

Main Stories 14 January 2019

* **Kosovo leaders express support for KLA commanders (*media*)**
* **Mustafa and Lushtaku travelled to Hague (Kosova Sot)**
* **Government cannot pay for Lushtaku’s attorney at this stage (*Insajderi*)**
* **Veseli calls meeting of leaders to coordinate on dialogue (*media*)**
* **U.S. requests Kosovo to immediately lift import tax (*Koha Ditore*)**
* **Government: 100-percent tax will remain in force (*Express*)**
* **Thaci has not yet given negotiating team documents on dialogue (*Zeri*)**
* **Kosovo to adopt platform on dialogue with Serbia (*RFE/Koha*)**
* **Zeka claims Specialist Chambers sent invitation to Veseli too (*veriu.info*)**
* **Mustafa seeks government’s clarification about the North (media)**
* **Haradinaj congratulates FYROM on finalizing name-change agreement (*Koha*)**

**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Kosovo leaders express support for KLA commanders (*media*)**

Kosovo leaders – President Hashim Thaci, Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj, Assembly President Kadri Veseli – have expressed support for the Kosovo Liberation Army fighters that were called by the Specialist Chambers in The Hague. As Rrustem Mustafa-Remi and Sami Lushtaku were heading for The Hague on the invitation of the Specialist Prosecutor, Thaci said that their readiness to positively respond to the Specialist Chambers proves Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) led a noble and just war. Similarly, Haradinaj said Kosovo’s liberation war was pure and sacred and this will be proven yet again while Veseli said there is only one truth to the KLA war and that is that it was righteous.

**Mustafa and Lushtaku travelled to Hague (Kosova Sot)**

Former commanders of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), Rrustem Mustafa and Sami Lushtaku, traveled on Sunday to Hague to be interviewed by the Hague Special Court. “I am responding to the invitation by the Special Court about Dick Marty’s claims. I am going there as an interviewee, normally I am a suspected witness. We are innocent, invitations are very normal after all that propaganda and Dick Marty’s report,” said Rrustem Mustafa. Lushtaku on the other hand said that he does not know in what capacity he has been invited. Media report that Rrustem Mustafa will be interviewed today by the Specialist Chambers.

**Government cannot pay for Lushtaku’s attorney at this stage (*Insajderi*)**

The news website reports that if the Government of Kosovo decided to pay for former KLA commander Sami Lushtaku’s defence counsel led by the former ICTY prosecutor Geoffrey Nice, it would constitute a legal violation of the Law for financial support to persons indicted by the Specialist Chambers. This, according to ***Insajderi***, is because Lushtaku has not yet been formally indicted by the court in The Hague and therefore the government cannot at this stage cover Nice’s charging fee which reportedly stands at over €2,000 per day.

**Veseli calls meeting of leaders to coordinate on dialogue (*media*)**

Most media report that Kosovo Assembly President Kadri Veseli has called a meeting today between the President, Prime Minister, the negotiating team, and representatives of parliamentary groups from opposition parties, the Democratic League of Kosovo and Vetevendosje Movement, to coordinate on dialogue with Serbia. The meeting is scheduled for 11:00 in the Kosovo Assembly. Some media reported on Saturday that Vetevendosje and LDK will not attend the meeting. A Vetevendosje spokesperson said, “the meetings were being held to legitimize Thaci in talks with Serbia and to create the impression that he has support which in reality he lacks”. An LDK MP said the meetings called by Veseli “are a farce”. “I do not see any reason to participate in such meeting ... Mr. Veseli represents the second political party at the Assembly based on the number of MPs, and he cannot pretend to take over neither a unifying nor a leading role in the process,” the LDK MP said.

**U.S. requests Kosovo to immediately lift import tax (*Koha Ditore*)**

The U.S. has called on Kosovo institutions to immediately suspend the import tax on products from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to give a chance to the Kosovo-Serbia agreement. In a written response to the paper, the U.S. Embassy in Pristina said it has repeatedly requested Kosovo leadership to suspend the measures. “We strongly encourage renewal of focus on Kosovo’s crucial goals – European perspective and normalisation of relations with Serbia,” the Embassy said. The paper also asked the Embassy about the meeting between President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci and the U.S. Ambassador to Germany Richard Grenell, a close associate to the President Trump, but received no comment. Thaci is reported to have said then that Kosovo will review lifting of the tax if an opportunity for an agreement with Serbia is presented.

**Government: 100-percent tax will remain in force (*Express*)**

Despite the continuous calls of the European Union, to lift the 100 percent tax on the goods from Serbia, the Minister of Trade and Industry Endrit Shala told TV21 that the government of Kosovo is committed to remove the tax when Serbia recognizes Kosovo. “The tax will continue to remain in power until all the reasons that pushed us as the government of Kosovo to undertake such measure are eliminated,” he said. He spoke further about the focus of the government to help local producers during 2019 in order for them to improve quality of their products and become competitive in Kosovo and foreign trade.

**Thaci has not yet given negotiating team documents on dialogue (*Zeri*)**

The paper reports on the front page that the deadline for the President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci to submit all relevant documents pertaining to the dialogue with Serbia to the Kosovo negotiating team has expired and he has done no such thing yet. The negotiating team had told Thaci that they expect him to submit documents by 11 January and the co-chairman of the team, Fatmir Limaj, said he was not aware as to why they didn’t receive them. Limaj however said he believes everything will be clarified today. “We have a meeting Monday and I believe we will have all the necessary information,” Limaj said. The meeting called by Kosovo Assembly President Kadri Veseli is scheduled to take place today at 11.00 hrs.

**Kosovo to adopt platform on dialogue with Serbia (*RFE/Koha*)**

***Radio Free Europe*** reported that the Kosovo negotiating team is preparing a platform for dialogue with Serbia which will represent Kosovo’s unity. Co-chairman of the team, Fatmir Limaj, said the platform will be the main pillar for the entire process of dialogue but did not specify whether the document will set out red lines on what cannot be negotiated with Serbia. “The idea is to come out with a platform that reflects unified position of the Republic of Kosovo,” Limaj said adding that the document is expected to serve as a roadmap for Kosovo negotiators and institutions.

**Zeka claims Specialist Chambers sent invitation to Veseli too (*veriu.info*)**

Milaim Zeka, an MP from the ruling coalition, said in a TV debate on Sunday that the Specialist Chambers have sent an invitation to Assembly President and PDK leader Kadri Veseli, but that he does not know if Veseli has received the summon. “I don’t know if Kadri Veseli has received the invitation or not. But the invitation from the specialist chambers has arrived in Pristina,” Zeka was quoted as saying. Pristina-based news website ***Gazeta Blic*** tried to get a comment from Veseli’s office and from the PDK, but none were willing to comment on the matter. Zeka said during the debate that President Hashim Thaci too will be held accountable by the specialist chambers, “which he himself created”.

**Mustafa seeks government’s clarification about the North (media)**

Isa Mustafa, leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), has expressed his concerns about the north of Kosovo. He expressed fear that “conservation of the situation in the north out of communication with central institutions, is deliberately planed for territorial trade with Serbia”. “As the leader of LDK, and Kosovo citizen, I ask the respective institutions of the country, the President, the Assembly, the government, and justice institutions, is state sovereignty being exercised in the municipalities of Leposavic, Zubin Potok, Zvecan and Mitrovica North, in an area of 1005 square kilometers (not hectares), which consist ten percent of the territory of Kosovo?” Mustafa asked.

**Haradinaj congratulates FYROM on finalizing name-change agreement (*Koha*)**

Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj met the Prime Minister of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) Zoran Zaev and congratulated him for finalizing the Prespa Agreement for the country’s name change to North Macedonia. Haradinaj expressed Kosovo’s support and said it remains committed to building a stable region.

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