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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Haradinaj: Constitutional Court must confirm Association’s statute (*media*)**

All media cover Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj’s interview to Fol Hapur on Thursday. Haradinaj said talks between Kosovo and Serbia must enter a final phase as Kosovo has remained hostage of the process and cannot move forward. “I was against the idea of Kosovo continuing with the existing dialogue because I believed that it was not having any effect. When I went to Brussels for the first time I told them this dialogue is not enough for resolving problems between Kosovo and Serbia. They asked me what I want. I told them that the process must enter a final phase. Mogherini told me that she understood what I am saying but that it is up to us to bring the process to a final phase by implementing the agreements that have already been achieved. The biggest setback was the Association, as Serbia used the Association as an excuse for not implementing the other agreements. The final phase requires political readiness. Trump, Merkel, May and Macron should find some time and decide what they will do with the Kosovo issue,” Haradinaj said. He suggested that the Kosovo Assembly should come up with a platform on dialogue and that there already is a basic concept and a strategy in this respect. “The President [Thaci] has all the opportunities, and when he gets involved in the process it is not that he is taking it over from the government. Kosovo has no reason to hesitate from entering the final phase. I think this is the best thing. I have asked for this to happen because I believe we are being held hostage in this situation. Serbia has not moved forward. I agree that the Assembly should draft a platform for Kosovo’s institutions. There is a basic document, a basic concept, we are already clear on what Kosovo cannot accept,” he added. Haradinaj said the most problematic issue is the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities and said that he cannot make any decision without confirming that the agreement is in line with the ruling of the Constitutional Court. “I cannot empower this without an assessment from the Constitutional Court. That is the only way. I have no other choice but to implement the ruling of the Constitutional Court”. Haradinaj said Kosovo’s Armed Forces can be formed anytime but that things must be properly calculated first. “This can happen next week if needed. But we need to calculate things first and agree with international mechanisms whose consent we need to establish the armed forces,” he said. On the arrest and deportation of six Turkish nationals, Haradinaj said he had no information and that the incident “came out of the blue”. He said the head of the Kosovo Intelligence Agency and the Interior Minister were obliged to inform him on the matter and that their failure to do so resulted in their resignations. He also added that the incident should not be seen as lack of professionalism by the Intelligence Agency “because this organization is very professional and it has done many good things”. Haradinaj said he does not interfere in Turkey’s affairs and that within Kosovo’s borders he will act in accordance with the laws and Constitution of Kosovo.

**Haradinaj leaves appointment of intelligence chief to Thaci (*Koha*)**

The paper reports on its front page that Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj has left President Hashim Thaci to decide on who will be the next chief of the Kosovo Intelligence Agency, although the law provides that the decision must be made jointly by the Prime Minister and the President. “The chief of this appointment is the President, in cooperation with the Prime Minister. I appoint many other officials, but the head of the AKI is appointed by the President in coordination with the Prime Minister. I need to sign the appointment,” Haradinaj said on Thursday. The paper recalls that the intelligence chief and the Interior Minister resigned following the arrest and deportation of six Turkish nationals.

**AKI deputy chief to report today on deportation of Turkish nationals (*media*)**

The Kosovo Intelligence Agency (AKI) deputy chief, Latif Merovci, will report today to a Kosovo Assembly committee on the arrest and deportation of six Turkish nationals, most online media report.

**“Internationals against the prospect of early elections” (*Zeri*)**

The paper writes on the front page that as opposition continues to call for early parliamentary elections in Kosovo, the international community consider the prospect waste of time and urge Kosovo to focus on other, more pressing matters, such as establishment of Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities, rule of law reforms, and economic development. In a written response to the paper, the US Embassy in Pristina said Kosovo should focus its efforts on the dialogue process with Serbia as well as strengthening the rule of law, boosting local and foreign investment, and approving the law on religious freedoms. At the same time, the German Embassy also said Kosovo has a great deal of work, the EU Office said its job is not to interfere in the political debate in Kosovo while UK’s Embassy said early elections is something that should be decided by political parties in Kosovo.

**Greece pledges assistance to Kosovo (*dailies*)**

Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias said in a visit to Pristina that his country will assist Kosovo. “We should set an agenda of positive relations, make progress step by step and not remain prisoners of the past… Kosovo belongs to the region and by helping Kosovo we are also helping ourselves,” Kotzias is quoted to have said in a meeting with Kosovo’s Foreign Minister Behgjet Pacolli. A press release issued by Kosovo’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs also quotes the Greek minister as saying that he respects Kosovo’s efforts in building a new reality in the region and that he supports Kosovo’s participation in the EU-Western Balkans summit in Sofia. Kotzias also met President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci who said that Kosovo is very grateful to Greece for its supportive role in Kosovo’s European perspective. “We request this support to continue for our membership in Interpol, UNESCO, NATO, the European Union and the United Nations as well,” Thaci said.

**Hoxhaj: Serbia continues to abuse with INTERPOL (*RTK*)**

Kosovo’s Deputy Prime Minister Enver Hoxhaj, took to Twitter to react to the statement of Serbian Interior Minister, Nebojsa Stfanovic, who said on Thursday that INTERPOL has reissued warrants for Ramush Haradinaj and Hashim Thaci, and that Serbia will insist on Interpol respecting indictments raised by Serbian court, that is, on implementing international law and regulations. “Serbia continues to abuse international organizations to damage Kosovo leadership through INTERPOL warrants, w/ already proven false allegations. This behavior is not in line with good neighboring or European perspective, nor it will help normalizing relations,” Hoxhaj wrote.

**Arifi: Association in accordance with Constitution (*Klan Kosova*)**

Avni Arifi, head of Kosovo’s delegation in technical talks with Serbia in Brussels, said on Thursday that Kosovo is adamant that Serbia needs to implement the agreements reached so far. Arifi argued there is no reason for the two countries to discuss the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities as Brussels has already confirmed that it will be established in accordance with the Constitution of Kosovo and the ruling of the Constitutional Court. “Several agreements have been reached, some are implemented and some have been stalled. I have taken over this duty with the idea that my mandate would be implementation of old agreements. I believe that as Kosovo, we have reached the level of conclusion of this process, because we cannot continue with a process where reached agreements in 2011 are not being implemented even now,” Arifi said.

**Bulgarian PM to visit Kosovo (*dailies*)**

Prime Minister of Bulgaria, Boyko Borisov, is expected to visit Kosovo Monday upon invitation from Kosovo President, Hashim Thaci, media report. The Bulgarian official will also meet Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj and Assembly President Kadri Veseli. Borisov’s visit to Kosovo comes ahead of the EU-Western Balkans summit set to take place in Sofia in May.

**Ymeri: We will create a new political party very soon (*TV Dukagjini*)**

Visar Ymeri from the group of independent MPs who recently resigned from Vetevendosje Movement, told ***RTV Dukagjini*** on Thursday that discussions are already underway for creating a new political party. “Of course our way is clear, after leaving the Vetevendosje Movement, we have started discussions in order to treat what could be our best model to continue in the political scene. We are having final discussions for creating a new political party and we will make it public very soon,” Ymeri said. He added that except for those who have already left Vetevendosje, there are other members of this party who want to join them.

**Kosovo authorities to take over case of UNMIK police officers’ murder (*Bota Sot*)**

The paper reports that EULEX is planning to hand over the file regarding the killing of two UNMIK police officers in 2004 to Kosovo judiciary. The mission’s spokesperson, Donika Berisha Rizaj, said EULEX is making preparations to transfer the case to Kosovo’s special prosecution. Four persons already charged for the crime have pleaded not guilty.

**Special prosecution raises charges against Pal Lekaj (*Epoka*)**

The Special Prosecution of Kosovo has raised charges against Pal Lekaj, former Gjakova mayor and current Minister of Infrastructure at the government of Kosovo. Leka is accused for embezzlement and abuse of official duty. Prosecutor Faik Halili confirmed the news and added that the accusation has already been submitted at the Basic Court in Gjakova.

Lekaj on the other hand said that he has in no case or circumstances acted against the law.

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