

Prishtina Insight

May 7 - 20, 2010 Issue No. 39 www.prishtinainsight.com Now on sale for € 1



Arms Raid Raises New Conflict Fears in Macedonia

Discovery of weapons on both sides of the Macedonia-Kosovo border raises concerns about renewed destabilisation of the country, and the potential resurrection of disbanded ethnic Albanian militant group.

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EULEX: No Evidence of KLA Organ Trafficking

Matti Raatikainen, chief war crimes investigator for the EU mission, tells Prishtina Insight that investigations into alleged KLA organ trafficking have uncovered nothing so far

By Jeta Xharra & Lawrence Marzouk

Accusations that the Kosovo Liberation Army, KLA, was involved in organ trafficking from the so-called "Yellow House" in Albania are not supported by evidence, Matti Raatikainen, chief of war crimes investigations at EULEX, said.

The allegations, which first surfaced in the book *Madame Prosecutor*, by Carla del Ponte, former chief prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia, ICTY, are arguably the most shocking levelled at the KLA. Del Ponte said the KLA might have kidnapped several hundred Serb civilians in 1999 and taken them to northern Albania, where their vital organs were removed and sold on the black mar-

ket. Former KLA fighters strenuously denied the claims.

Last year EULEX revealed it was looking into the claims, but speaking to Prishtina Insight, Raatikainen said enquiries by the EU rule-of-law mission had uncovered no evidence to back them up.

"We have investigated the Yellow House case but to date our prosecutors have found absolutely no evidence or intelligence that would lead us to believe this happened," he said. "We followed the clues but no evidence or intelligence about this case ever materialised."

He added that while the case was not closed, it was no longer a priority: "Of about 900 cases we inherited from UNMIK, we are working on about 60, as this is what we have capacities for."

"We have prioritised them mainly on the seriousness of the case.

Out of these are 50 cases in which there are more than 10 victims."

He said that looking at all the war crimes cases in Kosovo, 70 per cent of the victims were Albanians, 25 per cent Serbs and the remaining 5 per cent involved Roma and other ethnic groups.

The case has gained further traction internationally over the past year following claims by the Serbian war crime prosecutor's office that it has evidence of organ trafficking, and the launch of an investigation into the matter by Dick Marty, a Swiss senator representing the Council of Europe.

Prishtina Insight understands that EULEX's war crime unit has asked to see the evidence held by the Serbian prosecutor but has received no positive answer. This is in contrast to other investigations by EULEX in which Belgrade offi-

cial have helped with witnesses and evidence.

And according to a EULEX source, an organ harvesting operation would have required sophisticated logistics beyond what a small farmhouse in remote northern Albania could have provided.

In 2003, an UNMIK and ICTY mission visited a house 40 minutes from the village of Rribe to investigate the allegations that organs from Serbs abducted from Kosovo had been "harvested" there. The inquiry did not proceed further.

Kosovo and Albanian authorities argue that the investigation never went anywhere because the allegations were "cooked up by Belgrade" to undermine the legitimacy of Kosovo's war for independence.

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city

Gracanica Mayor Confident on 'Marigona Complex' Deal

The International Civilian Office, ICO, last week criticised Prishtina Municipality for issuing planning permission for a 100million residential complex in the neighbouring district of Gracanica.

But Prishtina Municipality has defended its decision to Prishtina Insight and the mayor of Gracanica...

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business

Kosovo Unions Fear Labour Law May Meet Delays

Trade unions in Kosovo say they fear legislation aimed at bolstering workers' rights may never see the light of day on account of vested interests.

At the moment, they say, too many employees work without contracts, which means they have few or none of rights that most workers take...

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Arms Raid Raises New Conflict Fears in Macedonia

Discovery of weapons on both sides of the Macedonia-Kosovo border raises concerns about renewed destabilisation of the country, and the potential resurrection of disbanded ethnic Albanian militant group.



By Sinisa-Jakov Marusic

Macedonia's security situation has the potential to deteriorate, analysts have told Prishtina Insight, though the chances of an escalation into a repetition of the armed conflict of 2001 are slim.

Last week's police discovery of a large weapons stash hidden in the mountains near the Macedonian border with Kosovo raised fears of renewed violence and of the resurrection of the disbanded National Liberation Army, NLA, the ethnic Albanian insurgent force that clashed for six months with Macedonian forces in 2001.

On Wednesday, NATO expressed concern following the recent case incident.

"The quantity of seized ammunition was very large and this is very worrying for us," Admiral Mark Fitzgerald, Commander of the Allied Joint Force Command in Naples, said during his visit in Kosovo.

"Such actions could destabilise a country like Macedonia, so we have to be concerned," he told before journalists.

During the bust the police came across NLA emblems and a large quantity of weapons, including 20 missiles, three mine-throwers, three field guns, 81 kg of plastic explosive, and hundreds of grenades and mines.

Police also encountered armed resistance from an unidentified group of uniformed men apparently guarding the sniper rifles, mortars, missiles and other weapons. The group retreated to Kosovo.

Shortly after the bust an alleged NLA representative sent a communiqué claiming responsibility for the arms stash and for engaging the police.

The communiqué arrived by email at the local Alsat M TV station, signed by a person named Arben Selimi and bearing a stamp of the NLA. It stated that the NLA existed and intended to "continue operations in all Albanian-populated parts of Macedonia".

The message echoed statements that the NLA sent nine years ago, when the 2001 conflict started, and

which then spread across most northern and northwestern parts of the country.

Six months of clashes in 2001 ended with the signing of the Ohrid Peace Accord, which envisaged greater rights for ethnic Albanians. Among others points, it envisaged proportional employment of Albanians in the security forces and in administration in return for dissolution of the NLA whose leadership subsequently formed what is now the country's biggest Albanian party, the Democratic Union for Integration, DUI.

The DUI, now part of the government led by the centre-right VMRO DPMNE party, condemned the communiqué as "false" and a "provocation", saying it was aimed at spreading fear among the population.

"There is only one legitimate NLA leader," the party said, naming its head, Ali Ahmeti, who led the insurgency back in 2001. The party condemned the use of violence as means of accomplishing political goals. Almost all political parties joined in condemning the alleged communiqué, while the EU office in Skopje denounced it as "unacceptable".

Police insisted matters were under control. "The timely action of the Macedonian police, which seized all the weapons, has produced results," Interior Minister Gordana Jankulovska said over the weekend.

But Lirim Dulovi, editor of Koha, an Albanian-language daily, told Prishtina Insight that the latest developments reminded him of the start of the 2001 clashes.

"All the parameters are the same," he said, pointing to the then police statements boasting about their successful actions, condemnations of violence and extremism from all sides and exchanges of accusations among the political parties.

He warned that "the situation could get out of control" because of growing dissatisfaction among the Albanian community over the slow implementation of the Ohrid accord. "Any attempt to disregard this [Ohrid] deal... gives additional fuel to alternative solutions and to those who instigate them," Dulovi said.

Albanians make up about a quarter of Macedonia's population. One political demand that has become a source of bitter arguments concerns state pensions for NLA veterans and the families of killed and wounded NLA fighters.

The DUI head, Ali Ahmeti, has promised to resolve this issue ever since the party joined the government with VMRO DPMNE in 2008 but has yet to reach a deal. He also promised Macedonia's swift entrance into NATO and EU, which have been slowed by VMRO DPMNE's failure to reach a compromise with Greece on the vexed issue of Macedonia's name.

"Many people are discontented over the condition of the Albanians in Macedonia and are not as patient as Ali Ahmeti," Dulovi said.

One man considered an NLA ideologist, Fazli Velju, recently warned the authorities to settle the problem over state pensions for NLA veterans. Speaking in the village of Slupcane he said that if the issue were not settled soon, the head of VMRO DPMNE, Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, would be responsible for any unrest that might follow. "Macedonia has two options for its future, one is cohabitation and the other is separation; Albanians are ready for both," he said.

Following these and similar statements made in the public domain, NATO, the EU, the OSCE and the US last week issued a joint statement expressing concern for the country and reaffirming support for the Ohrid Accord as the "only option" for future progress.

"We firmly oppose any violence or threats of violence, as this will only harm political and economic progress and is in sharp contradiction to the values that our institutions represent," the statement added. The DUI refused to comment on Velju's claims, saying he was a marginal figure.

Since taking power in 2006, Gruevski has faced criticism for pursuing policies that allegedly go against the spirit of the Ohrid deal, which foresees the creation of a multi-ethnic society.

He insists his government is doing its best to ensure full implementation of the deal.

However, his insistence on a



vast revamp project for the capital, dubbed "Skopje 2014", which involves erecting large monuments linked only with the history of the Macedonian majority, and last years' controversy over a government-sponsored encyclopedia which called Albanians "settlers" and used the derogatory term "Shiptari" for them, have raised concern among many Albanians.

His refusal to settle the issue of NLA pensions and his government's failed attempt to make Macedonian language classes compulsory for Albanian first-graders were also seen as provocative.

Dulovi argues that although no local political players would openly support violent destabilisation, some might hope to potentially benefit from such developments. "Gruevski might see some form of contained conflict as a good opportunity to excuse himself from the responsibility of settling the name dispute with Greece," Dulovi speculated.

Greece has blocked Macedonia's entry into NATO and the EU, conditioning its entry on changes being made to the name "Republic of Macedonia". Gruevski is under constant international pressure to reach a compromise with Athens, which would, however, undermine his unmatched popularity at home.

Dulovi said the leader of the opposition Social Democrats, Branko Crvenkovski, might "also profit from instability because he could then blame Gruevski for this, and so boost his low popularity ratings".

Biljana Vankovska, professor at the Skopje-based Faculty for War and Peace Studies, has been warning of a possible "resurrection" of violence for some time. She told Prishtina Insight the recent events were predictable.

"This region lives in a condition of negative peace - with absence of open violence but also without any

serious effort at demilitarization," she says, arguing that "the proliferation of weapons is a fact.

"The international factor has a certain interest in controlled pressure on Macedonia, primarily because of the name issue, but not in its utter destabilization because this will ruin all their efforts and successes in the region," Vankovska continues.

She fears, however, that "those working on the ground might misunderstand the signals of foreign factors and use the situation for their own lucrative or political goals".

Vankovska argues that NATO, as the biggest military force in the region, with the widest intelligence assets at its disposal, should help Macedonia in combating radicals.

However, Blagoja Markovski, a military analyst from the Balkan Security Forum, an NGO, argues that there is little chance of a return to something like the 2001 conflict.

Markovski, spokesman for the Macedonian army during that conflict, says Macedonia is now a more democratic society and is much closer to NATO and EU, membership of which is the common goal of both Albanians and Macedonians.

"These are former NLA fighters who are dissatisfied because they did not get what they were promised," he said of the men behind the recently uncovered arms cache, "or maybe they don't agree with the idea of achieving pan-Albanian unity through the NATO and EU integration of all Balkan States."

Markovski estimates that the weapon stash found by the police was intended for classical terrorist actions but doubts the unidentified armed men guarding it enjoyed significant support from the local Albanian population in the region.

EULEX: No Evidence of Organ Trafficking Claims

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In Belgrade, officials have continued to highlight the claims, portraying them as proof that the Albanian guerrilla war was a criminal enterprise

Belgrade's Humanitarian Law Centre is the NGO which has most seriously documented war crimes of former Yugoslavia

Its head Natasa Kandic said: "Humanitarian Law Center has no data about organ trafficking in

Albania.

"We did find testimonies and data on people who were detained in Albania but none regarding organ trafficking."

Suspect in Kukes War Crimes Case Arrested

A Kosovo Albanian man was arrested yesterday on war crimes charges, and Prishtina Insight has learnt that the case is tied to torture camps the Kosovo Liberation

Army maintained in Albania during the NATO bombing of former Yugoslavia.

Balkan Insight discovered in an investigation published last year that the KLA had maintained detention cells in a base in the northeastern Albanian town of Kukes.

Yesterday in the Pejton district of central Prishtina, EULEX's executive police department, under the supervision of the Special Prosecutor's Office, car-

ried out a house search and arrested a man, understood to be Sabit Geci, in connection with war crimes. EULEX said the investigation was in connection with crimes allegedly committed between April and June 1999, while sources confirmed to Prishtina Insight that the arrest was linked to KLA detention facilities in Kukes.

The cells appeared to be part of a loose network of detention facilities in the country, where

inmates, who were political adversaries, people suspected of being spies for Serbia and others engaged in feuds with some KLA authorities, were tortured and in some cases murdered.

EULEX confirmed last summer that it was looking into the allegations of the torture camps in Albania.

This is the first arrest for war crimes related to the former Yugoslavia which occurred in the territory of Albania.

Praise and Anger Follow Raids on Kosovo Minister

High-profile EULEX raids on transport minister Fatmir Limaj's homes and offices have been hailed by some as a step towards tackling corruption but condemned by others as pure theatre.



By Lawrence Marzouk & Petrit Collaku

Raids on the homes and offices of Kosovo's controversial Transport Minister Fatmir Limaj have drawn sharply contrasting reactions from civil society groups and government officials.

The raids conducted last Wednesday by the EU rule-of-law mission, EULEX, arguably constitute the most controversial corruption probe in Kosovo's short history.

Dozens of EULEX officers took part in the action. It was later confirmed that searches took place at the Ministry, at homes connected to Limaj and at the offices of three companies that had won road-building tenders from the ministry.

While the mission issued only a short press release, explaining that a number of searches were ongoing, the aim of the raids was easy to divine. That EULEX was investigating suspected corruption inside the Ministry of Transport had been the subject of speculation for months. It had even been referred to, albeit obliquely, in the press.

The newspaper *Koha Ditore* reported back in March that the International Civilian Representative, Pieter Feith, had urged Prime Minister Hashim Thaci to relieve an unnamed minister of his duties in a reshuffle before investigations into the minister's activities were forced to go public.

"The message sent by EULEX through such an action was that it was as if Kosovo's institutions are at war with international institutions, which is not true,"

said Prime Minister Hashim Thaci

It was widely believed that the minister in question was Limaj. And while the Prime Minister has denied Feith made such a request, Feith himself has not.

The ministerial reshuffle came and went in March without the departure of Limaj. In the weeks leading up to the EULEX raids, a new, secret plan emerged, which would have seen the minister take up a position outside Kosovo, possibly in New York.

Both international and government sources have confirmed that this plan was on the table and was put forward out of concern that Limaj's potential arrest could destabilise the country.

These sources point to a split within the international community when it came to dealing with this issue. EULEX, the ICO

and some states were allegedly keen for justice to take its course.

On the other hand, some members of the Quint, the ambassadors of the five most powerful countries in Kosovo, preferred a softer landing for the minister.

Voices calling for justice to take its course won the day. But it is not clear whether this was because all sides were won round to the argument or whether EULEX decided to act despite the differing approaches.

Pressure had been mounting on EULEX for months to use its executive powers to tackle high-level corruption. Civil society groups had become increasingly vocal in their criticism of the mission as time passed and action failed to materialise.

One of those who had called on EULEX to demonstrate its commitment to fighting corruption was Ilir Deda, director of the think tank KIPRED. He said the raids represented a positive new phase in Kosovo's development.

"I see this as the beginning of EULEX's wider action to fight corruption in Kosovo," he told *Prishtina Insight*. "The circle of such actions is going to get wider and as EULEX said we will see more actions in two or three weeks. It's never too late to do that."

From 1999 to 2009, Deda added, the international community had focused on building up peace in Kosovo, and now was the time for a change of gear.

"Over the last two or three months, the focus has been on creating functional and democratic Kosovo institutions, with minimal corruption," he continued.

Not everyone is convinced of this benign interpretation of recent events, however. Pro-government papers and in particular papers loyal to Limaj's party, the Democratic Party of Kosovo, PDK, have dubbed the raid a spectacle.

They mostly claimed that the action was intended to divert public attention from the furore surrounding Albin Kurti, leader of the hard-line nationalist Vetevendosje movement.

Kurti is on trial for taking part in a 2007 protest in Prishtina that turned violent but has failed to turn up in court despite a warrant for his arrest.

Some papers say the raids are an attempt also to draw the media spotlight from the Romanian EULEX officers caught smuggling cigarettes and alcohol out of the country last month.



Fatmir Limaj and his ministry are under investigation for corruption

Political commentator Mufail Limani said that while EULEX's move was legal, the way they had carried it out had damaged the reputation of Kosovo.

"The government and EULEX should demonstrate a better partnership to us because the last thing we need is a bad image [of Kosovo] or conflict between EULEX and the representatives of our country," he told *Prishtina Insight*.

"It is indisputable that there is a social and political need to fight corruption but no minister, whether Limaj or another, should be arrested like a bandit," he added.

"Such behaviour is unacceptable. The action that we saw is similar to actions against the mafia. This means that Kosovo's government is seen as a criminal or mafia-led group."

EULEX has denied that the motive for the operation was to improve its tarnished image. "The rule of law should be allowed to work independently without political interference," spokeswoman Karin Limdal said.

"No institution or individual is above the law and if there are well founded reasons for believing that material is present in a specific location that could bring an ongoing investigation forward, a judge can order a search of this location," she added.

"These are normal procedures based on the law. To suggest that the search of the Ministry of Transport... was a spectacle that violated state institutions in Kosovo is a groundless accusation."

Limaj provided a short statement on the evening of the raids, explaining that he would carry on working as normal but he has since shunned opportunities to speak to the public or the media.

At first, no government representative commented. But in what appeared a concerted fight-back by the government, three senior figures later provided interview and statements on Wednesday.

In an interview with the public broadcaster RTK, Prime Minister Thaci questioned whether Feith had interfered with judicial processes, saying the raid sent out the wrong messages. Relations between the two men have been reportedly frosty since the meeting at which Feith allegedly requested Limaj's dismissal.

"The message sent by EULEX through such an action was that it was as if Kosovo's institutions are at war with international institutions, which is not true," Thaci said.

Deputy Prime Minister Hajredin Kuqi took a more cautious position. "We will not interfere in the work of justice," he told *Prishtina Insight*. "We have expressed our stance... on not interfering in the justice system," he added.

"We look for cooperation, transparency and understanding, which are necessary in every country but... for the time being, we are awaiting answers from the judiciary."

In an interview with the daily *Express* newspaper, the speaker of the parliament, Jakup Krasniqi, was less diplomatic. "The material taken that day by such a large police force could have been taken in a more professional way by investigators and prosecutors," he maintained.

"The way that the raid, or the spectacle, was carried out in the Ministry of Transport was more like theatre," he added. "We believe there were numerous possibilities to get to the truth without violating state institutions [like that]."

The speaker said that in the meantime Limaj ought to "continue his work... Unless someone's guilt is proven, he is not guilty."

EULEX told *Prishtina Insight* that documents and information gathered during the searches were still being analysed and the spokeswoman would not be drawn on whether they would lead to arrests or further action.

Editor's word Liria e Shtypit



By Lawrence Marzouk

Newspapers are never impartial. It might be a surprise to hear an editor admit to it, but I think attempts to portray journalists as neutral observers is to project a fallacy.

Media organisations should strive to be fair, but inevitably social norms, morals and political views craft the stories that newspapers cover and affect the way that events are reported.

For example, journalists work on the basis that laws should be respected and do not strive to represent the views of convicted criminals. That is unless there is a suspicion that there has been a miscarriage of justice or that the law is unfair, which is based on the journalist's judgment.

When reporting on wars, is it right for journalists to give equal weight to the arguments of those committing crimes against humanity and to the victims of atrocities? These cases also require the journalist to make a judgment between what is right and wrong and, as a consequence, be partial. And, of course, some newspapers openly support certain principles and political parties.

In my home country, England, most newspapers have backed a particular party for yesterday's General Elections.

This decision obviously has a major impact on how events are covered, but at least you know what particular vision of the world you will be given when you pick up the paper.

What worries me most about media coverage in Kosovo is not that some media outlets are fiercely partisan, but that this manifests itself in the presentation of a completely warped version of events based purely on political motives.

The case of EULEX's raids on the Ministry of Transport and homes connected to Minister Fatmir Limaj is the latest example of this. Rather than present facts, the Democratic Party of Kosovo's cheerleaders decided to paint the events as some kind of media spectacle.

On the day after the searches, some newspapers didn't even bother to find a willing mouthpiece to put forward these views, but simply presented it as fact.

This is not the work of a journalist, but a propagandist.

Don't get me wrong, I cherish a strong independent media which represents all views, but newspapers and journalists should respect certain norms of behaviour and professional standards.

Suggesting that an organisation carried out raids on a government ministry and a minister's homes purely to boost its reputation is an incredibly serious allegation and should be backed up with evidence.

Unfortunately it seems that some newspapers are more interested in being political pamphlets embellished with government ads than doing their job.

A free press, or *liria e shtypit*, is a keystone of democracy, but regulations that maintain standards are also essential.

Press freedom should not mean freedom to peddle half-truths and propaganda.

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EU Nudges Kosovo, Serbia Towards Sarajevo Summit

Diplomats hope use of so-called Gymnich formula will enable Kosovo and Serbia to take part in key EU meeting and avoid another damaging boycott.



By Bojana Barlovac

Brussels is investing strong efforts in negotiations with Belgrade and Prishtina to find a formula that would allow both sides attend regional and international conferences, in the absence of a permanent resolution to their differences.

Italy's Foreign Minister, Franco Frattini, on April 29 proposed the use of the so-called "Gymnich" model as a solution that could enable all parties in the region to attend the EU-Western Balkans summit planned for Sarajevo on June 2.

Under the Gymnich model, only the names of the participants are displayed, not the names of the states they represent or their national symbols.

Named after a castle in Germany, the formula was introduced in 1974 by EU foreign ministers as a means of holding informal meetings at which participants could have free and comprehensive discussions on issues without reaching formal conclusions.

Ever since Kosovo unilaterally declared independence on February 17, 2008, Serbia, which strongly opposes the move, has refused to take part in international gatherings at which Kosovo is represented as an independent state.

Kosovo officials have meanwhile attended several regional and international meetings, prompting



Serbian officials refused to attend the regional conference in Brdo, Slovenia

the Serbian delegation to walk out in protest on a number of occasions.

The most recent incidents occurred in February at the inauguration of Croatia's new President, Ivo Josipovic, and on March 20, at the EU-Western Balkans conference held in Brdo, Slovenia. Serbian President Boris Tadic absented himself from both events, knowing that Kosovo representatives would take part as well.

The Brdo conference, which aimed to present a common front in the region on EU integration, was overshadowed by the Serbian boycott, which also triggered the absence of major European politicians.

While Serbian officials are open to a so-called "Gymnich plus" formula, based on an asymmetric presence of representatives, Kosovo is holding out for the equality of all participants.

However, some analysts believe that Kosovo may show flexibility in finding a solution as fears are growing that the whole region will lose out if the forthcoming summit ends up the same way as the meeting in Slovenia.

Prishtina Insight has meanwhile learned that Serbia will insist on a "Gymnich-plus" formula, meaning that Kosovo officials would have to be escorted to the talks by a representative of the UN mission in Kosovo, UNMIK, while representatives of other international organizations would be seated at the table as well.

Serbia's Foreign Minister, Vuk Jeremic, expressed hopes that a solution could be found that would allow both Belgrade and Prishtina to attend the gathering, while noting that certain lines could not be crossed.

"Kosovo cannot be introduced anywhere in a manner contrary to Resolution 1244", the Serbian Foreign Minister said, referring to the 1999 UN resolution which authorized international deployment in Kosovo but stated that Kosovo remained part of Serbia.

On the other side, Kosovo's Foreign Minister, Skender Hyseni, said Kosovo would accept any format for the summit as long as it respected the equality of all the participants. "If there are flags, titles, or the names of countries, then there should be [the same] for everyone," Hyseni said.

Sonja Liht, president of the Foreign Policy Council of the Serbian Foreign Ministry, told Prishtina Insight that as Serbia had accepted a Gymnich-plus formula, Kosovo should accept it as well. "I don't know whether Prishtina will agree on that one but I hope it will," she said.

Liht accepted that a permanent solution to the problem might be far off. On the other hand, Dusan Janjic, head of

the Forum for Ethnic Relations, said finding a suitable solution to the problem could be easily achieved if the political elites of the two sides wanted to do so; the problem was that Prishtina and some EU countries wanted it more than Serbia did at the moment.

Referring to the Sarajevo meeting, he added: "The Kosovo side is more likely to accept 'no name' formula and not be represented as a state, even if a UNMIK representative speaks first."

However, an UNMIK spokesman, Russell Geekie, told Prishtina Insight that UNMIK had not yet received an invitation for the Sarajevo summit. "I expect that UNMIK would attend if an invitation is extended to us," he said. "But the UNMIK representative - whether it is the SRSG [Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo] or another official - would only speak on behalf of the mission. He or she would not speak on behalf of Kosovo, which has its own leaders."

Geekie refused to comment on Frattini's proposal directly, especially without knowing the details, but reiterated that the SRSG strongly believed it was in the interests of all of parties to attend such meetings and he would like to see Belgrade and Prishtina representatives attend the summit under whichever formula works.

"I believe the Gymnich formula is one possible way for the sides to attend meetings by avoiding the status issue," he continued. "In Prague last year this formula allowed all the sides to present their views in the same forum, which is positive."

Spain's Ambassador to Serbia, Inigo de Palacio Espana, whose country holds the EU rotating presidency and is organising the Sarajevo gathering, has also said it is in everyone's interest for the conference to take place.

Top EU officials have reportedly said that they will not take part in the conference unless representatives from all countries in the region, including Serbia and Kosovo, attend the event, the Serbian daily Dnevnik reported.

The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Catherine Ashton, and EU Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Fuele have reportedly informed Spanish Foreign Minister about their stance.

Liht said that the absence of any country from the gathering would only lead to self-isolation, so both sides should show some flexibility in order to find a solution. "The entire region is losing if some of the parties do not take part," she said. "Every such move is only postponing EU integration."

News in Brief

Serbian Bishop Artemije Dismissed

The Council of the Serbian Orthodox Church, SPC, decided on Tuesday to permanently remove Bishop Artemije, the bishop of the Raska and Prizren Diocese in Kosovo, from his duties. According to the SPC statement, Bishop Atanasije also resigned as the diocese's temporary administrator, but will remain there until a replacement is found.

Serbian daily Vecernje Novosti learned from its sources that Artemije has denied allegations of fraud in the diocese and openly opposed an offer to retire but said he would "accept the decision of the Council, whatever that is."

On February 16, police launched a probe into allegations of fraud inside the Diocese on the basis of charges filed by the Church. Bishop Artemije, who led the Diocese, was temporarily removed from his post while the final decision of the Church Council was awaited.

According to a report issued by a Church commission looking into the Artemije case, which Balkan Insight has seen, money donated to the diocese allegedly funded the lifestyles of several of the Bishop's close associates.

The alleged beneficiaries included Simeon Vilovski and Rade Suboticki. The two men operated Rade Neimar, a construction firm linked to the church, which was engaged in the reconstruction of monasteries destroyed during the March riots that swept Kosovo in 2004.

Serbian police arrested Suboticki on February 17 on suspicion of embezzling 300,000 meant for the reconstruction of monasteries in Kosovo between 2004 and 2009, while Vilovski was arrested in Greece on March 11.

European Commissioner Fuele in Kosovo

EU Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Fuele started a two day tour of Prishtina and Mitrovica yesterday on his second official visit to Kosovo.

Commissioner Fuele is to meet the Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim Thaci and Kosovo Minister of European Integration Besim Beqaj. He will also meet representatives of the international community in Kosovo.

Fuele will also visit Mitrovica north, where he will give a lecture to university students and pay a visit to the business complex in Zvecan. He will mark Europe Day at a formal reception in Prishtina.

EU Releases Data on Asylum Seekers in 2009

European Union member states registered some 14,200 asylum applications from citizens of Kosovo in 2009, according to a recent report issued by Eurostat, the bloc's statistical office.

There were particularly high numbers of Kosovo applicants in France (4,580), Belgium (2,515), Germany (1,790), and Hungary (1,785).

Asylum applicants from other countries in the region were seen in the report as well, including 555 from Serbia, 75 from Bosnia, and 5 from Albania.

Of the 260,730 total applicants for asylum in the EU in 2009, 229,500 first instance decisions were made, 166,900 of which were rejections (72 per cent).

Prishtina, Belgrade May Begin Talks This Year

Prishtina and Belgrade may begin talks on decentralisation, cultural heritage and the northern part of Kosovo later this year, the BBC Albanian service reports.

According to the BBC's diplomatic sources, the possibility that talks will be held has increased after several EU and US officials visited Kosovo and Serbia.

Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini also said indirectly in Prishtina that Kosovo and Serbia could start discussions after the EU-Western Balkans summit in Sarajevo scheduled for June 2.

According to the BBC Albanian report, which quoted unnamed international diplomatic sources, Prishtina may create at least eight working groups to assist in technical preparations for the potential talks.

Kosovo Foreign Minister Skender Hyseni, who exchanged views with European deputies in Brussels on Tuesday, said he would favour talks with Belgrade officials.

Prishtina Insight

www.prishtinainsight.com

Publisher:

BIRN

Balkan Investigative Reporting Network

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Design & Layout: "Rrjeti"

Printing: Lindi Printing Center

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Kosovo Unions Fear Labour Law May Meet Delays

New legislation offering workers greater protection is up before parliament, and not before time, say union leaders, who fear the bill could still be held up.



By Lavdim Hamidi

Trade unions in Kosovo say they fear legislation aimed at bolstering workers' rights may never see the light of day on account of vested interests.

At the moment, they say, too many employees work without contracts, which means they have few or none of rights that most workers take for granted.

The head of the Association of Trade Unions of Kosovo, ATUK, Haxhi Arifi, told Prishtina Insight that many workers have to work for up to 16 hours a day, get no overtime and have neither pensions, health and disability insurance nor paid holidays. They often don't even receive their salaries on time.

Arifi said poor working conditions had been the cause of the death of dozens of employees in the workplace this year. The Kosovo Energy Corporation, KEK, has one of the worst records among the publicly owned enterprises for fatal accidents. During the past ten years 28 workers have lost their lives at work, while 1,300 others have suffered light and heavy injuries over the past five years.

On May Day, the international day of labour, hundreds of Kosovo workers took to the streets of Prishtina on to demand better conditions. A day earlier, the government approved a new Bill that promises to afford greater protection to workers in both the private and public sector.

Nenad Rashiq, Minister of Labour, said the law would help Kosovo meet all the European Union criteria in terms of workers' rights.

According to the draft legislation, full time working hours are 40 hours per week, while under 18s cannot work for more than 35 hours per week. And under the new law, the employer will now be legally responsible for the safety of its employees.

Arifi disagrees, branding the planned leg-



Workers protest in Prishtina against poor wages

islation "political marketing" and calling the announcement on April 30 a blatant attempt to assuage tensions ahead of the protests.

The union chief added that although the government had approved the bill, he still fears it could spend years gathering dust in what he calls "the bottom drawer of parliament".

Arifi also criticised the government for not having approved such legislation earlier; the annual cost of implementing the new law would cost only 8 million euro a year, he maintained. "The law hasn't been approved because some people profit from violating the rights of the workers, especially in the private sector," he claimed.

According to him, around 250,000 Kosovars work in the private sector, and many pay no tax. "From the non-collection of tax in the private sector, where thousands work in the black market, the losses to the budget are many times bigger than the annual cost of the [new] law."

The government says it has set up a special body, the Social Economic Council, to look at labour issues whose members include the association of trade unions, the Chamber of Commerce and other employ-

ers' associations. However the council does not yet function owing to the dissatisfaction of the ATUK with the number of representatives in the Council appointed by the government.

Safet Gerxhaliu, from the Chamber of Commerce, denies that employers want to hold up passage of the new law. Employers' representatives on the Social Economic Council welcome the law and parliament should approve it as soon as possible, he insisted.

Gerxhaliu said it was not clear why the passage of such a law had been held up until now, when the legislation was a precondition for Kosovo's further integration into the EU.

Another benefit of the new law, he added, was that it would help clarify the true state of the labour market. The common statement that unemployment in Kosovo is around 40 per cent was probably not exact, he continued, as the total number of people engaged in the private sector was unknown.

By regulating workers' rights, the new law would help shrink the black economy "and also make it known how many workers are involved in the private sector", Gerxhaliu maintained.

Business news in brief

Start of Kosovo Highway Construction Marked

In the presence of thousands of onlookers, the Kosovo government has marked the start of highway construction in Kosovo at a groundbreaking ceremony in the village of Vermice, near the border with Albania.

Albanian Prime Minister Sali Berisha, US Ambassador to Kosovo Christopher Dell, UK Ambassador to Kosovo Andrew Sparkes, and many other top officials were present at the ceremony.

Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim Thaci said that Kosovo was marking history with the biggest and the most important project for Kosovo.

"We are starting the road that unites us emotionally and physically with others in Europe," Thaci said. He said that today everyone in Kosovo has more hope and faith in the future of Kosovo.

Albanian Prime Minister Berisha said that Kosovo's government has proved that it is able to do everything for the national interest. "This corridor makes Pristina closer to the sea," Berisha said.

Kosovo Minister of Transport Fatmir Limaj said that the highway makes clear where Kosovo is going. "This road is Europe," Limaj said.

The project will cost around 700 million. Funds for the whole project have yet to be identified.

The Ministry has also said that the highway will be built in phases, starting with the section that runs from Vermice, on the border with Albania, to Qafa e Duhles, Suhareka municipality, in southwest Kosovo.

Israeli Foreign Minister in Visit to Macedonia

Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs Avigdor Lieberman on Monday kicked off a two day official visit to Macedonia.

The foreign minister is accompanied by an Israeli Foreign Ministry delegation and a group of businessmen interested in increasing cooperation with the Balkan country.

Lieberman, who is also a deputy prime minister, is set to meet with Macedonian Foreign Minister Antonio Milososki, President Georgi Ivanov, Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and Parliament Speaker Trajko Veljanovski.

The focus of the visit is expected to be economic cooperation and means to boost tourism to both countries.

In the course of the visit Lieberman will meet with leaders of the Jewish community in Macedonia and discuss the construction of a Holocaust Memorial Center in Skopje.

Macedonia is currently building a Holocaust Memorial Center in the country's capital which, when finished, will commemorate the several thousand Jews from Macedonia who perished in the Nazi death camps during the Second World War.

Macedonia and Israel established diplomatic relations in 1995 and since then relations between the two states have been friendly. However, both sides have agreed that much more can be done to boost economic cooperation.

German Call Centre Opens in Prishtina



By Lawrence Marzouk

Frankfurt-based company MC Mobile Communication GmbH has opened a call centre in Prishtina.

The investment has created 60 new jobs in Kosovo's capital and this number is soon to increase to 300.

The news comes as a boost to Kosovo after two years of falling direct foreign investment.

The project was carried out with the support of the Austrian Development Cooperation, ADC, and the Vienna Office of Investment

Promotion Agency of Kosovo (IPAK).

In a statement IPAK said: "Representatives of the German company are said to be very satisfied with the work of Kosovar employees, in particular with their knowledge of German language, which is a precondition to work in the call center."

"The company is also closely cooperating with the German language faculty of the University of Prishtina in issues such as recruitment and training of potential employees."

This is the third investment in Kosovo co-financed by ADC since the opening of the office in Prishtina in November 2006.

Foreign direct investment in Kosovo has fallen in recent years despite attempts to pro-



The opening of a call centre in Prishtina will bring 300 new jobs

note the country.

According to official statistics, foreign investment in Kosovo fell by 22 per cent in 2009 from 366 million euro in 2008 to 285 million euro.

While the government attributes the decline to the global financial crisis, economic experts maintain the drop is

nonetheless disturbing.

In 2007, direct foreign investment reached 441 million euro.

According to its website, MC Mobile Communications GmbH is 'an international cutting-edge system integrator based in Germany', specialising in data communications and multimedia.

Gracanica Mayor Confident on 'Marigona Complex' Deal

Bojan Stojanovic, Mayor of Gracanica, says his new municipality is likely to reissue a permit for the 100million Marigona residential complex, which was originally approved by Prishtina Municipality



By Shengjyl Osmani

The International Civilian Office, ICO, last week criticised Prishtina Municipality for issuing planning permission to a 100million residential complex in the neighbouring district of Gracanica.

But Prishtina Municipality has defended its decision to Prishtina Insight and the mayor of Gracanica, Bojan Stojanovic, said that he was confident a solution will be found to the issue.

In December 2009, under Kosovo's decentralisation plan, Gracanica became a new municipality in an area formerly administered by Prishtina.

In a statement, the ICO said that 'municipalities must respect each others' competencies' and referred to the Marigona case.

Spokesperson Andy McGuffie said: "All executive authority transfers to a new municipality on completion of municipal elections.

"The municipality of Prishtina/Priština is no longer competent to issue construction permits for land that falls within the boundaries of the new municipality of Graçanica/Gracanica. The ICO has communicated this to the municipality of Prishtina/Priština in person and by official letter.

"The International Civilian Representative (ICR) has request-



Prishtina Municipality has been criticised for issuing permits for areas now in Gracanica Municipality

ed that the Mayor of Prishtin/Priština ensures that his municipality ceases the issuance of permits with respect to land over which it now holds no competence.

"The ICR has further requested that steps be taken to address the permits issued since the completion of municipal elections; this includes informing recipients of such permits that construction must stop pending resolution of the matter."

But Muhamet Gashi, spokesperson for Prishtina Municipality, told Prishtina Insight that a permit had been issued to Marigona because part of the development remains in its municipality.

He said: "We have been through a long process of issuing those construction permits to Marigona because the requests for the permits were submitted almost a year ago, and based on individual house-

holds.

"Since last week, the municipality of Prishtina issued an announcement that the citizens of the municipality of Gracanica won't be given any services in Prishtina, but will have to ask for those services in their residential municipality.

"All construction permits for the area of the municipality of Gracanica will be issued there, because until now the municipality of Gracanica didn't have the technical ability to issue them," claimed Gashi.

"But, as soon as they establish the cadastral sector, all the construction permits will be issued without a problem in the municipality of Gracanica," concluded Gashi.

Bojan Stojanovic, mayor of Gracanica, told Prishtina Insight the municipality has the ability to issue permits. "Since December 29, 2009, the newly established municipalities, after

the latest elections, have the legitimate power of managing their territory according to its newly drafted borders.

"The living complex Marigona had requested those permits from the municipality of Prishtina, which has agreed to issue them, but after the decentralisation, those won't be valid.

"We have to work with the municipality of Prishtina, and the Ministry of Local Government, to find a common ground with the currently issued construction permits, and their future validity. I'm very confident that we can find an agreement that will satisfy both parties," Stojanovic concluded.

About 100 million is expected to be invested in Marigona, one of the biggest projects in Kosovo housing history.

The project includes 1,000 flats and more than 100 homes over 32 acres of land.

Prishtina through the Eyes of:

Kahan Ertik

Consultant at Kosova Chamber of Commerce



What surprised you most about Prishtina?

That there are so many nice places to eat, drink and go out. (Next hot spot for party people in Europe!)

What's your favourite hangout?

Beer in the sunshine after work at Rings on Nena Tereze, evening drinks at Odyssea, Late night at gjonis.

Food at Basilico, Gresa for schnitzel, fast food shops across from the university library after drinks.

Do you do anything cultural?

I was forced to go to ballet at the National Theatre. I have to admit that I liked it.

What is the most annoying thing about Prishtina?

Cars parking on the pavement.

If you were mayor of Prishtina for the day what would you change?

Tow away the cars from the pavement, clean garbage and educate the people on being more environmentally friendly.

How many macchiatos do you drink a day?

If we have meetings: uncountable; if not: tea.

What's the tastiest Kosovar food?

Qofte at the old and tiny qofte shops, boiled meat at Mozaik, mega schnitzel at Gresa, beef steak on my barbecue at home or simply my wife's homemade cooking...

What landmark do you use to tell taxi drivers where you live?

Same street as Hotel Ambassador or one street below Hotel AFA.

Freedom Fest Announces Top Line-Up

International stars have been confirmed to play in Prishtina this summer, but Lady Gaga says she is 'too famous' to come to Kosovo



By Shengjyl Osmani

Roni Size, Miss Dynamite and Dave Morales are among the international stars who will celebrate the 11th anniversary of NATO's intervention in Kosovo this summer.

Freedom Fest, which held its inaugural event last year, will take place on June 12 and 13, with a stellar roll call.

But the event will have to make do without Pearl Jam, Faithless, The Game and Busta Rhymes, who were either too busy or too expensive, and Lady Gaga, who was 'too famous' to make the event, according to her team.

"We are almost done with the preparations for the festival, and are only waiting for the sponsors to confirm their participation, which is very important to us," said Leart Zeqa, one of the organ-



Last year's Freedom Fest was the first, but not the last

isers.

Roni Size, Miss Dynamite, Stereo MCs, and The Young Gods are among the 15 artists who will perform at the festival, which this year will have two stages.

"Super700 from Germany, Red Snapper, Dred Zone from the United Kingdom, Budzillas, Bones, and Queens English, are

other artists that have already confirmed their attendance, and from electronic music, Dave Morales and Bob De Rosa are two other great musicians who will be part of Freedom Fest 2010," added Zeqa.

"Currently we are expecting the confirmation of DJ Sasha, a DJ that is known worldwide and

hopefully we'll be lucky to have him in Prishtina too," he said.

But unfortunately, Pearl Jam, Faithless, The Game and Busta Rhymes, have slipped through the net.

"Many of them haven't been available to come, others have asked for a large amount of money only to get in contact with them," Zeqa said.

"We have also contacted the manager of Lady Gaga, who said to us that is impossible for her to come to Kosovo because her show and production is too famous."

Freedom Fest will take place in a large field, known as the Arena, 2km outside of Prishtina, off the main road Prishtina-Skopje road.

This time, the festival will charge an entrance fee of 5 euro, which includes the cost of renting a tent.

For more information visit www.freedomfestival.eu or the Facebook page Freedom Festival Kosova 2010.

Battered Wives Still Suffer in Silence

Too many victims of domestic violence never report their husbands to the police because of pressure from tradition, the family and society



By Nora Nimani Musa

N's husband took her to the woods around midnight and tied her to a tree. There he tortured her with pliers and sexually assaulted her. He even shot at her with a gun but the bullet missed and she was dragged home, where the ordeal continued. After hearing her cries for help, relatives in a nearby house came to N's aid. They saw her bleeding and begged him to stop but he just locked the door and continued. No one reported the case.

This is not a fictional case but the real-life trauma faced by a 39-year-old woman from Kosovo who, although she has escaped from her husband, is too scared to reveal her name. N is not alone in having suffered extreme domestic violence for years in silence. Experts believe that while improvements have been made, many women have experienced a similar fate.

Married off at 21 to a man she did not know, N told Balkan Insight that she spent the next 18 years living in fear. "If you escape, I will kill you and your youngest brother," her husband told her.

N's mother knew of her daughter's suffering and begged her son-in-law to let N go, but he did not listen, and she did not do anything more about it. "A woman has to be under the rule of her husband. He can beat and tie up his wife if she doesn't respect him." So says the code of Leke Dukagjini, the honour code that has guided Albanian customs since the 15th century.

Although the traditional inequality between the sexes is changing in Kosovo, reporting domestic violence remains a taboo.

Hundreds of cases of domestic violence are reported to police each year but women's organisations maintain that for every woman who comes forward to complain, many others remain silent.

Shelters, social centres and police offer their services to the victims. But old traditions still impact strongly on social behaviour. Women's rights organisations complain of the lack of awareness campaigns against domestic violence, and say victims of domestic violence often fail to press charges because they do not have enough backing from the community.

"The attitude of ordinary people has to change; victims should have more social and family support, this is very important," Naime Sherifi, director of a women's shelter in Prishtina, says.

The number of cases of domestic violence reported to the police has increased steadily in recent years. According to police spokesperson Flora Ahmeti, 240 cases were reported during the first quarter of 2009, while there were 301 in the whole of 2008.

"Violence is being reported and there are five shelters in Kosovo... but this is not a long-term solution," Sibel Halimi, a sociologist at the Center for Gender Studies in Prishtina, says. "After they [the victims] have spent



Experts say that more women are reporting domestic abuse, but much remains to be done

some time there, having nowhere else to go they're forced to go back to the perpetrators."

According to Halimi, the strength and breadth of family networks in Kosovo mean that victims tend to turn to "family and friends" for support and "rarely go to the proper institutions".

Halimi says legal mechanisms are in place to protect women from domestic violence, but attention needs to focus on other areas. Shelters, for example, provide sanctuary for battered wives but remind women of their inferior status. "The sad thing is that the victims [have to] leave their homes because they belong to the violator," Halimi notes.

Divorce law and inheritance traditions are other factors inhibiting women from reporting domestic violence. Women who divorce rarely claim their rightful equal share of the marriage's common property and wealth, as society tends to disapprove of this.

Conditions in the shelters in Kosovo are good, however. Gjeve Osmani, custodian of the refuge in Prishtina, says there is plenty of space for victims and they are provided with a psychologist to help them rehabilitate. A gynecologist is available.

"If victims need medical treatment, we take them to the doctor and buy all the medications for them. Most importantly, they are very secure and safe there," Osmani says. "There is a police patrol available to the shelter 24 hours a day."

According to a UNDP report in 2009 on domestic violence, many women are not willing to report such attacks. The Kosovo Women's Network found that half of the victims they interviewed had never reported violence to police.

Among the most common reasons victims gave for not reporting violence, or for abandoning a legal case, were tradition and fear of social condemnation.

Another factor is poor education. According to the UNDP report, the illiteracy rate among women in Kosovo is three times higher than the rate among men. Girls drop out of school at higher rates than boys between mandatory primary school and secondary school, making women even more dependent on their hus-

bands.

These are all some of the reasons why N put up with 18 years of physical abuse. "I never left the house without him," she recalled. "He took me to my parents' house for a two-hour visit twice a year. There was no room for me to do anything without him knowing."

N and her husband had no children and so adopted his brother's son. The whole family had lived together until 1999 when they built their own house. The rest of the family knew about the violence, but kept quiet.

Lying sick in bed after a beating, N awoke one day to a knock at the door and was surprised to see a police officer. She was afraid to go with him, but went in the end. According to Sherifi, she was taken to a shelter where it took two months to heal her physical wounds alone.

She spent six months in total in the shelter by which time her husband had been sent to prison. The judge sentenced him to eight years and 11 months. Once he was behind bars, she felt safe to leave the refuge and go back to her family. But all she has now to live on is a 75-euro pension, out of which she has to pay her share of the family rent.

Donika Shabani, a psychologist at the shelter in Prishtina, says that there is no follow-up to cases of domestic violence in Kosovo; social workers rarely visit victims. With no institutional programmes in place to rehabilitate perpetrators of domestic violence either, "this gives more room for the repetition of violence".

"For a sustainable solution we have to change our mentality and the way we educate the new generations," Hamil says. She finds it a troubling aspect of Kosovo culture that discriminatory proverbs against women are still being passed on. "If you don't know why you're beating her, she'll know," says Halimi paraphrasing an old Albanian proverb.

Shabani agrees. Children tend to imitate their parents, she notes: "A young boy aged eight starts beating his mother. She stays still, as beating for her is very normal - but if this is how we teach social behaviour, we are in trouble."



Kosovo: 'Passport Control for Serbians Next Year'

As of next year, Serbians will no longer be able to cross the Kosovo border with their state ID cards. They will instead be required to use passports to do so, Dukagjin Gorani, an advisor to Kosovo's prime minister, announced.

In an interview with Serbian daily Danas, Gorani said that "Kosovo is in the process of visa liberalisation, which includes the introduction of biometric passports".

He added that "as part of this process it is necessary to introduce a ban on crossing the border with ID cards, regardless of nationality or country of origin. Thus, citizens of Serbia can no longer be an exception, as is the case now," the daily quoted Gorani as saying.

Kosovo unilaterally declared independence from Serbia on February 17, 2008. Belgrade rejected the move as an illegal act of secession.

Kosovo has been recognised by 22 out of 27 EU member states. Some 67 out of 192 UN member states have recognised Kosovo, most recently the Pacific island of Vanuatu, which recognised Kosovo's independence last Wednesday.

According to Gorani, reaching an "interstate agreement" could be an alternative to the introduction of passport controls at the border.

"Kosovo has intergovernmental agreements with Montenegro and Albania enabling Kosovo citizens to cross borders of the countries in the summer time with ID cards only. A similar agreement could be made with authorities in Belgrade, but in order to do so Serbia and Kosovo must sign the document as two independent states," he said.

The introduction of passport controls was previously agreed with the international community, which has recognised Kosovo's independence, Gorani said, so any possible outcry from Serbia's side should be sent to Washington and Brussels.

He also said that all who were born in Kosovo have the right to ask for Kosovo citizenship based on their birth certificate, which will then allow them to get an ID card and passport issued by Kosovo institutions.

Kosovo Albanian Arrested on Serbian Warrant

Serbian Deputy War Crimes Prosecutor Bruno Vekaric has announced that an ethnic Albanian accused of committing war crimes against civilians in Djakovica/Gjakova in 1999 was arrested at the Munich Airport in Germany.

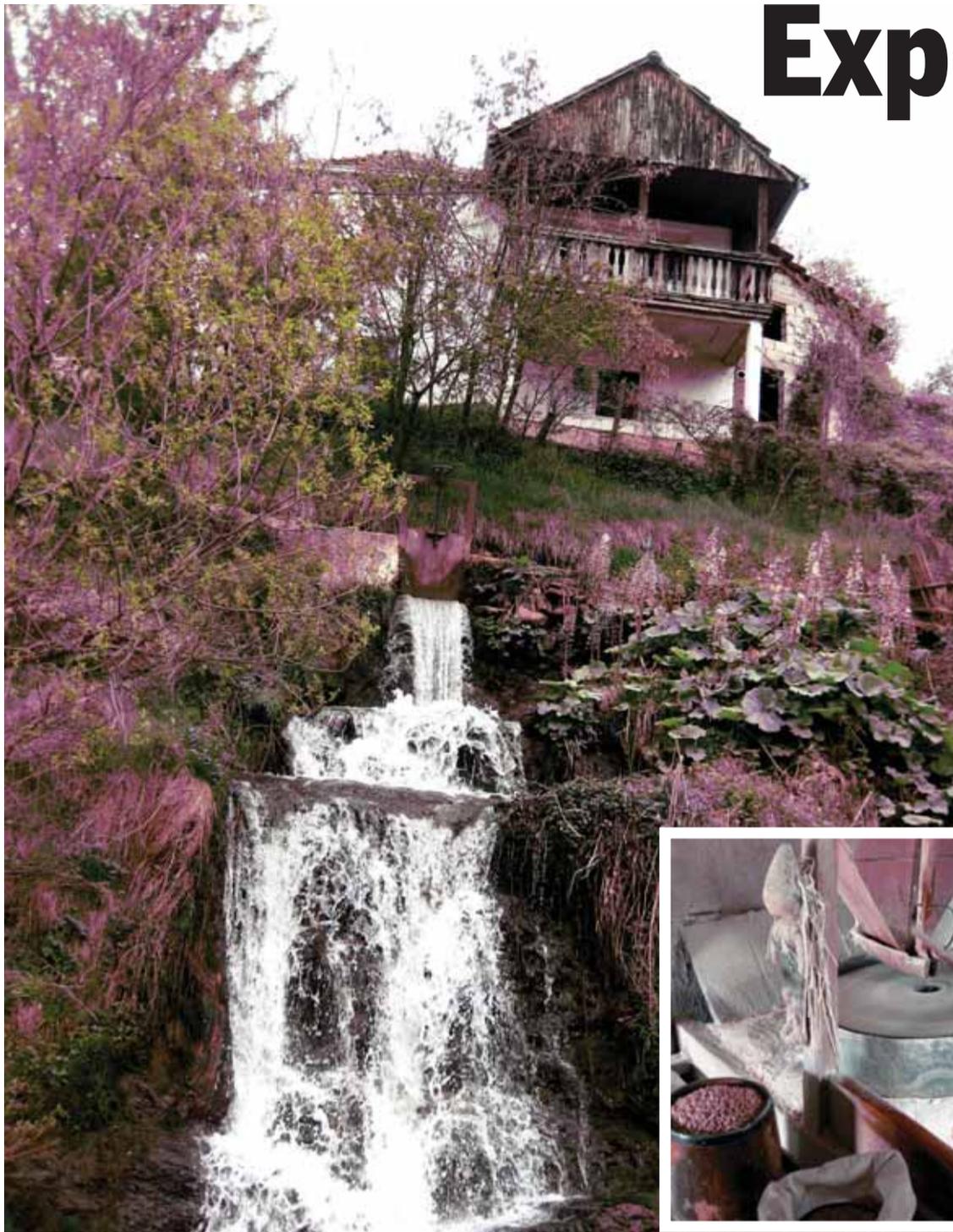
In an interview with broadcaster B92, Vekaric said that the suspect was arrested at the airport on Tuesday while he was traveling from Chicago to Tirana via Munich with his family.

"The procedure against the person detained in Germany was stopped, considering that he wasn't available to our law enforcement. We expect that an extradition procedure with the competent authorities in Germany will begin soon," the broadcaster quoted Vekaric as saying.

The man arrested is believed to have been a member of the infamous Anton Lekaj group, which was close to the former Kosovo PM Ramush Hardinaj and committed, according to the Serbian Prosecution, serious crimes against the civilian population. "Several persons were tortured and at least four murdered," Vekaric told B92.

In 2007 the Serbian Supreme Court confirmed the verdict of the Belgrade District Court War Crimes Trial Chamber, which sentenced Lekaj to 13 years' imprisonment for war crimes in Kosovo.

Explore Kosovo's



Nestled in the rolling hills near Kosovo's border with Macedonia, you'll find a series of charming villages of stone houses, grand churches and pristine nature

Given the manmade and natural beauty of south east Kosovo, the region should be one of the country's prime tourism destination.

Inexplicable, however, it rarely features in visitor's itineraries and very receives little attention.

While this is travesty for Kosovo's nascent tourism industry, the lack of day-trippers means that it is blissfully quiet and free of the scourge of rubbish.

Letnica is the jewel in the crown of the serene region surrounding the town of Viti.

It is relatively well know for its impressive modern church and Black Madonna Statue, which according to folklore can help childless couples become parents.

Each year on August 14 and 15, tens of thousands of people descend on this small village to

venerate the Madonna.

Interestingly, the two-day festival attracts both Muslims and Christians from across the region who take part in a series of masses and processions.

But the village is a fascinating place to visit at all times of the year due to one of the best collections of old stone houses in Kosovo and opportunities to walk the surrounding hills.

The Karadak Mountains, which mark the border, were once an important mining centre, attracting Saxon, Croat and Albanian miners from far and wide.

But many of the Croats left the hamlet in the early 90s to return to their homeland, leaving their beautiful stone houses empty.

In 2001, Letnica was settled in by Albanians from Macedonia who were escaping the conflict across the border.

But despite the new arrivals, the village still has the feel of having been bypassed by the ravages, and benefits, of the modern world.

You'll find a series of charming stone and Ottoman houses, mostly abandoned, dotted around the village.

The most impressive structure, apart from the church, is the water mill, which is still producing corn flour to this day.

The Croatian miller is not particularly friendly, but will show you around the mill and is happy to sell his produce.



Serbian Phone Service 'Restored in Most Areas'



By Bojana Barlovac

Serbian Telecommunications Minister Jasna Matic has said that the mobile and landline service of Serbian providers has been restored in most of the areas in Kosovo that were disconnected from the network last weekend.

In an interview with Beta news agency, Matic said that the restoration of service was of utmost importance.

Serbs in central Kosovo have been unable to use the service of Serbian-based mobile and fix phone networks for several days after equipment at some 20 base stations was destroyed by workers of Kosovo's Regulatory Body for Telecommunications and special units of the Kosovo police last week.

The incident caused a significant amount of controversy, and some 3,000 Kosovo Serbs in Gracanica staged a protest on Monday,



Serbian Telecommunications Minister Jasna Matic

calling on the international community to react and stop the Kosovo government from prohibiting them from using the phone services of Serbian mobile operators.

The Serbian government had vowed to do everything it could to help re-activate the networks, and called on the international community to help restore the service.

Kosovo's Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, TRA, said earlier this week that it had disabled 26 mobile masts in 22 locations across Kosovo.

In a statement, the TRA said: "Any deployment of telecommunication equipment without prior permission of the TRA will be considered illegal and will be treated as such."

The publicly owned Post Telecom of Kosovo said that it had supplied more than 2,500 sim cards for its Vala mobile phone operator to Serb enclaves for free and that it is working with Monaco Telecom, which provides the network, to offer affordable prices between Vala and Serbian numbers.



Catholic Villages



Bizarrely, at one end of the settlement you will find a large, shiny replica boat which serves as a restaurant. The contrast between this ugly modern structure and the rest of the town is startling.

Letnica is also a great place to take a gentle stroll across the green, rolling hills.

Follow the path which leads alongside the clean, gushing river, up hill to get great views of the church and the valley.

As well as the bizarre boat restaurant, there is also a fine

looking eatery, Trofta, in town which serves up trout. Unfortunately, this was closed on my visit.

However, the next door village of Stubbla e Eperme offers one of the best rural restaurants in Kosovo, Jozefi.

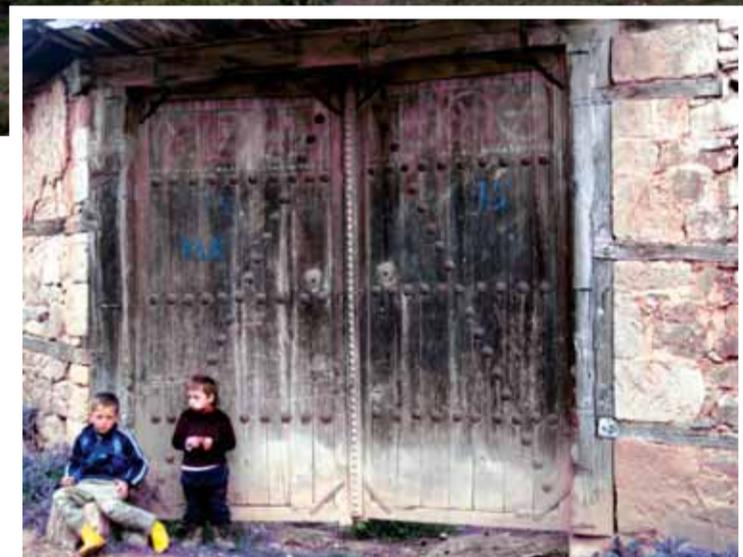
The building housing the eatery may be unappealing but the terrace is large and comfortable and provides superb views across the mountains.

The food and drink is also excellent. You'll find homemade

cheeses, plenty of delicious grilled meat and homemade raspberry and apricot Rakija for your delectation.

The village itself is very neat and well worth a wander. It is also worth noted that much of the infrastructure, including the main road, was paid for by Stubbla's diaspora.

If you want to walk off your meal, you can climb to the top of the hill behind the village which is emblazoned with a 'Saint Jozef' sign.



Kosovo: Police Fail to Apprehend Kurti



By Petrit Collaku

Kosovo police failed in an attempt to arrest Vetevendosje, or Self-Determination leader Albin Kurti last Monday, after trying to stop the vehicle in which Kurti was suspected to be riding.

Kurti, for whom an arrest warrant was issued last week, was attending the funeral in Prishtina of the well-known Kosovo political figure, Ali Aliu.

And on Tuesday, Judge Ferdinando Buatier de Mongeot of the EU rule-of-law mission in Kosovo adjourned the trial against the Vetevendosje leader Albin Kurti until June 21. The trial was postponed for the 11th time because Kurti did not appear in court despite an arrest order issued previously by presiding EULEX judge de Mongeot.

The attempt to arrest Kurti after the funeral failed after police



Vetevendosje leader Albin Kurti

asked the driver of the vehicle in which Kurti was suspected to be riding to stop but the driver managed to break through the police cordon.

At the same time, several Self-Determination activists held back the police as they attempted to stop the vehicle.

An arrest warrant was issued for Kurti on charges of participating in a crowd committing a criminal offence, participating in a group obstructing official persons from performing their duties and

calling for resistance.

The charges against him were raised in connection to the February 10, 2007 demonstrations in Prishtina against the Ahtisaari plan for the future of Kosovo in which two Vetevendosje activists were killed and dozens injured.

Kosovo police announced that at around 5:30 pm in Prishtina, police tried to stop a vehicle in which they suspected a suspect who faced an arrest warrant to be riding.

"The driver did not obey the order and in meantime hit policemen who were at the check point," the Kosovo police press release reads.

Police said that three policemen suffered injuries as a result of being hit by the vehicle.

"In an attempt to neutralise the aggressive actions [of Self-Determination activists] the police arrested seven of them and confiscated the vehicle that hit the policemen at the check point."

Police said that at the time of the arrest of the driver, Kurti escaped.

Self-determination activists claimed that police used all physical means, such as metal sticks and tear gas, hurting several activists.

"I want to say that such action at a funeral is not in the Albanian tradition," Liburn Aliu, son of the

late Ali Aliu and Self-Determination activist, said.

He added that the movement holds Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim Thaci, EULEX and the Internal Affairs Ministry responsible for what he called a violent action by Kosovo police.



Kosovo Police attempted to nab Albin Kurti after he a funeral but failed

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Puro Exclusivity

One of Prishtina's most exclusive restaurant does not fail to impress our reviewer



By Maneater

The country's line of 'blue blood' climbs to the high-end suburbs of Prishtina on a regular basis for what they have deemed the peak of dining exclusivity. The name of the venue is Puro Restaurant, positioned on a quiet hill in Veternik, overlooking the capital city.

The parking lot speaks for itself, with its series of corps diplomatique plated vehicles, and '000' government registrations. Beyond the small lot is a yet another small but lavish terrace, with white curtained doors leading to the dining area.

Floor to ceiling windows grace Puro's tall façade, lined with skillfully dressed dining tables. The rest of the space is sectioned off into a bar area, lounge and tables for larger, and usually more elite parties.

My dining partner and I had the 'privilege' of eating next to a current controversial minister and his clan, and a large group of lively Italian women enjoying the Sunday evening.

We opted for a booth-like table for our meal. A series of tropical plants, wine displays and intricate lighting craft an air of discretion

despite the spacious interior.

Our waiter promptly arrived at our table, welcomed us to the restaurant and took our drink order. Gratefully, his knowledge of the wine list was far more extensive than that of most Prishtina waiters, and we were quite satisfied with his Australian Cabernet Sauvignon recommendation.

After flipping through a classic menu divided into starters, pastas, main courses and seafood entrées, we decided on a sautéed mushroom salad, lamb kebab penne and roasted chicken with a special stuffing.

We were warned that our main entrées would take around 30 minutes, which wasn't such a big bother since our wine was well accompanied by a complimentary basket of fresh whole grain bread, sour cream and ajvar dipping sauces and lemon-scented carrot sticks.

Our salad arrived promptly, adorned with colourful accents of radicchio, spinach, green lettuce, carrots strings, tomato wedges, and surrounded by meaty slices of mushroom, seasoned and sautéed to perfection.

Beautifully plated and already seasoned with a touch of balsamic vinaigrette, the combined ingredients created an interesting palette of texture.



Puro is one of Prishtina's top restaurants

We spent the next half hour downing a couple more glasses of wine and mimicking the same hushed conversation as our neighbouring elite diners.

Our waiter passed by now and again to attend to any sort of request.

Before we knew it, our mains had arrived, again extravagantly plated and overly aromatic.

The penne was enveloped in a light yet tangy tomato sauce, with specks of soft onion and fresh basil leaves, providing an accurate balance for the very tender and well-seasoned ground-lamb, which gave an added character to the already harmonious dish.

The next entrée was also easy

on the eye, with a luscious cut of chicken breast, skin intact, and roasted to buttery perfection. The poultry dish included a layer of veggie-like pate stuffing, and was laid on a layer of soft spinach and chopped white onion - which I considered a tinge excessive, but obviously varies by personal preference.

A side of pureed potato and pastry-bagged into a delicate crown added an extra dimension to the dish.

After a hefty, yet very satisfying main course, we went with an order of champagne and mojito sorbets for dessert, for a light conclusion to our evening.

The flavours were slightly sub-

dued, but the dessert won points for its martini-glass presentation and downright refreshing attributes.

Be warned, Puro's services come at a slightly more inflated cost than its closest high-end competition, but is well worth the experience for those seeking a refined place to dine.



044 658 515

Off the Prishtina-Gracanica road (to the left just over you leave the Skopje highway) in Veternik

★★★★★	★★★★☆	★★★☆☆	★★☆☆☆	★☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Puro Genius	Beg Steal and Puro	Puro a Glass	Puro Down	Pretty Puro	Puro it Down the Drain

International Artists Showcase Work in Prishtina

Kosovo's Art Gallery is hosting two international artists, Soren Dahlgaard from Denmark and Bella Angora from Austria, in May



By Petrit Collaku

Dough and ink splatters aren't your typical medium for art, but both have been put to good use in two exhibitions at Kosovo's Art Gallery this month.

Soren Dahlgaard and Bella Angora are known for art installations in which they show harsh realities through unorthodox means.

Dahlgaard uses different types of French bread to illustrate his art in "The Dough Show".

The portraits include models with their head covered in heavy dough.

The display also includes Dahlgaard's video performance with only one character, the Dough Warrior, which is equipped entirely with baguettes.

The Dough Warrior has appeared in many of Dahlgaard's performances throughout his career.

Dahlgaard graduated from Slade School of Fine Arts, London.

His work is conceptual and is strongly linked to post-war Japanese performance art - especially the ground breaking Gutai group, the New York avant-garde movement of the 1960s and the land art from the 1970s.

He incorporates a type of understated slapstick in his work. This is mostly apparent in his performances and staged photograph series. Visually he draws from the aesthetics of minimalism.

Angora's project "Soft, Slow and Sweaty" presents drawings and video performances of an artist in which the person is covered by ink and slides on drawing boards.

Angora uses her personal experiences to articulate and question common desires. Her concern with universal themes such as intimate relations and the concomitant issues of love, loss and new life somehow always situates Angora in the middle of it all.

Both artists have had many exhibitions world wide.

The exhibition started on May 4 and ends on May 16. Kosovo's Art Gallery is next to the National Library.

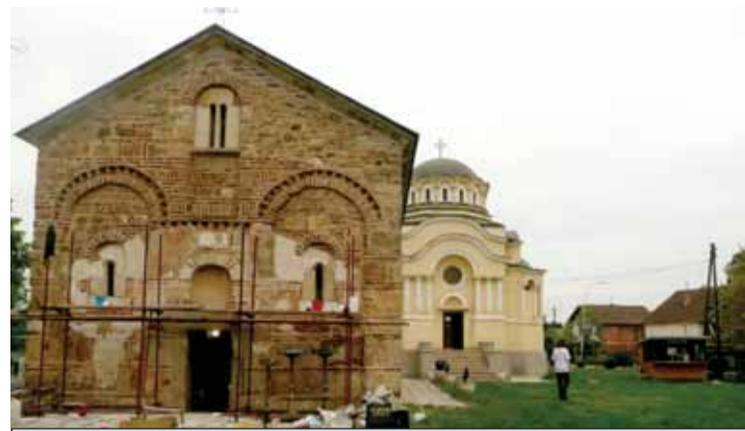




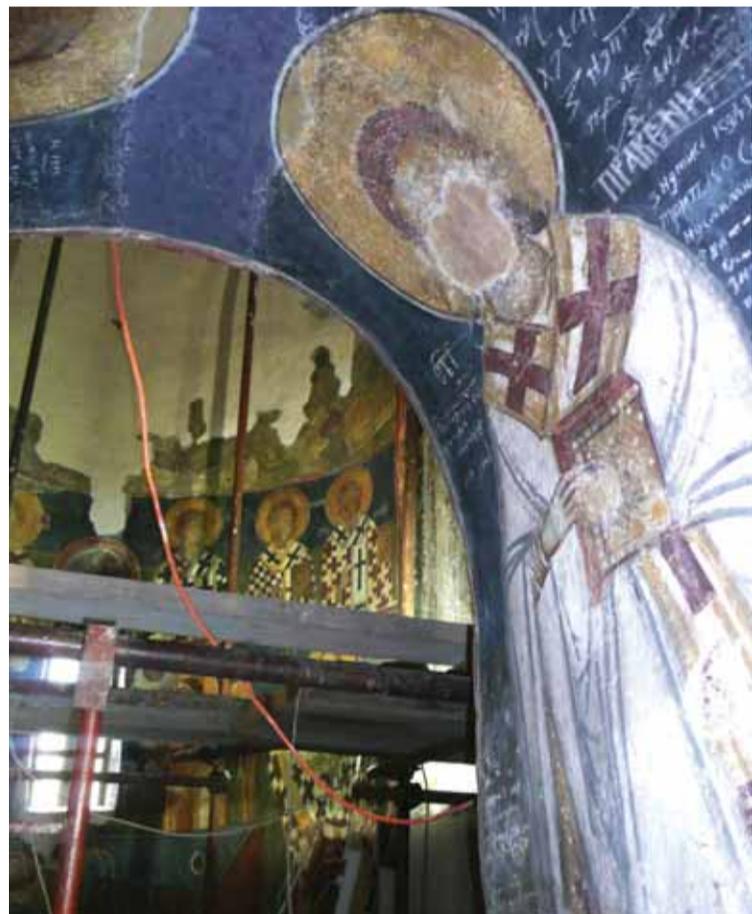
By Shega A'Mula
in Prishtina

Building Review:

Layers of History Revealed at Church of the Presentation of the Virgin



Lipjan's 14th and 20th Century churches



Serbia's Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments has been in Kosovo since last autumn contributing to the restoration of Lipjan's 14th Century Orthodox church, the Presentation of the Virgin.

With funding from various organisations, such as UNESCO, a group of art historians and wall-painting restorers from Belgrade are currently putting the finishing touches to a truly historic relic.

A detail visitors may be interesting in viewing at the moment is the original frescos alongside post-16th century paintings.

Damage to the building's walls has contributed to revealing the multiple layers of work completed over different periods.

A distinct form of church architecture emerged in the Balkans during the Byzantine Empire's control over the area in the 14th century, Aleksandra Davidov Temerinski, one of the visiting art historians from Belgrade, told Prishtina Insight.

In Kosovo, examples of that period are scattered in dozens of towns and villages to this day, with restoration efforts by state and international institutions guaran-

teeing their conservation and survival.

The Church of the Presentation of the Virgin was built in the early 14th Century by a group of noblemen still unknown by name.

However, the figure of one of the benefactors was included within one of the frescos, which cover all walls and columns of the church. These wall-to-wall frescos are found in many churches in Balkans, such as at the famous Gracanica church.

Temerinski said that the church was built on the foundations of an early Christian basilica, which was usual practice in those times.

The first time it suffered damage was in the 16th Century, with the spread of the Ottoman Empire across the Balkans.

"The Turks set the church on fire, and almost all of its frescos were damaged, especially along the upper parts," she she.

Although the church was repaired in that era, it encountered some additional damage during the 2004 March Riots.

This, combined with a lack of repair work over the centuries, made the case of restoration com-

pling.

"Unlike a monastery, it was only the village church, so anyone could come in and leave their mark," said Temerinski.

And by leaving a mark, she means literally, as many of the walls are covered in engravings, in roman and Cyrillic alphabets. These vary from names to dates as early as the 18th Century.

The grounds of the church are shared with another Orthodox Church, built in the 20th Century.

The new church was named after Russian patron saints St Florus and Laurus, and shares some equally appealing history.

"It is very uncommon for Serbian churches to be named after Russian patron saints, but this one is. Also, it is said that the icon of the Virgin in the church was seen with tears," said Temerinski.

Visitors are welcomed to stop by and view restoration efforts of the team, which are soon coming to an end, and the neighbouring St. Florus and Laurus.

Lipjan is 11km south of Prishtina off the main Skopje highway.

Bar Review:

Full House

Full House unexpectedly emerged on the nightlife scene only a couple of weeks ago, and has yet to dishearten the majority of its growing clientele.

Situated in the location formerly known as Flirt, the venue certainly has many memories to live up to, but also room to offer up even better encounters.

Although I expected a mass of hungry clubbers at the opening, the space was delicately taken up by well dressed parties, seated at tables, booths and VIP guest seating. Noticing acquaintances here and there, I realised that word of the opening had only been spread to what can be best described as the 'right people' for the concept at hand.

The space has gone through a mighty series of revamps, from its initial attempt at lounge décor, to its transformation into full-blown DJ booth and laser spinning vicinity.

A large dance floor sits in the shadow of weekly local and international DJ acts, accurately segregating those who want to get down to those who appreciate a private conversation and a drink instead.

Nevertheless, the most appreciated refurbishment feature by far is the new roomy female washroom located at the back of the venue, with head-to-toe mir-

ror and powder room, and separate toilet area - which is thankfully regularly maintained, and a huge improvement on the predecessor's notion of a washroom.

Bartenders are still on autopilot, and the music varies from house to hip-hop acts, depending on the night of the week.

With the fast-approaching summer season and the diaspora that comes with it, it's hard to tell whether Full House will be able to maintain its exclusivity.

Even so, its large outdoor area and strict door policy might be able to keep things in line.

This Friday's act is Dutch favourite Eelke Kleijn, critically acclaimed for his progressive sound and emerging talent.

*Full House
Located Behind the Youth and Sports Palace*



Shop Review:

The Department Store Arrives in Prishtina



QTL is one of central Prishtina's first department stores

Although small family businesses have been the main supplier of goods throughout downtown Prishtina for years, the corporate folks are coming to town, and are decking out a three-storey shopping center for consumers.

The location is smack in the middle of the centre, above Maxi Supermarket on Rr Rexhep Luci, and the name is Lesna Shopping Center.

The centre is divided into three shopping areas, the first of which includes formal men's apparel, such as moderately priced shirts and ties, and a selection of quality leather footwear for both sexes, varying from business casual to stilettos. Prices can reach well over the 100 euro mark.

The top level is home to a variety of boutiques, ranging from a Levi's store to

Scandinavian favourite Jack and Jones, English sports brand Trespass, and women's lingerie expert Lisca.

The space is small, but also includes local Italian Basilico's second location, with a more coffee shop flavour of sandwiches and salads, and a great view of the busy street.

But it is the underground level which has the greatest potential, with its emphasis on all departments of home décor - bedding, bathrooms, cookware, glassware kitchen appliances, cutlery, fine dining, storage and table linens.

What's impressive is that the selection is wide, with an array of prepackaged sets and loses items.

The gift possibilities are also endless.



Tapping Claims Put Spotlight on Macedonia's Secret Police

Revelations that the secret police have been following and eavesdropping on prosecutors are raising concern about the whether the service is above the law.



By Sase Dimovski

Leaked records of the secret services following Macedonia's chief public prosecutor and tapping the phone calls of other prosecutors have raised fresh questions about whether the secret police are above the law.

The weekly magazine Fokus published records of alleged police surveillance of Chief Public Prosecutor Ljupco Svr govski on April 23. The transcripts detailed his movements in the southern resort town of Ohrid in July 2009 and in locations in Skopje.

The records include details about his movements, meetings and social events he attended.

"I don't know who followed me but this is unacceptable," Svr govski told Balkan Insight after the magazine published the records. "I do not believe that this was done by the [regular] police... [but] there might be some other services involved," he added.

The weekly also published transcripts of police records, showing they had eavesdropped on Macedonia's organised crime prosecutor, Jovan Ilievski, in November 2006, months after the ruling VMRO DPMNE party took power. The phone of Ketii Kamceva, a prosecutor in the border town of Gevgelija was tapped in the same period.

By law, police may only wiretap and carry out surveillance when they are in possession of a warrant from a prosecutor or investigative judge.

Observers have speculated about whether the tapping was aimed at discovering criminal elements in the work of the prosecutor or whether the real purpose was less defensible.

Chief Prosecutor Svr govski has confirmed that the recorded meetings took place, one of which was with tobacco exporter Blagoja Ignjatovski. Svr govski said he had done nothing wrong but did not feel comfortable knowing he was being followed.

The records show the prosecutors Ilievski and Kamceva were tapped by the Directorate for Counter Intelligence, UBK in relation to a case of organized crime, concerning cigarette smuggling from Greece to Kosovo via Macedonia in 2006.

The main subject of the UBK's eavesdropping was Kamceva, who on November 8, 2006 became involved in a case involving a truck that was discovered transporting 35,000 cartons of Marlboro cigarettes to Kosovo. The goods had been declared as "Chinese toys".

Gevgelija lies on the southern border with Greece, where the truck was seized, and Kamceva was in charge of determining whether the truck driver should be detained.

That day, the secret police allegedly intercepted Kamceva's phone calls with Jovan Ilievski, with customs inspectors working on cigarette trafficking and the head of Gevgelija office of the UBK, Aco Petrov.

Ilievski confirmed that the telephone conversation took place. "I talked to prosecutor Kamceva about that case, as the records show," Ilievski told Fokus.



A wiretap scandal has erupted Macedonia, raising questions about the actions of prosecutors

"I told her by phone to propose detention for the truck driver because the department for combating organised crime had information that this was a case of organised trafficking of cigarettes."

Eavesdropping on his phone call was illegal, however, he added, because police are not allowed to wiretap prosecutors.

Responding to the furore generated by the magazine's revelations, the interior ministry spokesman, Ivo Kotevski, on April 22 said that the police had not received any complaints from the prosecutors about being wiretapped and the ministry could only act on official complaints.

Parliament has a commission for monitoring the work of the UBK and probing abuses. But both its former and current heads complain they lacked effective tools to control the UBK.

In August 2006, after it came to power, the VMRO DPMNE-led government appointed new heads to both the regular and secret police. Saso Mijalkov, a relative of Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, came in as head of the secret police.

Esad Rahic, former head of the parliamentary commission from 2006 to 2008, told Prishtina Insight that Macedonia's secret services appeared to answer to no one.

"One might ask whether the secret police is above the [political] parties, and is capable of controlling them and shaping them for its own purposes," Rahic said.

He said that when he had headed the body, requests to meet the head of the UBK, Saso Mijalkov, who is still in office, were routinely rejected. The excuse was always that he was too busy.

"I have the impression that the Minister of Interior has less power than the head of the secret police," Rahic said.

"With the rights he already enjoys, and with the new law that is being proposed, the head of this service could become 'a state in a state'" he added.

A proposed law foresees the merger of the three intelligence agencies - The intelligence Agency, the UBK, and the Military Intelligence Agency - into one institution.

"Even now he's probably the most powerful man in the country but then he would become untouchable," Rahic continued.

Rahic said that the head of UBK was always "a political figure with a high rank in the party from which he has

come.

"Saso Mijalkov is first cousin to the Prime Minister and has a high position in VMRO DPMNE," he noted.

Pavle Trajanov, former police minister and current member of the commission monitoring the UBK, told Prishtina Insight that the commission functioned only on paper. "In practice it has not controlled the work of the secret services," Trajanov said.

"In our 20 years of political pluralism, the secret services have never expressed any readiness to be open before the commission," he added.

"We lack efficient methodology to control the secret police's work," he continued. "All the commission does is to revise reports prepared by the secret services themselves, and the majority of legislators coming from the ruling parties always approve them.

"This is why the commission has never revealed any human rights violations through misuse of the surveillance and tapping system."

This is not the first phone-tapping affair that has suggested that the secret police take little notice of the law.

In 2003, charges were filed against Dosta Dimovska, then minister of interior, and Aleksandar Cvetkov, head of the sector in the UBK in charge of communication control, after it was revealed that they had ordered the eavesdropping of 55 politicians, journalists and public figures in 2000.

They included Nikola Gruevski, then a minister, and his cousin Saso Mijalkov, now director of the UBK, even though they belonged to the party whose minister, Dosta Dimovska, had ordered the eavesdropping.

The affair never came before the courts because the then president, Boris Trajkovski, pardoned Dimovska and Cvetkov. However, the wiretapped journalists sued the state and each received 4,000 euro in compensation.

Political parties are also widely believed to be engaged in illegal tapping. Two years ago, the head of New Social Democratic Party, Tito Petkovski, claimed both main parties tapped his party. This prompted the establishment of a separate commission in parliament, which also produced no results.

The commission "did nothing" Petkovski told Prishtina Insight. "I think they met once only to determine the methodology of their work and that was it," he said. "With the current law there is no man in the country who can protect his privacy."

News in Brief

Bosnia Calls Elections for October 3

Bosnians will head to the polls on October 3 in what has been described as a crucial post-war general election, with the outcome likely determining whether the country will move forward on its EU path or remain stuck in political deadlock.

Bosnia's central electoral commission decided on Wednesday that the election will be held on Sunday, October 3, while the official pre-election campaign is to start one month prior to that.

However, the ruling ethnic leaders began heightening their rhetoric months ago, with Serbs threatening Bosnia's disintegration, Croats calling for the country to be divided further along ethnic lines and Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims) insisting on greater centralization.

Albania Opposition Hunger Strike, Protests Continue

Nearly two dozen MPs from the opposition Socialist Party along with 180 of their supporters, are continuing their hunger strike in the Albanian capital Tirana, pushing authorities to hold a recount of the country's parliamentary election ballots.

The strikers set up a tent on Saturday in front of the office of Prime Minister Sali Berisha in Tirana's Deshmoret e Kombit Blvd., the city's main thoroughway, and have barricaded themselves inside.

Meanwhile a rally was held outside the tent by opposition leaders on Monday evening, a protest that Socialist leaders say will be a daily occurrence until the government fulfils their request.

Speaking in front of his supporters, Socialist leader Edi Rama lashed out at what he called government-controlled media for slander against the strikers.

The Socialists and their smaller political allies on the left have informed the police that they intend to protest for an entire month. The Monday protest follows a rally of tens of thousands of opposition supporters on Friday who came from all over the country.

Berisha and Rama have been locked in a stalemate over the results of the June 28, 2009 parliamentary elections, which Berisha's party narrowly won.

The Socialists have boycotted parliament since the new session began in September, claiming that the government's alleged fraud was to blame for their electoral loss.

They have conditioned their full participation in parliament on a recount of the electoral ballots of the parliamentary poll.

Serbia: Motorway Construction Set for Summer

The Serbian minister for the National Investment Plan has said that construction of the first section of the motorway connecting Belgrade to the Adriatic Sea is set to start this summer, while construction of the entire motorway should be finished by 2015.

In an interview for Montenegrin daily Vijesti, Verica Kalanovic said that construction of the motorway was a strategic priority for Serbia and that there was a detailed plan for its construction. The plan was drafted by the National Council for Infrastructure, which is the country's highest body dealing with infrastructure, and is chaired by the country's president, Kalanovic explained.

"Given the importance [of the construction], the motorway should be finished by 2015. We have an obligation to the citizens and we have no right to delay the implementation of the project, which responds to [the citizens'] long-standing needs and desires, but is also the prerequisite for rapid economic development," the daily quoted the minister as saying.

Bridging the Balkans Information Gap



By Nick Wood

In March 2004, amid the worst violence in Kosovo since the end of the war I remember a conversation with a senior spokesperson in the UN mission here. The mission, she explained, was taken completely by surprise, as thousands of youths roamed the streets burning UN cars and besieging Serbs in their homes.

The extent of the violence was shocking, but failure of the UN or NATO forces to foresee this kind of confrontation was baffling, and even more so in the case of someone who apparently lived side by side with people here.

The growing frustration of the ethnic Albanian population over status seemed obvious to me and had the potential to severely impact the Serbian community.

At the time I had just moved from Kosovo to Slovenia, and the drowning of the Albanian boys in the River Ibar and announcement of demonstrations the following day in Mitrovica was cause enough to book a plane ticket back to Prishtina. By the time I landed the riots were taking place across the province.

The UN's spokeswoman's surprise seemed symptomatic of the gap between policy makers, international bureaucrats, and a region they wielded enormous power over, and it planted the seeds of an idea. How, I wondered perhaps idealistically, could you give her and others like her a glimpse of reality.

This is now my full time occupation. For the last six months I have been bringing groups to Kosovo on study tours. They have included politicians, journalists, and a group of international civil servants studying peacekeeping.

Soon we will have tours in Bosnia, Turkey, Northern Ireland and Georgia. There are also plans for visits to Ethiopia, Lebanon and Cyprus. The objective in all these trips is to give the participants a first hand political insight into a region, and challenge people's preconceptions.

In an age where foreign correspondents are being replaced by user-generated content and blogs, first hand experience of foreign policy issues is a premium. Our groups have access to policy makers and international officials, and perhaps more importantly spend a lot of time getting their boots dirty and looking at people's everyday problems.

In Kosovo we start in a village on the border with Macedonia, looking at where people get their income from, how many have left Kosovo and live abroad, what are the state of local services, and what are their hopes for future.

Visitors on our tours have been struck by how these issues – employment, health, education, and complaints about corruption – dominate. Kosovo's disputed status while newsworthy is a secondary concern for most ordinary people.

In Bosnia the gaps between perception and reality are perhaps even starker.

"New Fears of Ethnic Conflict" was the headline above one of my New York Times colleague's articles. There have been similar warnings of conflict in Foreign Policy. But is Bosnia really on the verge of another war?

Milorad Dodik's threats of secession are menacing, and there's no doubt Bosnia need constitutional reforms.

Travel to Bosnia and you will find the suggestion that Bosnians are on the verge of taking up arms against each other is met with dismissals. More worrying for most is the looming budgetary crisis. And amid all of this Bosnia is close to completing all the legal and technical measures required for visa free travel in the EU – as the European

Stability Initiative recently pointed out – a significant achievement. So the picture in Bosnia is more complex than headlines suggest.

I understand how editors (and some academics too) like to revive old clichés about conflict in this region – but it is misleading and sometimes dangerous.

So it was with some pleasure I saw the reaction of Spanish foreign editors to Prishtina after a visit last November – they gave gritty overviews of a state burdened by severe economic problems, but one that was also vibrant, dynamic, and with an incredible night life to boot – "bars, cafes and restaurants in design and style that have nothing to envy to London and Berlin" wrote Luis Prados the editor of El Pais.

There are dangers of different kind with this concept. As in journalism, there is a risk of voyeurism or "news porn" if you like (Take for example the photojournalism workshop held in Haiti shortly after the earthquake). Study visits should not be a vehicle for modern battlefield tours, or trips through refugee camps and poverty stricken slums unless there is a direct benefit for the people affected.

Ultimately I know Political Tours can not shake up foreign policy in the Balkans or anywhere else.

In fact it is not our job to advocate one particular policy or another, but I hope we can bridge some gaps between some politicians' understanding of region and reality. More generally we should contribute to a more informed and nuanced view of foreign affairs.

Nick Wood was the New York Times correspondent for the Balkans between 2003 and 2008. He now runs Political Tours, a tour company that takes groups to study foreign policy issues in post conflict and developing nations.

www.politicaltours.com

Dear Teta Mia...



Teta Mia solves your problems

Why is everybody smiling?
Gezim, Prishtina

Ah, Gezim – it's true. There's something in the air; and half of Prishtina will need physiotherapy for jaw ache, such are the ear-to-ear grins gracing our streets and cafes.

The April showers are over, and Kosovo has turned a lush green. Summer arrived abruptly, feeding us with much needed vitamin D to boost our immune systems battered by the long winter. Before the sun reaches its blistering peak, we can sip our macchiatos and purr in the warming morning sun.

Summer officially started at a certain illustrious cocktail party last Wednesday. Surreptitious toasts "to justice" and ambassadorial skips brightened the brewing storm, as Europeans stretched their orbicularis oculi muscles into glorious Duchenne smiles.

The Cheshire Cat was similarly grinning late that night, but his smile used only the zygomatic major muscle, and there was no lightness round his eyes.

Odd that a smile has become a form of dissent in the stiflingly humourless world of Kosovar politics. But encouraging that the number of dissenters is growing by the day, boosted by EULEX's renewed vigour and tempered only by apprehension that this may be temporary.

Smiling is good for you ergo, dissent is healthy.

There are other beams of hope too, especially this weekend. The citizens of that proud city of Mitrovica are gearing up to celebrate Europe Day with a mass clean-up-the-city operation on both sides of the river on Sunday (meet at Charlie's at 10am, wearing something green!); the Mitrovica Youth Advisory Council is running a series of debates among high school students in the south on Saturday; and Aktiv NGO is putting on a two-day music festival in the north on Friday and Saturday (www.ngoaktiv.org). Gjakova will see cyclists pumping their calf muscles for 20km in honour of Europe Day on Saturday (meet in front of Hotel Pashtrik at 11am)

The European Commission is drafting its Progress Report as I write, tracking Kosovo's efforts to align itself with EU standards. The celebrations this weekend will be fun and japes for those involved, but we should also take a moment to think of the staff of newly formed Ministry for European Integration and hope the line ministries exert all necessary efforts to assist this super-important ministry in reaching towards EU accession.

EU membership is a powerful motivator for change here in Kosovo, but to be anything more than a pipedream, the government, officials, media, civil society and citizens alike will need to work extremely hard. Data protection, statistics collation and analysis, serious anti-corruption results, empowerment of civil servants to do their jobs without political interference, stopping the practice of single-source tenders for government procurement, strengthening of the entire judiciary... All these were highlighted as essential for maintaining Kosovo's European perspective in the EC's 2009 Progress Report.

And let's use this positive energy from the sunlight, from citizens' activism, from EULEX's new momentum, to get the trains running! Let's get the freight off the roads and onto the rails. Picnic in Peja, anyone? Shopping in Skopje? Beer in Belgrade? At the moment, it's not really practical to hop on a lovely train, but if it were, I would need that physiotherapist too.

So, Gezim, keep smiling. Maybe it will be alright.

Outside In

Kosovo's British Lesson: Concentrate on policy, cut the rubbish



By Kreshnik Hoxha

As this edition of Prishtina Insight goes to print, the preliminary results of the British general election will be coming through.

A four-week intense election campaign has shown that the 5pm tea-drinkers believe Labour deserves defeat, the Conservatives don't deserve victory and the Liberal Democrats are messing up the statistics by blowing a fresh breath of air into the British political dynamics.

The introduction of the American style televised election debates has demonstrated the level of scrutiny the British voters go into to decide who moves to 10 Downing Street on Friday, May 7.

Emotional connections with political figures and sympathy towards their past endeavours just don't sell, because this is not Kosovo.

What sells are lucid answers to the dilemmas facing the British society today. Economy, immigration, healthcare reform, defence, EU and the Euro are the topics that have been drilling the Labour leader, Gordon Brown, Conservative leader, David Cameron, and the Liberal Democrat leader

Nick Clegg.

Why so harshly? Because it is the policies of these three men on these important issues that will have a direct impact on the life of Britons. And this is where Kosovo needs lecturing.

A lawyer in Decan respects Ramush Haradinaj for what he went through in The Hague and votes for AAK, while a father from Inverness wouldn't consider David Cameron's grief when he lost his son when voting. He would be keen to know how Mr Cameron is going to get the UK out of the recession. Because it is this lawyer that is struggling to pay the electricity bills.

An engineer in Rahovec is obsessed with Hashim Thaci and orders the rest of his family to vote PDK, while an engineer in Bristol has got no time to empathise with Gordon Brown's unpopularity over his recent 'bigoted gaffe'.

Instead, he would want to hear what Mr Brown is going to do about high levels of immigration which, he feels, have left three of this engineer's children unemployed because the 'foreigners' have grabbed the jobs.

A doctor in Podujeve praises the figure of Ibrahim Rugova and hence votes LDK until apocalypse kicks in, but a doctor in Manchester would want to talk to Nick Clegg about his take on UK's position in the EU. It is his income tax that funds international

law enforcement missions such as EULEX in Kosovo. And if these missions prove to be sluggish, the Mancunian lawyer will want accountability.

Democratic elections enable the voters to reward or punish incumbent decision makers and hence bring a verdict on the past.

After thirteen years of Labour leadership in the UK, the Brits are contemplating whether another five years of Gordon Brown are bearable, whether David Cameron is a dodgy tact and whether giving Nick Clegg a chance might mean a wasted vote.

But, it's a blurry picture in Kosovo. After just under eleven years since the end of the war, we continue to actively moan about corruption and unemployment.

But, come polling day, we still cast the ballot in such way that ensures another four years of moaning on the same issues.

If elections are a means of punishing or rewarding politicians for what has been delivered, then in Kosovo we reward stagnation. And we will continue to do so until an alternative policy making is served to us.

Today, the Liberal Democrats in the UK are getting ever stronger in challenging the status quo of a two-party system. If Nick Clegg is doing it now in the UK, someone needs to do it in Kosovo's general elections next year.

That's if we can convince people to vote based on policies rather than tradition.

Youth Initiative for Human Rights: Broadening Horizons



By Shengjyl Osmani

“Travel to Europe was a dream for me, and I believe that it is for all my peers,” said Granit Shala, a participant in Youth Initiative for Human Rights’ Travel to Europe 2009 programme. “A dream thanks to an opportunity that not many people have, but for me it became a reality,” he added.

Established in 2004 in Kosovo, Youth Initiative for Human Right, YIHR, attempts to break the prejudices of post-war young people within the Balkan region.

While Kosovo’s young cannot usually travel to most of Europe without completing the arduous and often fruitless process of applying for a visa, YIHR gives them the opportunity to see the Old Continent through the programme Travel to Europe.

The study trips are used to explore the culture and infrastructure of Europe’s great capitals. Since 2007, YIHR has been providing visas, InterRail train tickets, health insurance and a ride up to the first European starting point, Berlin, from where the one month journey awaits Kosovo students.

“All those European cities, historic monuments, the different cultures are not for me known or seen only through the TV screen now,” said Granit.

YIHR is a regional organisation with offices in Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo, including three local

offices in Kragujevac, Nis and Novi Sad, proving programmes on capacity building, advocacy empowerment and youth participation.

Raba Gjoshi, programme coordinator of the YIHR office in Kosovo, told Prishtina Insight that this programme will take place this year, and the application process will start in mid June.

YIHR also runs a “Visiting Programme”. Originally an exchange programme for journalists between Serbia and Kosovo, it has latterly developed into a broader exchange programme for young people.

“To date 600 young people have participated in the programme, utilising it for personal growth and professional networking,” added Ms Gjoshi. “The programme organises at least two visits per month, from Serbia to Prishtina and Kosovo to Belgrade.

“Visits last for three days and each visiting group consists of up to four young people. But, for the moment, the programme is paused because of technical barriers for Kosovo citizens crossing the Serbian borders. The YIHR office in Belgrade is in the process of signing an agreement with the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Serbia to let the young people cross the border without any problem. Besart Lumi, a participant on the ‘Visiting Programme’ to Belgrade, said: “As this was the first time that I crossed the border to go to the Serbian side, it’s worth mentioning the rude and abusive behaviour of the border policeman. However, when we arrived in Belgrade the



warm welcome from YIHR representatives relaxed me.”

YIHR also tries to break the barriers of young people inside Kosovo.

“By taking up an internship opportunity in the YIHR office, many young people found themselves in working positions, met new people and expanded their knowledge on youth and human rights issues. For example, a Serbian girl, after finishing her internship at our office was offered a job in the government,” claimed Ms Gjoshi.

The newest programme by YIHR is the Internship Programme offered to law and political science students, to spend six months at the International Court Tribunal of Former Yugoslavia, ICTY, in The Hague.

“This year, for the first time, Kosovo as well was included in the regional Internship Programme for students to work at the ICTY for six months,” added Ms Gjoshi. Two students have been selected from

Kosovo.

Part of YIHR’s human rights education programme has been the ‘Human Rights Schools’ organised each year for young people of 18 to 25 years, which promotes human rights through games and a multi-ethnic group of young people living in Kosovo.

Through the Initiative Foundation, YIHR offers a small grants programme in supporting smaller organisations in promoting human rights and youth activities.

“We offer \$500 to small organisations, and in 2009 we gave this amount to 30 organisations,” added Ms Gjoshi.

YIHR also monitors and reports on different laws dealing with the implementation of anti-discrimination law and laws on access to public information, and recently run a campaign on promoting communities’ rights.

For more information visit
http://www.yihr.org/office_kosovo.php

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Prishtina Diary

Peppermint Club:

Friday, May 7, 2010,
Aragona Band, starting from 11 pm
Saturday, May 8, 2010,
DJ LEG OFF, house music, starting from 11 pm

Filikaqa:

Monday, May 10, 2010,
JAZZAIR'T (Xhafa e Ilir Bajri)
Saturday, May 15, 2010
DJ Flow and VLN
Saturday, May 29, 2010 00
GENTI & ORCHID TRIP
Fridays from 10 pm,
Filikaqa Karaoke. For reservations call 044 788 748

Full House:

Friday, May 7, 2010,
DJ Eelke Kleijn from Netherlands, starting from 10 pm

DJ Eelke Kleijn is one of the best DJ's in Europe, played gigs in many European countries as well as Lebanon, Jordan, the United States, Russia, Ukraine, Mexico, Argentina and Brazil. His monthly 2-hour radio show and podcast "Outside the Box", broadcasted on a variety of online and FM stations, gives him the opportunity to showcase his sound worldwide. Entry fee: Male 4.99/Female 2.99 http://www.eelkekleijn.nl/blog/?page_id=3

Saturday, May 8, 2010,
Hip Hop music, from 10 pm

Pamon on decks ft. ErgeNR & Mr. DAS on mic.
For reservations call Dren Shala 049 / 044 155 614

Job Fair 2010

Thursday, May 13, 2010, from 10 am to 4 pm
Location: Youth Centre (in front of Red Hall)
The American Chamber of Commerce is holding the seventh annual Job Fair. This is an excellent opportunity for you to identify companies who are looking to give employment or internship opportunities.

212 Jazz Club:

Saturday, May 8, 2010, from 10 pm, R&B 80's



Exit Festival 2010

Exit has started early this year, with concerts having started on May 4. Visit www.exitfest.org for the list of so far announced exciting performers coming to Petrovaradin fortress this year. Just as previously, EXIT fans can use answerme@exitfest.org email address, and if you want to subscribe to the newsletter please follow this link http://www.myexit.org/newsletter/prijava_eng.

Music Festival Active Live 01, Mitrovica
Programme for May 7 and 8, 2010 www.ngoaktiv.org

May 7, 2010, at 9pm, Club Viva Resident DJs from Kosovo
DJ Wood - Mitrovica, Kosovo
DJ Batrich - Mitrovica, Kosovo
DJ Pavicevic Dejan - Mitrovica, Kosovo
DJ Chella - Mitrovica, Kosovo
DJ Marko - Mitrovica, Kosovo
DJ Flekica - Mitrovica, Kosovo
*special guest

May 8, 2010, at 9pm, Club Viva Live performance of local Mitrovica bands
Cold Shots - Mitrovica, Kosovo
Dark Sky - Mitrovica, Kosovo
Krvna Grupa - Mitrovica, Kosovo
Breakdown - Mitrovica, Kosovo
Lazy Band - Mitrovica, Kosovo
Hosenfefer - Mitrovica, Kosovo
And special guest Kanda, Kodza i Nebojsa from Belgrade

Dodona Theatre V-Day Performance Saturday, May 8, 2010 at 7.30pm Eve Ensler's A Memory a Monologue, a Rent, and a Prayer

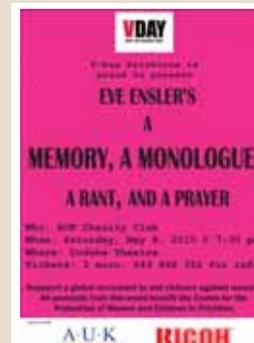
V-Day is a global movement to end violence against women and girls that raises funds and awareness through benefit productions of Playwright/Founder Eve Ensler's award winning play The Vagina Monologues and other artistic works.

Every euro collected at the performance will be awarded to the

Center for the Protection of Women and Children in Prishtina.

The series of Monologues will be performed in English, revealing true stories of violence against women and girls.

Come and enjoy the first ever A Memory, a Monologue, A Rant and A Prayer performance in Prishtina and contribute to protecting our women.



ABC Cinema

ABC Cinema continues to screen the movies Cloudy Meat Balls, at 5 pm, and the movie Let the Ex-Games Begin at 10 pm. Since May 4, ABC Cinema has been showing the film Yuri's Day by Kirill Serebrennikov, about a famous opera singer who visits the city of Jurijev.

The movie Libertas, a drama on the repression of creativity, was an official Croatian candidate for AMPAS Film Award 2006 and will be screened broadcasted on May 11, and the movie Robin Hood, a film by Ridley Scott the director of Gladiator, will start on May 14, 2010.

For ticket reservations and further information visit www.kinoabc.com, or call 038 243 117



Prishtina International Half-Marathon, May 9, 2010 starting from 10 am

The Athletic Federation of Kosovo, Sports Department and Directory of Sport and Youth are holding the tenth Prishtina International Half-Marathon.

This run will again promote the values of peace, co-existence and excellence in sports. In 2009, 658

runners of many nations enjoyed the event.

This year, the organisers hope that the positive experiences of last year's will motivate even more athletes will take part this event.

For more information visit www.prmaraton.com, or contact maratonpr@yahoo.com.

Clean Up Mitrovica

Sunday, May 9, 2010, from 10am to 4 pm

To celebrate Europe Day and to promote the forthcoming Inaugural Conference of the Forum for Cities in Transition, to be held in Mitrovica in the last week of May, this proud and glorious city will be given a spring clean.

From 10am to 4pm on Sunday, May 9, an ever-expanding team of volunteers will assemble in Mitrovica wearing old clothes and brimming with enthusiasm to get our hands dirty and pick up all the litter in the centre of the city, on both sides of

the river. Meet at Charlie's cafe by the Mother Teresa statue just south of the Main Bridge at 10am to receive your rubber gloves and bin liners.

Those who are comfortable to do so will head across the bridge and work with our team of north-Mitrovica volunteers run by the Centre for Civil Society Development; those who prefer to stay on the south side will work with our team of south-Mitrovica volunteers run by Community-Building Mitrovica.

As a reward for your efforts, they'll treat you to burek and Mitrovica's

If you can make it, email Inge Baanders at inge.baanders@gmail.com.

Spray:

Friday, May 7, 2010,
from 11 pm, Utility and Likatek
Mum says aliens don't exist.

Utility and Likatek need no introduction, both veterans in the Kosovar techno scene have been turning heads locally and internationally

Armed with the best underground tunes, there's no other or better option than to attend at Spray club. So put your anti-gravity shoes on, and join in this intergalactic night of mayhem, at your favorite club on planet earth.

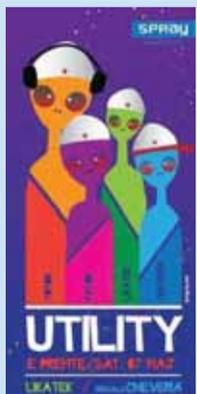
Entrance: 2 Euro

For more information, visit Spray's profile on Facebook.

Saturday, May 8, 2010 from 11 pm at Spray

Hip Hop and DJ Goce

Entrance: Women 2 euro, Men 3 euro

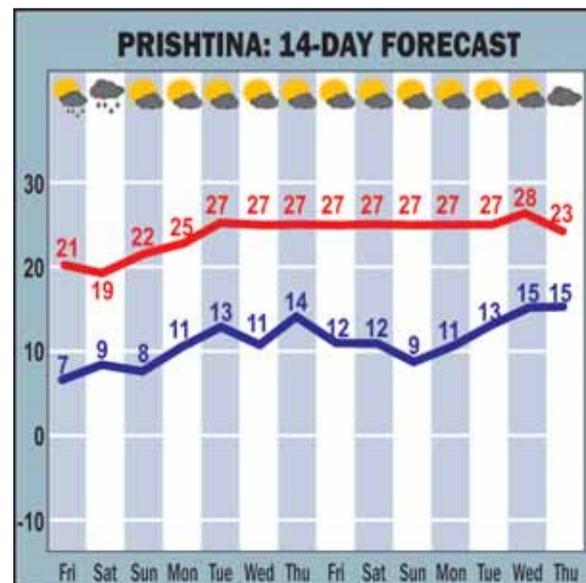


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