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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Final alarm of internationals over special court (*Zeri*)**

The paper reports on its front page that the U.S., German, Norwegian embassies and the European Union Office in Pristina have sent the final alarm to Kosovo’s institutions to back down from the initiative to revoke or renegotiate the law on the Specialist Chambers and the Office of the Specialist Prosecutor. One day before the Kosovo Assembly Presidency will discuss the initiative, the foreign embassies have reiterated that Kosovo is jeopardizing its relations with international friends. The EU Office told the paper on Monday that the attempt to undo the special court will seriously damage Kosovo’s relations with the European Union. The statement noted: “In the statements of 22 December and 12 January the EU and its Members States have urged the originators of the Parliament initiative to withdraw it. 2015 Kosovo took a clear commitment with the EU and with the rest of the international community to establish the Specialist Chambers. For the EU, this demonstrated Kosovo’s full commitment to the rule of law. Any attempt to repeal or amend the mandate of the Specialist Chambers would seriously undermine such a commitment and would jeopardize the joint EU-Kosovo work on the rule of law done in recent years. Therefore, it would adversely impact Kosovo relations with the EU. Kosovo needs to make further progress towards EU integration, and make genuine efforts aimed at guaranteeing democracy, rule of law, human rights and reconciliation. When making these efforts, Kosovo will always find the EU at its side”. The U.S. Embassy told the paper on Monday: “Our position remains the same. We call on leaders of institutions, political parties, and MPs to give up on any idea for abrogating or renegotiating any aspect of the Law on Specialist Chambers”.

**Veseli: We will overcome challenge of special court (*Kosova Sot*)**

Kosovo Assembly President and Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) leader, Kadri Veseli, said on Monday that Kosovo needs to win the battle of the special court because the truth and justice are on Kosovo’s side. “The Kosovo Liberation Army remains unique in the purity of its cause and its fight. Any attempt to distort the character of the KLA through different courts is a major challenge for all of us. We are now faced with an inevitable challenge but we shall overcome it,” Veseli said.

**Kosovo’s new negotiators express commitment to Brussels dialogue (*Koha*)**

Kosovo’s new negotiating team, led by Avni Arifi, held a meeting with European Union officials in Brussels on Monday. A press release issued by the Kosovo government said talks will focus on energy, freedom of movement and regional cooperation. “The Kosovo delegation has expressed commitment to dialogue, namely to a process of dialogue that is in the service of all Kosovo citizens … The new negotiating team is committed to a process of dialogue that will have greater transparency vis-à-vis the people,” the statement said.

**Border demarcation bill sent to Assembly Presidency for discussion (*media*)**

The Kosovo Assembly’s Foreign Affairs Committee decided on Monday to submit for discussion to the Assembly Presidency the draft law on the ratification of the border agreement between Kosovo and Montenegro. The committee recommended to the presidency to decide whether or not the draft law should be included in the Assembly’s agenda for Wednesday.

**AAK MP: Not enough votes to pass current demarcation deal (*Epoka*)**

In a front-page interview to the paper, Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) MP, Time Kadrijaj said it is going to be very difficult to secure 2/3 of votes in the Kosovo Assembly to ratify the current version of the border demarcation agreement with Montenegro. Kadrijaj, who is also a member of the Assembly’s Foreign Affairs Committee and whose party rejects the border deal, said that there are even PDK and LDK MPs that will vote against the agreement. She also added that Kosovo should not give away parts of its territory in exchange for visa liberalization.

**No agreement in Vetevendosje (*media*)**

***Koha Ditore*** reports on its front page that even after a six-hour meeting on Monday, the two groups in the Vetevendosje Movement (VV) failed to reach an agreement. The two groups however agreed to continue talks in the next couple of days. After the meeting, those who resigned from Vetevendosje said they were not optimistic about an agreement. On the other hand, the supporters of Albin Kurti said they are optimistic. Kurti told reporters that “talks will continue and so will the work in the Vetevendosje Movement”. Shpend Ahmeti, Pristina Mayor, said “there will be intensive talks in the coming days to see if we can continue on a joint path”. ***Kosova Sot*** covers the meeting under the headline ***Two VV camps do not agree, the movement is heading toward division***. ***Epoka e Re*** quotes two political analysts as saying that there are real indications that VV will be divided.

**Walker: Kosovo needs a new generation of political leaders (*Kosova Sot*)**

William Walker, former head of the Kosovo Verification Mission, said on Monday that he is disappointed with the current situation in Kosovo. Walker said things are not changing for the better and argued that Kosovo needs new political leaders. “The political class that is currently leading the country was part of the war. The time has come for Kosovo to have a new generation of political leaders. Everyone is saying that they want changes, but I am not seeing any changes,” Walker was quoted as saying.

**IMF reacts to decision on salary increase (*Zeri*)**

Ruud Vermeulen, head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission in Kosovo, told the paper on Monday that he is concerned with Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj’s decision to increase the salaries of political staff. Vermeulen argued that this decision could encourage other sectors to ask for salary increases and that this decision was not foreseen by the 2018 budget. He further said that any increase, if not agreed upon by the IMF and the Kosovo government, could undermine employment opportunities in primary sectors, such as healthcare, education and the judiciary.

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