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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Thaci: Kosovo to take responsibility for Albanians in Presevo Valley (*media*)**

President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci, said after a meeting with Albanian political representatives of the Presevo Valley that Kosovo needs to assume responsibility for the Albanian population there. “Kosovo has successfully marked the tenth anniversary of its statehood and now, more than ever, it needs to take responsibility it is entitled to for protection of Albanians living in the Valley. Kosovo respects territorial integrity of all neighbouring countries, in this case Serbia’s too, but it cannot close its eyes in face of injustices and contempt Albanians of the Presevo Valley are subjected to,” Thaci told reporters. He said it is his duty as president of Kosovo to not only listen to the problems of the Albanian community in Presevo Valley but to also undertake concrete measures to “address these problems in a democratic and peaceful manner in accordance with European standards.” Thaci said it was unfortunate that Serbia is far from meeting international standards when it comes to rights for Albanians there. “Today, I promise the citizens there that Kosovo and its institutions will use every democratic mean to protect their rights,” Thaci said further adding that he would like to believe that authorities in Belgrade will welcome Kosovo’s ‘legitimate’ interest for the wellbeing of the Albanian community there. Asked whether he would sign any agreement with Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic whereby Presevo Valley would join Kosovo while the north of Kosovo would go to Serbia, Thaci said there will be no partition of Kosovo. “The final historic Kosovo-Serbia agreement will be between two independent countries,” he noted. He said the will of the residents of Presevo Valley should not be put in the same bag with what he called ‘fake news’ regarding partition of Kosovo. Thaci said he promised legitimate representatives of the Albanian community in Presevo to continue meetings and analyse the prospects of introducing their demand expressed through a 1992 referendum in the framework of the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue.  Whether the aspirations of the Albanians in the Valley will materialize is difficult and almost impossible, added Thaci, but he vowed to raise the issue in the dialogue with the President of Serbia Aleksandar Vucic. He said chances for a final agreement with Serbia being reached are ‘slim’ but that he hopes a miracle will be possible.

**Presevo Valley wants to join Kosovo (*dailies*)**

Political representatives of Albanians from the Presevo Valley said in Pristina yesterday that they wish to join Kosovo in line with the referendum they held in 1992. Ragmi Mustafa, leader of the Albanian Democratic Party in Serbia and former mayor of Presevo, said after meeting Kosovo President Hashim Thaci: "we want to confirm that Albanians in Presevo Valley have a political capital that needs to be implemented. In the closing phase of talks between Pristina and Belgrade, the problem of Presevo Valley too must be solved". "In this respect, we are pledged to respect the political will of Albanians in Presevo Valley expressed in the 1992 referendum where they clearly said they want political-territorial autonomy with the right of joining Kosovo. Now is the time to resolve problems that have been accumulated. Now could be the historical time of resolving problems in peaceful fashion," Mustafa said.

**Kurti: Ideas for partition, attempts for deception (*RTK*)**

Vetevendosje leader Albin Kurti said that ideas launched in the public about exchange of territories or border changes are new deceptions, the news website reports. Kurti made these remarks during a debate with representatives of Albanian municipalities from southern Serbia. "The reason why we think these are new deceptions is because the idea for exchange of territories or border changes is aimed at creating an atmosphere where a status special for northern Kosovo becomes more easily acceptable in return for a promise for compensation with Presevo, Medvedja and Bujanovac, which will not happen," Kurti said. He further argued that the motives of the sides involved in the Brussels dialogue have nothing to do with Serbs in Kosovo or Albanians living in Serbia, but rather with Belgrade's motives to get closer to the European Union as soon as possible, and for certain leaders of Kosovo to stay safe from the special court.

**US does not comment on Kosovo’s partition idea, Germany against it (*Zeri*)**

Officials from the US Embassy in Pristina did not want to comment on the option of Kosovo’s partition or territorial exchange as part of the final settlement with Serbia, the paper reports on the front page. In the paper’s query to the US Embassy on the issue, officials there reiterated the position of Ambassador Greg Delawie that Kosovo should decide on its own what its objectives are and try to reach consensus on them. At the same time, the German Embassy referred the paper to previous statements of its officials, including Ambassador Christian Heldt, who categorically opposed the idea saying that Germany does not believe border changes would lead to a sustainable solution for Kosovo and Serbia.

**Opposition wants Assembly to have key role in dialogue (*Koha*)**

Members of the Kosovo Assembly have finally begun the debate on the final phase of dialogue with Serbia following the request of the Social Democratic Party (PSD). Opposition representatives are insisting that the Assembly should have a key role in the process, the paper reports on the front page. At the time when many options are being discussed in the framework of final solution and when President Hashim Thaci has intensified the meetings the opposition has asked from the Assembly to be at the helm of this process. Parties of the ruling coalition are calling for consensus and for all parties to join the process but they do not object to President Thaci’s current role. The Assembly session was interrupted after news that human rights activist Adem Demaci has passed away. This postponed the vote on the PSD resolution until Friday. The four-point resolution namely lays out institutional responsibility in the process of dialogue, with the first point calling for the Assembly to have a lead role in the process, the second point calling on the Assembly to adopt a state platform on dialogue with 2/3 of votes. According to the third point, the Assembly should mandate the head of dialogue and the fourth point suggests that the Assembly should set up a committee that would closely monitor the process.

**LDK insists on elections before dialogue with Serbia (*Telegrafi*)**

Head of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) parliamentary group, Avdullah Hoti, said at the Assembly session yesterday that his party considers the dialogue with Serbia to be the most important process Kosovo is going through since it declared independence in 2008 but at the same time entering it without being adequately prepared is both dangerous and irresponsible. “Closed-door meetings of Thaci and Vucic where no one knows what is being discussed cannot be considered as part of technical preparations. Government’s draft platform for dialogue was a poor, unserious document with unconstitutional provisions,” Hoti said. He added that LDK wants the dialogue to be led by Kosovo institutions that have constitutional competencies and political legitimacy and that this role cannot be exercised by the current government which has lost its parliamentary majority. He said LDK is ready to become active part of dialogue but only after early general elections take place in Kosovo.

**Vetevendosje presents six-point plan on dialogue with Serbia (*Klan K*.)**

Head of Vetevendosje parliamentary group, Glauk Konjufca, presented the party’s six-point plan for dialogue with Serbia which he said would have to be embodied in a resolution adopted by the Assembly. Vetevendosje maintains that the current format of dialogue with Serbia should be halted, no one can negotiate Kosovo’s internal affairs, Kosovo should apply full reciprocity towards Serbia, there should also be reciprocity with regards to rights of Albanians in Serbia with Serbs in Kosovo, Serbia should be sued of genocide, and final point, Hashim Thaci cannot lead the process of dialogue.

**Arifi: War is inevitable if border changes are made (*Bota Sot*)**

Avni Arifi, chief of staff in the Office of Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj, told ***TV7*** on Thursday that if someone thinks about redrawing borders in the Balkans, war will be inevitable. “Not because we want this, or that we want to threaten someone, but the moment that borders would be redrawn, this would lead us to a dead-end road. We want mutual recognition [with Serbia]. This means establishing bilateral relations just like with other neighboring countries. Partition is not on the table of talks. This is a red line that the government will not cross. No institution should fall prey to Serbian propaganda and talk about the issue,” Arifi said.

**Adem Demaci, political activist and ‘Kosovo’s Mandela’, dies at 82 (*dailies*)**

Adem Demaci, political activist known as ‘Kosovo’s Mandela’ for spending 28 years in Serb prisons, has died at 82. President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci, declared three days of mourning and said Demaci was Kosovo’s symbol of resistance and was unbreakable in face of any challenge. Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj said Demaci spent his entire life serving his country while Assembly Speaker Kadri Veseli said Demaci’s work was a source of inspiration not only for the liberation war but also the building of the state of Kosovo. Demaci will be buried on Saturday with highest institutional honours and President Thaci has appointed a team to make necessary preparations.

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