

Main Stories 26 June 2018

* **Thaci: We will be criticized by nationalists in Pristina and Belgrade (*Zeri*)**
* **Final agreement aimed in 6-8 months (*Koha*)**
* **Thaci continues with dialogue without consensus (*Zeri*)**
* **LDK against Thaci’s “unauthorized” negotiations (*Kosova Sot*)**
* **Pristina complains to Brussels about presence of parallel structures (*Koha*)**
* **US Ambassador: Politics have no place in the constitution (*Epoka/Bota Sot*)**
* **Kosovo president backs Swiss players over eagle gesture (*Politico*)**
* **EULEX has started hand over of cases to locals (*Zeri*)**
* **Former KSF commander: Delays in forming the army (*Epoka*)**

**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Thaci: We will be criticized by nationalists in Pristina and Belgrade (*Zeri*)**

Kosovo President Hashim Thaci told the French newspaper ***Le Figaro*** that the final phase of the dialogue will not be an easy one and that both parties will be criticized by nationalists in Pristina and Belgrade. “We are talking about negotiations between two sovereign and independent countries supported by the EU. The process will be difficult and heavy,” Thaci said. “Kosovars never forget Milosevic’s war and I know that some Serbs, even famous academics, consider in a false manner that Kosovo is their Jerusalem. However, these blockades must be overcome, and we should be realistic.”

**Final agreement aimed in 6-8 months (*Koha*)**

Kosovo and Serbian authorities have around six to eight months to reach a comprehensive and legally-binding agreement in what is being called the finale of dialogue, the paper reports on page three. Bekim Collaku, advisor to Kosovo President Hashim Thaci, told the paper on Monday: “we all know that the timeline or window for reaching an agreement is related to the mandate of EU institutions, because there will be new elections next year. In the practical aspect, we can say that the optimal time available for reaching an agreement is six-eight months. If this momentum is lost, I fear things will get complicated and become really difficult”.

**Thaci continues with dialogue without consensus (*Zeri*)**

The President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci is expected to continue the final phase of the dialogue with Serbia without reaching a consensus with Kosovo political parties, the paper reports on its front page. Opposition parties as well as Social-Democrat Initiative from the ruling coalition, continue to object Thaci’s role as chief negotiator. Thaci, on the other hand, has expressed optimism in Brussels that a national consensus could be reached. Political commentators in Pristina meanwhile believe it is impossible to reach consensus among political parties on dialogue.

**LDK against Thaci’s “unauthorized” negotiations (*Kosova Sot*)**

The Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) argued on Monday that Kosovo President, Hashim Thaci, is not authorized to negotiate on behalf of Kosovo citizens in dialogue with Serbia. LDK’s caucus chief, Avdullah Hoti, told reporters in Pristina on Monday that Kosovo’s representation by President Thaci is not legal, being that Assembly is the only body which elects representatives. He further added that LDK believes that the dialogue is the only way to resolve issues with Serbia and hailed the engagement of the EU and the U.S. in the process.

**Pristina complains to Brussels about presence of parallel structures (*Koha*)**

The paper reports on its front page that in its latest report to Brussels, the Kosovo government notes that former members of the Civil Protection, who were integrated in Kosovo’s institutions, are not performing their functions in accordance with the law and are not reporting to Kosovo institutions. “Although 483 integrated persons have contracts with Kosovo’s institutions, in practice they don’t perform the functions in accordance with Kosovo’s laws. The integrated persons are not responsible and do not report to Kosovo’s institutions. There is lack of cooperation at the sectorial level between Kosovo institutions and the integrated persons,” the government notes in its report. The paper contacted the Ministry of Interior Affairs but they did not comment on the matter. The government’s coordinator for dialogue with Belgrade, Avni Arifi, told the paper that “one day” Serbs will stop acting this way. “There is a level and limit of tolerance on all issues. One day this will end. Kosovo’s laws are mandatory for every citizen of the Republic of Kosovo regardless of their ethnic background,” Arifi said.

**US Ambassador: Politics have no place in the constitution (*Epoka/Bota Sot*)**

The United States Ambassador in Kosovo, Greg Delawie, called on the Kosovo Assembly on Monday to appoint three judges of the Constitutional Court, the paper reports on page two. Delawie wrote on Twitter: “politics have no place in the constitution. No more delays: Assembly must appoint three qualified Constitutional Court justices now. Essential #Kosovo’s highest court can function and protect #RuleofLaw”. ***Bota Sot*** covers Delawie’s tweet under the headline ***Ambassador Delawie with another strike on Kosovo politics***.

**Kosovo president backs Swiss players over eagle gesture (*Politico*)**

Kosovo President Hashim Thaci on Monday defended two Swiss footballers of Kosovo-Albanian heritage who celebrated World Cup goals against Serbia with a two-headed eagle gesture reflecting their ethnic roots. Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008, nine years after the end of a war in which guerrillas fought to end Serb rule and repression in the majority ethnic Albanian territory. Belgrade, however, views Kosovo as a rebel province and relations between the two sides remain tense. Those tensions spread to the World Cup on Friday when Granit Xhaka and Xherdan Shaqiri both brought their hands together to make the eagle gesture after scoring in Switzerland’s 2-1 win over Serbia. A two-headed eagle is a traditional symbol of ethnic Albanian identity and Serbian officials said the gesture amounts to a political provocation. But Thaci said the celebration should be seen as emotional, not political. “That symbol is not a symbol that killed people. It’s not a symbol of an attack on anyone. It’s a symbol of a bird. So may Switzerland fly to success,” he told reporters in Brussels on Monday, a day after meeting Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic as part of a long-running EU-sponsored dialogue aimed at normalizing relations between the two sides. Thaci said football’s governing body should not make decisions based on political pressure.

**EULEX has started hand over of cases to locals (*Zeri*)**

The European Union Mission for the rule of law, EULEX, has started transfer of cases to Kosovo authorities. According to the representatives of Kosovo Prosecution, transfer of competencies does not represent a challenge as the institutions are already mature, function in an independent manner and without interference of politics. Chief Prosecutor of the Basic Prosecution in Prizren, who is also in charge for communication with media, told Radio Free Europe that the prosecutions have already started receiving cases by EULEX.

**Former KSF commander: Delays in forming the army (*Epoka*)**

Kadri Kastrati, former commander of the Kosovo Security Force (KSF), is quoted as saying on the front page that Kosovo institutions are running late with the formation of armed forces and that they should change the mandate of the KSF this year through a law. Kastrati further said that Pristina must tell its strategic partners that this is the only way to form the armed forces as Kosovo Serb representatives are adamant that they will not vote in favor of constitutional amendments.

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