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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Thaci: Albania would not be against unification with Presevo Valley (*RTK*)**

The President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci, told Albania’s ***Top Channel*** that Kosovo’s unification with Presevo Valley is not related to division or exchange of territories. “I have not discussed it officially with Albanian authorities, but I do not want to believe that Albania would be against the will of the citizens of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedje. I remain with hope that Albania’s position will be in favor of their rights,” Thaci said. He added further that neither Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj nor Assembly President Kadri Veseli are against the rights of Albanians in Presevo Valley. “In the contrary, they are strong supporters of their aspirations,” Thaci said.

**President Thaci to hold press conference at 11:00 (*media*)**

Several local online media report that Kosovo President, Hashim Thaci, will hold a press conference at 11:00 hours today.

**Haradinaj: Only war can shift borders (*Zeri*)**

Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, said after a meeting of the government yesterday that Kosovo borders can be changed only through war. “Borders were established through war and only a war can move them,” he stated. “Don’t forget one thing, only Vladimir Putin is interested in moving the borders, no one else,” Haradinaj added. Commenting on the statements that Presevo Valley should join Kosovo, Haradinaj said they are part of the ‘counter-rhetoric’ to Belgrade’s claims. “Belgrade’s rhetoric that ‘Kosovo is Serbia’ and ‘Kosovo is the heart of Serbia’ is countered by some in Kosovo saying ‘Presevo is Kosovo’ and ‘Presevo is the heart of Kosovo’ but the end remains where it is,” Haradinaj said. He also thanked KFOR for its work in Kosovo and said that what happened in the Ujman/Gazivoda Lake over the weekend was part of KFOR drill. “No one should be concerned,” he said.

**Exchange of territories does not bring normalization (*Koha*)**

The paper reports on its front page that while Kosovo President, Hashim Thaci, continues to promote the idea of border correction, Kosovo Serb politicians who have cooperated with Thaci in different periods, are arguing that such an idea is dangerous and that it would bring normalization. Nenad Rasic, leader of the Democratic Progressive Party, said border changes would result in instability and that promoting ideas of border changes constitutes a threat to security in the Balkans. “Any form of partition is the worst possible idea. The exchange of territories represents a real threat to security not only in Kosovo but in the region too. Borders were never changed without tensions and conflicts,” Rasic said. “If partition will happen according to their plans [politicians in Kosovo and Serbia, paper’s remark] this would have a direct impact on the lives of Serb citizens in Mitrovica South. These ideas are dangerous on many levels”.

**Civil society associations in Kosovo, Serbia write to Mogherini (*Telegrafi*)**

Over thirty civil society organizations from Kosovo and Serbia have sent an open letter to the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, warning against partition of Kosovo or exchange of territories along ethnic lines. The associations said such events would produce a chain reaction in other Balkan countries. Furthermore, this would send a dangerous message to all Serbs and Albanians living on the ‘wrong side’ of ‘their’ ethnic states which could lead to another exodus of the population in the Balkans. “Civil society organizations invite all actors, domestic and international, to actively oppose attempts to introduce the ethnic principle as the supreme in the building of states in the Balkans. Any state that is based on discrimination and divides citizens on any ground is pre-sentenced to failure. A society that develops on values opposed to respect for basic human rights is condemned to nationalism, isolation, and hopelessness. More and more young people are already leaving our countries, and the territories for which national and political elites are battling today will struggle without the driving democratic forces,” the letter reads.

**Russian Embassy in Tirana reacts to “border changes” (*Lajmi*)**

The Russian Embassy in Tirana issued a reaction on Tuesday on the issue of “border changes” in which it included an earlier press release issued by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The reaction notes that “all issues pertaining to Kosovo’s final status must be resolved based on UN Security Council Resolution 1244. In this respect, Belgrade and Pristina have agreed to direct dialogue brokered by the European Union. Russia continuously supports the process of negotiations, it insists on the implementation of all agreements reached and will never try to discuss the issue behind the backs of the parties involved. We call on the media community to refrain from flagrant speculations about the existence of secret deals between Moscow and Washington. No one should play with an extremely dangerous tendency of ruining Russian – American relations, from which international security depends , and no one should incite tensions in a region as complicated as the Balkans”.

**LDK: Thaci violating Constitution of Kosovo with his statements (*Zeri*)**

The Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) said President Hashim Thaci’s statements on territories are in violation to the Constitution of Kosovo and that the Constitutional Court’s opinion in this matter is needed to clarify the situation. A statement issued by the party following a meeting, which for the first time in months was chaired by the leader Isa Mustafa, said Thaci has failed to exercise a unifying role and cannot represent Kosovo in talks with Serbia without a mandate entrusted to him by the Assembly of Kosovo.

**Analysts: Problem with Association/Community deepens (*Zeri*)**

Political analysts the paper has spoken to expressed concern that submitting the draft statute of the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities straight to Brussels and bypassing the government of Kosovo can only further complicate its establishment process. Furthermore, analysts say, Serbs are not expected to give up on establishing the Association/Community based on the Brussels agreement not Constitution of Kosovo which is another obstacle. Former Kosovo chief negotiator, Edita Tahiri, said the current government of Kosovo has failed in its approach to implementation of the Association/Community agreement by allowing the Management Team, tasked to prepare the draft statute, be comprised of only Serb representatives. She also said the Brussels Agreement states that the Association needs to be in line with Kosovo’s Constitution and its legislation.

**Serbian PM Brnabic on Kosovo solution (*Lajmi*)**

Serbia’s Prime Minister Anan Brnabic, said on Tuesday that resolution of Kosovo’s problem does not depend only on President Aleksandar Vucic and the support of the Serbian government, but also on the way Pristina is ready to speak openly about compromise. “We do not have an official position of the government of Serbia. We will have it as soon as we have a concrete proposal on the table,” Brnabic said. She added that President Vucic is doing the utmost to find a solution. “The President is trying to look at the problem from all sides in order to find something that could bring Serbia what it does not have, respectively to lose as little and gain as much as it is possible,” Brnabic said.

**Phillips: Partition of Kosovo would end multiethnic society (*DW/dailies*)**

David Phillips, Director of the Program on Peace-Building and Rights at Columbia University’s Institute for Study of Human Rights, in an interview with Deutsche Welle cautioned against Kosovo’s partition saying it would put an end to Kosovo as a multiethnic society. He said the north of Kosovo was taken by force and through ethnic cleansing. “The Kosovo government has made this clear in its position. It will not take part in talks to legalize Serbia’s taking over of these territories. The status of Albanian territories in Presevo and other parts of Serbia is the only one that will be included in the border correction process,” Phillips said. He also the United Nations support the EU-facilitated dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. “Dialogue was created to negotiate measures that need to be undertaken to build trust and address technical issues which lead to Kosovo’s recognition with its current borders. Serbia has so far delayed solutions. The United Nations do not create countries. Ethnic division would end Kosovo’s existence as a multiethnic society. Many people have lost their lives over the principle of pluralism. We should not give up on it.” He said the US would support the Kosovo government’s position after Kosovars reach agreement but it was not encouraging ethnic division. He said the US and EU should appoint a special envoy for dialogue and encourage both sides to make compromises. “The Vienna format has proved efficient in the past. It should be restored,” he noted.

**Djuric to visit Kosovo today (*RTK*)**

Jetlir Zyberaj, adviser to the Foreign Minister of Kosovo, informed that Serbia’s director of the office for Kosovo, Marko Djuric, will be visiting Kosovo today. “Marko Djuric has received permission to enter Kosovo. He has fulfilled all the criteria and we have given him permission to enter Kosovo,” Zyberaj said. On 26 March of this year, Djuric was arrested by Kosovo Police and then sent to Serbia for entering Kosovo without permission.

**Trade Minister against Government’s decision on protective measures (*Zeri*)**

Minister of Trade and Industry, Bajram Hasani, reaffirmed his position in favour of protective measures on 21 products but said he would respect the government’s position to lift them. He also said that the introduction of the measures did not violate the free trade agreement, CEFTA, or the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU. Hasani made the comments after meeting the new chairman of the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce, Berat Rukiqi.

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