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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Thaci trying to sidestep Assembly, talks of referendum (*Zeri*)**

According to the paper, President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci is trying to entirely sidestep the Assembly in the process of dialogue with Serbia and plans instead to organise a referendum on the final agreement with Serbia. However, the paper notes the fact that Kosovo does not have a law on referendum and analysts consider Thaci’s attempt to overlook the Assembly in this matter will not succeed. Most recently, Thaci said the agreement with Serbia would be supported by the US and EU but that the people of Kosovo will have the final say and called on the civil society to press for referendum. “If the citizens agree, fine, if they don’t, we will continue but with consequences and high price,” Thaci said yesterday at a roundtable focusing on the idea of border changes are part of the final agreement with Serbia. Thaci further highlighted that there will be no partition of Kosovo and no “Republika Srpska” in Kosovo. However, he said it was absurd to say that “border adjustment” between Kosovo and Serbia would lead to conflict. “On the contrary,” he added.

**Haradinaj: Borders do not fall under President’s authority (*Telegrafi*)**

In an interview with Serbian TV network ***Prva***, Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj said competencies of President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci are clear and that Kosovo’s territory and borders are not among them. “President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci represents the country; territories and borders are not under the president’s authority. Kosovo’s sovereignty and integrity are constitutional categories,” Haradinaj said. Asked whether there is a chance for Kosovo to agree to the redrawing of borders as President of Serbia Aleksandar Vucic wants, Haradinaj replied: “No.” He said it is wrong to speak about redrawing of borders after what happened in the 90s.

**Decision-making crisis in the Assembly on dialogue with Serbia (*Koha*)**

***Koha Ditore*** reports on its front page that none of the political camps have managed to secure enough votes to push forward parliamentary initiatives on dialogue with Serbia: the ruling coalition has not submitted for voting the government’s proposal for the negotiating team, whereas the opposition has not managed to secure a quorum on a resolution that prevents President Hashim Thaci from negotiating Kosovo’s borders with Serbia. “This blockade and decision-making crisis is happening two days before the third meeting of the final phase of dialogue in Brussels, where President Thaci has said he will table the proposal of ‘border correction’,” the paper notes.

**Veseli on Vucic: We don’t know if he’s coming, has no stake in Gazivoda (*RTK*)**

Kosovo Assembly President, Kadri Veseli, told reporters in Pristina on Wednesday: “I don’t know if [Serbian President] Vucic will come to Kosovo. We gave him the permit, but he should threaten stability in Kosovo. Second, he has no reason to go to the Gazivoda Lake, we don’t even know if he is coming. I don’t want to be a patriot in front of you here, I want to reach consensus … If we decide that he should not visit, Vucic will not enter Kosovo. We are focused on the position of our fellow citizens, the position of our independent and sovereign state, the visa liberalization and our cooperation with international partners! If it weren’t for this situation, he would not step in Kosovo. Let him try and enter Kosovo without our permit, the other guy [Marko Djuric] knows this very well!”

**Trump’s envoy to visit Balkans next week (*Epoka*)**

The U.S. Senator and head of the National Security Committee of the U.S. Senate Ron Johnson will be visiting next week Kosovo, Greece, FYROM and Serbia. According to the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade, Johnson will meet regional leaders. Radio Free Europe reported that Johnson is one of U.S. President Donald Trump’s most senior associates. His visit is occurring at the time when Kosovo and Serbia are considering the idea of change of the border, while the Adviser of the White House National Council, John Bolton sated that the U.S. do not exclude territorial corrections.

***Le Figaro*: Macron to try to change Merkel’s mind on border correction (*media*)**

Several local media cover an article published in French daily ***Le Figaro*** titled “20 years after the war, Serbia and Kosovo in the path of peace” on the latest developments between Kosovo and Serbia. According to ***Le Figaro***, after meeting his Kosovo counterpart in Brussels on Friday, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic will visit Kosovo and tell Kosovo Serbs about the deal. A French diplomat, who preferred to remain anonymous, told the paper: “the two Presidents have decided to go much further than the agreement proposed by Brussels and to resolve the matter by finding a win-win agreement”. According to the paper, the agreement could be finalized in mid-November at a peace forum organized in Paris. The paper recalls that Germany is categorically against border changes in the Balkans fearing that this would open the Pandora’s Box in Bosnia, Vojvodina and Macedonia. “Emmanuel Macron hopes to convince Angela Merkel on Friday before the meeting in Brussels,” the paper notes.

**Vucic to reveal his plan for Kosovo in the North (*Kosova Sot*)**

Head of the parliamentarian committee for Kosovo at the Assembly of Serbia, Milovan Drecun, said on Wednesday that the President of Serbia Aleksandar Vucic will be speaking during his visit to Kosovo on 8 and 9 September about further developments with regards to the dialogue with Albanians and will offer solutions in order to resolve this issue. “He will certainly offer solution on how he sees this matter and he will listen to the opinions of the Serb representatives in order to make it clear how to proceed further,” Drecun said. He stressed that there is an initiative in Washington to conclude the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade and added that Serbia should use this chance.

**Arifi: Agreement should be built based on existing principals (*RTK*)**

Avni Arifi, adviser to Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj took to Facebook to write that Kosovo must choose between the frozen conflict and “any kind of drawing of the borders”. “If Kosovo has to choose between a frozen conflict and “any kind of drawing of the borders” I am for a frozen conflict. If Kosovo must choose between de-functionalisation/such as Republika Srpska and frozen conflict, I am again for a ‘deeply frozen conflict.’ The agreement should be built based on existing principals, on defense of the rights of communities, reconciliation and mutual recognition. Anything else does not serve anyone,” Arifi wrote.

**Kosovo Police rebuts Djuric’s claims (*Zeri*)**

Kosovo Police has reacted to the head of the Serbian Government’s Office for Kosovo Marko Djuric’s claims that he was not allowed entry to Kosovo yesterday saying they were untrue. KP deputy director for Mitrovica North region, Besim Hoti, said Djuric was granted permission to enter Kosovo but did not do so for personal reasons. “He was not banned from entering,” Hoti said.

**Kosovo MFA: Djuric was given permission to enter Kosovo (*Koha*)**

Kosovo’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs has issued a statement concerning reports that the head of the Serbian Government’s Office for Kosovo Marko Djuric was not allowed entry to Kosovo yesterday. The Ministry said Djuric did have permission to visit Kosovo and that Djuric’s claims he was not allowed entry to Kosovo are part of his “desperate efforts to present Kosovo as non-cooperating.”

**Civil society calls for early elections (*media*)**

All media cover the third protest organized by civil society organizations in Pristina on Wednesday. ***Koha Ditore*** reports on its front page that civil society representatives have called for early parliamentary elections “as the best way to save the country from those making deals with Kosovo’s fate”. Protesters said it was clear to everyone now that politics is interfering in the work of the judiciary, the Assembly is dysfunctional and that this system is ruining the country’s future. Organizers of the protest also called on the opposition to join the upcoming protests.

**Minister of Trade and Industry dismissed from post (*Zeri/Kallxo*)**

Social Democratic Initiative (NISMA) has asked Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, to release from the post of Minister of Trade and Industry Bajram Hasani. Government spokesperson, Donjeta Gashi, confirmed Hasani’s dismissal saying it came as a result of his party’s request.

**Former Serb member of intelligence agency threatens to kill himself (*RTK*)**

The news website report that Bojan Bozovic, a former member of the Kosovo Intelligence Agency, has threatened to kill himself on Friday in Pristina citing threats from Kosovo Serbs and because he was fired from his job at Kosovo Telecom. Bozovic wrote in a Facebook post: “I have decided to kill myself on Friday, September 7, 2018, at the main roundabout in Pristina. I invite my reporter colleagues to come to this place at 13:00 hours”.

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