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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Serbian List decides to leave government, Haradinaj says he won’t resign (*media*)**

The leading story in most media is the Serbian List’s decision to leave the ruling coalition following the arrest of Serbian government office for Kosovo director Marko Djuric. ***Koha Ditore*** reports on its front page that the Haradinaj-led government has lost its majority and that the Serbian List has threatened to initiate unilateral actions for forming the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities. Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj told reporters in Pristina on Tuesday that he doesn’t plan to resign after the Serbian List’s decision to leave his government. “Parliament consists of many parliamentary groups. The Serbian List is a partner. We had a truthful partnership. Yesterday’s action [Djuric’s arrest] was not directed against Kosovo Serbs but only against those who violated the law. This was standard procedure … I do not intend to resign. I will continue my work. I have no comment for those who enter and leave. I believe this decision does not serve the interests of Kosovo Serbs and I hope it will be withdrawn,” he added. Under the front-page headline ***Haradinaj with a minority government***, ***Zeri*** quotes the Prime Minister as saying that he is confident there will be no early parliamentary elections. ***Epoka e Re*** reports on its front page that Haradinaj is counting on the support of the opposition and that the latter has implied it will not call for a motion against the government. In a different article related to the same issue, the paper reports that the Movement for Unification (LB) has called for a unity government after the Serbian List’s decision to leave the ruling coalition. The LB called on President Thaci to summon all political parties and to form a unity government “which would not be hostage to the Serbian List”. Vetevendosje leader Albin Kurti suggested on Tuesday that Serb politicians that have recognized Kosovo’s statehood should take the place of Serbian List ministers that have left the ruling coalition. Pal Lekaj, a minister in Haradinaj’s government and deputy leader of the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK), told ***KTV*** on Tuesday that Serbian List representatives could be arrested if they decide to unilaterally form the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities.

**President Thaci’s statement on Djuric’s arrest (*media*)**

The President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci issued on Tuesday a press statement with regards to the arrest of the Serbian government office for Kosovo director, Marko Djuric. “Precisely on the day when the Kosovo institutions started work on the establishment of a wide institutional Working Group, which will cooperate with the Management Team and the OSCE Mission in Kosovo on the drafting of the Statute of the Association of Serb-majority Municipalities, the provocation by the state of Serbia occurred. This is also confirmed by today’s decision for the withdrawal of the Serbian List from the institutions of Kosovo. The developments of Monday, March 26, 2018, are contradictory with the commitments for dialogue and sustainable peace building in Kosovo, and a violation of the efforts to normalize relations between Kosovo and Serbia. I call to respect and maintain the spirit of the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia and to remain focused on the normalization of relations, the building of good neighborliness and reconciliation. Today I talked again with the EU High Representative, Federica Mogherini, with whom we once again agreed on the need to reduce tensions, because the dialogue has no alternative and we all have to focus on the way forward. The EU High Representative informed me that she will travel to Belgrade today to meet with the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vucic, to convey the same message to him as well that dialogue and reconciliation are the only way forward. Kosovo remains committed to the rule of law throughout its territory and will always request that all shall respect the laws of Kosovo. I am sorry that yesterday’s events have stirred up the peace and distressed all the communities of Kosovo, but I invite them all to maintain the tranquility. While the police has shown professionalism in their work, I also greet the reaction of the state institutions, in particular of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Kosovo Police who reacted on time, and their readiness to review and evaluate with high professionalism and responsibility all the developments of Monday, March 26, 2018, related to the illegal entry of Marko Djuric in Kosovo.”

**Mogherini condemns events in Kosovo, “must not happen again” (*Koha*)**

The paper reports that Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic and the EU High Representative Federica Mogherini met on Tuesday evening in Belgrade “to discuss, in an open, frank and substantial way, the latest developments and the future of the EU-brokered dialogue for normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina”. A joint press release issued after the meeting quotes Mogherini as saying, “what happened yesterday must not happen again. The European Union expects calm, wisdom, restraint and leadership to prevail”. The statement also noted that Vucic and Mogherini agreed to find new ways to continue working and resolving peacefully issues between Belgrade and Pristina. “They agreed it is in the national and state interest of Serbia to preserve stability, peace and to progress on the EU path,” the statement noted.

**Pajaziti: Serbian List’s leaving will not harm processes (*Lajmi*)**

Kosovo Assembly MP and member of the chairmanship of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), Zenun Pajaziti, said on Tuesday that his party does not have an official position on the Serbian List’s decision to leave the government. Pajaziti however said he does not believe that this action would harm democratic processes in Kosovo. “We are committed in the Assembly to strengthen Kosovo institutions and sovereignty of the country in the entire territory of Kosovo and to continue the process of dialogue. I am certain that these events will not affect these processes,” Pajaziti said.

**Haliti: Government might go down, our hopes lie with LDK (*RTK*)**

Deputy President of the Assembly of Kosovo from the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), Xhavit Haliti, considers a blackmail the announcement of the Serbian List to leave the government. However, he said, if Serbian List makes its decision official, and if the government cannot ensure the required majority to function, then Haradinaj’s government would go down. He added that readiness of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) to help government make majority, would be an action of a responsible political party. “I will say it again that Serbian List will try to play a planned game, in order to fulfill its own requests,” Haliti said. Asked if such requests of the Serbian List are dictated by Belgrade, Haliti said “until now, they did nothing without Belgrade”. “I considered the manner in which (Djuric) was brought to Pristina, to be an exaggeration. He could have been interviewed at the Police station in Mitrovica North,” Haliti said.

**Hoti: LDK will soon lead the Republic (*RTK*)**

Avdullah Hoti, head of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) parliamentary group, took to Facebook to write that his party will stand in defense of the Republic. “The vote of the people will soon give legitimacy and power to LDK to govern with the Republic, and there is no other formula”. “Today, some Kosovo Serb representatives who look to Belgrade are trying to collapse institutions of the Republic. LDK will not allow this. We will stand in defense of the Republic as always. But we will not feed the bad policies of this government. From the opposition, we will defend the institutions of the Republic, but not bad governance,” Hoti wrote.

**Pacolli: Everything was done with Haradinaj’s knowledge (*RTK*)**

Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Behgjet Pacolli told ***RTK*** on Tuesday that Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj was fully aware of the police action in Mitrovica north. He said Marko Djuric’s request to enter Kosovo was refused, but that the Serbian official refused to accept this. “Djuric insisted on coming, there were several phone calls from Serbian officials, the government, but Djuric said we will go, it is our country, no one can stop us,” Pacolli said. “I did not act on my own, the Prime Minister was aware, nothing was done without coordinating with him.”

**Russian Foreign Ministry issues statement on Djuric’s arrest (*media*)**

The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement on Tuesday accusing the European Union and the United States of America “of trying to suppress the efforts of Kosovo Serbs to protect their legitimate interests”. The statement was issued after the arrest of the Serbian government office for Kosovo director, Marko Djuric, by Kosovo Police in Mitrovica north on Monday. “It is apparent that Kosovo authorities are heading the advice of their U.S. and European masters who are violating international law,” the statement noted.

**CDHRF: Djuric was treated in humiliating fashion (*media*)**

The Pristina-based Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms has called for an investigation into the Kosovo Police’s operation that resulted in the arrest of Serbian government’s office for Kosovo director, Marko Djuric, in northern Kosovo on Monday. The CDHRF said the police acted professionally but that allowing media to film the arrest was unnecessary and humiliating toward Djuric. “The CDHRF calls for an investigation into this error that shouldn’t have happened. The CDHRF believes the police intervention for arresting Marko Djuric was highly professional, but the unnecessary exposure to the media and citizens was political folklore and influenced by politics,” the Council said in a statement to the media.

**Haradinaj starts preparations for border delineation (*Zeri*)**

Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj met the State Commission for Border Delineation on Tuesday and said after the meeting that a joint political-technical group will be set up and a state strategy will be drafted to delineate Kosovo’s borders. “We will further our cooperation with the State Commission,” Haradinaj wrote in a Facebook post.

**Kosovo doesn’t join campaign of expelling Russian diplomats (*Koha*)**

The paper reports in one of its front-page stories that Kosovo’s government has not followed the example of countries in the region and the West of expelling Russian diplomats after the so-called Salisbury incident. The paper notes that there is a Russian liaison office in Pristina headed by Andrej Lissovoj. The Office of the President refused to talk about the status of the office and its staff members or their communication. Representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not say if they will expel any Russian diplomats. In a written reply to the paper, the Ministry said: “The Republic of Kosovo stands strongly with our Western allies regarding the international incident known as Salisbury and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Behgjet Pacolli, has made this position very clear. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is closely following developments related to the Salisbury incident and will take all necessary actions and decisions in coordination with our allies and partners”.

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