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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Six Turkish nationals arrested and deported to Turkey (*media*)**

Local and international media report that Kosovo police have arrested five Turks working with a group of schools owned by the cleric who Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan blames for an attempted coup two years ago. In a statement issued on Thursday, Kosovo’s Ministry of Interior Affairs said their residence permits had been revoked, without providing any reason why. According to Kosovo law, the ministry can revoke the residence permit for security, criminal, health, public moral or human rights threats. ***Koha Ditore*** reports on its front page that the arrests and deportation of Turkish nationals shocked Kosovo on Thursday. Kosovo Police and the Interior Ministry did not say who gave the order for the arrests, while some attorneys said they were told by police that the order came from the Kosovo Intelligence Agency (AKI). State leaders said they were not aware of the arrests or the deportation. An unnamed source in the Kosovo government told ***Koha*** that Interior Minister Flamur Sefaj and AKI Director Driton Gashi will be dismissed because of the arrests. ***Koha Ditore*** editor-in-chief Agron Bajrami argues in an opinion piece that the main state leaders should resign over the scandal.

**President Thaci’s statement on arrest of Turkish nationals (*media*)**

Kosovo President Hashim Thaci said after the arrest of Turkish citizens on Thursday that Kosovo is a democratic state built in accordance with the highest democratic standards, which above all respect the individual rights of every person regardless of ethnicity, belief or political or ideological beliefs. “This principle, embodied in our Constitution and our laws, remains inalienable by anyone and it is the duty of our state institutions to apply it in practice. Today we are disappointed because our relevant institutions, for reasons that remain to be clarified to the end, have failed to defend these principles related to the human rights of foreign nationals who live and work in our country. I am informed by the competent authorities after the event that six citizens were deported today to Turkey on the grounds that they did not have a residence permit in Kosovo. We now need to explain the reasons that have led to the deportation of these Turkish citizens to Turkey. I want to assure citizens of the Republic of Kosovo and all foreign nationals who live and work in Kosovo, that Kosovo will in any case protect its constitutional values, which above all else provide for every individual to express without fear the identity belief, culture, ideology, thought, and free speech. No one dares to be persecuted, censored or deported because of a belief or ideology different from someone else,” Thaci said.

**Assembly President Veseli on arrest of Turkish citizens (*media*)**

Kosovo Assembly President Kadri Veseli took to Facebook on Thursday to say that the arrest of Turkish nationals, “does not represent the proper form of rule of law development or the necessary consolidation of democracy”. “Taking such action without respecting the relevant procedures and lack of transparency leaves room for considerable ambiguity over the arbitrary actions of the authorities in question. As a democratic state, Kosovo must institutionally address the legal responsibility of the actors involved in this case. Also, the arrest of foreign nationals in flagrant groundless suspicions does not correspond to the European values that Kosovo should represent. Kosovo has no alternative but the European path. That, of course, requires rule of law and accountability from its arbitrary abusers,” Veseli wrote.

**PM Haradinaj calls for responsibility over arrest of Turkish nationals (*Zeri*)**

Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj has called on AKI Director Driton Gashi, Kosovo Police Director Shpend Maxhuni, Interior Minister Flamur Sefaj and Justice Minister Abelard Tahiri to report after the arrest of Turkish nationals on Thursday. “I call on you to prove full and accurate reports about the arrest and deportation of six Turkish nationals from Kosovo. Why were their residence permits revoked? Why were they arrested? Why were they deported with urgency and in secrecy,” Haradinaj was quoted as saying in a government press release issued late on Thursday.

**Thaci: Visa liberalization in autumn (*Jeta ne Kosove*)**

Kosovo President Hashim Thaci said in an interview to ***Jeta ne Kosove*** that Kosovo will receive visa liberalization in autumn. He said that in a meeting with Commissioner Hahn and High Representative Mogherini “it was confirmed that the country report will be published on April 17 and that visa liberalization will follow in autumn”.

**Serbs want Government to investigate Djuric incident (*media*)**

Most media report that Deputy Prime Minister and Returns and Communities Minister, Dalibor Jevtic, has called on the Government to investigate the arrest of Marko Djuric, the Serbian government office for Kosovo director. Jevtic said at the government meeting on Thursday that the only way to resolve problems is through talks. “If you are open and want to work together in peace in the future, the least you can do is to initiate investigations on who was responsible for the police intervention that day,” Jevtic said. Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj said the government and other institutions will discuss Jevtic’s concerns and added that the police intervention was not directed against any community. “Kosovo remains determined and committed to dialogue,” Haradinaj said.

**Serbs’ insistence for Association led to failure of Brussels talks (*Koha*)**

The insistence of the Serbian delegation in Brussels to talk only about the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities has made it impossible to talk about technical issues such as the energy, freedom of movement and the cadaster, the paper reports on page three. Avni Arifi, head of Kosovo’s delegation in the technical talks, told the Assembly’s Foreign Affairs Committee: “When the Serbian delegation realized that the Association was not on the agenda they engaged in monologue. As far as the other agreements are concerned, they suggested renegotiating the energy agreement but we rejected this”. Arifi also argued that Belgrade has blocked the implementation of the agreements on energy, the Ibar Bridge and the cadaster.

**Warnings of possible terror attacks to be taken seriously (*Zeri*)**

Regardless of a press release issued by the U.S. Embassy in Pristina warning about the possibility of terror attacks during Catholic and Orthodox Easter celebrations, local institutions argue that the security situation is stable, the paper reports on page six. KFOR officials have said they are ready to take all necessary measures to guarantee a safe and secure environment in close cooperation with Kosovo Police and EULEX. Security experts meanwhile argue that the press release issued by the U.S. Embassy should serve as a reminder to local security institutions for eventual attacks.

**Kwai Hong Ip succeeds Schwendiman as acting Specialist Prosecutor (*media*)**

Online media report that Kwai Hong Ip has succeeded David Schwendiman in the position of Acting Specialist Prosecutor of the Specialist Prosecutor’s Office. Ip’s term as Acting Specialist Prosecutor will last until a new Specialist Prosecutor is appointed. He has exactly the same authorities as a Specialist Prosecutor and there will be no interruption in the work of the SPO in any respect.

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