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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Thaci: Assembly should be directly involved in dialogue (*media*)**

Kosovo President, Hashim Thaci, told a press conference in Pristina today that the Kosovo Assembly must be directly involved in the final phase of talks with Serbia. “The Assembly must be directly involved in the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia. I call on parliamentary parties and the Assembly to assume their constitutional responsibilities. Everyone must play their role, therefore, my invitation to political parties and the institutions is to agree on a package of synchronized actions on this matter,” Thaci said. Thaci said the ruling of the International Court of Justice on the legality of Kosovo’s declaration of independence was very important. “The ICJ ruling, which is based on a UN resolution, paved the way to dialogue between two independent countries – Kosovo and Serbia – and supported by the EU and the U.S. This decision confirmed the legality of Kosovo’s independence. The decision was the best possible excuse for countries that had recognized Kosovo’s independence”. Thaci said the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia will be followed by Kosovo’s membership in all international organizations, including the United Nations, and mutual recognition between Kosovo and Serbia as two independent and sovereign countries. Thaci said the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities will be formed in accordance with the laws, Constitution of Kosovo and the ruling of the Constitutional Court. Thaci also commented on the visa liberalization process for Kosovo. “Member states should not hesitate in the process. We will also prepare a campaign for the citizens of Kosovo. I trust the people are educated. We had to meet more requirements than any other country in the region,” he said. Thaci said that the idea of Kosovo’s partition was mentioned in different circles. “I also understand the concerns of Albanians living in Presevo Valley. I have met them too, I have heard their stories, they are touching, and they don’t want to remain the most discriminated community in Europe,” he said.

**Thaci is preparing ground for “painful compromises”, commentators say (*Koha*)**

The paper reports on its front page that in a five-day span, Kosovo President Hashim Thaci held three conferences to comment on the final phase of talks with Serbia, following a brief “but difficult” meeting with his Serbian counterpart in Brussels. Thaci mentioned painful compromises that Kosovo will have to make in order to reach a final agreement with Serbia, without elaborating further. Political commentators meanwhile argue that with his frequent statements Thaci is trying to prepare the ground for “painful compromises”. Imer Mushkolaj, political analyst, said one of the possible compromises could be autonomy for the mainly Serb-inhabited northern part of the country. “President Thaci is deliberately keeping the topic of partition on the agenda … In doing so, he is preparing the ground for what is being considered a painful compromise in talks with Serbia, which seems to be autonomy for the north. When this happens, he will be able to say that between autonomy and partition, he chose the lesser evil. Otherwise, Thaci wouldn’t have to deal so much with the possibility of partition, namely the exchange of territories,” Mushkolaj added.

**Haradinaj: Games with territories would mean war (*RTK/Blic*)**

Kosovo Prime Minister, Ramush Haradinaj, said on Tuesday that “games with territories and border changes would mean war in the Balkans and everyone should know this”. In an interview to ***Blic***, Haradinaj said Kosovo declared its independence in the current borders. “Opening discussions on the territorial integrity of Kosovo means war. It means going back to the past, to the tragedies of the past, and I am against this. I have said this time and time again, we cannot play with territories. I don’t believe someone would like to bring back the tragedies of the past, the wars of the past in the Balkans. This is a wrong and dangerous call, just talking about it is dangerous and let alone thinking about them,” Haradinaj said.

**Haradinaj: We are ready for border demarcation with Serbia (*Zeri*)**

Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, said Kosovo is ready to begin the border demarcation process with Serbia whenever such issue arises. He added however that presently there is no concrete development in this regard. In a press briefing following the meeting of the government, Haradinaj said Kosovo’s most painful compromise to Serbia in the final stage of the EU-facilitated dialogue for normalisation of relations is forgiveness for the crimes its forces committed in Kosovo. “There is no more painful compromise for Kosovo than the act of recognition with Serbia, which implies a sort of forgiveness. It is a painful compromise for Krusha, Meje, Lubenica and all these places,” Haradinaj noted.

**Asllanaj: LDK favors dialogue, but not in this format (*Epoka*)**

Sali Asllanaj, member of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) chairmanship, said in a front-page interview to the paper that his party does not support the current format of dialogue with Serbia led by Kosovo President Hashim Thaci. “LDK favors dialogue, but not in this format. We are also against President Thaci leading the process. This is our official and unchanged position,” he said. Asllanaj further argued that political consensus on dialogue with Serbia must be reached in the Kosovo Assembly and not through other institutions. He also said consensus on this issue is difficult to be reached, “but not impossible”.

**Veseli: Italy supports visa liberalisation for Kosovo (*Telegrafi*)**

Kosovo Assembly Speaker, Kadri Veseli, met in Rome the President of the Italian Senate, Maria Elisabetta Alberti Casellati, and discussed support for visa liberalisation for the people of Kosovo this year. Veseli said Kosovo institutions have fulfilled all necessary criteria for visa-free travel and that this was also acknowledged by the European Commission. “We in Italy are on your side. We are happy there have been positive steps in this direction. We will try to positively influence European Union countries for visa liberalisation,” said Casellati.

**Lumezi: War crimes suspects to be tried in absentia (*Zeri*)**

Kosovo’s chief prosecutor, Aleksander Lumezi, said after meeting Justice Minister Abelard Tahiri and chief prosecutor of Special Prosecution of Kosovo Reshat Millaku that they are looking into the possibility of trying war crimes suspects in absentia. Currently, such trials are not permissible under the Kosovo’s Criminal Code but the lack of cooperation between Kosovo and Serbian authorities in extraditing war crimes suspects has forced the judiciary to consider the possibility of introducing the concept of absentia trials.

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