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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**EU promotes solution that goes beyond idea of ethnically pure states (*Koha*)**

Representatives of EU High Representative Federica Mogherini said on Thursday that in the Kosovo – Serbia talks, the EU promotes a solution that is not based on the idea of ethnically pure states, the paper reports on page two. They say that a legally-binding agreement for the normalization of relations between the two countries must guarantee a sustainable solution that is in line with international laws. Maja Kocijancic, spokeswoman for the EU High Representative, told the paper that they are focused on finding a solution agreed upon by both parties. Asked to comment on Kosovo President Hashim Thaci’s initiative for border correction, Kocijancic said: “I will not comment on the specific content of ongoing discussions. I can only say that we will support any result that is agreed upon by both sides, as long as what is discussed is in line with international law and the acquis communitaire of the European Union … You know European history: it is based in overcoming and preventing ideas for ethnically pure states”.

**Johnson: Trump interested in resolving Kosovo – Serbia issue (*Lajmi*)**

U.S. Senator Ron Johnson said on Thursday that U.S. President Donald Trump is interested in resolving the Kosovo – Serbia issue, and that people in Kosovo and Serbia should know that the U.S. administration is focused on this problem and that it knows the importance of peace in the Balkans. “I have been to the Balkans three times, because Assistant Secretary of State, Wess Mitchell, encouraged me. People there should know that the administration is interested to find a solution,” he said. Johnson said the U.S. does not have red lines for an agreement between Kosovo and Serbia leaders. “We want to do everything to encourage President Vucic and officials from Pristina to find a solution to the long-term problem and to reach an agreement that will guarantee peace in the Balkans,” he added.

**Thaci: KSF soon to have new mandate (*Zeri*)**

President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci said yesterday at a reception to mark German Unity Day that Kosovo Security Force (KSF) will soon have a new mandate but recalled that the Force has come this far through NATO partnership and “this will remain the case always”. Speaking about dialogue with Serbia, Thaci said Kosovo wants to reach landmark agreement that would bring forth mutual recognition and full normalisation of relations. “We accept nothing short of formal recognition from Serbia,” he said.

**KSF calls on Serbs to join transformation process (*Radio Free Europe*)**

The Kosovo Security Force (KSF) is trying to fill in the vacancies of Serb members that resigned in the last two-three months, the news agency reports. Around 100 Serb members of the force resigned citing pressure from the authorities in Belgrade. KSF Minister Rrustem Berisha told ***RFE*** there is interest among Serb youths to join the force. “My staff and I are very committed to fill in the vacancies and to make new vacancy announcements for non-majority community representatives, namely from the Serb community,” he said. Berisha also said he regrets that Serb members left the force as a result of pressure from outside. “I think that after the decision for the transitioning of the KSF, Serbs will no longer be under pressure to leave the Kosovo Security Force,” he added.

**Pacolli: Putin is a good man, I have respect for Russians (*Telegrafi*)**

In a podcast with ***UN Dispatch***, a website that provides coverage for UN-related issues, Kosovo’s Foreign Minister Behgjet Pacolli said he considers the Russian President Vladimir Putin to be a good man and that he believed one day Russia will realise that independence of Kosovo does not cause harm to anyone. Pacolli said he has worked for a long time with Russians and “have respect for the Russian people and I know Putin is one of these good people.”

<https://www.undispatch.com/podcast-a-conversation-with-kosovos-foreign-minister/>

**DPM Hoxhaj criticizes Kosovo’s foreign policy performance (*Bota Sot*)**

Kosovo’s Deputy Prime Minister and deputy leader of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), Enver Hoxhaj, has addressed criticism to the way Kosovo’s foreign policy performed in 2018 under the leadership of Foreign Minister Behgjet Pacolli. Hoxhaj said he wasn’t directly pointing a finger at Pacolli but said it was a fact that Kosovo’s recognitions have stalled as has Kosovo’s membership in international organisations. He attributed this to the lack of coordination between FM Pacolli and the president and prime minister of Kosovo.

**Thaci: There were no more than 15,000 fighters in uniform (*media*)**

Kosovo President Hashim Thaci said today in Pristina that the judiciary must be encouraged to see through the case of war veterans and that there were no more than 12,000 – 15,000 fighters in uniform. “We must encourage the judiciary to see the case through. The truth is very clear, there were no more than 12,000 – 15,000 fighters in uniform, the rest is deception. And this great deception that has had a major toll on Kosovo’s budget must be ended through the judiciary and not by threats or political pressure, wherever they may come from,” Thaci said. On Kosovo’s membership of INTERPOL, Thaci said it would be useful for Kosovo and the region too. “We will all win, the only ones that will lose are criminalized people … I expect support from our international friends in the process,” he said.

**Apostolova: Officials accused for corruption, away from institutions (*RTK*)**

Head of the EU Office to Kosovo Nataliya Apostolova has requested from the officials accused for corruption to leave the institutions. She even appealed for endorsement of a range of laws, including the one for dismissal of the accused officials from the institutions. EU Representative added at the regional conference against corruption that despite all the achievements on the legislative aspect, Kosovo has space to do more. She also said that war against corruption is directly related to the visa liberalization issue.

**EU and OSCE request transparency from political parties (*media*)**

Officials of the European Union and OSCE Mission in Kosovo stated that political parties in Kosovo are hiding their finances. During the joint workshop “Financing of political parties” officials of these international organizations requested from political parties increase of transparency and accountability. “There is an urgent need in Kosovo to control political finances, transparencies on donations and their use. These are some of the problems found and can be seen in the reports of the auditors. The findings are quite concerning. According to the independent auditors, political parties failed on giving account, internal reporting, financial reporting and corresponding with legal requests when it comes to their finances,” said Richardo Serri from the EU Office in Kosovo.

**Mitrovica chief prosecutor: Judiciary functional throughout Kosovo (*Zeri*)**

In a conference organised by the Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture (ACDC) in Mitrovica, chief prosecutor Shyqyri Syla spoke of positive developments in the basic court and prosecution in Mitrovica and concluded that the judicial system is fully operational throughout Kosovo. He said the effects of the Brussels Agreement on judiciary are now evident and that 11 months since the integration of the courts, there are 20 percent less criminal cases to deal with.

**Kosovo’s diplomatic service on verge of full politicization (*Koha*)**

The paper reports on its front page that a working group is drafting changes to the draft law on foreign service and it claims to have the correspondences between group members, which reveal clashes after what it calls “smuggling” of an article that would make all politically-appointed ambassadors into career diplomats. According to the paper, many ambassadors have opposed the article.

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