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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Specialist prosecutor Jack Smith on first visit to Kosovo (*dailies*)**

Specialist Prosecutor Jack Smith is on his first visit to Kosovo since taking on the post. Smith was expected to meet heads of international organisations in Kosovo, representatives of EU member states, as well as Kosovo’s Minister of Justice Abelard Tahiri and other officials of the ministry. According to an unnamed official of the government of Kosovo quoted by ***Klan Kosova***, Smith’s visit is expected to establish lines of cooperation between Kosovo authorities and the Specialist Chambers based in The Hague. ***Klan Kosova*** also spoke to Tahir Rrecaj, Pristina attorney accredited by the Specialist Chambers, who said Smith’s visit could be a signal that the court is nearing its indictment-filing stage. ***Koha Ditore*** on the front page writes that apart from meeting Minister of Justice Abelard Tahiri, the specialist prosecutor Smith did not meet any other senior Kosovo official. Lawyer Tome Gashi interpreted this as Smith’s way of saying that no one is immune from criminal prosecution. At the same time, ***Zeri*** also on the front page quotes analysts as saying that Smith’s visit could be a sign of imminent indictment by the Specialist Chambers. It also quotes a press release issued by the Ministry of Justice following Tahiri-Smith meeting saying that the Kosovo institutions are ready to fulfil all obligations towards the Specialist Chambers. Smith also met head of Kosovo Judicial Council Nehat Idrizi and the head of the Prosecutorial Council Blerim Isufaj.

**Haradinaj: Kosovo has obligations towards Specialist Chambers (*Zeri*)**

Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj commented on the visit of Specialist Prosecutor Jack Smith to Kosovo saying he is scheduled to meet him. “Kosovo has indeed obligations towards the Specialist Chambers as they were established under Kosovo laws. However, based on previous experience there is also a sense of skepticism in these processes involving international justice,” Haradinaj said.

**Kosovo Assembly to discuss dialogue with Serbia today (*Epoka e Re*)**

As the Kosovo Assembly prepares to open a special session to discuss dialogue with Serbia, ***Epoka e Re*** writes that last week’s visit of the US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Matthew Palmer, made Kosovo political parties reflect on their positions regarding talks with Serbia. This was also confirmed by Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj who said that Palmer’s visit along with other meetings have had a positive result. “I think it would be good to crown that visit, that interest of the US for important processes in our country, with a clear strategic position in protection of the constitutionality, territory and borders,” Haradinaj said yesterday after the meeting of the government. He added that it is of little importance who authors the resolution and that what matters is to protect national interests.

**Veseli: Thaci could be testing the ground (*Telegrafi/RTV Dukagjini*)**

Kosovo Assembly President and Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) leader, Kadri Veseli, said in an interview to ***RTV Dukagjini*** on Tuesday that he is against Kosovo’s partition and against executive competencies for the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities. He said that if these two points are included in the resolution sponsored by the opposition, the PDK MPs will vote in favor. “The resolution of the opposition is poor. It deals with one person. We are against Kosovo’s partition, against border correction, and against executive competencies for the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities,” he said. “The President expressed an opinion that is not obligatory until the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo comes out with its own platform. Heads of institutions are obliged to act in line with the platform adopted by the Assembly”. Veseli said President Thaci is experienced in foreign policy and he does not make mistakes contrary to what some people might think. “Thaci has political experience and he could be testing the ground,” he added. Asked to comment on visa liberalization for Kosovo, Veseli said that even if the process is delayed till next year, he still has faith in the European Union. “I am one of the biggest critics, but I have faith in the EU. I will always believe in them, because we have reached this point together,” Veseli said.

**Hoti: Let’s stop President from playing games with people every day (*Bota Sot*)**

Avdullah Hoti, head of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) parliamentary group, said on Tuesday that he expects members of the Kosovo Assembly to adopt the resolution against negotiations on Kosovo’s territory. “We expect the extraordinary session to adopt the resolution that ‘no one can negotiate on Kosovo’s territory’. This is the most important red line in the process of dialogue with Serbia. In their public statements, all parliamentary groups have rejected talks on Kosovo’s territory. We call on all parliamentary groups to attend the session and to support the resolution. Through this resolution, we want to send a message to our international partners that Kosovo’s citizens are not willing to negotiate on Kosovo’s territory,” Hoti wrote.

**Thaci: Kosovo was equal to all countries at the opening of Istanbul airport (*Epoka*)**

President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci said that Kosovo was represented equally to all other countries at the opening of Istanbul airport few days ago. Thaci’s reaction comes to the statement of Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic who said that at the inauguration ceremony he asked the organisers to take down Kosovo flag and that they heeded his request. Thaci said in a Facebook post he was proud of the respect the Turkish hosts displayed towards Kosovo.

**Hashim Thaci shares article that says north will belong to Serbia (*Bota Sot*)**

The paper reports on page four that Kosovo President Hashim Thaci has shared on his Twitter account an analysis by the editorial board of Financial Times titled ***A Balkan plan that merits cautious backing***. Thaci tweeted: “Important analysis by the editorial board of Financial Times on the risks and benefits of final peace agreement between Kosovo and Serbia - which must lead to Kosovo in UN and Balkans in EU”. The FT analysis can be found in the following link: <https://www.ft.com/content/f86c1fda-d93c-11e8-a854-33d6f82e62f8>

**Kosovo MFA condemns bus stoning in Serbia (*media*)**

Kosovo’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed concern over what it said was increasing number of attacks on Kosovo’s means of transport travelling through Serbia saying such acts call for strong condemnation. “Citizens of the Republic of Kosovo and those of Serbia need to move freely, without fear,” the ministry said in a statement. It further called on Serbian authorities to take swift action in finding the authors of the recent incidents and reveal their motives. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also called on the EU to ask Belgrade to respect the freedom of movement as a fundamental right. The Ministry’s reaction follows reports that a bus travelling from Kosovo to Austria was stoned Monday in Krusevac of Serbia by yet unidentified persons.

**KSF Ministry: There is interest among Serb youths to join KSF (*Kallxo*)**

The Kosovo Security Force Ministry said for ***Kallxo.com*** that many youths from the Serb community have expressed interest in joining the Kosovo Security Force. “We cannot speak of exact figures as it is too early and could damage the future recruitment process,” KSF Ministry said. It did reveal however that 71 resignation requests from Serb members of the KSF have been processed.

**Council of Albanian Ambassadors calls on Israel to recognize Kosovo (*media*)**

Several newspapers report that the Council of Albanian Ambassadors has called on Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, for Israel to recognize the independence of Kosovo. The request comes on the eve of Netanayhu’s visit to Albania. “The official recognition of Kosovo would be seen not only as a friendly step by Israel toward Albanians throughout the world, but also as a decision that serves peace and stability in the Western Balkans,” said a statement issued by the Council.

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