

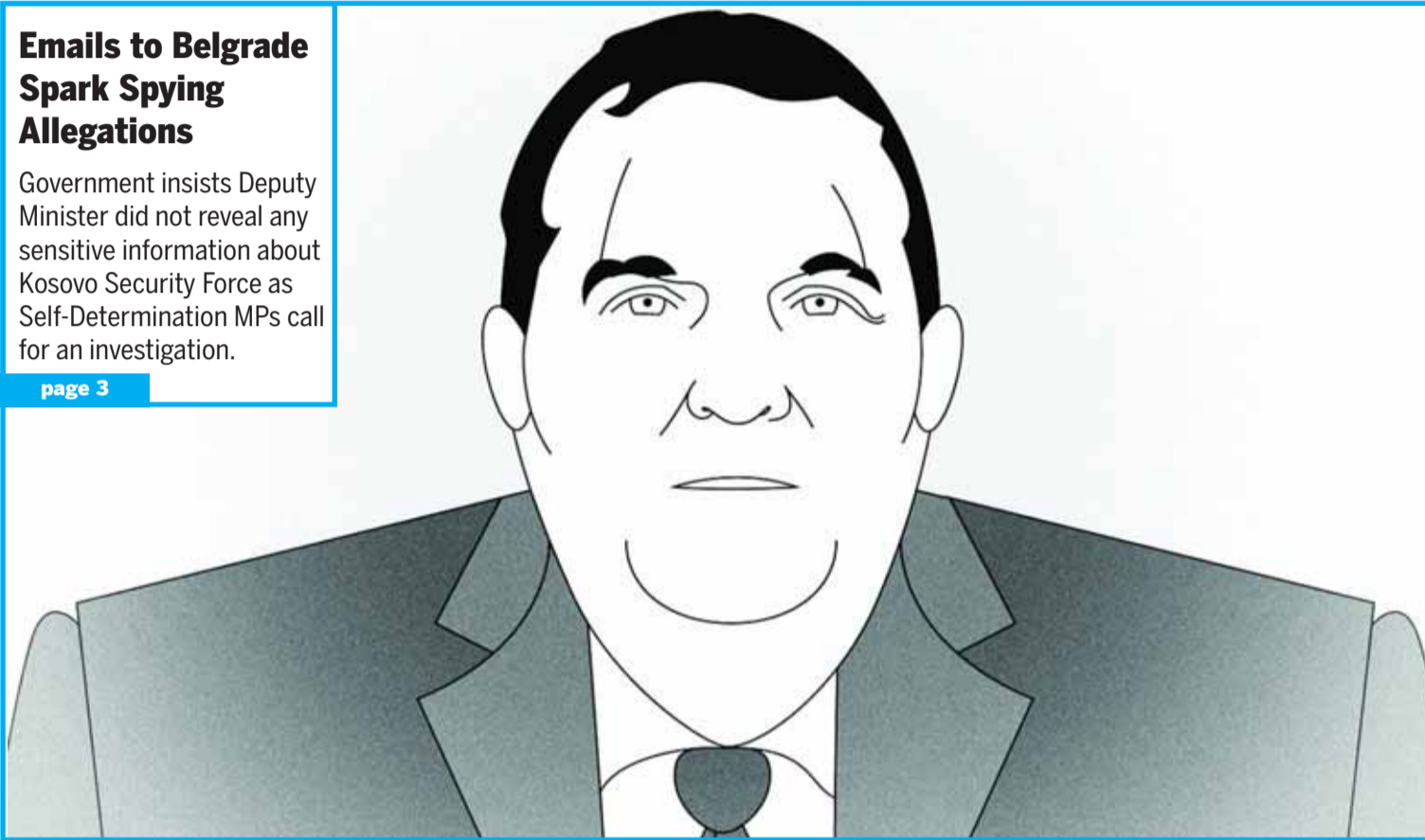
# Prishtina Insight

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## Emails to Belgrade Spark Spying Allegations

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# Witnesses Change Stories in KLA Jail Trials

Denials of abuse at KLA detention centres muddle prosecution cases in high-profile war crimes trials.

By Florent Spahija

At the Kosovo Liberation Army, KLA, detention centre in Llapashtica, the beatings were commonplace. At least, that's what Rushid Bollofci told UN police and an investigative judge in 2002 and 2003.

"Nazif Mehmeti beat me up. He beat me with a baton for an hour. After a 30-minute break, he beat me again with a wooden baton and

an electric prod," Bollofci testified in 2003, during the first trial of the so-called Llapi Group case.

Bollofci gave a very different account this past April, when he testified at the suspects' retrial.

"I haven't seen or heard of beatings," Bollofci said.

Confronted in court regarding his previous testimony, Bollofci said, "This is not true, because if he [Mehmeti] had beaten me up, even if he were a dragon, I would

have taken revenge."

Bollofci is among four prosecution witnesses in high-profile war crimes retrials happening in Kosovo now, the Llapi Group and Klecka cases, who have contradicted statements and testimony given years earlier. Three of those witnesses, who were all previously anonymous protected witnesses, including Bollofci, have also publicly identified themselves by name.

Both cases are being handled by EU rule of law mission, EULEX, prosecutors and involve charges of abuse and torture at KLA detention centres during the 1998-9 war. Among the accused are prominent lawmakers in the ruling Democratic Party of Kosovo, PDK, including MP Fatmir Limaj, in the Klecka case and MP Latif Gashi, in the Llapi case.

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feature

## Prevala - The Cost of Luxury

Environmental inspectors suspended construction Tuesday of seven homes being built at a housing development at Prevala Mountain, some 30 kilometres from Prizren...

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# Witnesses Change Stories in KLA Jail Trials

from page 1

The four witnesses offered a variety of explanations for their contradictory testimony, including mistranslations, pressure from UN investigators and bad memories.

EULEX prosecutor Charles Hardaway, in his closing arguments in the Llapi case this week, attempted to downplay the significance of the new contradictory statements.

"The words they spoke at a time closest to the experience and before the corrupting effect of time, circumstances and other influences took their toll, are the best guides to fully establish the factual reality of what occurred at Llapashtica," he said.

While prosecutors haven't suggested that the changes in witness statements resulted from intimidation, war-crimes cases have seen numerous instances of it.

A article in the New Yorker magazine in May about war crimes cases in Kosovo, entitled "Bring Up the Bodies", explored widespread witness intimidation in war crimes cases heard at the Hague Tribunal against Limaj and former Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj, now an MP.

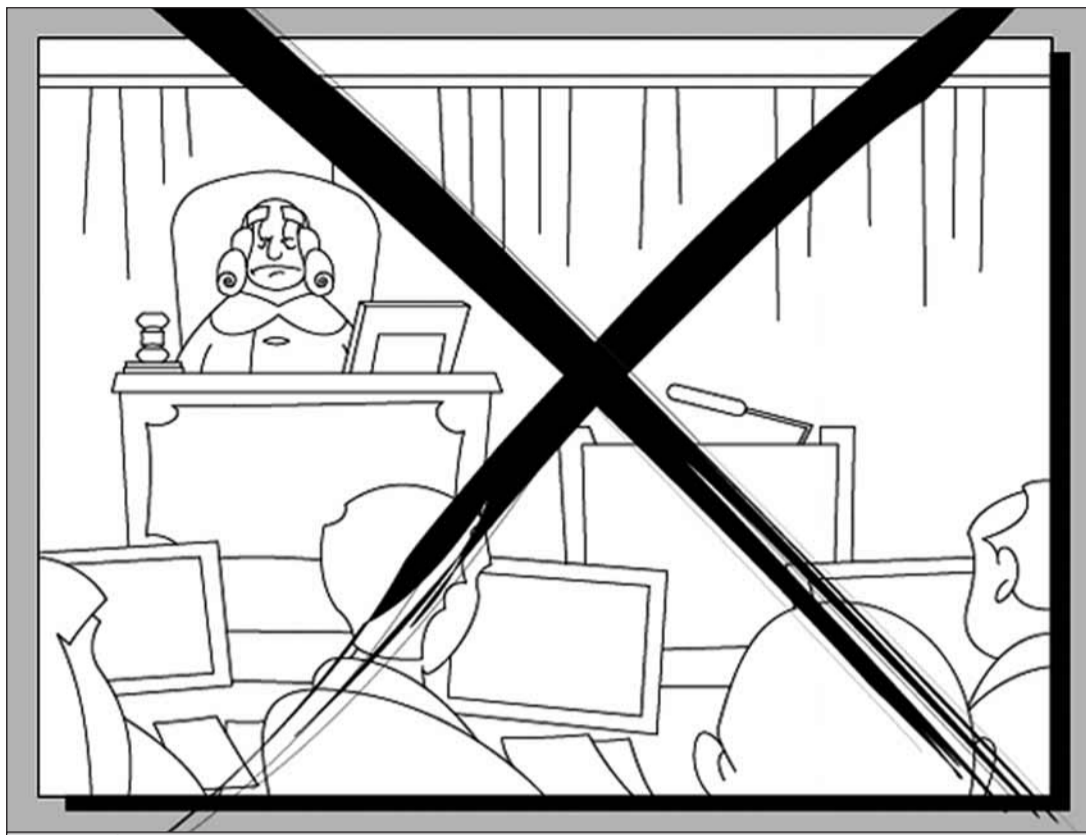
Limaj, in an interview with the New Yorker, denied abusing any prisoners. When asked if he got subordinates to scare witnesses into recanting, Limaj responded, "I was in The Hague. If someone here did something which was wrong, this person has to respond."

Hilmi Zhitia, a former chief state prosecutor who's now a private defence attorney, told Prishtina Insight that Kosovo witnesses frequently find themselves under pressure.

"Witnesses in high-profile cases can change their statements because of pressure, threats and blackmails against the witness's children and family," said Zhitia, who is not involved with the Klecka or Llapi cases.

Agim Zogaj, a former KLA prison guard known as "Witness X", was the star witness in the Klecka trial until he died in an apparent suicide in Germany in 2011.

Zogaj, who gave detailed



Illustration/A. Visti

accounts of the murders of Serbian prisoners at Klecka, had previously told prosecutors about multiple attempts on his life.

In June 2009, he was shot and wounded at his house in Prizren, and prior to that, he found a grenade in his car in July 2007, as well as receiving other threats to himself and his family.

The witnesses who've changed their stories in the Klecka and Llapi case did not offer accounts as damning as Zogaj's, but they nevertheless supported prosecutors' assertions about abuses at KLA detention facilities.

Kosovo defence attorney Rame Gashi, who isn't involved in the Klecka or Llapi trials, said contradictory statements can muddle cases.

"Changing statements is a widespread phenomenon since the end of the war in Kosovo," Gashi said. "The judge is challenged in recognising which of the statements offers the truth or comes close to the truth. This becomes a difficult task especially when some other evidence related to the case is lacking."

Avdyli Avdyli, in multiple

accounts in 2002, spoke of being beaten by KLA fighters and witnessing beatings at the Llapashtica prison. In the current trial, he said otherwise, and one of his earlier statements was ruled inadmissible.

He blamed faulty translations — interviews were done in Serbian, which he said he didn't know well — and pressure from UN police.

"They came to me many times. They saw that I was scared and told me that I'd be given a visa and compensation for what had happened to me," Avdyli said. "Because I was young, I was deceived by their claims."

## Different stories in Klecka:

While the Llapi case heard its closing statements this week, the testimony continues in the Klecka case. Two Klecka witnesses have thus far contradicted earlier statements.

Lawyer Sokol Dobruna was a protected witness for the prosecution, known as Witness A, but he testified publicly on April 23.

"I do not accept being a witness for the prosecution, however this doesn't mean that I will not answer the questions," he told the court.

Dobruna headed the KLA's judicial service from December 1998 until the end of the war.

In testimony given in 2010, Dobruna had said that Fatmir Limaj, then a KLA commander, was the only person who had authority to release prisoners at the Klecka prison.

In April this year, he declared, "Fatmir Limaj had no power in the prison of Klecka and didn't have the competence to release the prisoners."

Another witness who has remained anonymous, Witness C, testified in the trial via a video link April 30 and contradicted his earlier testimony.

He claimed he hadn't been beaten or poorly treated at Klecka, as he'd said before. He also denied seeing four inmates that he knew at Klecka.

At the end of his testimony, Witness C declared that he wished that the defendants would be freed as soon as possible.

Five other protected witnesses remain and are expected to testify.

## Concerns over witnesses:

The ability of EULEX to protect witnesses came under fire in the wake of the death of Witness X, Zogaj.

EULEX did not respond to Prishtina Insight's questions about the protection of witnesses in the Klecka and Llapi cases.

In January, EULEX signed a witness protection collaboration agreement with Kosovo's Ministry of Internal Affairs in January.

The mission has said that the agreement was drafted in accordance to the Law on Protection of Witnesses that entered into power on September 1, 2012, without providing further details.

Gashi, the defense attorney, said that while witness protection exists on paper, "in practice, it is equal to zero".

## Editor's Word In Cronyism They Trust

It's no secret that government jobs are a favoured currency for politicians in Kosovo.

Countless government employees are politically connected. Even the chief of the civil service is part of the governing body of the Democratic Party of Kosovo, the PDK.

While patronage exists throughout the world, it is particularly pervasive here in Kosovo. A new report by Democracy for Development, *A Class of Its Own: Patronage and its impact on Social Mobility in Kosovo*, attempts to measure the extent personal and political patronage.

On the report's Patronage Index, using a scale of 0 to 1.0, Kosovo registers 0.928, the highest among the 15 European democracies studied.

By comparison, Greece, which has well-documented patronage problems, registers 0.62 on the index. In the UK, it is just 0.09.

This means that government employees who got their jobs based on merit are in the minority in Kosovo.

Looking more broadly, the report is just one indictment of how connections and cronyism frequently trump common sense.

Consider the unfolding scandal involving the Kosovo Security Force. By the KSF's admission, emails found on the computer of Deputy Minister Slavisa Filipovic showed that he informed the Democratic Party in Serbia about KSF unit positions.

Filipovic's involvement isn't clear, but the ministry's has insisted that he himself did not reveal sensitive information, as has Filipovic.

The discovery was also kept from the public for more than a year and a half, prompting the opposition Self-Determination party to call for Filipovic to be investigated in connection with possible spying.

There is no conclusive evidence that Filipovic was spying for Belgrade. But it is remarkable that the case was kept under wraps for so long and that Filipovic has been given the benefit of the doubt. There also doesn't seem to have been a proper investigation. The KSF's oversight committee apparently was not even told about it.

The most logical answer is connections. Filipovic, a political appointee, is a member of the Serbian Democratic Party of Kosovo and Metohija, a party in coalition with Prime Minister Hashim Thaci's PDK. Thaci needs the Serbian party's support to maintain his ruling coalition, which probably played a role in Filipovic's selection in the first place.

For some in PDK, having a Serb in the fold who is accused of spying could be difficult to stomach. After all, much of the PDK's political identity stems from its connections to the Kosovo Liberation Army and its fight to break from Serbia.

No doubt, many in the party are now wondering whether that the carrot of Filipovic's appointment was worth it.

"Changing statements is a widespread phenomenon since the end of the war in Kosovo. The judge is challenged in recognising which of the statements offers the truth or comes close to the truth. This becomes a difficult task especially when some other evidence related to the case is lacking."

- Rame Gashi, Kosovo attorney

# Emails to Belgrade Spark Spying Accusations

Government insists Deputy Minister did not reveal any sensitive information about Kosovo Security Force as Self-Determination MPs call for an investigation.



By Visar Duriqi

Revelations that a top official in the Kosovo Security Force Ministry sent emails to officials in Belgrade have led opposition Self-Determination MPs to demand an investigation into possible spying.

The Kosovo Security Force, KSF, said it learned that Deputy Minister Slavisa Filipovic exchanged emails with Serbian leaders when it discovered the messages on his computer in late 2011.

But the information was kept from the public until May, when KSF Minister Agim Ceku responded to questions from Self-Determination MP Alma Lama during a parliamentary session on May 2.

"Our competent structures

"The fact that the ministry hesitates to give information about this issue means they are hiding the truth."

- Alma Lama,  
Self-Determination MP

noticed a correspondence - an exchange of emails - between the deputy minister and an official of a political party in Belgrade," Ceku told MPs. "But we concluded that no secrets were revealed in the email exchange."

It is unclear what Filipovic is alleged to have written to Serbian officials. The KSF, an armed uniformed civil defense organisation, has refused to make the emails in question public.

A written statement from the ministry last week, after Ceku's appearance in parliament, said the messages included information about KSF unit positions but did not say explicitly that Filipovic had revealed them.

The KSF wrote that Filipovic's



Slavisa Filipovic

computer contained emails from 2011 between leaders in the Serbian Democratic Party of Kosovo and Metohija and Serbia's Democratic Party, at a time when the leader of the latter, Boris Tadic was Serbia's President.

"There are a few emails about their party issues and among them was also an email about the KSF, which is about the locations of units of the KSF," the ministry said.

Filipovic, who remains a Deputy Minister, has not responded to Prishtina Insight's request to comment about the emails. He denied sending messages to Serbian officials in an interview with the Prishtina daily newspaper Tribuna.

"It's speculation and propaganda by Self-Determination," Filipovic told the newspaper.

A Democratic Party official in Serbia named by the KSF as one of the correspondents told Prishtina Insight that she was unaware of any exchange of messages.

"I have never heard about that person [Filipovic], I don't have any interest in this issue or contact with such people," she said.

The Ministry, for its part, said the messages did not divulge state secrets, but the matter is now "now with the competent bodies," without elaborating.

The Kosovo state prosecutor's offices would not say if it was investigating Filipovic.

Under Kosovo's laws, a person convicted of divulging a state secret to a foreign state organisation or individual faces five to 12 years in prison.

By law, a "state secret" means data or military, economic or official documents designated as classified information by law or dispositions and other decisions of the competent body issued in accordance to the law.

Lama, who brought the correspondence to light in parliament, called on the government to release all the emails and for prosecutors to initiate an investigation into possible espionage.

"The fact that the ministry hesitates to give information about this issue means they are hiding the truth," she told Prishtina Insight.

"If they say the information that [Filipovic] sent is not a violation of state secrets, why don't they make it public?" she asked.

Lama accused the government of keeping the issue quiet to avoid shaking the ruling coalition of Prime Minister Hashim Thaci, of which Filipovic's Serbian Democratic Party of Kosovo and Metohija is part.

"They have tolerated this in order not to make a noise," Lama asserted.

The 61-member coalition has only a slim majority in the 120-member assembly and has been increasingly fragile because of fractures inside Thaci's Democratic Party of Kosovo, PDK.

Thaci has had to rely more on his smaller partners to get key votes through, including the recent EU-backed agreement with Serbia.

Lama also claimed that double standards were at work, since in April two Kosovo Serbs, Sasa Nikolic and Dalibor Djordjevic, were arrested in Gjilan on suspicion of photographing KSF facilities. They remain in custody and face prosecution.

"This sends the message: if you have power, you are above the law,"



The Kosovo Security Force is a uniformed, lightly armed civil defense force. But Agim Ceku, the minister of the KSF, says it will be an army this year.

## KSF: The Makings of an Army?

The Kosovo Security Force is a lightly armed, uniformed force that is subject to democratic, civilian control. Its mission is to conduct crisis response operations throughout Kosovo and neighbouring countries.

Minister Agim Ceku has said he expects the KSF to become a full-fledged army in 2013.

It is an indirect successor to

the former Kosovo Liberation Army, KLA, which was transformed into the Kosovo Protection Corps, KPC in 1999.

The KPC existed until 2008, with the establishment of the KSF, envisaged by the Finnish diplomat Martti Ahtisaari's plan for Kosovo. The KSF is supposed to have no more than 2,500 troops and 800 reservists.

Lama said.

PDK MP Fadil Demaku, a member of the committee that oversees the Kosovo Intelligence Agency, said he became aware of the emails in 2011.

While he said he was confident that no breach in national security had occurred, he invited prosecutors to open an investigation.

"Let the state prosecution start investigations on this case and if a penal act has been committed, let the law be enforced on the perpetrators," Demaku said.

PDK MP Ahmet Isufi, a member of the committee that oversees the KSF, also dismissed concerns about the messages, saying Filipovic had no access to classified information.

"In his position he could not have access to operational documents with content that damages or endangers the functioning of the KSF," Xhelili said.

Xhelili, however, said his committee hadn't yet discussed the matter.

Earlier this year, the Anti-Corruption Agency investigated Filipovic for not declaring business interests.

The agency ended its investigation in April after Filipovic declared his management positions in the Binacka Morava company in Gjilan and the Pcelica agriculture cooperative in Preoc.

Filipovic has served as Deputy Minister in the Kosovo Security Force Ministry since May 2011.

On his official profile, he describes himself as "loyal" and mentions as previous experience his time as head of the service department in the Coordination Centre for Kosovo and Metohija in Gracanica, a so-called parallel institution operated by the Serbian government.

# Mayor Arrested For Alleged War Crimes



By Edona Peci

Police have detained the mayor of Skenderaj, Sami Lushtaku, and four other suspects for alleged war crimes against civilian prisoners during the 1999 conflict.

Officers from the EU rule-of-law mission EULEX and Kosovo police arrested the five men on Thursday on suspicion of abusing civilian prisoners held at a Kosovo Liberation Army, KLA detention centre during wartime.

"The five individuals are being investigated for war crimes against the civilian population in the form of the violation of the bodily integrity and health of civilians held in a KLA detention centre located in Likovc/Likovac (Skenderaj/Srbica municipality)," said a statement from EULEX.

"One of the individuals is also being investigated for a war crime in the form of the killing of one civilian," the statement said.

Lushtaku's lawyer Arianit Koci confirmed that his client had been detained.

"Mr. Lushtaku is charged with war crimes against the civilian population in violation of the

Geneva conventions," Koci told Prishtina Insight.

He said that more information about the case was expected on Friday when Lushtaku and the other four suspects will appear before a pre-trial judge.

"Tomorrow we'll see if he remains detained or if he will be released," the lawyer said.

Lushtaku also is one of six accused of waging a hate campaign against BIRN Kosovo director Jeta Xharra.

He is charged, along with Infopress's former owner Rexhep Hoti, former executive director Arizona Dibra, former editor-in-chief Avni Azemi and former jour-

nalists Rizah Hajdari and Qani Mehmedi with issuing threats against Xharra and violating her rights in May and June of 2009.

According to the indictment, a campaign against Xharra was launched after Radio Television Kosovo broadcast an edition of BIRN's TV programme, "Jeta ne Kosove" ("Life in Kosovo"), dealing with alleged mismanagement in Skenderaj/Srbica where Lushtaku was mayor at the time.

The indictment notes that in 12 articles published by Infopress, Xharra was called a "Serbian spy", a "professional bomb", an "embassy slut" and was "subjected to other insults".



Skenderaj Mayor Sami Lushtaku

# Sugar King Eyes Brezovica's Powder



Powerful Serbian businessman who made a fortune in sugar is among pre-qualified bidders for Kosovo's ambitious planned ski resort.



By Parim Olluri and  
Bojana Barlovac

**M**iodrag Kostic is known as the "Sugar King" in Serbia. He purchased government-owned sugar refineries in Serbia's northern province of Vojvodina for just 3 euro a piece in 2000 - the deal of a lifetime.



Miodrag Kostic made a fortune in the sugar business.

Those refineries became the foundation of a business empire that turns over an estimated 500 million euro a year and made Kostic one of Serbia's wealthiest people, with a personal fortune last tallied at around 300 million euro.

Kostic later became the centre of a scandal after his company was accused of taking advantage of an EU trade agreement to repackage sugar bought on world markets as a Serbian product and re-sell it to EU countries at a much higher price. Kostic denied wrongdoing, and an EU commission later concluded his company did nothing illegal.

These days Kostic is taking an interest in a different kind of white powder. His MK Group has expressed interest in investing in the planned new ski resort at Brezovica, in Strpce, a predominantly Serbian municipality in southern Kosovo.

The MK Group is among four qualified bidders announced by the Kosovo government on May 8 to take on a 99-year concession for a ski centre, to be

built near the existing resort.

The plan, drafted by international ski experts, took shape in 2011 after a decade of failed attempts to privatize the aging resort.

These collapsed because of ownership wrangles between the Kosovo and Serbian governments. By building a new resort, the Kosovo government aims to sidestep these disputes.

Kosovo's Ministry of Trade and Industry, which is overseeing the Brezovica concession, has declined to comment on Kostic's interest. Kostic and his MK Group also did not respond to requests for comment.

## Shifting political ties:

During the 1990s, Kostic was director of Serbia's centrist Democratic Party. But in 2000, following the fall of the regime of Slobodan Milosevic, he left the party, saying he couldn't be in politics and lead what was then Serbia's biggest private company.

But he remained close to the Democrats and was a friend of the late Prime Minister, Zoran Djindjic, whose government sold him the three sugar plants at a token price. Following Djindjic's assassination in 2003, Kostic drifted away from the Democrats.

He is now seen as close to the ruling Serbian Progressive Party, headed by Aleksandar Vucic, Serbia's deputy prime minister, who has taken a lead role in selling Kosovo Serbs the terms of the recent EU-led agreement between Kosovo and Serbia.

The attempts to privatize Brezovica during the past decade have failed. (Photo/David Bailey)



If the Kosovo government's plans are realized, Brezovica will become one of the largest skiing centres in the region. (Photo/Driton Avdyli)

## No timetable:

The Kosovo government has not given a timetable for bidding on the Brezovica concession. The other bidders include:

- ATC Investment and Design Workshop, an Austrian-American consortium
- Rila Ski Resort, Eco Sign Evropa and Balkan GCE, a Bulgarian-Austrian consortium
- PGI Management & MDP Consulting, a French-Andorran-Kosovar consortium

In January and February, The Ministry of Trade and Industry ran adverts in *The Economist* and *Financial Times* to solicit investors for Brezovica.

According to a 2011 master plan, the new ski resort will be one of the largest in the Balkans and five times larger than the nearby ski resort in Mavrovo, Macedonia.

The estimated cost is not clear, however, and the new lifts alone are said to cost about 25 million euro.

Those refineries became the foundation of a business empire that turns over an estimated 500 million euro a year and made Kostic one of Serbia's wealthiest people, with a personal fortune last tallied at around 300 million euro.

# Kosovo, Serbia Agree EU Deal Action Plan

Leaders of Serbia and Kosovo have agreed on a harmonized plan to implement the recent Brussels-led agreement, the EU foreign police chief announced.



By Prishtina Insight

The EU foreign policy chief, Catherine Ashton, said the prime ministers of Kosovo and Serbia on Wednesday agreed a fixed text on implementing the recent EU-brokered deal.

Hashim Thaci and Ivica Dacic "will be in touch with me by the end of the week," Ashton added.

The agreement, which Kosovo and Serbia struck on April 19, is intended to normalise relations between the two sides and thus boost both sides' progress towards the EU.

It primarily addresses the vexed issue of Serbian state-run "paral-

lel institutions" in the north of Kosovo, where most of the population is ethnic Serbian.

Implementation of the agreement is the condition for Serbia to obtain a start date for the opening of accession talks with the EU, while Kosovo has the prospect of obtaining a Stabilization and Association Agreement, SAA, the first step towards membership.

Dacic said the implementation plan confirmed the existence of "a serious intention" to enact the deal, which was signed in April.

The plan will become effective after the governments of Serbia and Kosovo confirm it and inform Ashton of this in writing.

According to Dacic, during phase one, "a working group comprising representatives of both

sides will be set up and charged with suggesting which laws should be amended. The other part of the plan refers to the Community of Serb Municipalities [in Kosovo]".

Thaci said that details of the implementation of the plan "will be settled later in meetings of expert teams, as well as by the governments of Serbia and Kosovo.

"We have agreed in principle on the steps for the implementation of the agreement over the next six months," Thaci said on Wednesday.

Dacic said dialogue with Kosovo would continue with talks on the property of the displaced persons and refugees, Serbian cultural heritage in Kosovo and the status in Kosovo of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

## Local Elections Could Be Delayed Until 2014

Kosovo wants to hold local elections in October, but if conditions are not right in the Serb-run north of Kosovo they could be postponed until spring 2014, sources told Prishtina Insight.



By Edona Peci

As the Kosovo president Atifete Jahjaga is due to continue consultations with political parties on the upcoming local elections, Prishtina Insight discovered they might be delayed until next year when "chances to have a successful electoral process in the northern part of the country have increased".

"We are interested in holding local elections throughout the whole territory of Kosovo- the northern part included- this year.

"The second Sunday of October is an option we are looking into," a Balkan Insight source in the Kosovo presidency said.

Kosovo held local elections on November 15, 2009, but the vote was boycotted by local Serbs in the four northern Serb-run municipalities of North Mitrovica, Leposavic, Zvecan and Zubin Potok, where local leaders were elected in separate votes organized by Belgrade.

Since the end of the Kosovo conflict in the late 1990s, northern Kosovo has been beyond the control of Prishtina's government, while Serbia has continued to finance local security, judicial, health and educational institutions.

On April 19, Kosovo and Serbia adopted a 15-point draft agreement on normalizing relations, allowing both sides to advance their integration into the



A municipal meeting in Zvecan in April.

European Union. The draft agreement mainly deals with the future of the Serbian community in Kosovo.

According to article 12 of the agreement "Municipal elections shall be organized in the northern municipalities in 2013 with the facilitation of the OSCE, in accordance with Kosovo law and international standards".

"Once those elections are held, there will not be any parallel structures in the north (...) I am speaking without any prejudice, but we do not want to have the same structures. We are interested in supporting structures which implement the rule of law in the framework of the Kosovo system", the source said.

The current differences between Serbia and Kosovo over the action plan on the implementation of the

EU-brokered deal are expected to be the main topic of discussions during a meeting between Serbian and Kosovo Prime Ministers hosted next week by EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton.

"A lot related to the local elections will depend on this meeting", the official in the Kosovo presidency said.

However, he explained "other options would have to be examined" if there is not a good basis to hold successful local elections in the north.

"The Kosovo president could ask the parliament to extend her legal timeframe in setting the date for local elections. The parliament then could approve a resolution or it could change the law", he stressed adding elections could then be called on April or May of 2014.



German diplomat Wolfgang Ischinger, left, says a 'Two Germanys' style model could work for Kosovo and Serbia.

## 'Two Germanys Model' Suggested for Kosovo

Veteran German diplomat says 1972 treaty between East and West Germany holds lessons for Kosovo and Serbia.



By Bardh Shkreli

In 1972, during the height of the Cold War, East and West Germany signed the Grundlagenvertrag or Basic Treaty.

The agreement established normal relations between two sovereign states and allowed both to join the UN without addressing issues of German national identity or unification.

Wolfgang Ischinger, a longtime German diplomat who represented the EU in the talks on Kosovo's status in 2007, says the Basic Treaty could offer a model for Kosovo and Serbia.

"In the case of Germany in the 1970s, leaving aside the thorny issue of mutual recognition, the agreement helped to solve many practical issues of interest to people on both sides," he said.

"It was not the perfect solution, but a good way to escape the blockade," Ischinger, now Chairman of the Munich Security Conference, told Prishtina Insight recently.

Ischinger said he proposed the so-called Two Germanys Model during talks in Prishtina back in 2007.

The idea has continued to resurface during various talks between Kosovo and Serbia since 2011, but has yet to gain serious traction.

### EU deal encouraging:

The diplomat described the recent EU-led agreement between Kosovo

and Serbia on April 19 as a major step forward for the region.

"Sometimes it takes some time for rationality and the European spirit to defeat old-style nationalism and other backward ideas," Ischinger said.

"This has now happened between Belgrade and Prishtina, and it will happen elsewhere, and will allow all countries of the Balkans to join a prosperous, modern, and globalizing EU."

Under the recent EU-brokered agreement, Serbia agreed not to stand in the way of Kosovo's eventual accession to the EU.

It did not mention other organisations, most notably the UN, however. Serbia, backed by Russia on the UN Security Council, has vowed to block Kosovo from joining the UN.

But Ischinger predicted that Kosovo would eventually become a UN member. "Sooner or later it will happen," he said.

"The longer Serbia blocks the accession of Kosovo to the UN, the smaller will the reward that Serbia obtains in exchange," he said.

"The smart leaders in Belgrade know this, and they have shown before how smart and mature they are," he added.

Ischinger also said that Germany and other powerful states continue quietly to press the EU members that still have not recognised Kosovo's independence, namely, Spain, Greece, Romania, Slovakia and Cyprus.

But good diplomacy can take time. "We need to be patient," Ischinger concluded.

# Former Anti-Corruption Chief Jailed for Corruption

Five-year sentence for ex-prosecutor who offered to drop investigations against bank officials in exchange for bribes.



By Petrit Collaku and Armend Zenelaj

The former head of Kosovo's anti-corruption task force, Nazmi Mustafi, was sentenced on Thursday to five years in prison and fined 10,000 euro for extorting money from people he was investigating and for illegal possession of a firearm.

Mustafi, a prosecutor appointed to head the task force by Prime Minister Hashim Thaci, was handling cases involving the liquidation of four banks. Through his friends, Reshad and Xhelal Zherk, Mustafa extorted 30,250 euro from Pashk Mirashi, a suspect in the case of the Credit Bank.

The Zherka brothers were sentenced to four years in prison and fined 10,000 euro for their role in the crimes.

Another intermediary, Mirela Ndoci, was sentenced to three months in prison and

fine 10,000 euro for attempting to extort suspects at three other banks.

A prosecutor in the EU Rule of Law mission, EULEX, handled the case.

The case dates back to 2008, when Kosovo police received two anonymous complaints about irregularities in the banking sector.

The letters contained allegations against a former liquidator of the former Credit Bank in Gjakova, Pashk Mirash, two officials from NLB Prishtina, Lavdim Koshutova and Albert Lumnezi, and Vullnet Latifi from the Bank for Business.

Following an investigation, police forwarded charges to the Office of the Special Prosecutor.

Mustafi took over the case of Mirashi in 2010, and informed Reshad and Xhelal Zherka about it.

According to the indictment, Mustafi asked the Zherka brothers to contact Mirashi and offer to "solve the case" for 50,000 euro.

The Zherka brothers met

Mirashi in August 2010 at a restaurant in Gjakova. Mirashi said he was willing to pay 27,000 euro to the prosecutor - but the brothers insisted on 50,000.

Mirashi then made a series of payments of less than 50,000. Later, after getting no concrete response about the status of the case against him, he contacted police.

The police in turn had Mirashi make an additional payment. Mirashi had a cousin deliver money to the brothers, and had them sign a piece of paper to acknowledge receipt of the money.

Mustafi also conspired with Ndoci to extort money from other suspects, according to the indictment. Mustafi had Ndoci inform Latifi, Lumnezi, Koshutova and Govori that he was planning to arrest them and offered to end the investigation in return for money. It is unclear, however, if any payments

were made.

EULEX had been investigating the Mustafi for almost a year. Most the cases he had handled were dropped because of lack of evidence or because the suspects were freed.



Nazmi Mustafi used to head Kosovo's anti-corruption task force.

## Kosovo's Tough Smoking Law Draws Protests

Businessmen and bar owners are unhappy as a wide-ranging ban on smoking in public takes effect.



By Kaltrina Rexhepi

Eight years have passed since Kosovo began curbing smoking, when a 2005 law restricted smoking to spaces not exceeding 30 per cent of a bar or restaurant.

The law was toughened in 2010 with a ban smoking on public transport.

But the rules were not uniformly adopted and many bars in practice still allow smoking throughout their establishments. It is also common for bus drivers to light up behind the wheel.

But as of Wednesday, it has been illegal to smoke in any enclosed public area and well as in certain open areas including schools grounds and sports stadiums.

The changes take place within a wide-ranging Law on Tobacco Control approved by MPs in April and signed by President Atifete Jahjaga.

The law, which also prohibits tobacco advertising, lays down fines for people who light up in public spaces and for managers of bars who allow smoking on the premises.

The law also obliges the public broadcaster, Radio and Television Kosovo, RTK, to air programmes that raise awareness of the dangers of smoking.

The government is also prohibited from receiving any assistance from the tobacco industry or from hiring anyone



Bar owners are skeptical about the new law.

who currently works, or has worked in the industry within the past 12 months.

But Kosovo's hospitality industry is far from happy. The Chamber of Commerce said it objects to the law and will ask the Constitutional Court to review it.

"We think the population will be hurt by implementation of this law, socially and financially," Safet Gerxhalii, head of the Chamber, said.

"It will create too many problems in society, starting with the fact that most people smoke and our regular customers are smokers," agreed Emir Shala, owner of Prishtina's Apartment bar.

Shala said he was trying to follow the law by having customers smoke on a terrace.

"I don't know what we will do because some customers do not understand. But we will try to implement the law," he said.

Some establishments banned smoking long before the law took effect, including the Metropol, on Mother Teresa Boulevard.

"We haven't had any problems. The

purpose was to not have any smoking and customers welcome this," Rexhe Kurteshi, manager of the Metropol, said.

The government is meanwhile promising to step up enforcement of the changes.

The Ministry of Health is overseeing the ban and is pooling inspectors from various ministries throughout the government to see that the law is implemented, ministry spokesman Faik Hoti said.

He cautioned that implementation would take time. "You cannot expect this law to be implemented within 24 hours, but with time it will succeed and be one of the most positive steps taken to protect public health," he said.

Hoti maintained that Kosovo was ready for the ban. "Several years have passed [since the first smoking regulations] and there has been good preparation for this," he said.

Some signs of the law were already visible on Wednesday. Some supermarkets had covered up cigarette advertising at checkouts, for example.

# Amnesty Lists Rights Failings in Balkans in 2012

The Amnesty International Report for 2012 listed war crimes prosecutions and discrimination against sexual and ethnic minorities as among the most pressing rights issues in the Balkans.



By Prishtina Insight

## KOSOVO

Roma faced widespread and persistent discrimination, in Kosovo, the report said.

The report also noted that only just over 300 Serbs had returned voluntarily to Kosovo during the course of the year.

"Violent and other attacks on returning Kosovo Serbs continued," it said. "In Klinja municipality, returnees received threatening letters; two houses recently reconstructed for Serb returnees were burned down."

Meanwhile, a 2011 Law on Witness Protection, which entered into force in September, was not implemented by the end of the year.

According to the report, the government's Commission for Missing Persons largely failed to implement the 2011 Law on Missing Persons.

## ALBANIA

The report said Albania's judicial system failed to deliver justice in a case of enforced disappearance and in the unlawful killing of protestors in the January 21, 2011 riots while torture and ill-treatment in police departments were described as disturbing.

The rights watchdog noted that UN Committee against Torture had expressed concerns about the investigations by the Ministry of Interior into alleged ill-treatment by police.

The same Committee reported that basic safeguards against torture were not provided to people in detention, including timely access to lawyers and doctors. It also noted the excessive length of pre-trial detentions.

According to the Amnesty report, violence in the family remains widespread in Albania, with 2,526 reported incidents of domestic violence, 345 more than in the previous year. Discrimination against Roma and other minorities is also of concern.

## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The report for Bosnia noted that nationalist rhetoric by the main political parties had increased in 2012. Institutions at state level, including the judiciary, reportedly weakened.

Prosecution of crimes under international law continued

before domestic courts but progress remained slow and impunity persisted. Many civilian victims of the 1990s war were still denied access to justice and reparations.

The Amnesty report also noted that Bosnia again failed to implement the 2009 judgement of the European Court of Human Rights in the case brought by a Roma, Dervo Sejdi, and a Jew, Jakob Finci, concerning discrimination against the minorities.

Top governing posts in the country are currently reserved only for three constituent peoples, Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats, and the ruling told Bosnia to amend this.

The report also said that despite an Anti-discrimination Law prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, the authorities did not develop a system to register discrimination cases.

State institutions failed to publicly condemn homophobic violence; no one had been held responsible for the attacks on the organizers and participants of the 2008 Sarajevo Queer Festival.

## BULGARIA

Roma continued to face discrimination in areas such as education, employment, health care and housing, the Amnesty report said. Conditions of detention fell short of international human rights standards.

"In December, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture criticized detention conditions and ill-treatment reported in Bulgarian prisons," the report said.

Homophobic violence persisted, the report continued. "Bulgarian legislation does not currently criminalize hate crimes perpetrated on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity," it reads.

Amnesty International also said that asylum-seekers continue to face obstacles in accessing international protection.

## CROATIA

"Despite some progress in prosecuting crimes under international law committed during the 1991-1995 war, the measures taken to address impunity remained inadequate," the report reads.

According to the report, crimes allegedly committed by the Croatian Army and police against Croatian Serbs and other minorities remained uninvestigated.

Of the total number of registered war crime cases only 112 cases - 10 per cent - were completed before the domestic courts.

The report also said that the authorities failed to provide vic-

tims and their families with access to reparation.

Discrimination against Roma continued in terms of access to economic and social rights, including education, employment and housing. Measures undertaken by the authorities remained insufficient.

Croatian Serbs continued to face discrimination, mainly in relation to housing and employment, report said.

## MACEDONIA

The Amnesty International report noted "further deterioration" in relations between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians in 2012.

The report mentioned the February killing of two Albanians by an off-duty Macedonian policeman in Gostivar, as well as the arrest of 20 and subsequent terrorism charges against five ethnic Albanians in May, suspected of the killings of five Macedonian men at a lake outside Skopje earlier that year.

"Thousands of Albanians protested against the arrests and the authorities' depiction of them as terrorists" the report noted.

Amnesty said that quarrels between government partners also sparked ethnic tensions when in August the main ruling VMRO DPMNE party proposed a draft law on reparations to Macedonian army and police veterans that fought in the 2001 armed conflict.

"In October, the bill was derailed in parliament by the coalition party, the Albanian Democratic Union for Integration, because it did not provide for the National Liberation Army (NLA) combatants, an armed group which had fought the government forces," the report recalled.

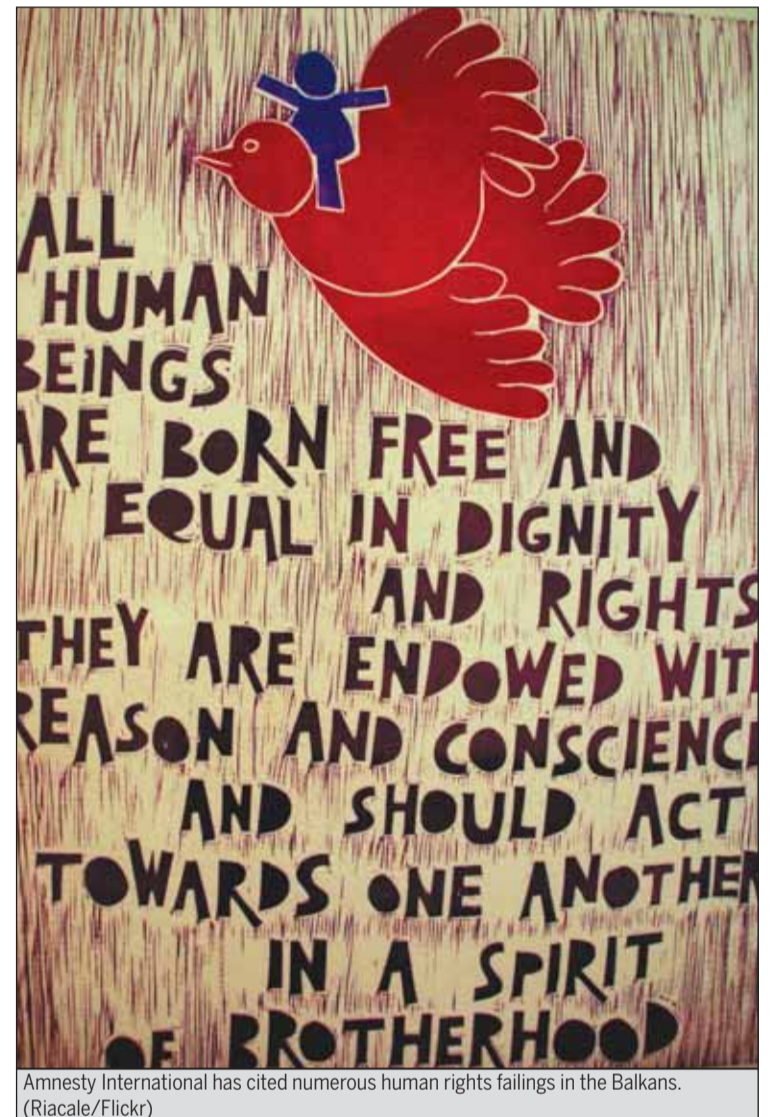
The report further mentioned that relatives of missing persons abducted in the 2001 conflict were denied access to justice last year and that conditions in places of detention fell short of minimum standards.

## MONTENEGRO

The report on Montenegro particularly criticized verdicts in war-crimes cases and continuing pressures on independent media.

"In some cases (court) proceedings were not fully in line with international standards, and verdicts were inconsistent with international law," the report said.

With regard to the freedom of expression, the document specifically mentions the case of Olivera Lakić, journalist of opposition daily "Vijesti", who was beaten up



Amnesty International has cited numerous human rights failings in the Balkans. (Riicale/Flickr)

in front of her home in March 2012.

Continuing discrimination against the LGBT community and delays in providing more than 3,000 Roma and Ashkali refugees who fled Kosovo in 1999 with permanent housing are further challenges to respect for human rights.

## ROMANIA

Excessive use of police force during anti-austerity and anti-government demonstrations, discrimination against the Roma community and the failure to hold a full and open inquiry into the detention and torture of prisoners held under the CIA's rendition program are among Amnesty's complaints about Romania in 2012.

The Amnesty report recalls allegations of excessive use of force by Romanian police in anti-austerity protests and also questions a parliamentary proposal from September 2012 to introduce mandatory counseling for pregnant women, which could impact on women's freedom to choose abortion, it said.

Roma children were still being placed in schools for children with disabilities, in separate schools or in separate classrooms, according to Amnesty, which also said that

the segregation of Roma children and the effective denial of access to education were contributing to the lower levels of education found among the Roma community. Forced evictions of Roma families are also referred to.

## SERBIA

The report said that forced evictions of Roma had continued in Belgrade in 2012. "Around 1,000 Roma were forcibly evicted in April from the Belvil settlement by the Belgrade City authorities. Almost half were returned to southern Serbia; many were made homeless," the report said.

The rights of gay people were also violated, it noted. According to the report, in September 2012 a gay man was beaten with a meat hammer by youths in a homophobic attack in Belgrade. A month later, the Prime Minister banned the Belgrade Pride for the second year running on the basis of unspecified security threats.

The report also noted that proceedings continued at the Belgrade Special War Crimes Chamber. Some 37 defendants being convicted in first-instance war crimes trials, but only seven new indictments were issued. Some witnesses were allegedly threatened by officials charged with their protection, it said.

# Zoran Raskovic - The Jackal Who Repented

The Serbian paramilitary who became a key prosecution witness at his former comrades' trial for war crimes in Kosovo says he had to speak out about the brutal massacres his unit committed.



By Marija Ristic

**Z**oran Raskovic has been called a hero and a war criminal, a patriot and a traitor, a crazy man and a genius. Asked by Prishtina Insight to describe himself, he said he was "a man of truth".

"I want to end this 15-year-long silence. I want to remove the burden from my chest and the cross I carry on my head," said former Serb paramilitary Zoran Raskovic, now the prosecution's key witness in the case against 13 Serbian fighters charged with committing war crimes in four Kosovo villages during the 1999 war.

Raskovic, a former member of the Jackals paramilitary unit, has been a witness at the special court in Belgrade on several occasions, giving vivid testimonies about their brutal massacres in the villages of Ljubenic, Pavlan, Zahac and Cuska, all in the area around the Kosovo town of Pec/Peja.

For the past two years, Raskovic has been under constant police protection, because when he decided to testify under his own name, he and his family started

receiving threats from former Jackals and from the police protection unit.

Raskovic said that all this has proved that the society "doesn't want to hear the truth about Kosovo".

"I wonder if I was more manipulated back in 1999, when as a 20-year-old boy I proudly went to war, thinking that this is the way to defend my land from 'evil Albanians', or now, because I wanted to tell the truth and I endangered the lives of my closest, because I believed that the time had come for facing the past and for reconciliation," Raskovic said.

## Twice a refugee

Explaining what he meant by "manipulation"-in the 1990s, Raskovic said that "all these wars and that campaign from all sides that someone is taking our land made me think I was doing something right. You know, I was a refugee from Croatia and now from Kosovo."

Raskovic was born in the Croatian town of Rijeka while the country was still part of Yugoslavia. In the middle of the deadly Balkan war, as a fifteen-year-old boy, he fled from his hometown to Kosovo.

"With my father, mother and young brother, as a refugee for the first time, we went to Pec, the town where my family comes from," Raskovic said.

In 1998, after finishing high school, he did his compulsory military service, serving as a guard for Vladimir Lazarevic, who at the time was the chief of the Yugoslav Army's Pristina Corps. Lazarevic has since been sentenced to 15 years in prison for war crimes in Kosovo in 1999 by the Hague Tribunal.

During his twelve-month service, the armed conflict between the guerrilla Kosovo Liberation Army and the Serbian security forces started, and Raskovic says he witnessed disturbing scenes of Serb civilians being killed in Kosovo Liberation Army camp Klecka and Radonjic lake, which convinced him to join up and fight "for Kosovo's land".

"When I came back, Pec [Peja] was not the same town. Six Serb children were killed in Cafe Panda, hate and intolerance was everywhere," Raskovic said.

Working in a local coffee shop, he met Nebojsa Minic, alias 'Mrtvi' ('Dead'), a notorious criminal and member of several paramilitary groups and a police unit called Munje (Lightning), which is suspected of committing some of the most heinous war crimes.

## The deadly Jackals

Minic recruited him to a new unit, called the Jackals, which consisted of dozens of Serbian fighters and according to Raskovic was "tasked for dirty and most dangerous work".

"I was impressed at the time because I was part of the unit. I was a kid back then, Mrtvi was respected and he liked me. That was enough for me. For me, he was the alpha and the omega," said Raskovic.

"He told us then, 'We need men like you, the state needs us.' At that time, that was enough for me because I didn't understand what we were doing as I understand now," he said.

"For 100 days this unit



Zoran Raskovic says he's changed a lot since the 1990s.

was rampaging around the area of Metohija, spreading fear and horror among Albanians," he added.

In 2010, the Serbian war crimes prosecutor indicted fighters Toplica Miladinovic, Srecko Popovic, Slavisa Kastrotovic, Boban Bogicevic, Radoslav Brnovic, Vidoje Koricanin, Veljko Koricanin, Abdulah Sokic, Milojko Nikolic, Sinisa Misic, Zoran Obradovic, Dejan Bulatovic and Ranko Momic for killing more than 100 ethnic Albanians in the villages of Zahac, Pavlan, Ljubenic and Cuska in Kosovo in 1999.

At the trial, Raskovic, identified the majority of the men as the direct perpetrators of the massacres.

All of them except Toplica Miladinovic, who was a Yugoslav Army commander, are alleged to have been members of the Jackals.

The Jackals' command structure is still a subject of dispute, as many of its members claimed during the trial that they were part of a regular army unit and not paramilitaries.

Raskovic says that the leader of the unit was Minic, but he often consulted the Yugoslav Army command in Pec.

"We had army symbols, benefits that the army had, like gas and arms. And Mrtvi had official documents saying that he was an officer. I don't know if he was under Yugoslav Army command, but I know I took him at least ten times to the Yugoslav Army command for consultation,"

Raskovic.

Minic never faced criminal charges because he died of AIDS in Argentina in 2005. It is believed that he had close ties with the Serbian police and senior officials.



"I wanted to look all of them in the eyes. This was not done by Serbia, but by individuals. I wanted to remove this burden from my soul. I wanted this to be heard in Prishtina, Belgrade and Brussels. I don't think it is patriotic to be silent about these crimes, especially if you burn and kill whole villages. This is cowardice."

- Zoran Raskovic



Raskovic, at age 16, in Peja.

### Life after the massacres

Following the signing of the Kumanovo agreement on June 9, 1999, which ended the Kosovo war, Raskovic and his family fled to central Serbia. He then became a part of several criminal gangs and shortly after the war was sentenced to 12 years in prison for robbing a bank.

In his defence, he says that he was only trying to "steal the stolen", because the bank he robbed was owned by Serbian tycoon Miroslav Miskovic, who has since been charged with illegally earning more than 30 million euro from privatised road companies.

While in prison, Raskovic led several uprisings, the largest one in 2006, when hundreds of inmates sewed and stapled their tongues to their mouths in a protest for better prison conditions.

He escaped from prison twice, and when he finally left jail, he became a protected witness in the Jackals' case.

It was initially planned that Raskovic would testify under a codename to conceal his identity, but for the first time in Serbian court history, a protected witness decided to testify publicly so he could "tell the truth about the horrors in Kosovo".

"I wanted to look all of them in the eyes. This was not done by Serbia, but by individuals. I wanted to remove this burden from my soul. I wanted this to be heard in Prishtina, Belgrade and Brussels. I don't think it is patriotic to be silent about these crimes, especially if you burn and kill whole villages. This is cowardice," Raskovic said.

During the trial he received blatant threats from his former comrades.

"I have become aware that a criminal is a criminal. We can not justify our acts by saying 'they did this to us, so we will take revenge'," he said.

Today, he says he is effectively "stateless" because he has no official identity documents; he filed a request for an ID

card two years ago when the last one expired, but the authorities are still refusing to give it to him.

"I complained and asked for help from every possible institution - the police, the prosecution, the judge and the ombudsman. Everybody said they will help, but I am still without my ID," Raskovic said.

"I feel manipulated, or rather, double-crossed, because I am asking my own

state to provide me with my basic human rights, while all the other Jackals are walking around Belgrade freely," he said.

In the future, Raskovic said he would like to return to Kosovo.

"I have land there. I didn't sell anything. I would like to return and start a new life. That is why I talked. It is time for a true dialogue, because I don't have another 15 years to wait.

"I want to return home," he said.

# Serbia Arrests 2 Ex-Paramilitaries in Brutal 1999 Village Massacre



By Marija Ristic

Serbian police have arrested two men, including a current member of the country's special police unit, on suspicion that they helped murder at least 65 Albanian civilians in a Kosovo village.

Announcing the arrests on Tuesday, Belgrade's war crimes prosecutor said that the detained men were among five people "suspected of having committed war crimes against at least 65 Albanian civilians" in the Kosovo village of Ljubenic, which was attacked by Serbian paramilitaries in April 1999.

The men, identified only by the initials K.V. and P.L., are also suspected of the "deportation and transportation of the bodies of those killed in village of Ljubenic to the police [training] centre in Batajnica [in Belgrade]", where a mass grave containing around 750 bodies from Kosovo was discovered in 2001.

One of the detained suspects is a member of Serbia's special police unit, the 'gendarmerie', while the other's current position is so far unknown.

The attack on Ljubenic by the Serbian paramilitary unit called the Jackals, which acted under the patronage of the Yugoslav Army, came in the middle of the conflict between Serbian forces and Kosovo Liberation Army on April 1, 1999.

Thirteen former Serbian fighters are already on trial for killing at least 100 Albanians in four Kosovo villages - Ljubenic, Cuska, Pavlan, Zahac - from April until June 1999.

Key prosecution witness Zoran

Raskovic, who was a member of the Jackals during the Kosovo war, gave vivid testimony at Belgrade special court on April 22 about the brutal murders committed in Ljubenic by his unit.

"It was early in the morning when we entered Ljubenic," Raskovic told the court.

"It was a regular army action - we entered the village, forced villagers to leave their houses and gather at the centre of the village near the mosque," he said.

"There were around 60 to 100 villagers gathered. They looked so scared. Like sheep before the slaughter. Then one Albanian stepped out of the group and said: 'Why are you acting like bandits?'"

"Then 'Mrtvi' ['Dead', the nickname for the former commander of the unit, Nebojsa Minic] just shot him and said: 'Everyone who tries to offend the Serb police will end up like this,'" Raskovic continued.

After these initial shootings, the mass

killings began, he said.

"I just remember seeing three more members [of the unit] shooting randomly at the group of civilians gathered there. I don't know how long that lasted. But I can still see their bloody bodies. That was a massacre," Raskovic said.

At the beginning of the trial, Raskovic was a protected witness, but later decided to reject the protection measures, claiming he had been intimidated by the police's witness protection unit.



The Jackals were a notorious Serb paramilitary unit in Kosovo.

# Serbia's Right-Wingers Dream of Nationalist Resurgence

The protests over the Kosovo agreement revealed deep divisions among Serbia's right-wingers, but they could still become a serious force if they tap into public disappointment with the government.



By Nemanja Cabric

Sitting under a religious icon next to a map of Kosovo at the Belgrade headquarters of the new Zavetnici (Testifiers) movement, Milica Djurdjevic dreams about unifying all the movements that are fighting against European Union membership and want to keep Kosovo within Serbia.

Djurdjevic, political science student, said that her organisation, launched in February last year, has several thousand members. It uses a modern internet approach to popularise its views and membership is growing, she insisted.

"We are fighting for a change in the way the state is run - a change of government, looking towards Russia and against EU membership," Djurdjevic explained, eyeing the small Serbian flag on her desk.

Zavetnici was one of the various right-wing groups that protested in the capital against the EU-brokered Brussels agreement between Belgrade and Pristina on May 10th. Demonstrators included some leading Orthodox Church officials, opposition groups like the Serbian Radical Party and Democratic Party of Serbia, DSS, the conservative, pro-church Dveri movement and the banned ultra-nationalist organisation Obraz.

The protest, organised by Kosovo Serbs, attracted several thousand people. The demonstrators demanded that the Serbian constitutional court challenge the Brussels agreement that saw the Serbian authorities agree to dismantle their institutions in northern Kosovo and put them under Pristina's jurisdiction in exchange for an EU accession date.

The demonstration should have been a showcase for a united and vigorous nationalist movement but instead revealed its core weaknesses.

The turnout was played down by mainstream Serbian media but was still too low to show serious power.

"There is more talk about unification than real action," said Djurdjevic.

She remains optimistic, however: "This is the moment when all political fractions should act together. That could at some point result in a joint political platform and participation in new elections."

However, that point does not look likely to come soon. The nationalist bloc in Serbia is far from united. Some organisations are banned, others have differing strategies, many struggle to find funds, they lack clear support from the Serbian Orthodox Church and only one party represents their views in parliament:



Milica Djurdjevic carrying a poster with words "Serbia, don't allow your hearth to stop." (Photo/Slavko Dimitrijevic)

the opposition DSS, led by Vojislav Kostunica.

On top of that, they have a hard time getting media attention as Serbia's mainstream outlets are traditionally aligned with the government.

June 28th, the anniversary of the battle of Kosovo in 1389, would be one possible date to showcase right-wing unity but the nationalists are already squabbling over who will rally where. There are two major events announced for the same day, one in Belgrade and the other at Gazimestan in Kosovo, where a monument to the battle stands.

Traditionally, right-wing groups together with church officials, politicians and ordinary people from across Serbia gather at Gazimestan, under police protection, to commemorate the battle which is seen as a symbol of Serbian patriotism.

Marko Jaksic, a DSS deputy from North Mitrovica in Kosovo, who bitterly opposes the Brussels agreement, told BIRN that this year he wants to see opposition parties like the Radicals and Dveri as well as the DSS organise a protest in Belgrade.

"The issue of Kosovo and Metohija is not only an issue for Kosovo Serbs, it is a nationwide issue and everyone should get involved more actively in the defence of Kosovo and Metohija," he said.

But the Serbian National Movement, known as SNP 1389, a right-wing organisation with tens of thousands of members which

says it wants to "unify all Serbian lands", says it will go to Gazimestan on June 28th, instead of attending the Belgrade protest.

"I think it is more important to be at Gazimestan on Vidovdan (St Vitus' Day) and show that Kosovo is still Serbian than to participate in a promotion of political parties," SNP 1389 representative Igor Jovanovic said.

"The big question is whether the Belgrade rally will be a wide popular protest or just a rally of languishing opposition parties," he added.

Another group, SNP Nasi ('Ours'), which was united with SNP 1389 until 2010, will also go to Gazimestan and not protest in Belgrade.

Ivan Ivanovic, the president of SNP Nasi, has also announced a series of events across Serbia aimed at bringing down the current government of "traitors".

Zavetnici will however, participate in the Belgrade protest, and will join other Kosovo gatherings either the day before or the day after.

As well as lack of unity, the right-wing bloc is also suffering because of the contradictory messages coming from the Serbian Orthodox Church, widely perceived as the defender of Kosovo and the nation.

In April, Patriarch Irinej sent an open letter to Prime Minister Ivica Dacic, asking him to quit negotiations with Kosovo officials. During the Belgrade protest on May 10th, two top bishops - Amfilohije Radovic from the

Montenegro eparchy and Atanasije Jevtic, a retired bishop - denounced Dacic along with Serbian President Tomislav Nikolic and deputy prime minister Aleksandar Vucic as traitors. They held a public prayer for the Serbian government to come to its senses. However, just a day later, Patriarch Irinej slammed the clerics for participating in the protest without his blessing.

In Zavetnici's small office, packed with flags, posters, and leaflets, some of the movement's members lamented that there is no political party or organisation that is standing up for what they believe.

"Over 30 per cent of Serbian people support the causes we stand for," said Zavetnici president Stefan Stamenkovski.

"We need a consensus from all political sides to get what we want: to stop the implementation of the Brussels agreement and create that long-awaited nationalist bloc," he said.

Political analyst Jovo Bakic explained that the Radicals, before their split with Nikolic's Progressive Party, used to be the driving force that united all these movements ideologically.

The ruling Progressive Party has changed dramatically since the split in 2008, going from patriotic defenders of Kosovo to eager EU supporters. As a consequence, a significant number of right-wing voters, some 20 to 25 per cent of the electorate, are not represented in parliament, Bakic argued.

"If unified, this might be a force in the next elections and I don't see how any government could be formed without them. They will profit more from the economic crisis, the issue of Kosovo and the loss of territories where Serbs live," he said.

Bakic believes that the Church would support a unified nationalist bloc because it shares a similar ideology: traditionalism, family values, xenophobia and homophobia.

He sees the lack of a strong and authoritarian leader as the right-wing bloc's most serious weakness.

"I am not sure who will emerge as a leader, bearing in mind that Kostunica is an old and outdated figure, while the Radicals' leader Vojislav Seselj is on trial in the Hague and the Dveri political party has so far not delivered a strong personality. Still, I think that this is the bloc that has the biggest growth potential," he said.

Milica Djurdjevic has similar hopes.

"I am disappointed in both the ruling parties and the opposition. The problem is that we do not have an opposition that is strong enough to stand up against the government," she said.

"Our goal is to enter politics because we can win the battle there. That is how we can avoid media censorship and marginalisation," she insisted.

"Yes," Stamenkovski agreed enthusiastically. "We need to penetrate the system."

# Croatia Leads Balkans on Gay Rights Legislation

Croatia leads the Balkans in providing the best legal environment for lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender people, while Macedonia offers the least protection, new research says.



By Bojana Barlovac

Croatia scored 48 per cent on a checklist of laws that include rules on non-discrimination, gender recognition and hate speech, making it the regional leader, according to the research ahead of International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia earlier this month.

"Croatian officials continued to gradually improve the human rights situation for LGBTI people," the study said.

It was also noted that the Croatian authorities had ensured there was adequate police protection for participants at the Split Pride demonstration, which saw violence in 2011, and the event was even attended by five government officials.

"The government also expressed its intention to remove the degrading and offensive references to homosexuality identified in biology and religious education textbooks, while LGBT specific content was included in official curricula of the police academy," it

continues.

The survey was conducted by ILGA-Europe based on data on developments at a national level in 49 countries in Europe.

Albania came second in the Balkans, scoring 38 per cent.

"Albania continued to make progress at the institutional level towards greater recognition and protection of LGBTI people," the survey said.

"At the same time, homophobia and transphobia remained widespread," it continued.

Romania was the next best ranked in the Balkans with 31 per cent.

The survey warned however that the risk of discrimination or violence targeting LGBTI people remains high in the country.

According to the survey, Montenegro scored 27 per cent, and the country is still dogged by hate speech and violent attacks.

Serbia came in fifth place in the Balkans with 25 per cent.

The study said that despite some improvements, the situation remains difficult.

"The right to freedom of assembly of LGBTI people was violated this year as the Belgrade Pride was banned by authorities," the study



Gay pride in Croatia in 2010. (Photo/Goran Zec)

said.

"The risk of physical attacks and threats against members of the LGBTI community also continued to be high," it said.

In Bosnia, which scored 20 per cent, homophobia and transphobia remain common with limited or no action taken by the authorities to address discrimination, harassment or violence.

"Positively, [Bosnia's] blood transfusion institute amended its blood donation regulations by deleting the discriminatory provi-

sions," the study said.

Overt homophobia and transphobia expressed by government and religious leaders as well as by extremist groups remained common in Bulgaria, which scored 18 per cent.

Rampant homophobia also remains a serious threat for LGBTI people in Kosovo, which scored 14 per cent.

"While anti-discrimination legislation on the grounds of sexual orientation is in place, the impact of the law remains very limited in the

absence of any proactive policy to ensure its effective implementation," the study said.

Macedonia was ranked the worst in the Balkans with 13 per cent.

The survey said that discrimination against the LGBTI community remained widespread in the country, often fuelled by homophobic rhetoric from officials.

"Journalists also contributed significantly towards the stigmatisation of the LGBTI community through sensationalist and inflammatory articles," the survey added.

# Tour Operators Cash in on Tito Legend

Tour operators across the former Yugoslavia have spied a lucrative and very capitalist opportunity in the cult surrounding the old Socialist dictator.



By Sinisa Jakov Marusic

A tour based on the personality cult surrounding Yugoslavia's late president, Josip Broz Tito, was agreed last week at a regional tour operators' meeting in Belgrade.

"We have been searching for a product that will differentiate our region, especially because the Balkans since the [1990s] wars lost some of its attraction," said

Snazana Jovanovska, head of Macedonian Hospitality and Tourism Association, after the Belgrade meeting. "Our goal is to create an original story that will sell.

"This is not about politics and the idea should not be associated with it. Tito is a celebrity and I believe if we promote it well, we could make a really interesting tour," Jovanovska added.

The meeting was attended by tourist associations from six former Yugoslav states, Slovenia, Macedonia, Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia and Montenegro.

The initial plan is for the tour

to last from 11 to 15 days, offering travellers several days' stay in each country.

The tour may include visits to Tito's birth place in Kumrovec in Croatia, his presidential palace in Belgrade in Serbia, and his villa on Lake Ohrid in Macedonia.

Tourists will also sample Tito's favourite dishes, listen to old Yugoslav music from his era and gain insight into his most-loved places across the former state.

Ranko Petrovic, the founder of the first Tito-themed restaurant in Skopje, Kaj Marsalot (At the Marshal's Place) also had a few ideas to offer.

"A youth brigade could simulate collective construction work endeavours. Young people could participate in sharing the socialist ideals of unity, friendship, mutual help and humanity... A scouts' camp could be made and socialist songs sung around the bonfire," Petrovic told the newspaper Nova Makedonija.

"It would be good to stage an exhibition with photos from the work endeavours... and at the end of the tour, tourists could be brought to Tito's villas in Skopje and in Ohrid," he said.

Because of his non-aligned diplomatic stance, Tito was



The legend of Tito persists in the former Yugoslavia.

admired by many in the West as a benign dictator, and was praised for maintaining peaceful coexistence between the peoples of Yugoslavia.

He was the only successful

defector from the Soviet bloc, which he quit in 1948 in order pursue a neutral foreign policy during the Cold War. The country fell apart just over ten years after his death in 1980.



The tour could include visits to Tito's birthplace in Kumrovec, Croatia.

Prevalla

# The Cost of Luxury

Environmental inspectors suspended construction Tuesday of seven houses being built at a housing development at Prevala Mountain, some 30 kilometres from Prizren.

This follows the order of Kosovo's Environment Minister Dardan Gashi, issued last month, that breaches of the existing construction plan, in which houses are exceeding approved sizes and using unapproved building materials, were to





**E**nvironmental inspectors suspended construction Tuesday of seven homes being built at a housing development at Prevala Mountain, some 30 kilometres from Prizren.

This follows the order of Kosovo's Environment Minister, Dardan Gashi, who declared on May 2 that breaches of the existing construction plan, in which houses are exceeding approved sizes and using unapproved building materials, were degrading the environment.

In the coming weeks, authorities will review more than 120 houses and see which ones have gone beyond the urban plan foreseen by the Prizren municipality. Authorities estimate that around 90 houses do not fit the plan, mostly owing to their sizes.

After this, owners will be asked to reduce the size on the given time frame. If they do not obey, houses will be demolished.

Meanwhile, Prizren is in a legal dispute with the Kosovo's Privatisation Agency about 2

hectares that are within 27 hectares of land in Prevala destined for the housing development.

Prizren declared itself owner of more than 2 hectares of publicly owned land in 2004. The former Kosovo Trust Agency filed suit in the Special Chamber of the Supreme Court alleging that the transfer of property was illegal.

The Special Chamber passed the case to the Municipal Court in Prizren, which has not yet taken a decision on the disputed area.

- 120 - Homes being developed in Prevala
- 90 - Homes thought to be violating development plan
- 27 - Hectares of land being developed at Prevala mountain



+

# Troubled Albanian Museum Sunk by Hoxha Row

Donors spent hundreds of thousands of euro building a museum in Gjirokastra - but the results were questionable and it ultimately closed over an ideological dispute.



By Besar Likmeta

**G**jirokastra — Locked away in a complex of three galleries with soaring vaults and cupolas on the ground floor of Gjirokastra's castle stand several photographic stands, a flat screen TV with a DVD player, and two displays of artifacts.

Although donors and the government spent nearly half a million euro on preparing the galleries for exhibits, the roof of the castle still leaks, creating large pools of water among the stands.

Attendants will only turn on the lights on at the visitors' own risk, warning that a short circuit due to humidity could happen at any moment. What should have been Gjirokastra's newest museum named "A Chronicle in Stone" is now closed to the general public.

The contents of the museum, which was created by the Gjirokastra Development Foundation, GCDO, were never approved by the State Committee on Monuments, which has disagreed over its content.

Experts complain that the museum is poorly designed and describe it as merely an exhibition. They have also questioned GCDO's use of donor funds.

However, what ultimately led to its closure was a little display about Albania's former Stalinist dictator, Enver Hoxha, who was born in the town.

With its distinctive cobbled stone streets, towering slate roofs and an old bazaar overshadowed by an imposing 19th-century cas-

tle, Gjirokastra is a rare example of a well-preserved Ottoman town.

Following its designation as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2005, funds from the government and international donors to protect its cultural heritage slowly flowed in.

GCDO started work on the museum in 2007, and its stands were supposed to narrate the rich history of the city and the surrounding Drino valley from ancient to modern times

The museum was named after a novel of Albania's most renowned writer, Ismail Kadare, about the life of the small town during World War Two. Kadare was also born in Gjirokastra and the city features often in his novels.

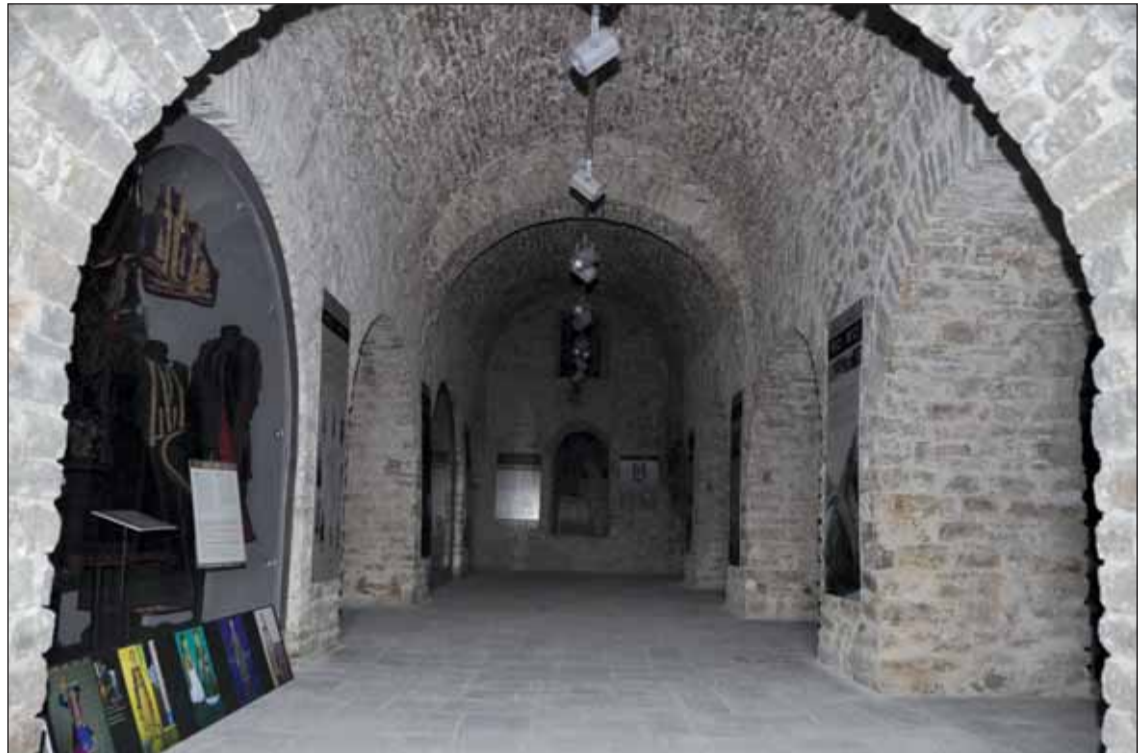
The museum held its inauguration ceremony on World Heritage day in September 2012. However, the city council of Gjirokastra never gave its approval so it closed only a few months later.

Documents released to Prishtina Insight show that from 2008 to 2012, GCDO received several grants from various donors, including the Packard Humanities Institute, the Hadley Trust and the Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund to create the museum and revitalize the castle.

In 2008, Albania's Institute of Monuments spent €140,000 on waterproofing parts of the castle terrace.

The GCDO spent another €140,000 from the Packard Institute and other donors on restoring the three galleries, installing a new electrical system and on waterproofing part of the castle roof directly above.

Another €42,000 was spent on installing solar panels to light the entrance gallery of the castle.



The Chronicle in Stone museum is closed to the general public.

The GCDO also spent €86,000 on research, design and on consultations with experts and the public for the museum.

But the institutions overseeing the contents of the exhibition did not approve of the results.

In a statement to reporters on

March 1, the head of the Institute of Monuments, Apollon Bace, questioned the GCDO's work.

"I have objected to this museum... because it has ended up being a mere exhibit," Bace said.

"Gjirokastra has many other objects that could have been included, but they ended up with a stand on Enver Hoxha," he added.

Bace also questioned how the GCDO had spent its donor funds, arguing that other museums had been much cheaper.

"There has been an abuse of funds here, considering that the Apollonia museum was created with only a fund of €69,300," he added.

During a hearing on February 26 in the parliamentary commission on education and media, the then Minister of Culture, Aldo Bumci, said the state committee on museums had not approved the museum and had urged the municipality to close it.

"We had concerns about the part [of the exhibition] related to the dictator [Hoxha] where we sought modifications, and also about the lack of a permit from the local city council," Bumci said.

"They did not take action on either point, which is why the

committee did not approve it [the museum]," he added.

GCDO's executive director, Sadi Petrela, admits the museum did not receive a stamp of approval from the authorities but denies that donor funds were mismanaged.

"The monuments committee asked us to remove the stand about Enver Hoxha's life," Petrela said. "We tried to reach a compromise but it was not possible," he added.

According to Petrela, the process of legalizing the museum should have gone on in the municipality of Gjirokastra but stalled after the GCDO failed to obtain approval from the State Committee of Museums.

"For every dime we spent from the donors, everything is transparent," he said. "In my opinion this is a complete museum but not yet a legal one," Petrela concluded.

In a statement to reporters on March 1, the head of the Institute of Monuments, Apollon Bace, questioned the GCDO's work.

"Gjirokastra has many other objects that could have been included, but they ended up with a stand on Enver Hoxha," Apollon Bace, head of the Institute of Monuments,



The thousands of euro spent on waterproofing were apparently unsuccessful.

# Cavdarbasha Gallery Reopens



By Donjeta Demolli

The gallery of the late Kosovar sculpture Agim Cavdarbasha had been shuttered ever since rioters torched it in 2004.

The Caglavica gallery - just outside Prishtina - reopened this month, following renovations that began in 2011.

"By restoring the gallery, the institutions and society are showing their care toward artists who have worked with a lot of passion and have left behind a precious cultural treasure," said Eqem Basha, a friend of Cavdarbasha, at an opening ceremony May 15.

The gallery showcases the work of Cavdarbasha, who died in 1999.

The Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports financed the project, which cost more than 80,000 euro.

"It was one of the tasks I had for myself as a minister, to restore this gallery as it used to be and I am extremely happy that we managed," said Culture Minister Memli Krasniqi.



The Cavdarbasha gallery had been closed in 2004.



The work of Agim Cavdarbasha, who died in 1999, continues to be influential.

## marketing



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Here is Prishtina Insight's guide to the best places in town to eat, drink, shop and be merry. We'll keep this section updated with the newest and coolest places opening in Kosovo.

### Restaurants:

#### Liburnia 1 and 2

Rr Meto Bajraktar, tel. +381 (0)38 222 719. There are actually two Liburnias opposite each other, both very similar in style and food. Housed in a fine Ottoman abode and surrounded by pleasant walled gardens, Liburnia oozes atmosphere, whether in winter or summer. The food is a roll call of decent traditional Albanian food, including the usual stews (tave) and grilled meat. It's not the best place in town to sample local delicacies, but a good choice given the setting. Open 8 am - 11 pm

#### Country House

Off road to Podujevo from Pristina, right after the Muciqi Mercedes-Benz garage, tel. +377 (0)44 656 054. This rustic restaurant is a 15-minute drive outside Pristina (on a good day) and provides glorious views across rolling, verdant hills and is especially pleasant place in the summer to watch the sunset. The overall food quality is decent, with special marks for the fresh bread, straight from the wood stove, and specia me maze (peppers in cream). 10 am - 11 pm.

#### Princesha Gresa

23 Rr. Fehmi Agani, tel. +381 (0) 38 24 58 41. If you have a horse-size hole in your stomach to fill, this is the place to come. The meal starts with some free bread and dips and is followed by gargantuan portions of salad, meat, fish, or anything else on this varied menu. The food is sometimes great, sometimes average but always served in massive portions. Open 10 am - 11 pm.

#### Hemingway

Rr Ilaz Kodra, tel. +386 (0)49 145 637. Yes, you can get fresh sea fish in landlocked Kosovo. Hemingway is tucked away in an unappealing end of the city but worth a trip if you are craving food of the piscine variety. It's a pretty basic sort of set-up and relatively expensive for the setting, but undoubtedly one of the best places in town for fish. Open 9 am - 11 pm

#### Le Siam Thai

Rr Fehmi Agani, tel. +377 (0)45 243 588. Stylishly designed and smoke-free, Le Siam has become a real hit for the international

community of Kosovo. If you are acquainted with Thai food, you're not in for any surprises here, with the typical assortment of curries, salads and deep fried treats, delivered to decent standards. At 7 or 8 euro for a main course, it's relatively pricey compared to its neighbours. Open Monday-Thursday 11:00-14:00 and 17:45-22:30; Friday-Sunday 11:00-23:00.

#### Renaissance II

Rr George Bush (behind the Pro Credit Bank HQ), tel. +377 (0)44 118 796. Renaissance offers arguably the best overall dining experience in Prishtina. It's quite an experience just to find the place. Tucked away along a tiny alleyway, you enter the homely, stone building through heavy wooden doors. It's 15 euro per head, and for that you will be kept fed, watered and supplied with booze for at least a three course meal, including a wonderful meze starter and a delicious main course cooked on embers. Open 11 am - 11 pm.

### Bars:

#### Tapë

Hajdar Dushi Street Nr. 2 (next to Zani Bar, Kada Books, in front of the Radio Dukagjini). Tapë — which means "cork" in Albanian but is often used to denote extreme drunkenness — is a bar with a warm atmosphere in Prishtina's centre. It serves homemade rakia, as well as a variety of beers and other liquors, and, of course, Stone Castle wine - all at reasonable prices.

#### Crème de la Crème

Rr Robert Doll, tel. +377(0)44259912. Crème is probably the best all-round bar in the city. It's run for the amusement of the young, arty owners and not for profit, which explains the more-than-generous pricing arrangements, especially for the perfectly executed cocktails. Its five tiny floors heave on Fridays and Sundays with Pristina's cool to the variety of beats. Every Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from 8pm to 3am.

#### Filikaqa

Rr Mujo Ulqinaku BL 4/1, Pejton, website www.filikaqa.com; 038 244 288. Whistle, as it translates from Albanian, offers a dizzying array of televisions on which to watch your sport of choice and eat the best burgers in

town. Select a booth, ask the amiable staff to tune into your match and grab a 'double decker' or 'triple burger', which look like American fast-food classics but taste better. Friday night Karaoke is a must-see, must-sing event.

#### Hard Rockers Club

Road Ilaz Kodra, contact: vraja\_fatos@hot-mail.com. It's one of the few places in Prishtina where you can catch regular live acts and the only place which caters for those who like their rock served up heavy, or hard. On a quiet night, it's quite a comfortable venue to grab a beer, even if you are not being entertained by hirsute musicians.

#### The Cuban

Road Luan Haradinaj Tel: +377(0) 45 620 620. This is a decent addition to the city's drinking scene, even if the place can be full of spivs and tarts who aren't going to a fancy-dress party. The Cuban-themed décor is decadent Havana, the food is average, and not very Caribbean, but the cocktails are good. 8 am - 1 am.

#### Xhoni's Bar

Rexhep Mala, Pristina, tel. +377 (0)44 750 720. Xhoni's is, without doubt, a Prishtina institution. It's small, friendly and smoky, plays excellent soul, disco and classic rock music from vinyl and is open until the last man or woman staggers out. Arrive by 11pm at the weekend to secure a corner, or even better a

seat, if you intend to make a night of it. Next to A&A restaurant and has round windows. Opens: 8pm-to late. Shut on Sundays.

### Fastfood:

#### Bel Ami

Rr Luan Haradinaj, Tel: +377 (0)44 133 848, +386 49 133 848. The ideal town-centre stop for a quick lunch or takeaway snack, Bel Ami unceremoniously serves some of the best chicken doner in Prishtina in a surprisingly un-greasy, smoke-free environment. Ask for a "komplet" to get the classic doner packed with salad and sauces and wrapped in tin foil. Monday-Friday 9 am - 7.30 pm; Saturday 9 am - 8 pm.

### Clubs:

#### P1

Fehmi Agani, +377 (0)44 608 669. If you're looking for cool, then P1 is probably not the spot for you. The decor is pretty uninspiring, the music is bog standard and the atmosphere reminiscent of a cattle market. But if your thing is scantily clad young women or packs of amorous boys, than it's an excellent choice. And, in the venue's defence, it does have a pleasant outdoor area for summer dancing. Working hours Wednesday, Friday, Saturday from 9 pm to 3 am.



### Hot Food:

**VEGETARIAN RESTAURANT (ABOVE)**, Rruga Garibaldi, Behind Metro Caffè. Tingell-Tengell's short-lived but much loved vegetarian menu gets a restaurant of its own. It doesn't have a name, and it's delicious. There's falafel, hummus, baba ghanouj and more. The stew is also luxurious. All the food is under 5 euro. The bar also features a few whiskies you'll be hard-pressed to find anywhere in Prishtina, as well as an allegedly 36-year-old rakia. The space also feels like home, in that down-to-earth hipster sort of way. The only quibble is the bread, which is a rather basic white bread that's toasted and garnished with herbs. It doesn't do justice to the otherwise spectacular fare. Don't miss the poppyseed cake, either. - GravlaX

**FRESCO (LEFT)**, Rr. Fehmi Agani. The newest eatery to hit Prishtina's fine-dining scene, Fresco has designs on being one of its best. Forgive the excessive interior design - the food is elegant and simple, with a gastronomic sense that in-step with the times. The salmon filet (11.50 euro) is a standout: succulent and flavorful, appearing alongside a sweet potato puree and tempura-fried zucchini. The steaks are perfect, too. +377 (0) 44 333 772.

**PAPIRUN** Tel. 045 26 23 23. Papiro has seating at two perpendicular counters in what's basically a hole-in-the-wall just off Mother Teresa Boulevard, near the Grand Hotel. The menu has 13 options: 6 pizzas and seven sandwiches. The sandwiches are the stars, though. Every component is handled with care. The bread alone is good enough to make just about any sandwich into a glorious feast. It's freshly baked and seasoned with rosemary.



## Where to pick up Prishtina Insight?

Prishtina Insight has teamed up with these excellent venues to offer a limited number of complimentary copies of Kosovo's only English-language newspaper. Grab a copy of the publication and settle down with a drink or a meal to read it.



### Papillon Bistro Bar

This newly reopened bar in Prishtina, Papillon, offers more than 60 types of wines from France, Italy, Spain, and Kosovo with great prices and delicious dishes.

They serve pasta, sandwiches, salads and different appetizers.

You can also try different types of local or international beers.

The bar, with its stunning new design, is located in the centre of Prishtina, near ProCredit Bank headquarter, RTK radio centre, and the Mother Teresa cathedral.

*Papillon*  
Mother Teresa Str. Nr. 51 A  
[info@caffepapillon.com](mailto:info@caffepapillon.com)  
044 103 310

### Hotel Prishtina

Hotel Prishtina's 43 charming guest rooms and suites are reminiscent of a small hotel in the European tradition. You'll immediately feel at home in our living room, sipping a glass of wine in our fine restaurant surrounded by a gallery of paintings by local artists.

The hotel offers free, fast wifi internet, complimentary breakfast, conference room, swimming pool, sauna and laundry service.

*Hotel Prishtina,*  
St. Vaso Pasha nr. 20  
+381 38 / 22 32 84



### Hotel AFA

Located in a quiet neighbourhood just outside the city centre, Hotel Afa can guarantee guests a peaceful night while being within walking distance of all the action. The venue has won a host of awards for its excellent service to customers and offers a good range of facilities, from an exclusive restaurant and VIP bar to pretty, tranquil gardens. Rooms start at 45 euro for a single, and luxury rooms and apartments are available. The hotel's rooms are well appointed and comfortable.

15, Rr Ali Kelmendi,  
Sunny Hill, Prishtina  
+381 38/225 226  
[www.hotelafa.com](http://www.hotelafa.com)



### Hotel Gracanica

A place to relax in the calm and clean air of the country side, just 15 minutes from Prishtina city center, 500 m from the center of Gracanica and its UNESCO World Heritage monastery and a short walk to the archeological site of Ulpiana. Offering 5 single, 7 double rooms, 3 studios as well as two meeting rooms (16 / 6 p.), the boutique hotel combines contemporary architecture with traditional elements to create a unique atmosphere that will make you feel at home.

+381 (0)38 729 888 (landline)  
+386 (0)49 764 000  
[info@hotelgracanica.com](mailto:info@hotelgracanica.com)  
[www.hotelgracanica.com](http://www.hotelgracanica.com)  
[www.facebook.com/HotelGracanica](http://www.facebook.com/HotelGracanica)



### Paddy O'Brien's

The staff at Paddy O'Brien's have a saying: "It's easy to walk in, but very hard to leave."

And with its warm atmosphere, fantastic range of drinks and excellent food, it is easy to see why.

There have been many attempts to establish a proper Irish pub in Prishtina, but this is the only one to hit the spot.

From classic coffees to cocktails, via, of course, Guinness, you really won't find it difficult to select the perfect drink.

A mouth-watering menu of Irish specialties is also on offer, spanning from all-day breakfasts to Irish stews at night.

Options include shepherd's pie, bangers and mash, fish 'n chips, and whopping great burgers.

Thursday is pub quiz night, but there is always something going on at the pub, whether it is sport screenings or just a good shindig.



*Paddy O'Brien's*  
Tringe Smajli Street, by the Illyria Hotel  
Prishtina: 045-420900

### A taste of Napoli in Prishtina.

After ten years of making pizza in Napoli, and with only love to blame, Fatmir, the head chef, returned to Prishtina. His pizzas, made in a wood-burn stove, are definitely genuine napolitanas. Fatmir also has several delicious pastas on offer, a true joy for the taste buds. Napoli has an excellent selection of red and white wines or, for the more ambitious, one of the region's best quince raki. Napoli makes for delicious lunch, dinner or even after-theatre time out in the centre of Prishtina.

*Pizzeria Napoli*  
off Luan Haradinaj, opposite Newborn  
044/409-402402



### The Ninety One

The Ninety One (91-shi) is back with its new location and old tradition. The owners and the staff are the same. Daily specials are changed on a daily basis. The breakfast is still served as usual while the coffee is served with delicious home-made almond biscotti. Breakfast menu includes; English breakfast, French toast croissants, puff pastries and omelettes with your choice of toppings. The new menu dishes include: roast fillet of beef served with spinach potatoes & wine, Chicken and confit garlic in bed of mash & thyme juice. Dessert are served and garnished with fresh herbs and are all home made. Lemon tart and Chocolate mouse is a must try. The kitchen is open every day until 11:00 pm.

*Fehmi Agani str., 29/2 (Te kafet e vogla)*  
- 044 91 91 91 -



+



### “The Croods” 3D

Every day at 4pm

The Croods is a prehistoric comedy adventure that follows the world's first family as they embark on a journey of a lifetime when the cave that has always shielded them from danger is destroyed. Traveling across a spectacular landscape, the Croods discover an incredible new world filled with fantastic creatures -- and their outlook is changed forever.

Director: Kirk De Micco, Chris Sanders

Writers: Chris Sanders, Kirk De Micco etc.

Starring: Nicolas Cage, Emma Stone, Ryan Reynolds.



### “Epic” 3D

Every day at 4pm and 6pm

A teenager finds herself transported to a deep forest setting where a battle between the forces of good and the forces of evil is taking place. She bands together with a rag-tag group of characters in order to save their world -- and ours.

Director: Chris Wedge

Writers: James V. Hart, William Joyce etc.

Starring: Collin Farrell, Josh Hutcherson, Beyonce Knowles.

### “Fast and Furious 6”

World premiere on 24th of May at 8pm

Hobbs has Dom and Brian reassemble their crew in order to take down a mastermind who commands an organization of mercenary drivers across 12 countries. Payment? Full pardons for them all.

Director: Justin Lin

Writers: Chris Morgan, Gary Scott Thompson

Starring: Vin Diesel, Paul Walker, Dwayne Johnson.



### “Star Trek into Darkness” 3D

After the crew of the Enterprise find an unstoppable force of terror from within their own organization, Captain Kirk leads a manhunt to a war-zone world to capture a one man weapon of mass destruction.

Director: J.J. Abrams

Writers: Roberto Orci, Alex Kurtzman

Starring: Chris Pine, Zachary Quinto, Zoe Saldana

Soon: “After Earth”

For any further questions or reservations call at 038 243 238 or visit them at [www.kinoabc.com](http://www.kinoabc.com)

## Theatre



### “The last station”

Every Thursday at 8pm

The story is situated in the year 2015. Nowadays and past problems are carried in the year of 2015. Burim is the main character who is looking for the truth, for his family and his fiancé, which are still missing since the war of KLA ended. After many attempts he finds out that his neighbour is still alive and that he knows more about his family. Burim can't live in the present; he is always going back to the past, in the memories of his family and Behare, his fiancé. Halfway he meets a young girl called Shpresa who reminds him of Behare and finally gets part of Burim's life. Based on the novel “Birds fly on their own” by Ibrahim Kadriu.

Directed by Lirak Celaj and Florent Mehmeti

Cast: Besnik Krapci, Liridona Shehu, Ilire Celaj, Adrian Morina, Eshref Durmishi and Kushtrim Sheremeti.



### “As if this was a show”

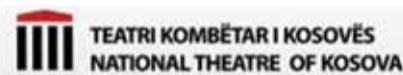
Every Wednesday at 8pm

"In the bus no. 4...during the war in Prishtina ...a 26 years old - young man...is wearing jeans and a black T-shirt... At "Union" hotel...sniper breaks a window... and the youngster is shot in the neck... A lady dressed in white, who was standing near him starts to scream. When she sees the blood in her shirt she faints... two hours later...she is seen at the Big Mosque...near café "Romantika", but this time accompanied by a friend younger than her..

Based on the drama by: Almir Imshireviq

Directed by Agon Myftari

Cast: Rebeka Qena, Ardian Morina, Armend Ismajli, Besnik Krapci



Friday, 24 May, 8pm  
“39 steps”

By Patrick Barlow

Director: Agon Miftari

Saturday, 25 May, 8pm

“39 steps”

By Patrick Barlow

Director: Agon Miftari

Monday, 27 May, 8pm

“The twelfth night”

By William Shakespeare

Directed by Ilir Bokshi

Tuesday, 28 May, 8pm

“The twelfth night”

By William Shakespeare  
Directed by Ilir Bokshi

Wednesday, 29 May,

8pm

“Kopelia” ballet

Choreographer: Ilir Kerni

Music: Leo Delibes

Thursday, 30 May,

8pm

“Wedding” ballet

Choreographer: Mehmet

Ballkan

Friday, 31 May, 8pm

“Narnia”

From “The lion, the witch and the wardrobe” by C.S. Lewis

Director: Arjeta Ajeti

and Antti Sevanto

Saturday, 1 June, 8pm

“Narnia”

Screenplay by “The

lion, the witch and the

wardrobe” - C.S. Lewis

Director: Arjeta Ajeti @

Antti Sevanto

## Movies at OSCE/EULEX/UNMIK Club.

Movies every Thursday at 7.00 at EULEX Auditorium opposite Newborn.

- 30 May - The Hunt

- 6 June - Chicken with Plums

All movies are without entrance fee.

People just need an ID or a passport to enter.



## Prishtina Diary

Hamam Jazz Bar

Friday, 24 May

Jazz Quartet

Total Gym

Saturday, 25 May

Mariza Ikonimi

Public House

Friday, 24 May

Travel Plan

Punkt

11.30 pm Saturday, 25

May

The Glasses

Entry: 2 euros

Hera Restaurant, Hotel

Sirius

7 pm Wednesday, 29 May

Kosovo 2.0, reloaded.

Never-ending scrolls.

Over 200 writers.

Captivating slideshows.

More blogs, more arti-

cles, more news.

# Magnificent Rugova

Less than two hours from Prishtina, unspoiled nature awaits off beaten path.



Cabins are available in Guri i Kuq.



By Douglas E Morris

## Toward Guri i Kuq

From Kuqishte, Guri i Kuq is 5 kilometres and around 20 minutes of bone-jarring driving up a narrow dirt road. In winter or rainy weather you should have a four-wheel drive. Surrounded by the picturesque scenery of Rugova Gorge, Guri Kuq offers several log cabins for rent that can sleep up to 10 people each, a restaurant, and an opportunity to hike up to the largest glacial lake in Kosovo.

Only 2 kilometres away, but all uphill, the lake is surrounded by rocky crags and pine forests and offers stunning views over the valley. This has been a well-trodden destination for quite a while, so can get rather crowded with day trippers from Peja, school groups and others, which can detract from the peace and serenity you came up here to experience. All that being said, from Guri i Kuq you do have the chance to hike to the aforementioned lake, which is directly on the border with Montenegro. So is a destination not to be missed.



Montenegro's border is within hiking distance of Magra Austria.

Te Liqeni is a rustic looking hotel-restaurant near Guri i Kuq. More modern, but built in the same log cabin style, it offers the same charm as Guri i Kuq – stunning views and tranquil surroundings – with the same drawbacks – the area is well-known and more frequently visited. Whatever the case, both of these places are recommended as weekend getaways.

## Toward Boge

At Kuqishte, instead of turning left toward Guri i Kuq and Te Liqeni, if you turn right, you will be heading toward Boge, 7 kilometres away and 30 minutes of bumping and bouncing down a narrow dirt track – a situation that will be changing soon as the road is in the process of being landscaped to be paved. Before that happens though, be sure and bring a 4x4 in the winter or rainy weather.

Boge is a good example of a place flourishing on domestic tourism. In summer, it is a center for hiking and biking, and in the winter, thanks to a recently opened small lift, it has become a domestic ski center. Right now, in this direction, despite having Boge here, seems more remote, more

isolated. Especially when you get to the end of the line, the Magra Austria.

As you approach Bogë, Rugova Relax will be on the right. A high-end resort type place, within walking distance of Boge. Stay here if you can't get into the Magra Austria or you want an easier pace of hiking.

A couple kilometres past Boge, Magra Austria looks like a gasthaus transplanted from the Alps. For good reason. The owners worked in one in Austria and brought back their skills with them. The Magra is the end of the line. This is as close the end of civilization as you can come and is definitely the place to get away from it all.

From here, there is no other option but to walk. Even so, staying here will be comfortable and relaxing. They have a sauna, swimming pool, games room, restaurant, and bar. Rustic and charming, the food is nothing to write home about, though it is plentiful and filling, and their pizza is delicious.

My recommendation would be to stay here, as the hiking options are more varied, and you can also rent four-wheel drive ATVs if you

want to zip around rather than hike.

From Magra Austria there is a strenuous 2.5 hour roundtrip hike up to a mountain valley scattered with wild flowers in the spring, onto a mountain peak, former border pass with Montenegro; and a long but less strenuous loop to Shkrel and back through Boge that can take up to five hours or more.

## On The Way Up

On your way up into the Rugova valley as you leave Peja, before you pass the well-guarded monastery on the outskirts of town, stop at the newly built info center and pick up some information, buy an awesome map (2 euros) suitable for framing, use the facilities, or grab a quick coffee, and possibly even rent some bikes (1 euro an hour, 6 euros all day) to bring with you.

As you head up into the mountains, if hunger pangs hit, stop at Hani, the first major restaurant in the valley. The food is typical Balkan fare, and the setting is lovely.

However you do it, wherever you stay, don't hesitate, start making plans to come to the Rugova valley today. It is spectacular.



Mountain roads offer scenic driving in Rugova.

Ecosovo

# On May 24, 2014, Let's Not Clean Up Kosovo



By Elizabeth Gowing

Today is Let's Clean Up Kosovo Day. Enthusiastic young people with gloves and bin bags will descend on all the least beautiful parts of Kosovo to gather together the garbage and take it away. The day is inspired by the 2008 initiative in Estonia which transformed the country.

And of course that's a good thing.

But this is the second year of the initiative in Kosovo, and I see very little improvement in the situation greeting the clean-up teams compared with last year. The sites that were filled with garbage last year are once again filled with garbage; the fundamental challenges of how to reduce the amount of waste in Kosovo, how to reuse what is there and to recycle where possible have hardly been addressed. Nor has the proper management of waste depots. And until all of us – as individual citizens, consumers and householders, as municipal and central government institutions – do something about those fundamental parts of the waste management process, Kosovo will need repeated clean-ups.

I worry, too, that if the day uses up all people's energy and interest in waste management – if the Prime Minister can get on television picking up a crisp packet in a school playground to applause, and not have to worry any further about allocating budgets and attention to the bigger issues of why some of Kosovo's villages are clogged with garbage – then the day could do more harm than good.

However, there are some changes of emphasis by the organizers in comparison to the initiative last year which are moving in the right direction. Last year, groups of pretty Prishtina students set off to the villages to sort out other people's muddle, but this year the organizers stressed that local people must take the lead in cleaning up any given area. Of course, where extra help is needed, it's great to have solidarity shown, but this mustn't be the equivalent of having a stranger turn up at your house and announce that they've come to clear out your fridge; we all need to be involved in sorting out our own mess, and Let's Clean Up Kosovo 2013 has taken a positive step in making sure that this is part of this year's campaign philosophy.

And there are other signs of progress. One of the most significant is a project being implemented by GIZ helping municipalities to establish sustainable local waste management systems. "Only through the careful planning of waste services and the long term and continuous inclusion of all relevant actors engaging the citizens can municipalities reduce the amount of illegal littering and create a healthier and cleaner Kosovo," says Inga Beie, advisor on the programme. In Prishtina, the GIZ project has begun with an awareness-raising campaign for householders about separating wet and dry waste to enable recycling to start, and GIZ will be celebrating today in Drenas, where they are supporting the municipality to pilot an improved waste management system, including giving new bins to homes and businesses in two villages which have not previously had waste collections. Today marks the start of a regular collection service by the regional waste company.

If projects like these, and the individual initiatives of households starting to compost, to reuse and to reduce, for example, are successful, maybe by 24 May 2014 we won't need a clean-up day at all – because Kosovo will be clean enough already.

*Elizabeth Gowing is a founder of The Ideas Partnership, a Kosovan NGO using the power of volunteers to tackle educational, cultural heritage and environmental challenges. She is also the author of Travels in Blood and Honey; becoming a beekeeper*

Outside In

# An Unscrupulous and Offensive Celebration



By Kreshnik Hoxha

Skopje is not alone on the list of ludicrous and bizarre cities, as Prishtina has joined in with an unscrupulous and offensive idea.

Many would have noticed that Skopje has been grabbing the attention of media in the last few years. This is all in relation to the renovation of the city with "antique" statues, which are exclusively financed to overcome the rather strong Macedonian inferiority complex relating to their identity crisis.

While the Macedonians have chosen this approach, Kosovars seem to have much more to sweep under the carpet and have therefore decided to use different mechanisms in order to make themselves feel better. The "feel-better approach" this time emerged by transforming Prishtina into a brothel for flirting and seducing with Europe.

The events associated with the celebration of Europe Day in Prishtina earlier this month represented the glaring example how insecure the Kosovar society has become. The circumstances which we live in, with an array of international missions in Kosovo, have imposed some sort of an inferiority complex. This complex has had a rather strong momentum in leading the society through metamorphosis.

As if it isn't ludicrous enough that Kosovo is the only country where Europe Day is a public holiday, this year the genius brains in Kosovo's government decided to transform one of the busiest streets of

Prishtina into a rather tacky combination of European cities. This act was nothing short of being unscrupulous and offensive because it was being sold as an idea of Europeanisation, which is utopian and ridiculous given the current social, economic and political situation in Kosovo.

If Kosovo was in the position of Croatia, which is shortly joining the EU, such act would be understandable and justifiable for the sake of the reform, harmonisation with European values and the continuous emancipation of the Croatian society via open public debate on gender, sexuality and human rights and other taboo topics that challenge a Balkan country.

Going back to Kosovo, we are talking about the country which has failed to become a functional state in its five years of existence. Many international reports and articles refer to Kosovo as a place with tainted judiciary and police where corruption and mismanagement of funds thrives.

Contrary to Croatia, Kosovar society has not yet reached the state where public debate can be conducted on taboo topics. The parliamentary discussions held last March about raped women during the Kosovo war; the attack against MP Nazile Balaj as an advocate of the raped women; as well as the violence that erupted in the aftermath Kosovo 2.0's publication of its Sex Magazine prove that the Kosovar society functions with a somewhat primitive mentality. The Kosovo of today, which celebrated Europe Day, is the very same one that is being described as a hotbed for of crimes (Medicus case) and a black hole of Europe.

Celebrating Europe's Day in order to show our commitment for EU integration is the blinding reflection of how small and insecure the Kosovar society has become vis-a-vis a strong power. It also proves how easy it is to let go of our integrity and become submissive even toward those terribly incompetent, arrogant and mediocre EU bureaucrats sent by Brussels to tell Kosovars how to live. These bureaucrats deserve the aforementioned accusations because it is their job to push forward the projects, which they are paid for by the EU taxpayer.

The EU undoubtedly represents a brilliant model and a safe path for the consolidation of the Kosovar state, cleansing it from its inept leaders and moving on from the bitter past. However, this path should not be followed blindly and with organising such ghastly and offensive events such as the celebration of Europe Day, which was attended by both local and EU officials.

The time has come for all in Kosovo to understand that the societal and country-wide reform should take place firstly for the benefit of Kosovars and not because of EU demands. It must also be understood that there will never be an equal treatment by EU officials if Kosovars continue to bow and accept the requests of every Tom, Dick and Harry from Brussels without detailed evaluation and reasoning.

Finally, everyone in Kosovo must understand that by showing an unwavering admiration to the EU, Kosovar challenges will not be softened. Celebrating Europe Day does no good to Kosovo if it does not embrace European values of state-building, which so far it has struggled.



Children take part in the Europe Day festivities in Prishtina. (Photo/European Commission Liaison Office)

Restaurant review

# Don't Go Out of Your Way for HIB's Eateries



Gas station's restaurants are convenient if you're fueling up your car. But prepare your belly for a smorgasbord of mediocrity.



By Femke Dekker

One thing I find remarkable about Kosovo's main cities is that there are plenty of gas stations around it. Attached to every gas station you'll find a restaurant where you can order proper food. One of the well-known petrol stations, particularly among UNMIK and OSCE employees, because they have a 'get gas, just sign-deal', is called HIB Petrol. There is one located in Fushe Kosove and another next to Hotel Emerald. Both locations have pretty big restaurants.

It is not very common for people I know to go out for dinner at a gas station restaurant, or even to take business partners there for lunch. Though in Kosovo this happens quite often. A good reason to get some gas, check out the menu and taste the food at the so-called HIB Pizzeria.

At first I was tempted to take a seat on the big terrace outside until I realized that the view on the parking lot and the smell of gasoline would not encourage my appetite. Luckily there were more than enough free tables inside. A seat next to the fancy and large smoking area was the perfect spot to try out a real HIB meal. The mountain view behind the parked cars made me shortly forget the gas station atmosphere.

It was not particularly crowded for a Tuesday night. The aggressive jazz music in the background created a jittered ambience

but at least muted the noise of the passing traffic.

Too many waiters in fluorescent green t-shirts were desperately waiting for customers since we've been approached by three out of seven in the first five minutes of our stay. However, this might also be part of their fast service strategy for guests that come in for a quick bite - something you'd expect from a roadhouse.

Although the name suggests that the restaurant only offers a variety of Italian food, the menu starts with a wide range of salads and meat dishes with sauce or without. They also have fish on the menu for the real gas station restaurant thrill-seekers. It takes a while to get to the Italian section, but there is at least enough to choose from. For those who aren't able to read or translate the menu, every description goes with a detailed picture of the meal.

Despite of the specific images, it took a while to make a decision, considering the ambiguities on the menu. What to choose, a chicken salad or a salad with chicken? Or a spaghetti fruti di mare or a spaghetti fruti di mare natural? Particularly the last option seemed to cause a little confusion among the staff after asking. Since my fellow diner already had a bad experience with eating the spaghetti with frozen sea fruit, this time the natural option (4.50 euro) would probably be a better choice. The waiters didn't understand the difference between these two and after some heavy debate with the chef everything seemed to be clear to them. For us it was still a mystery.

I decided not to take the spaghetti or any



particular Italian dish and went for a sallatë rugula (3 euro), broshete pule (4 euro) and a big glass (0.25l) of vranac (3 euro). The dishes arrived all at once and the waiter had clearly some difficulties putting them on the small wooden table. Meanwhile, the presentation of the food on the plates was surprisingly fancy.

Still, I always get a little scared when the pictures on the menu so closely correspond with what you get on your plate. The images didn't look overwhelmingly tasteful and this seemed also true for the chicken skewer I ordered. The meat was awfully chewy and blackened. It came with some lukewarm rice, half defrosted vegetables and potatoes covered with greasy oil. I tried to make the digestion process easier with the very cold red wine but I wasn't lucky. I had to ask for some extra curry sauce (0.50 euro) to smoothen it up. The rucola salad, though, positively surprised me and was quite tasty with fresh tomatoes, cucumber, olives, flakes of parmesan cheese and an interesting yoghurt dressing. Also the spaghetti fruit di mare natural with defrosted sea fruit appeared to be better than the unnatural one.

Meanwhile, the waiters were still in a rush and kept an eye on every single move we made, which was a bit uncomfortable. To make it even more inappropriate, halfway our meal, two of them tried to explain us to pay the bill because they changed shifts. We paid and tried to quickly absorb the rest of the food.

The pictures of the desserts on the menu:



tiramisu, ice cream and fruit cake didn't convince me and although coffees at gas stations are usually not the best ones, a big macchiato (1 euro) was the best option after all. Also the coffee arrived suspiciously quick and contained more cold milk than coffee, probably to speed up the whole process for us to leave the place.

For a total amount of 11.50 euro you won't probably get better price-quality at one of the shopping mall restaurants close by. The food isn't great but for a gas station restaurant, the service corresponds with its purpose; to get fuel for your body and your car before hitting the road again. However, if you are planning on a short dinner at the HIB restaurant, ordering the chewy meat might significantly delay your trip.

HIB Pizzeria (two locations)



Prishtina, Veternik  
Fushe Kosove, near the turn to Prishtina  
International Airport

# University Hires Bus Company With Troubled Past

University of Prishtina appears to have bypassed the tendering process in contracting a firm with a dubious safety record.



By Petrit Collaku

The Thaci Brothers company did not earn a reputation for safety after it began busing students in Drenas in 2012.

According to a 2012 report by the GAP Institute, some drivers were underage and unlicensed. Buses were overcrowded and one ran over two students, injuring both.

Despite the troubles, the company won a second contract to continue offering bus services.

Now the Thaci Brothers - no connection to the Prime Minister's family - are providing a free bus service for University of Prishtina students.

The rector of the university, Ibrahim Gashi, inaugurated the service when he boarded the Thaci Brothers bus in Prishtina

In Drenas, some of the bus drivers were underage and unlicensed. One ran over two students, seriously injuring both.

on April 10.

Gashi touted the service, noting that the bus would link university faculties hourly, 10 times per day.

Some question the need for the bus service as most faculties lie within a few hundred metres of the city centre.

Gashi said the service would cost the university 2,500 euro per month and the contract was awarded through proper procedures.

"In the call for tenders we announced, we selected the cheapest offer and the company that offered the biggest number of transfers during weekdays," Gashi said.

But the university never issued a call for bids. There is no evidence of a formal contract, either.

Afrim Bajraktari, head of procurement at the University, refused to give any information about what requirements the Thaci Brothers met, or any details about the contract.

Bajraktari claimed that the contract was awarded through a closed tender.

Under the Law on Public Procurement, closed tenders are reserved for extraordinary circumstances. But even in those cases, the contracting agency is still required to post an award



Ibrahim Gashi, rector of the University of Prishtina, hails from the same village in Drenas as the owner of the Thaci Brothers bus company.

notice, which did not happen in the case of the Thaci Brothers.

The owner of Thaci Brothers, Mehdi Thaci, is from the same small village in Drenas as Gashi, Llapushnik. However, Thaci maintains that this played no role in his company's selection.

"The fact that the rector and I come from the same village

doesn't mean anything," he told Prishtina Insight.

"Just because he is the rector doesn't mean that I should stop working. I have to work."

Thaci said he won the tender because he had a good offer, although he refused to say when he placed the bid and when he signed his contract.

He also declined to discuss his company's troubles with its bus service in Drenas.

The bus service will run until July 15.

"It's a trial phase to see how much the students value it. If it helps them, UP will consider contracting another bus," Gashi said in April.

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**Hard**

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