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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Haradinaj: Initiative to abrogate specialist court was unsuccessful (*Zeri*)**

Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, said in an interview to the German paper ***Der Tagesspiegel*** that the initiative for abrogating the law on specialist chambers was unsuccessful and that it was a democratic expression of a group of MPs. “The views of the MPs are not necessarily expression of obligations and international responsibilities. The initiative however was unsuccessful, meaning it will not have an epilogue,” Haradinaj said.

**Kosovo government rejects ideas of partition (*Koha*)**

Avni Arifi, head of the Kosovo delegation for talks with Belgrade in Brussels, told the paper on Sunday that Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj would never be part of eventual talks for Kosovo’s partition. “We understand the ideas coming from Belgrade. In the last 20 years, they never had any good ideas for the region, the same goes for their latest idea for the exchange of territories. If they want to divide Serbia, it is their problem, but Kosovo has no land to give away or exchange,” Arifi said. “Anyone who says or suspects that Ramush Haradinaj is part of any talk or agreement for Kosovo’s division is lying and has ill intentions”. In an interview to German newspaper ***Tagesspiegel***, Haradinaj talked about Kosovo’s relations with Serbia and highlighted the importance of a peace treaty. “It has been almost two decades since the war has ended. It is time for Kosovo and its people to have a clear future,” Haradinaj said. The paper recalls that several media reported over the weekend that the idea for the exchange of territories between Kosovo and Serbia is supported by President Hashim Thaci and Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama.

**Hoxhaj: News on exchange of territories, campaign against Kosovo (RTK)**

RTK reports that on the verge of the tenth anniversary of the declaration of independence, Serbia has increased its activities in the campaign against Kosovo, which is being implemented by the Serbian media controlled by the government there. Kosovo’s Deputy Prime Minister, Enver Hoxhaj, took to Twitter to write that “Serbia is intensifying the propaganda agenda and attacks against Kosovo on the verge of 10 years of independence. Fake news and hybrid threats on territorial partition and change of borders are part of a systematic campaign against Kosovo and the Euro-Atlantic future of the region.”

**Veseli: Serbia to recognise Kosovo (*Epoka e Re*)**

Kosovo Assembly President, Kadri Veseli, told Croatian news agency ***HINA*** that Kosovo and Serbia need to reach a legally-binding agreement as a precondition for their European integration. “It is not reasonable for the moderate politicians in Serbia not to be able to recognise the reality and the independence of Kosovo,” Veseli noted. He said that transformation of the Kosovo Security Force into a Kosovo army is inevitable but that this new force would not present a threat to anyone and will contribute to stability. Asked about the specialist chambers, Veseli said it is known who the victims and who the perpetrators of the Kosovo conflict were but that Kosovo will fulfill its international obligations.

**Austrian vice-chancellor: Mistake to pressure Serbia to recognise Kosovo (*Zeri*)**

Austrian Vice-Chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache is quoted to have told Belgrade daily ***Politika*** that it would be a mistake to pressure Serbia into recognising Kosovo. “I think recognition of Kosovo is only Serbia’s issue. To put pressure on the country for this would be a wrong thing to do. Austria as a neutral country should play the role of a mediator,” Strache said adding that he considered that self-determination or autonomy for the northern part of Kosovo would be “desirable.” “However unfortunately, this requires lengthy and complicated negotiations. I think Pristina is very clear on this matter,” Strache said ahead of his meeting with Serbian Foreign Minister, Ivica Dacic.

**Austria has not changed its position on Kosovo (*RTK*)**

The Austrian Embassy to Kosovo, has reacted after the reporting that Austrian Vice-Chancellor Heinz-Christina Strache said Kosovo is part of Serbia. Austrian Ambassador to Kosovo, Gernot Pfandler, said Austria has not changed its position on Kosovo. “No changes to Austrian Position on Kosovo. Austria has recognized Kosovo as one of the first countries and is since then one of the strongest supporters of the Republic of Kosovo and its European perspective,” Austrian Ambassador wrote on his Twitter account.

**Hahn reconfirms that Austria has not changed position on Kosovo (*Koha*)**

The European Enlargement Commissioner, Johannes Hahn, retweeted the Austrian Ambassador to Kosovo Gernot Pfandler’s original tweet saying: “No changes to Austrian position on Kosovo. Austrian has recognised Kosovo as one of the first countries and is since then one of the strongest supporters of the Republic of Kosovo and its European perspective.”

**Pacolli: Austrian official’s statement could lead to bloodshed (*Bota Sot*)**

Kosovo’s Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Behgjet Pacolli, reacted to the statement by the Austrian Vice-Chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache that the north of Kosovo should be given the right to self-determination or autonomy saying such proposals are not only unwise but also do not contribute to the resolving of any dispute in Kosovo. “Any such initiative could open the Pandora’s Box and create situations that lead to bloodshed,” Pacolli wrote is his Facebook page. He added that Kosovo is thankful to Austria for its contribution but that is strongly opposes the statement of the vice-chancellor.

**LDK MP: Strache’s statement dangerous for the region, Europe (*Klan Kosova*)**

The Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) MP, Vjosa Osmani, said that the statement of the Austrian vice-chancellor that the north of Kosovo should be given the right to self-determination is dangerous to the security of the Balkans and Europe. In a Facebook post, Osmani said that whoever comes with proposals regarding self-determination for the north is disregarding international law principles and fundamental rules. “

**Serwer urges Kosovo to ratify border demarcation (*Epoka/RFE*)**

The U.S. Balkans analyst, Daniel Serwer, said Kosovo has made considerable progress in the ten years since it declared independence but that it required ten more to fully consolidate. He said the abrogation of the specialist chambers would be a catastrophic move while the ratification of the border demarcation agreement with Montenegro would move things forward for Kosovo. “My advice is: finish this job because Kosovo wins much more with visa liberalisation than anyone stands to lose with demarcation,” Serwer told ***Radio Free Europe***.

**Opposition doesn’t believe demarcation guarantees visa liberalization (RTK)**

Opposition political parties in Kosovo do not appear to change their positions on ratification of the Agreement for demarcation of the border with Montenegro. According to them, ratification does not guarantee visa liberalization. “Each meeting that we have had with Apostolova, including the latest one, we were told that there are two conditions, and it remains so: demarcation and combating of corruption,” said Albulena Haxhiu, Kosovo Assembly MP from Vetevendosje Movement. Avdullah Hoti, caucus of the Democratic League of Kosovo at the Assembly, said the government is playing with two cards and added that demarcation should be sent to the Assembly as soon as possible. “We will support demarcation, there is no reason for further delay,” Hoti said.

**Jevtic: Establishment of association, key to continuance of dialogue (RTK)**

Kosovo’s Minister for Communities and Returns, Dalibor Jevtic, met in Washington with the U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of European and Euroasian Affairs, Matthew Palmer. They discussed the current situation in Kosovo. “There are many challenges that await us this year. We have to resolve some of the problems in order for the entire Western Balkans to move forward and became part of the EU. The U.S. support to reach sustainable peace and stability in Kosovo is of great importance, while Oliver Ivanovic’s murder requires an answer to the question who committed this crime,” Jevtic said. He further stressed that continuance of the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina is very important, and establishment of the Association of Serb majority Municipalities is a necessary step for continuance of the dialogue. He also talked about returns of the displaced persons and obstacles on this process.

**Two policemen arrested for “mishandling evidence” in Ivanovic case (*Kallxo*)**

Two Kosovo Police officers were arrested under the suspicion of mishandling evidence at the scene of the murder of Kosovo Serb political leader, Oliver Ivanovic. “They were tasked with protecting the scene of the crime and did not do so accordingly,” said prosecutor Nijazi Rexha. Kosovo Police Inspectorate confirmed the arrests in a statement adding that the two officials were working at the Mitrovica North police station.

**‘Serbia is not involved on investigations of Ivanovic’s murder” (RTK)**

Despite the news from a few days ago that Kosovo has sent to Serbia some documentation related to Oliver Ivanovic’s murder, Serbia’s Minister of Internal Affairs, Nebojsa Stefanovic, said that Kosovo has more chances to shed light on the murder of Serb politician, as it has more information from the field. He added further that Serbia is not authorized to participate on the investigation, but only on exchange of data. Serbia’s director of the Office for Kosovo, Marko Djuric, stated earlier that he expects intensification of cooperation.

**Slovenian President to visit Kosovo today (*media*)**

The President of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, is expected to visit Kosovo today. Kosovo’s President Hashim Thaci, will be hosting a joint meeting of Kosovo and Slovenian delegations, after a ceremony at “Ibrahim Rugova” square.

**Kosovo national killed in Syria (*media*)**

Several news websites report that a Kosovo Albanian has been killed in the fighting in Syria. Pristina-based ***Kallxo*** news website cites sources in law enforcement agencies as saying that K.A. from the village of Pestova, Vushtrri municipality, was killed on February 2. He was reportedly living in Germany from where he joined the fighting in Syria. Media report that 75 Albanians from Kosovo have been killed so far in the conflict in Syria and Iraq.

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