences”. The French and German officials also met with representatives of the Vetevendosje Movement on Wednesday, and today they will meet representatives of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) and Kosovo Serb political representatives. The delegation is composed of the Special Envoy for South-Eastern Europe, Turkey and the EFTA States of the German Federal Foreign Office, Christian Hellbach, and the Head of the Western Balkans Department of the French Ministry of European and Foreign Affairs, Thomas Bertin. The German Embassy in Pristina issued a press release saying that the reason behind the visit are the recent efforts to revoke the law on the special court. “The visit comes as a result of concerns in Berlin and Paris over the recent efforts to revoke the Law on the Specialist Chambers and the Office of the Special Prosecutor. Other topics of discussion include the need to continue reforms, especially in the rule of law area, democracy and good governance, which are the foundations for Kosovo’s further approximation with the European Union,” the press release noted. The paper also quotes sources as saying that President Thaci continues to insist on the initiative to revoke the special court.

**Three leaders, many positions! (*Zeri*)**

Kosovo’s top three leaders, President Hashim Thaci, Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj and Assembly President Kadri Veseli, do not have joint positions on the most difficult issues the country is facing, the paper reports on its front page. Thaci and Haradinaj are along the same lines when it comes to the special court but they have diametrically opposite positions on the issue of the border demarcation deal with Montenegro. Meanwhile, Haradinaj and Veseli have different positions on the demarcation deal and the issue of the special court. In a similar tone, ***Bota Sot*** reports on its front page that “Kadri Veseli has gone against Hashim Thaci on the issue of the special court”. The paper further predicts that this could result in a split among PDK MPs.

**KLA War Veterans threaten to act if special court is not revoked (*Indeksonline*)**

The KLA War Veterans have warned to undertake concrete actions if the Kosovo Assembly does not revoke the law on the special court, the Pristina-based news website reports. Xhavit Jashari, chairman of the Association of Families of Martyrs, told ***Indeksonline*** that they expect MPs to do their job in revoking the special court. “We have sent petitions and requests to the institution that voted in favor of this court. If the MPs do not respect the path that we have followed to get here, they no longer need to stay in the Kosovo Assembly,” Jashari said.

**Vetevendosje to continue meetings to overcome problems (*media*)**

***Koha Ditore*** reports that the chairmanship of the Vetevendosje Movement (VV) met for over three hours on Wednesday to discuss internal problems and the resignations of its senior officials. The party’s organizational secretary, Ismajl Kurteshi, told reporters after the meeting that Albin Kurti is the only candidate for party leader. He also said that the VV chairmanship supports the letter of 82 activists which calls for open discussions to overcome the party’s problems “without any interference by the party’s decision-making bodies”. ***Zeri*** reports on its front page that Kurti has no counter-candidate and that senior VV officials are continuing to submit their resignations. In a front-page article, ***Kosova Sot*** claims that Pristina Mayor and Vetevendosje member Shpend Ahmeti is “blackmailing Albin Kurti” and is allegedly trying to take over the post of party leader.

**Hoti: Kosovo is testing its relations with U.S. and EU (*Epoka*)**

The paper carries as its leading front-page story an interview with Afrim Hoti, professor of international law at Pristina University, highlighting his remarks that Kosovo is in a very unfavorable position as a result of the initiative to revoke the law on the special court. Hoti said Kosovo is testing its relations with the U.S. and the European Union and that the initiative to revoke the special court could have a negative impact on the process of new recognitions and Kosovo’s prospects of joining international organizations.

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