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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**UN Security Council discusses report on Kosovo (*media*)**

One of the leading stories in the media is the United Nations Security Council session on Kosovo on Thursday. ***Koha Ditore*** highlights in its coverage the remarks by U.S. Ambassador Jonathan Cohen who welcomed the commitment of Kosovo and Serbia leaders to normalize relations between the two countries. “Cohen repeated the request of the U.S. for the UN Mission in Kosovo to be shut down. On the transformation of the Kosovo Security Force into the Kosovo Army, Cohen said it is Kosovo’s sovereign right to have an armed force. He also expressed support for Kosovo’s membership to INTERPOL,” the paper notes. ***Epoka e Re*** on its front page highlights the statement by Kosovo’s Ambassador to Washington, Vlora Citaku, who said that Kosovo will not discuss the formation of its army with Serbia and that the armed forces will be formed soon. Citaku said Kosovo has made major progress since the declaration of independence and that UNMIK no longer has a peacekeeping role, “therefore it would have been beneficial to use resources of this organization for solution of other crises in the world”. Citaku called on member states to refer to the decision of the International Court of Justice, that Kosovo has not violated any law with declaration of independence and that this reality is irreversible. “These sessions here do not help peace and dialogue and unfortunately this place here is being misused and transformed into a theatre,” she said. ***Zeri*** reports on its front page that Citaku and Serbian Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic clashed over the future Army of Kosovo and Kosovo’s eventual membership to INTERPOL. ***Kosova Sot*** notes in its coverage that “the United States proves again it is Kosovo’s main ally by supporting the formation of the Armed Forces and Kosovo’s membership to INTERPOL”. Most media covered the UNMIK press release on SRSG Tanin’s address to the Security Council. ***Koha*** quotes the UNMIK chief as saying that the army matter should be handled with utmost care. ***Klan Kosova*** carried the press release under the headline ***Tanin speaks at UN Security Council on dialogue, visas and army***. ***Indeksonline*** reports that the SRSG has called on all communities and individuals to support commitments to peace and progress. Tanin is quoted as saying in ***Gazeta Express*** that the debate on exchange of territories has caused both apprehension and impetus. ***Telegrafi*** reports that UN Secretary General Guterres hailed Belgrade’s and Pristina’s commitment to reach normalization of relations through dialogue mediated by the EU, announcing at the same time that some incidents which resulted from interethnic tensions have been registered during the last three months. In a report which covers the period from 16 July to 15 October, UNMIK chief Zahir Tanin said he was concerned about the renewed tensions over construction work in special protected areas and warned of obligations related to protection of religious heritage. In this document, he also stated that announcements of Serbian and Kosovo leaders about correction of borders caused concern among Kosovo Serbs, as well as misunderstandings between Belgrade and Serb Orthodox Church in Kosovo. “Without reconciliation between communities, progress may be lacking,” Tanin said. He stressed that UNMIK continues constructive co-operation with Belgrade and Pristina, with all communities in Kosovo and regional and international actors.

**Haradinaj: Elections not favorable at this time (*media*)**

Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj said on Thursday that it is not a practice to announce about whether he has the parliamentary majority at the Assembly or not. Responding to the statement of the Kosovo President Hashim Thaci, on whether the government has the majority to continue with its work, Haradinaj said “the practice of announcing if the government has majority or minority does not exist. It is well known how these things happen at the Parliament. For instance, if there are 61 votes against the government, then it is over. However, there is no reason for anyone to talk about it. The day when this happens, it will be known, but in this manner, to talk ahead… one does not make these statements. There are many discussions about this matter, each from their own corner and I stand behind what I told political parties, elections will happen someday,” Haradinaj said. According to the Prime Minister, elections are not at all favorable at this current phase. “It is much better to use this time to complete some matters such as the army, INTERPOL, dialogue, liberalization, improvement of the situation in education and healthcare. So, I think that it is better for the opposition to redirect the competition towards these parameters than to remain on the competition which is a big issue in the capitals, while our lives do not depend directly from them,” Haradinaj said.

**Germany against Kosovo – Serbia border changes (*Zeri*)**

The German Ambassador to Serbia, Thomas Schlieb, said in an interview to ***N1*** that Germany is against a possible land swap between Kosovo and Serbia and that it will maintain this position, the paper reports on page two. He said that many EU member states share this opinion. “Chancellor Merkel has publicly expressed her opinions and this position remains valid. I know there has been speculation that Germany might change its position but it is no so, the German position will remain the same,” Schlieb said.

**Assembly President Veseli visits Finland, meets Rissiko and Ahtisaari (*media*)**

Kosovo Assembly President, Kadri Veseli, met in Finland on Thursday with his counterpart, Paula Risikko and other Finnish MPs. Veseli thanked Rissiko for Finland’s support in the state-building process of Kosovo and both presidents highlighted the need to further cooperation, especially in the areas of economy and education. Veseli asked for Finland’s support for visa liberalization for Kosovo as soon as possible. “We have the EU’s requirements in the process. We are making constant progress in many areas. We are working hard on reforms that will accelerate our European agenda. Our citizens don’t deserve to remain the only ones isolated in the Balkans,” Veseli said. He also asked for Finland’s support for Kosovo’s membership of INTERPOL as a very important step in the fight against organized crime and terror. On the final phase of dialogue with Serbia, Veseli said Kosovo is willing to continue dialogue and to reach an agreement that will normalize relations and bring mutual recognitions. Risikko confirmed Finland’s support for Kosovo in the visa liberalization process, INTERPOL membership and other integration processes. During his visit to Finland, Veseli also met former Finnish President and former special envoy for Kosovo, Martti Ahtisaari. Veseli wrote in a Facebook post: “President Ahtisaari and I exchanged opinions on the future of Kosovo. His advice is always more than welcome. In this phase, Kosovo remains committed to continuing the dialogue with Serbia, and to closing once and forever all open issues between the two countries. The Constitution of Kosovo, which derives from the Ahtisaari proposal, is a strong guarantee of freedom of our citizens”.

**The late offensive for visa liberalization (*Koha*)**

The paper reports on its front page that Kosovo’s authorities are preparing to “bombard” EU Enlargement Commissioner Johannes Hahn with reports when he visits Pristina in early December, with the aim of convincing EU member states to grant visa liberalization to Kosovo. In addition to this, senior state officials have launched an offensive of meetings with representatives of EU member states to make sure that the EU Council includes in its December agenda the visa liberalization for Kosovo. Kosovo Assembly President Kadri Veseli and European Integration Minister Dhurata Hoxha are visiting other countries as part of a lobbying campaign, while in Kosovo authorities have stepped up their work to change the current report which speaks of setbacks in the implementation of European reforms and to identify reforms that will be listed as priorities for 2019. Both documents will be presented to Hahn during his visit to Pristina early next month.

**LDK’s Hoti says parties should discuss dissolution of Assembly (*Epoka*)**

Avdullah Hoti, head of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) parliamentary group, said on Thursday that all political parties should meet and discuss the dissolution of the Assembly. Hoti wrote in a Facebook post that most meetings of parliamentary committees have failed due to the absence of MPs from the ruling coalition. “It would be wise for political parties to meet and dissolve the Assembly. Kosovo deserves legitimate and reliable institutions that can perform their duties. The current form of governance must come to an end because it is damaging every process in our country,” Hoti argued.

**Rashiti: U.S. and EU expect agreement by April (*media*)**

Naim Rashiti, executive director of the Pristina-based Balkans Policy Research Group, said in an interview to ***Voice of America*** that the issue of border correction remains on the table as a possible solution for a final agreement between Kosovo and Serbia. “Such an agreement which would include recognition and could also include border correction, will not be a one-sided partition but an eventual border correction in the north and Presevo Valley. This is one of the options that Mogherini’s office is working on,” Rashiti said. He also argued that the U.S. and the European Union are expecting a Kosovo – Serbia agreement to be reached by April next year.

**Appeals court confirms Limaj’s innocence (*media*)**

Most media report that an appeals court upheld the verdict acquitting former Kosovo Liberation Army commander Fatmir Limaj, clearing him of responsibility for the murders of two ethnic Albanian civilians in 1998. The appeals court in the town of Gjakova on Wednesday upheld the verdict acquitting Kosovo’s Deputy Prime Minister Fatmir Limaj of war crimes. The verdict cleared him of charges that he did not take reasonable and necessary measures to prevent the killing of two ethnic Albanian civilians in October 1998, when he was a Kosovo Liberation Army commander.

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