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Thousands of Kosovars Face Repatriation

The case of nine-year-old twins, returned to Kosovo by Austrian Police on Wednesday, highlights the plight of thousands of families being thrown out of Western Europe.

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Lobby Contract Breaks Kosovo Law on Tenders

Prishtina's decision to take on the top US firm Patton Boggs, without considering rival bids, flouts Kosovo's own laws on tendering.

By Lawrence Marzouk and Petrit Collaku

Kosovo's government has awarded a lobbying contract worth 600,000 euro a year without a tender process, Prishtina Insight has discovered.

The decision to hand the one-year lucrative deal to one of Washington's top lobby firm, Patton Boggs, appears blatantly to breach the law on public procurement.

By law, the Office of the Prime Minister, which is leading the process, should have gained permission from the Public Procurement Agency, PPA, before awarding any such deal.

As it had decided to negotiate

the price with only one firm, the Office of the Prime Minister should have applied to the PPA with documents demonstrating why only one firm could supply the services.

Only then, according to law, would the government have been allowed to begin negotiations with a specific lobby company.

On October 5, the government issued a decision that it was allocating the 50,000-euro-a-month contract to Patton Boggs to "promote and protect the interests of the institutions of the Republic of Kosovo abroad".

The head of the PPA, Mursel Racaj, told Prishtina Insight that he was not aware the deal had been awarded. "I don't have any

information on this case," he told Prishtina Insight. "I don't recall anything about this particular contract."

Racaj was unable to identify any documents in his agency relating to the deal, while confirming that the PPA needed first to agree to any awards of negotiated contracts.

Government spokesman Memli Krasniqi told Prishtina Insight on Tuesday that the government was allowed to use a "single source" tender process, in which only one company is allowed to bid, and that the deal would be signed "in days".

He maintained that the deal was good news for Kosovo. "This is what we need as a country and as a government," he said.

Asked whether the government had followed due process before agreeing to the deal, he advised Prishtina Insight to contact the legal department of the Ministry of Economy and Finance, saying they were "responsible for funding the project".

The head of the legal office at the Ministry of Economy, Lulezim Rafuna, then told Prishtina Insight to contact the legal office of the Prime Minister's office. "We don't have anything to do with this matter," Rafuna insisted.

The head of the legal office at the Prime Minister's office then told Prishtina Insight to speak to the procurement department.

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Wires Stay Crossed in Serbia-Kosovo Energy Row

Belgrade and Prishtina remain locked in a bitter dispute over energy supplies, one year after the October 19, 2009 crisis that saw power cut in the Serb-majority north of the country for 18 hours.

The disagreement intensified in September when it emerged...

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Clinton: Start Talks Now, But Leave North until Later

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said today that status, sovereignty and territorial integrity will not be part of the talks between Kosovo and Serbia.

On the last stop of her Balkans tour, following visits to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, Clinton met Kosovo...

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Wires Stay Crossed in Serbia-Kosovo Electricity Row

A year after Serb-run northern Kosovo suffered a power cut for 18 hours, as temperatures plunged, the energy dispute between Belgrade and Prishtina shows no sign of resolution.



By Besiana Xharra

Belgrade and Prishtina remain locked in a bitter dispute over energy supplies, one year after the October 19, 2009 crisis that saw power cut in the Serb-majority north of the country for 18 hours.

The disagreement intensified in September when it emerged that Serbia would face a hearing with the regional energy regulator, the Energy Community, concerning what Kosovo claims is theft of 5 million euro a year from Kosovo in tax revenues.

Kosovo also maintains that Serbia's energy operator is leveling illegal fees, costing Kosovo energy consumers 10 million euro a year and raising the price of power by 20 per cent.

As temperatures plunged suddenly on October 19, 2009, the north of Kosovo, effectively ruled from Belgrade, lost all electricity.

The area remained without power until Serbia's public energy provider, Elektroprivreda Srbije, EPS, stepped in to reopen an unused power line from the southwestern Serbian town of Novi Pazar. Serbian politicians claimed that the move averted "a humanitarian catastrophe".

It remains unclear why northern Kosovo lost power that day; explanations range from network overload to human error and problems at a particular substation.

But since then, the EPS has supplied electricity to northern Kosovo and has been billing customers.

Meanwhile, the Kosovo Energy Corporation, KEK, claims that this is illegal and says it has been providing customers there with energy since November 2009.

Power Games:

The KEK told Prishtina Insight that it is concerned that two non-licensed entities, EPS and another provider, Serbia Elektrokosmet,

were undertaking "illegal activities" in the north of the country.

KEK spokesperson Viktor Buzhala said they had evidence that the two operators, supported by Serbia's Elektromreza, EMS, are distributing electricity from substations to homes and billing customers.

"Only the KEK is licensed to...supply electricity across Kosovo's territory and no one else," Buzhala said. "Users of electricity should not be making payments to Elektrokosmet or EPS."

He explained that since last November, the only supplier of electricity in the north had been the KEK, so, if customers were disconnected because of non-payment, they must immediately contact the firm to arrange reconnection.

Buzhala accepted that the situation had got "out of hand" in the October 2009, when the KEK stopped supplying electricity to the north as a result of what he claimed was a systemic failure. During that time, he went on, the EPS supplied the north with electricity.

"But this was only during October [2009]," he continued. "Since then, the KEK has managed the situation and the KEK is the only supplier of electricity in the north."

Buzhala said the EPS was breaking the law: "This is a matter of rule of law and the KEK expects all law enforcement authorities in Kosovo to take appropriate actions to ensure implementation of the rule of law in the north."

The EPS denies it is operating illegally, however, and said the company had a right to supply electricity to northern Kosovo. Spokesman Momcilo Cebalovic said Resolution 1244, the 1999 UN resolution that allowed for the deployment of the UN Mission in Kosovo, UNMIK - which Serbia argues is still in force - does not mention the issue of energy supply.

He said that in autumn 2009, the KEK abandoned the northern part of Kosovo, since when "the EPS took over supply of the province in order to prevent a humanitarian disaster."

"The supply is running smoothly

and all citizens, regardless of nationality, have power at a price that is 50 per cent lower than the one that KEK offers," he added.

Cebalovic dismissed the KEK's claims that they were supplying electricity to the north. "The EPS supplies electricity to northern Kosovo and Metohija and it is logical for those who deliver goods to charge for it," he said.

Elektrokosmet was a subsidiary of the state-owned EPS and headquartered in Mitrovica, northern Kosovo, he explained. [Half of Mitrovica lies in the Serbian zone of Kosovo.] "The company buys electricity from the EPS and then charges customers in northern Kosovo and Metohija," he went on.

He added that since EPS had stepped in, the rate of bill collection in the north had improved drastically, more or less from a base of zero, as "until then, people had not been paying [for power] for 10 years". For its part, the KEK estimates that 100 million euro in unpaid bills has accumulated in northern Kosovo over the years.

A source in the KEK told Prishtina Insight that it was awaiting a political solution to the overall problem. "The EPS doesn't supply the north with electricity but Serbs there still believes that their EPS is supplying them," the source claimed. "There's not very much that the KEK can do to solve this issue, as it is a situation between the Serbian and Kosovo governments."

Whether KEK or EPS are correct as not be determined independently.

Hajredin Kuci, Kosovo's Deputy Prime Minister, said the government was working to find a solution. "We are trying to resolve the situation, along with international," he said.

Breaking the treaty?

The Kosovo Electricity Transmission, System and Market Operator, KOSTT, is responsible for transmitting electric power on the main electric networks in and out of, and across, Kosovo.

It is also a signatory to the Energy Community Treaty, which



regulates the transfer of electricity across Southeast Europe.

But difficulties with the Serbian Transmission Operator, EMS, have led to KOSTT issuing a complaint to the Energy Community.

On September 17 the Energy Community's secretariat in Vienna sent a letter to Serbia, informing it that it had initiated a preliminary procedure against the EMS for non-compliance with the treaty.

KOSTT claims it is losing 5 million euro annually because EMS is "illegally obtaining financial benefits" from international energy transfers through Kosovo.

It also alleges that Serbia is charging energy traders VAT for imports to Kosovo that pass through Serbia.

Zana Rama, spokeswoman for KOSTT, told Prishtina Insight: "The damage to Kosovo, which is eventually paid by Kosovo customers, is estimated to be around 10 million euro annually."

"In this context, prices of imported energy are about 20 per cent higher compared to regional countries," Rama added.

Following receipt of the Energy Community's letter, Serbia has two months to respond, after which it may be found in breach of the Energy Community Treaty.

If Serbia is found to have broken

the treaty, it can be excluded from the Energy Community.

Fadil Ismajli, KOSTT's chief executive, told Prishtina Insight: "We are confident that the issue between KOSTT and the Serbian operator will finally be solved and in future we expect to have good cooperation with EMS, as with all other regional and European TSOs [Transmission system operators]."

However, Mildan Vujicic, spokesperson for the EMS, said KOSTT's accusations were groundless. "The EMS and EPS can only make agreements with UNMIK," he said. "We don't communicate with KOSTT, and all agreements we made refer to us and UNMIK as signatories," he continued.

Vujicic confirmed that Serbia had received a letter from the Energy Community Secretariat but added: "The letter is based on KOSTT's documentation only," he said.

Serbia is preparing to present its evidence at a forthcoming session of the Energy Community Secretariat in Vienna, he added. "That is the only way we can resolve the issues," he said, noting that communication with UNMIK was "very good".

"The only motives behind KOSTT's actions have to do with lobbying for Kosovo's independence," Vujicic concluded.

Government Lobby Contract Breaks Tender Rules

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The Office of the Prime Minister's head of procurement, Isa Hajdari, then requested we speak to the government's spokesperson, Memli Krasniqi.

When Prishtina Insight spoke again to Krasniqi on Thursday, having informed him that the PPA had not received any request to waive the usual tender process, he said the government had not,

in fact, yet given the contract to the company. It had only "made a suggestion about cooperating with them."

"No decision is made yet, and the contract is not signed yet," the spokesman added.

However, claims that the government was only "cooperating" with Patton Boggs appear to contradict the government's own press release, issued following its meeting on October 5.

This stated that the government had "decided to engage the company Patton Boggs LLM".

The official report of the meeting lists one of its decisions as "agreeing to pay Patton Boggs 50,000 euro a month for its services".

Avni Zogiani, head of the anti-corruption NGO COHU, said he was not surprised that the government was flouting the law.

Tenders and contracts for international consultants are

often strongly influenced by political considerations, he said.

"The government appoints lobbyists that they owe for helping them come to power," Zogiani told Prishtina Insight.

An expert on Washington lobby firms told Prishtina Insight that while 50,000 euro a month was not excessive for such a top firm as Patton Boggs, an open tender process would have resulted in a number of good companies com-

ing forward with lower offers.

Patton Boggs' foreign affairs adviser is Frank Wisner. The former US Secretary of State under George Bush, Condoleezza Rice, appointed Wisner as the US's special representative to the Kosovo Status Talks in 2005, where he played a crucial role in negotiating Kosovo's independence.

There is no suggestion that Patton Boggs acted inappropriately in obtaining the contract.



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Kosovo Ruling Party Risks Exclusion From 2011 Poll

Opposition says they will ask the Constitutional Court to rule on whether the Democratic Party of Kosovo has broken the rules by not holding internal elections within last three years.



Voters are expected to go to the polls in February, but a question mark hangs over whether Kosovo's biggest party will be able to participate



By Edona Musa

Kosovo expects to stage early general elections in February 2011, following the resignation of the country's President, Fatmir Sejdiu.

But in a recent twist, it has emerged that the poll could theoretically take place without the participation of the country's biggest party.

Central Election Commission rules on party registration state that a party faces suspension if it has not held an internal election of all its members within three years of the last "electoral assembly".

However, Kosovo's biggest party, the ruling Democratic Party of Kosovo, PDK, led by the Prime Minister, Hashim Thaci, has not held a party congress since 2005. As such, it risks disqualification from competing in the election.

The opposition Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, AAK, has said that it will ask Kosovo's Constitutional Court to rule on the issue if the PDK fails to hold internal elections - and is still allowed to stand in next year's elections.

Burim Ramadani, the AAK General Secretary, told Prishtina Insight: "If a party doesn't hold elections every 36 months, they cannot be certified and are illegal parties."

The commission has been hesitant to comment in public on this issue but has been briefing that it expects the PDK to hold internal elections soon.

Rame Buja, head of the PDK parliamentary group in the Assembly of Kosovo, defends the party's position, arguing that Kosovo has had a busy agenda and the party had been waiting for "a better environment" before holding the poll.

"They cannot disqualify us because we will soon hold a working convention," he added, referring to a meeting of all members that does not involve an actual election.

Buja said it would be impossible for the PDK to hold internal elections in

all its branches and sub-branches in time to meet the general election deadline.

The PDK's government coalition partner, the Democratic League of Kosovo, LDK, has also missed the deadline to hold its internal polls, but should complete its round of elections by the end of November.

It last organised a vote almost four years ago in December 2006, following the death of its leader, Kosovo's first president, Ibrahim Rugova.

The LDK has already begun the process of holding elections at local level and is expected to have selected a new leader by the end of November.

"The LDK announced last year that we would hold internal elections this year, and we're obliged to respect legal norms," said Ismet Beqiri, member of the LDK's presidency.

"The Constitution cannot be respected in a selective manner," he added.

Political analyst Halil Matoshi told Prishtina Insight that the PDK should not have had the right to take part in the last local elections in November 2009 either, because it had failed to comply with Election Commission guidelines even at that point.

Strong leaders prevail:

While the opposition AAK and New Kosovo Alliance, AKR, have held internal elections, neither Ramush Haradinaj or Behgjet Pacolli, respectively, have been challenged for the top jobs of these parties.

Political analysts believe that even within parties that comply with the law on internal elections, there is little true spirit of democracy.

Matoshi, a commentator for the newspaper Koha Ditore, says the parties do not function democratically because the leaders see themselves as aristocrats.

"The [little] power they delegate shows how much internal democracy these political parties have," Matoshi said.

Avni Zogiani, head of the anti-corruption NGO, COHU, noted that differences of opinion within Kosovo's

political parties tend to lead to splits rather than internal dialogue.

"The moment people who think differently appear, factions appear," he said. "That they then separate shows that there is no democracy."

An example of this was the split inside the LDK, following its internal elections in 2006, which led to the creation of a new party, the Democratic League of Dardania, LDD.

After Nexhat Daci lost the LDK leadership election to Fatmir Sejdiu, he set up the new party following what was called the "Convention of Chairs", so named after the fight that broke out after the vote.

However, Beqiri insists that his own LDK is the most democratic party in the country. Members who disagreed with party policy were free to express their ideas openly, he declared.

The two main faces of the PDK, Hashim Thaci and Fatmir Limaj, have been seen as rivals since the latter returned to Kosovo following his release in December 2005 from the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia, ICTY.

The relationship between the two is believed to be frosty, especially since Limaj, Kosovo's Transport Minister, became embroiled in a corruption probe led by the European Union rule-of-law mission in Kosovo, EULEX.

However, analysts downplay talk of a leadership clash between Limaj and Thaci.

"Limaj cannot take on Thaci, even if he has the confidence of the majority of the party, while he is under investigation by EULEX," Matoshi said.

Zogiani of COHU, on the other hand, says he detects signs of a coming split within the party. He believes Limaj has become closer to the AAK, led by Thaci's arch-rival, Haradinaj.

"There is a current within PDK that is tending to get closer to the AAK," he said. "Structures in both parties are trying to bring the two parties closer."

The PDK's Buja argues that there is fruitful debate and a healthy democratic spirit within the PDK. Democracy is not all about having rivals for the party leadership, he told Prishtina Insight.

Editor's Word

Tokenism



By Lawrence Marzouk

I've given up the usual Albanian word from this week's column as part of my fight against tokenism. That's the art of glossing over real issues with tokens, whether it is reassuring but insincere words, or throwing the odd ethnic minority into a line-up just for show.

In that sense, my usual biweekly Albanian word is a sop, or a token, to the fact we live in a country where most people speak Albanian, even though the phrase is always drowning in a sea of English, the language of the flag-oppressor.

Although, I hope, it's always useful for our readers to pick up a new word in the local lingo, it is, I must admit, a bit of tokenism.

Back to the flag oppression, and there has been plenty of that this week. First, an order from on high, possibly from the US Embassy according to unconfirmed reports, demanded that all Albanian flags be taken down for the visit of Hillary. No red and black, they said, apparently it would have clashed with her outfit.

Then, Serbian hooligans decided to burn an Albanian flag as they ran amok in Genoa before their country faced the Italian national side.

The reaction to both events has astounded me. Tens of thousands of people have signed various Facebook campaigns and thousands, for what I can see, have also changed their profile status to various forms of the double-headed eagle.

I'll deal with the second incident first. There are idiots in every country on earth, and we should not get upset by the actions of a few racist bigots.

Admittedly burning someone's flag is offensive, but what kind of behaviour did people actually expect from the ultra-right, hooliganism wing of Red Star Belgrade's fans?

'Ignore, move on and reach out to the moderate majority in every country' would be my advice.

As an aside, I can't remember anyone standing up against the principle of 'not burning flags' when the supporters of Prishtina last year set a Macedonian standard ablaze after the encyclopedia row.

Someone even phoned the BIRN office up to ask whether we could ask Hillary whether Kosovo should negotiate with a country - Serbia - which is willing to burn the Albanian flag.

If the US's foreign policy was based on negotiating only with countries which had not burned the stars and stripes, then it would not be talking to many.

I have more sympathy for those angry at the decision to remove Albanian flags from Prishtina. It is the flag of the nation and not the state, after all.

Although perhaps confusing for some passing dignitaries and tourists, most people are able to spot the nuance with a minimal briefing.

The Albanians of Kosovo should, of course, be allowed to fly their flag, even if it is also the state flag of their neighbour, Albania.

But it is an entirely different matter whether a government, which is supposed to represent a multi-ethnic state, should be flying the flag of just one ethnicity for a state visit, especially when it is such a sensitive issue.

If you want to fly one, I am afraid, you are going to have to have the flags of Serbs, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, Gorani, Bosniak, Montenegrin, and the list goes on.

The problem is that Kosovo is only really a multi-ethnic state in the eyes of those who want it to be so. That is why passing diplomats, usually a fan of this concept, have to ensure he or she makes a visit to see the monks of Gracanica, by now probably the savviest international operators to also wear the cloth, and why we had both a Serb and Albanian journalist presenting Hillary's session with civil society on Wednesday (although the Serb journalist was obviously dubbed on RTK into Albanian).

A multi-ethnic society is a good noble goal, but what we have for the moment is just tokenism.

The mantra of 'Kosovo is a multi-ethnic society' is tokenism for the Serbs, who aren't particularly pleased to have found themselves outnumbered twenty-to-one by Albanians.

In my view, the decision not to allow the Albanian flags to fly was the right one in the context, although it should come from Kosovo's government, not any foreign government, especially as they are so committed to multi-ethnicity.

If people have a problem with this idea, then they should be addressing their anger to the government about the concept of the multi-ethnic state, not a one-off decision to bring down some flags for a dignitary's visit. That is just tokenism.

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Kosovo Visa Liberalisation Process 'to Start Soon'

The European Commission is set to unveil Kosovo's strategy for visa liberalisation in the coming weeks despite growing disquiet in some European quarters about the expansion of visa-free travel for Balkan citizens



By Lawrence Marzouk

The European Commission is expected to formally open Kosovo's visa liberalisation process in the coming weeks, Ulrike Lunacek, Rapporteur on Kosovo to the European Parliament, has told Prishtina Insight.

The Green MEP said she expected the European Commission, EC, to open Kosovo's path towards the White Schengen List, which allows citizens of a country to travel across most of the European Union without a visa, in the 'next couple of weeks'.

The news follows the European Parliament's approval last week of plans for Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina to join the list from January.

If the Council of the European Union agrees to extend visa liberalisation to the two Balkan states in November, Kosovars will be the only citizens of the region requiring visas to travel to the EU.

The Austrian politician told Prishtina Insight that she agreed with some Kosovars' fears that such a step would transform Kosovo into a 'ghetto'.

But she said she is optimistic the liberalisation process will be extended to Prishtina.

"Even those countries that don't recognise Kosovo have said that

Kosovo needs to be included in visa liberalisation," she said, referring to the five member states which have yet to recognise Kosovo's February 2008 declaration of independence.

Kosovo's Minister of European Integration, Besim Beqaj, told Prishtina Insight that he also expects a 'strategy' for the visa liberalisation to be revealed soon.

He said that the process had been renamed a strategy, rather than the usual 'guidelines', because of the five EU member states which do not recognise Kosovo's independence.

"In essence, the strategy is the same as the guidelines," Beqaj said.

He added that the government has fulfilled 'all its obligations required by the EU to receive the strategy for visa liberalisation'.

According to sources close to the process, Kosovo and Serbia's path towards the European Union are being coordinated in order to give both countries steps forwards at roughly the same time. As a result, the announcement of Kosovo's strategy for visa liberalisation is likely to dovetail with progress for Serbia towards the EU, the source added.

Disquiet over Visa Liberalisation

Albania and Bosnia's steps towards the White Schengen List have not been without controversy.

Officials in Paris have expressed doubt in recent weeks about extending visa liberalisation to Albania and Bosnia, which have now fulfilled the technical criteria to become members of the White Schengen List, according to the EC.

"The Commission wants a measure [visa liberalisation] but will not be dealing with its negative impacts," an unnamed high-level French diplomat told Le Monde earlier this month.

French State Secretary for European Affairs Pierre Lellouche called the visa policy a "matter of security" in a speech to the French parliament on September 29.

He said that France would request "security guarantees" from Albania and Bosnia before it will support visa liberalisation.

Visa liberalisation for Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia was granted in January this year and led to a spike in asylum claims in



Kosovars hope to travelling visa free across Europe soon

Belgium filed by citizens mainly from Serbia and Macedonia.

In recent weeks it has emerged that Sweden has become the latest destination for Serbians seeking asylum.

According to local reports, of the 22,045 applicants that have sought asylum in Sweden this year, about 4,000 declared Serbian citizenship, compared with 421 in the same period last year.

In September alone, 1,410 Serbian citizens arrived in the country, seeking asylum.

Lunacek said the issue was raised in a recent meeting between the EU and the Serbian government and called on the countries which joined the list in January to act responsibly.

She added that Kosovo's image as a country of 'criminals and corruption' among certain member states, and increasing scepticism voiced by some major European powers, such as France, over extending visa liberalisation, present obstacles on the road to visa liberalisation for

the world's youngest state.

But she remains confident that the Council of the European Union would approve the move for Albania and Bosnia next month and said it would be ridiculous to exclude Kosovo from the process.

"There is a responsibility to those that already have liberalisation to make it clear to their citizens that visa liberalisation is not for seeking asylum or seeking a job," she said.

"Kosovo has just 2 million people so it would be ridiculous to leave them out and it would affect the democratisation process," she said. "We cannot leave 2 million people outside."

Renzo Daviddi, head of the European Commission Liaison Office in Kosovo, told Prishtina Insight that the issue with asylum seekers would not derail Kosovo's path towards visa liberalisation.

"Today this issue is also present in the public opinion and does not present any problems," Daviddi said.

Charting an Unmapped Kosovo

Volunteers are using an open-source online map service to plot Kosovo in detail for the first time



By Lawrence Marzouk

Until recently, detailed and accurate maps of Kosovo were almost impossible to find, in hard copy or online, and you could forget about using a satellite navigations to locate your destination.

But a group of volunteers and IT experts have been quietly but steadily filling the void in decent cartography.

The online Open Street Map, www.openstreetmap.org, forms one prong of a movement for open source programmes, which are copyright free and allow everyone from computer programmers to complete novices to access the programme code and update information.

Just two years ago, Kosovo was virtually a blank slate on the Open Street website, as it was everywhere on the internet, with just a few major towns and roads marked, now thousands of cafes, restaurants, places of interest and new roads have been plotted thanks to the work of a small team of volunteers.

This work was outlined at last month's conference Software Freedom Kosova 2010, organised by local group Kosovar Association for Free/Libre and



Open Street Map has excellent coverage of Prishtina

Open Source Software, Known as FLOSSK and the University of Prishtina.

James Michael DuPont, one of the driving forces behind FLOSSK and the improvements to Open Street Map, said that better maps would boost investments in Kosovo and help businesses.

He said that his group had collected information ranging from municipal cadastral records to on-the-ground photos to plot the map, and had even used the Global Positioning System data from a

local logistics firm.

FLOSSK has now returned data to the company with the new, improved information.

DuPont said: "There is a huge community set up around this database. It's not some bureaucrat running around with a clipboard, it is not a government that creates this - it is you and me."

While Google Maps, the best known commercial offer, has improved drastically in recent months from a very low base, Open Street Map remains streets' ahead

in terms of the quantity of information available.

"Kosovo is a beautiful country with beautiful places to visit but no-one knows where these things are," DuPont added. "If you come off a place you will not find these places."

"Investors want to know where property is available and what the value of that property is, but at the moment they can't."

"Map," he said, "means money." For more information visit openstreetmap.org and flossk.org.

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Clinton: Start Talks Now, But Leave North until Later



By Petrit Collaku

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said on Wednesday that status, sovereignty and territorial integrity will not be part of the talks between Kosovo and Serbia.

On the last stop of her Balkans tour, following visits to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, Clinton met Kosovo officials, as well as leaders of the Serb community and civil society organisations.

She told an audience of civil society members that talks should start as soon as possible, but on easier issues than how to integrate Serbs in the north of the country, over which Prishtina has little control.

"My opinion is that the status of the north is resolved. And once that sinks in, that people of the north will have to recognise that they have to integrate into Kosovo, that they must look to Prishtina, that there cannot be any longer parallel institutions, that there has to be a commitment to working together as many of the Serbian communities to the south have done," she said.

"Therefore, I think it is in Kosovo's interest to begin the dialogue as soon as possible on issues that are at first perhaps easier, like missing persons."

She added that the US wants to help Kosovo speed up the process of integration of the north.

"So what we have to do is work out the best way to integrate the citizens of the north. And perhaps there is more that could be done more quickly, but I don't think that should delay this dialogue," she said.

Before sitting down for talks with Kosovo's prime minister, Clinton visited a statue dedicated to her husband, former US president Bill Clinton, which is located on a boulevard named after him in the centre of Prishtina. The former president is considered a hero in Kosovo. She then popped into a

clothes' shop named in her honour.

During the meeting with Kosovo leaders, Clinton said that the US was pushing for dialogue between Prishtina and Belgrade that would offer technical solutions for Kosovo and Serbia, overcome obstacles and allow the two to become good neighbours.

"As Prime Minister Thaci said today and President Tadic yesterday, some issues, such as status, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Kosovo will not be discussed," Clinton is quoted by the prime minister's website as saying.

She added that the leaders of both countries should come to the dialogue with goodwill and respect for the concerns of one another.

"The US has asked Serbia and Kosovo to sit down at a table," Clinton said at the joint press conference with PM Thaci.

The secretary of state said that Kosovo, as the youngest country in the world, has to do many things at the same time in order to create a tradition of democracy and strong public institutions to develop the economy and attract foreign investors.

"The US will continue to offer assistance to the people of Kosovo until you achieve those objectives," Clinton said.

PM Thaci reiterated that Kosovo has expressed a readiness and willingness to build good inter-state relations with Serbia as two inde-



Thaci and Clinton at a joint press conference in Prishtina

pendent countries.

"The time has come to end a century-old conflict between Kosovo and Serbia, the moment has come for cooperation and looking towards the future. Kosovo is ready," Thaci told journalists.

After the meeting with Kosovo leaders, Clinton visited an Orthodox monastery in Gracanica, a Serb-run town.

She also met with the president of the newly created predominantly Serb municipality.

What Hillary Said...

On Business

First, there has to be confidence by American and other investors that the business climate is friendly to business, which means you have to tackle corruption; you have to tackle organised crime, which is a problem in some parts of Kosovo; you have to continue the economic reforms that will lead to a more open economy.

Second, I think we have to do more to generate what are called "small businesses" or "micro-businesses." I think there are a lot of entrepreneurial people in Kosovo who can't get access to credit to start or expand their own businesses. So we need to look at ways of helping you find credit for more small businesses. There's the big business that might come in, but actually, more jobs over the long run are created by many small businesses starting and growing. So I would like the advice of you about how we can do more to help small businesses in Kosovo.

And finally, you need to finish privatising state industries.

I know it's a debate in your parliament. I know there are some

who are worried about privatising the phone companies, privatising the electric companies, but it's been our experience that privatising companies will open up competition, will provide more jobs over the long run. There are tourist sites in Kosovo that now that we've got firmly the independence decision and there's peace and stability in Kosovo, we can start working to get people to know about.

I think that now is the time that we could be holding investment conferences between Kosovo and investors in the United States. As you know, there are many successful Kosovar and Albanian Americans – every Greek and French restaurant in New York is run by somebody from either Kosovo or Albania, it seems like. Every time I go to one, that's what they come and tell me. So we need to be looking for successful business people in the United States to help broker understanding and work with businesses here doing business training, mentoring, entrepreneurial activity.

And don't forget the internet. I mean, the internet can give you a

"As you know, there are many successful Kosovar and Albanian Americans – every Greek and French restaurant in New York is run by somebody from either Kosovo or Albania, it seems like"

market globally. The internet can put your business, literally, on the world map. And it's very cheap to do that. When I was a senator for New York, many parts of New York, particularly upstate New York away from New York City, are very poor – high unemployment, not very many businesses. And I worked to put small businesses on the internet because there are ways that you can make more money if you have a bigger market than just in your local village or community.

So we have lots of ideas and we're ready to share those ideas, but there are certain steps that your government has to take and that your business community must take to break monopolies, open up competition, open up the market, and really let the entrepreneurial energy of the people of Kosovo start making money and putting people to work.

On Bill's Statue

Well, I have to say it's quite a

statue. And my husband – it still looks like he has bronze coloured hair, which I like. Because when I met him – you know we've been married 35 years as of Monday – so when I met him we were in law school, and he had very brownish, reddish hair. And the statue reminds me of that, so of course I like the statue. Nobody should paint it white. Don't paint it white. Keep it that colour

On Dialogue

Well, we are trying to make every consideration possible so that this dialogue will be a dialogue between equals. When the representatives of Kosovo sit with the representatives of Serbia, we want to have an agenda and a framework for the negotiations that will help lead to resolution of any of the remaining issues, like missing persons, for example, internally displaced persons. There's a lot of issues that are present not in the headlines, but in the daily lives of people.

Roma Lead Camp Closed, But Different Sides Claim Credit



By Lawrence Marzouk

The lead-polluted camps which have been home to Kosovo's Roma refugees in north Mitrovica for more than ten years were closed on October 1.

But in separate press releases, the United Nations and then the EU and USAID have claimed credit for shutting the camps down.

The nearby Trepca lead mine and smelting works were closed in 2000, but heaps of waste matter were never cleaned up and the surrounding area remains extremely contaminated. Dozens of cases of lead poisoning have been reported over the years in the informal Cesmin Lug settlement.

Human rights and health groups have long expressed concern about the level of pollution in Cesmin Lug, one of three camps opened by UNHCR in 1999 to house hundreds of Roma civilians who had fled to northern Mitrovica after their homes in the city's south were attacked.

The settlements were only intended to be used temporarily, but until recently the site remained home to hundreds of Roma.

But on October 1, the camps were officially closed and the remaining inhabitants have been resettled in new homes or to another nearby refugee camp, Osterode, which has been made safer from lead poisoning.

In a press release on October 8 issued by the UN news agency, it said that the 'UN had shut the lead-

contaminated camp for displaced persons'.

"The United Nations mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has demolished a controversial settlement inhabited by uprooted members of the Roma community, which was contaminated with lead from a nearby plant," the release reads.

But a statement issued four days later by the European Commission Liaison Office in Kosovo, ECLC, said that a 'joint EU and USAID effort had brought Cesmin Lug camp in north Mitrovica to a successful closure'.

"This breakthrough was made possible with the joint efforts of USAID and EU-funded projects in full coordination with other stakeholders," the statement said.

Fifty RAE – Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian – families were resettled in Roma Mahalla during

September 2010 under the USAID-funded project, and the EU-funded project will ensure resettlement of an additional 90 RAE families currently living in the Osterode camp, the press release revealed.

The projects are implemented by the NGO Mercy Corps on behalf of both USAID and the EU.

But neither rival press release referenced the work of the other international organisation.

When Prishtina Insight asked ECLC whether it was the USAID and the EU team which had closed the camps or the UN, Fjolla Ceku, press officer, said her organisation had been surprised by the press reports detailing the UN's involvement. She added that the camps were shut as part of the USAID-EU project.

She said: "UNMIK Administration in North

Mitrovica demolished 4 hard-built structures in Cesmin Lug camp, while UNHCR had two trucks and one van for facilitating the transport of beneficiaries' belongings from Cesmin Lug to Osterode camp."

UNMIK, on the other hand, told Prishtina Insight: "On October 1, in a coordinated effort of UNHCR, Mercy Corps International (MCI), RAE residents and UNMIK Administration in Mitrovica (UAM), Cesmin Lug camp in the northern part of Mitrovica was closed and the last residents moved to Osterode camp.

"UAM sealed the camp, while the area remains to be under UNMIK Administration in Mitrovica (UAM) custody and KP protection. The remaining 22 families have voluntarily moved to the nearby Osterode camp."

Serbia May Veto Kosovo Chair of Trade Group

Belgrade looks set on blocking Kosovo's chairmanship of the Central European Free Trade Agreement from January 2011, if it represents itself as an independent state.



By Lavdim Hamidi

Belgrade could veto Kosovo's chairmanship of the Central European Free Trade Agreement, CEFTA, from January 2011, a Serbian minister has warned.

While Kosovo's government claims it will take up the position as an independent country, Serbia's Economy Ministry this week said Prishtina must be represented by the UN Mission in Kosovo, UNMIK. Serbia rejects Kosovo's independence, declared in 2008, and insists the UN remains paramount authority there under Resolution 1244, which authorised the deployment of a UN mission in Kosovo, UNMIK.

Kosovo's Trade Minister, Lutfi Zharku, says the country will only take up the post as "The Republic of Kosovo".

The stand-off could lead to the current chair, Serbia, not passing the baton to Kosovo, Berat Rukiqi, general secretary of the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce, KCC, told Prishtina Insight.

"To take up the chair of CEFTA in January 2011, Serbia should transfer the responsibilities to Kosovo. However, neither side is working on the transfer of responsibilities," Rukiqi said.

If Serbia refuses to transfer the responsibilities to Kosovo for chair-

ing CEFTA, the chair will go to the next country after Kosovo, Albania, he added.

Minister Zharku rejects the possibility that the country will lose the chair of CEFTA, although he accepts that it will face problems of different nature during the chairs of Serbia, Bosnia and Moldova, none of which recognise Kosovo's independence.

"There is no possibility of losing the chair of CEFTA and those words are being said only by those who have not read the agreement," Zharku said.

He insisted that Prishtina will not direct CEFTA under the logo "UNMIK-Kosovo", as Serbia requires.

"We will chair CEFTA only as the Republic of Kosovo and in no other form," he said. But he admitted that Serbia, Bosnia and Moldova may refuse to attend meetings under Kosovo's chairmanship.

Zharku explained that Kosovo is currently represented at CEFTA subcommittee meetings by experts who go under their own names, not that of their country. This was done to avoid disputes with the current chair, Serbia.

Rukiqi said Kosovo was ill prepared to chair CEFTA, unlike Serbia, which began preparations for the transfer in May 2009.

Alban Hashani, senior analyst at the Riinvest Institute, which specialises in economic issues, said if Kosovo obtained the chair of CEFTA in 2011, it should work on



A CEFTA map showing when countries left and joined the agreement

unlocking the trade embargo imposed by Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

From December 2008, when Kosovo replaced the UNMIK custom stamp with that of the Republic of Kosovo, Serbia and Bosnia placed embargos on imports marked "Made in Kosova".

This has had far-reaching implications for Kosovo's already struggling export market, leading to a crisis this year among grape producers, among others.

Kosovo's biggest wine producer, Stone Castle, refused to purchase any grapes from producers this autumn because the embargo had left it unable to sell much of last year's vintage.

At the time the embargo was

imposed, Minister Zharku threatened blocking countries with reciprocal measures. But the move never materialised on account of objections from the international community.

Hashani said that if the country failed to obtain the chair of CEFTA in 2011, it would represent a major failure not only for Kosovo but for the international community.

As of 2007, the parties to the CEFTA agreement were Albania, Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and "UNMIK-Kosovo".

The original members, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, left the organisation after they joined the European Union.

Business news in brief

Prishtina Airport Sees Passenger Increase

Prishtina International Airport expects to attract a further 100,000 passengers this year, compared to the last.

During 2009, the 1 million milestone was reached on October 25, whereas this year the figure was met in September.

The predicted number of passengers for the full year is expected to be 1.3 million.

"For the past two years we have had an increase of almost 400,000 passengers," said PIA Managing Director, Agron Mustafa. "All this was achieved thanks to the hard work of all employees of PIA, creating best conditions for airlines and passengers."

The airport is to be transferred to the French-Turkish consortium formed by Aeroport de Lyon and Limak after the group successfully bid for a 20-year franchise.

Large Firms in Latest Privatisation Round

The Privatisation Agency of Kosovo has announced the sale of a number of large firms as part of its 45th round of auctions.

The Health Spa near Peja, Bauxite Mines near Klina, Shock Absorbers Factory in Prishtina and a tobacco factory in Mitrovica are among the firms up for grabs.

The last day for prequalification for this privatisation round is October 20 2010, while bids must be submitted by October 27.

For a full list of companies and descriptions visit www.pak-ks.org.

Bosnian Women 'Beating Men in Pay League'

Female managers in Bosnia earn more than their male counterparts, a survey conducted by the country's leading job site has revealed.

Female heads in financial services outdo their male colleagues by 32 per cent, according to the online survey conducted by the www.posao.ba job site.

In legal corporate services, they are paid 16 per cent more.

A similar trend was observed in all other high positions in various sectors of employment in the country.

However, Bosnian women who work in lower position jobs earn about 92 per cent of what their male colleagues get, the survey of 9,100 people revealed.

But the figure still puts them in a better position than working women in other countries of the region, survey administrator Mersiha Mehic said..

Kosovo Receives First World Bank Funds



By Besiana Xharra

Kosovo has received 30million dollars from the World Bank – the first time the country has received funds from the international organisation since becoming a member in June 2009.

The programme, which was agreed upon at a meeting of the World Bank's board of executive directors on October 4, aims to create new jobs for Kosovo in a bid to tackle an unemployment rate of about 45 per cent.

The fund will also go towards improving public procurement, bettering higher education and tightening public expenditure management.

Of the 30.9 million dollar given, 13.5 million comes in the form of grants, 6.3 million as loans and a further 11.1 million is composed of donations pledged at the 2008 Kosovo Donor Conference in

Brussels.

A World Bank report issued as the decision was taken reveals that the fund hopes to 'create steady employment and a favourable environment for the development of policies for opening of new jobs'.

Investments will also be made to 'maintain flexibility of the labour market and to protect workers'.

According to the report, the World Bank also aims to improve the business registration process.

The programme will also provide assistance of higher education to ensure a better quality of institutions.

"The time has come that this programme be adopted in order to help the country in areas that the World Bank has submitted in its programme," said Hajredin Kuci, Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo. "Kosovo is developing and such donations will only accelerate this development."

But according to some, there is a risk that the implementation of



The World Bank's headquarters in Washington

this programme could prove difficult because of the current unstable political situation in the country.

"The World Bank programme is very welcome," said Myzejene Selmani, the head of commission on economy in Kosovo's Assembly and a member of the opposition New Kosovo Alliance, AKR.

"Every donation helps in developing [the country], but this current unstable government might jeopardise the programme. Without a stable policy there is no

stable economy,"

Muhamet Sadiku from Riinvest Institute, which specialises in economic issues, complained that money promised at the donor's conference was only trickling through.

"Investors are not feeling safe to invest their money into a country where there is much talk of corruption and organised crime - this makes them uncertain," he said, adding that this 30.9 million dollar fund should be seen as a test for Kosovo's government.

SURF presents:

22 / 10 / 2010

*“kitschy? sure.
fabulous? absolutely.”
Washington post on
nouvelle vague*

**NOUVEAU
VAGUE**

**pallati i sportit / prishtinë
biletat 7 euro më 13 / 10 / 2010
në të gjithë kosovën**



BILETAT SHITEN NË KËTO LOKACIONE:
STRIPDEPOT / TINGLE TANGLE / PRINCE COFFEE HOUSE / 91 /
THE CUBAN / KOMITETI / MORENA / DVD SHOP MUJA / BAMBOO /
CARS 'N PILETTOS / PRIVE / AUK (BYFEJA) / RRONI / TE GJAKOVART /
CORNER (PRIZREN) / TE BEKA (GJAKOVË) / PICASSO (GJILAN) /
ZIPPO (MITROVICË) / SING SING, EXIT (PEJË)



sponsorët medial





Prishtina Municipality hopes to rein in the city's uncontrolled building boom

Prishtina Takes Tough Line on Illegal Buildings

The Municipality of Prishtina has begun to tackle illegal structures, including part of the city's Grand Hotel, while Mayor Isa Mustafa says the legalisation process for buildings without permits is progressing well



By Lawrence Marzouk

Prishtina's post-war construction boom is being reined in by the city's municipality with a tough line on new illegal constructions and the legalisation of older structures without planning permission.

Prishtina Municipality hopes to bring an end to unregulated building through its process of legalising currently unlicensed premises built before August 19.

It estimates that 70 per cent of new apartment blocks built in the city since 1999 do not have a licence.

The municipality announced on September 1 that any building which did not feature on satellite images of the city, taken at 10.30am on August 19, would be destroyed while those built prior to this date can be legalised.

And in the past two weeks, the municipality has taken steps to demolish unregulated buildings.

Last Thursday, Prishtina's town hall announced it would remove pillars being built on the Grand Hotel to support an extra floor as the owners did not have permission. Overnight, builders working on the site demolished the structure themselves.

And on Sunday, the municipality moved to demolish part of an illegal building in Sunny Hill after the owner had failed to

comply with an order to stop work.

Mayor Isa Mustafa said he was pleased so far with the response to calls for people to legalise buildings which did not have planning permission. He said: "There are still a few weeks until the official end of opportunity to apply and I believe that the time available will be enough for people to apply."

A campaign of awareness-raising was launched this week to ensure that the message is received by all citizens.

"The whole process is to the benefit of citizens because they legalise their buildings but people who will refuse to engage in this process will have their buildings demolished," Mustafa said.

Prishtina through the Eyes of:

Angela Mazer

Angela Mazer, Programme Analyst at UNDP



What surprised you most about Prishtina?

So many American flags! And also how many languages people can speak, it's impressive.

What's your favorite hang-out?

Walking up to the park where President Rugova is buried and watching the sunset over the city.

Do you do anything cultural?

Does the Snoop Dogg show count? The Tour de Culture bike ride a few weeks ago was amazing.

What is the most annoying thing about Prishtina?

Aside from the trash, it's the permanent puddle of water right in front of my office in Peyton.

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

Raise the cost of cigarettes and use that money to build more parks and sidewalks throughout the city.

How many macchiatos do you drink a day?

Not more than two...or three.

What's the tastiest Kosovar food?

Corba soup for lunch at Pishat.

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

Sahat Kulla

Marketing



Kosovo's only real Irish Pub...



www.paddyobriens.com

What a Pump-King!



By Shengjyl Osmani

This giant pumpkin is the largest in the region, according to its grower Ismet Babaj, from Skenderaj.

The giant vegetable, weighing a whopping 400kg, was unveiled in Babaj's home town on Sunday.

But despite its impressive bulk and a 9metre perimeter, it will not earn Babaj a place in the record books.

The international record was set in the US at 782kg, while the largest Europe has produced weighed 615kg.

Last week, two brothers, Ian and Stuart Paton, 49, from Hampshire, UK, came close to a European record-breaker, missing out on the coveted prize by 90kg.



Photo by: Koha Ditore

But Babaj, who specialises in growing massive vegetable, has grand plans to claim his place in history next year.

"I have taken the seeds of this pumpkin from USA, and for three years now I have been cultivating with them," added Babaj.

Dodik Retains Whip Hand in Bosnia After Elections

Populist Serbian nationalist takes some knocks in weekend polls but looks set to remain the dominant force in Bosnia's Serbian entity and a major player in the Balkans.



By Andrew MacDowall

Milorad Dodik and his Alliance of Independent Social Democrats, SNSD, looks set to remain the dominant force in the Republika Srpska, the Bosnian Serb entity, following last weekend's elections.

Dodik, outgoing prime minister and now president-elect of the Republika Srpska, has been increasingly strident in his attacks on the structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina, calling for greater Serbian autonomy and, potentially, independence.

Referring to Bosnia as "an absurd state" he has said that "our position is clear - a peaceful dissociation is best", adding that, "if the pressure on the Bosnian Serb Republic becomes too great, we will calmly and slowly build our position in order to one day decide our fate on our own".

Bolstering his credentials among Serbian nationalists, Dodik has also denied that the 1995 massacre at Srebrenica, east Bosnia, where Bosnian Serb soldiers killed around 8,000 Muslim men and boys, was an act of genocide.

At home, his critics accuse Dodik and his party of attempting to consolidate control over the Serbian entity through tightening their grip on the media, public recruitment and the security forces.

Dodik strongly refutes allegations of authoritarianism, and even opponents and critics suggest that his nationalist bark is often worse than his bite.

Much attention has focused on the close-run election at the weekend for the post of Serbian member of Bosnia's three-member state Presidency.

The incumbent, Nebojsa Radmanovic, of the SNSD, appears to have scraped home with 49.76 per cent of the votes, narrowly beating Mladen Ivanic, of the Party of Democratic Progress, PDP, an opposition coalition candidate, on 46.98 per cent, according to initial results.

The PDP hammered away at what it called "practical priorities" in the campaign, focusing on employment, health care, pensioners, education, and agriculture, and going lighter on constitutional issues and nationalist rhetoric.

Ivanic's near miss was a surprise. The articulate former prime minister of the Republika Srpska and former foreign minister of Bosnia, an academic who has spent spells in the UK and Germany, was widely seen as more comfortable in Western diplomatic circles than pressing the flesh in a tough election cam-



Milorad Dodik is now president elect of Republika Srpska

paign.

Sometimes described as more popular with the international community than his own people, it seems he has broader appeal than he was given credit for.

Nonetheless, Ivanic's result should be seen in context. He was backed by a grouping of opposition parties known as Coalition Together for [Republika] Srpska, which included the Serbian Democratic Party, the former party of Radovan Karadzic and Bijana Plavsic - notorious Serbian nationalists of the Bosnian war era, subsequently charged with crimes against humanity.

The Serbian Democratic Party remains the largest opposition force in the Serbian entity, though it is still officially a pariah in the West, which ironically once backed the SNSD and Dodik as a rival to it.

The weekend's other election contests reveal that the SNSD, while far from the only show in town, is still the leading political force. On the basis of preliminary results as of Tuesday evening, it took the largest share of the votes in every multi-member constituency for the Republika Srpska Parliament, which is considerably more important to most people than the results for the Bosnian state parliament.

Its vote shares ranged from 44.28 per cent in Constituency Two in the west of the entity to 34.07 per cent in Constituency Four in the northeast. In all but one constituency, its closest challenger was the Serbian Democratic Party rather than the PDP.

In the contest for Bosnia's state

parliament, the SNSD took a plurality in all three three-member constituencies, with vote shares of 50.44, 38.19 and 42.89 per cent.

Not an overwhelming victory in the second two cases, but still well ahead of, again, the Serbian Democratic Party. Given that several of the other parties that were standing supported Dodik's separatist agenda, it is clear that more voters support the SNSD's course than can unite around an alternative.

Meanwhile, Dodik won not just a plurality but an absolute majority of votes for the Presidency of the Republika Srpska: 51.93 per cent. Ognjen Tadic of the PDP, also backed by the Serbian Democratic Party, took 36.96 per cent, making him by a long way the strongest opposition candidate, but still a mile behind Dodik.

As results stand, therefore, the SNSD will retain control of the Serbian entity, albeit with other parties' support. It will also have a significant presence at state level, though it may be outmanoeuvred by a grouping of moderate parties, after the non-sectarian though largely Muslim-supported Social Democratic Party and the Party of Democratic Action [in practice a Bosniak party] performed well.

But if, as looks certain, the SNSD holds onto power in the Republika Srpska, it will retain its blocking power in Bosnia anyway, particularly in partnership with the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina. To complicate things, this party is calling for a third, Croatian entity, to be fash-

ioned out of Bosnia's largest entity, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The two main anti-SNSD parties each have reason to be moderately satisfied: the PDP for emerging as a real electoral force with an unexpectedly popular leader, and the Serbian Democratic Party for inching towards respectability while remaining the largest opposition party.

But the opposition has loudly declared that the election was neither free nor fair, pointing to the SNSD's alleged control of the media and civil service in the Republika Srpska, as well as making claims of poll rigging, not for the first time.

Borislav Borenovic, the PDP vice-president, has said that the party will not recognise the results for the Serb presidency post owing to "obvious election fraud". The Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina has said that it will look into the conduct of the poll, in which a strikingly high proportion of the ballot papers, almost 60,000, or around 9.5 per cent, have been declared void.

It will take some time for the dust to settle, due both to contested results and the laborious process of coalition-forming at entity and state level.

Hours before the polls opened, Borenovic told Prishtina Insight that the opposition might attempt to topple the SNSD through public protests if necessary. "If we can't change the regime democratically, it should be changed by the street, though I'm not supporting violence," he said, evoking the

demonstrations - and riots - that toppled Slobodan Milosevic's regime in Serbia in 2000 in the "Bulldozer Revolution", and the more recent "Orange Revolution" against allegedly rigged election results in Ukraine in 2004-2005.

A January by-election in the impoverished Bosnian Serb village of Bileca in January, in which the SNSD was defeated despite visits from the hierarchy, including Dodik, and promises of funding if the party was re-elected, is occasionally given as an example of public dissatisfaction. Some opposition figures even hint darkly at armed conflict between government and opposition in the Republika Srpska.

The opposition's ability to bring about change by action on the streets, peaceful or otherwise, remains to be seen. Conversations with citizens enjoying a stroll near the imposing and freshly scrubbed government buildings in Dodik's capital, Banja Luka, suggest the public supports his autonomy-cum-independence project, however grudgingly.

Furthermore, unrest would probably cause serious worries in the international community about instability in an already worrisome region, which some had hoped could be left more or less to its own devices, plodding through reform and normalisation through the incentive of eventual European Union membership.

It should be noted that neither the PDP nor the Serbian Democratic Party is enamoured with the international community's dream of every closer union of the entities inside Bosnia and Herzegovina. Therefore, they cannot expect the sort of Western support enjoyed by the Bulldozer and Orange revolutionaries.

Therefore, barring an unexpected turnaround, Dodik and the SNSD are likely to remain the dominant forces in the Serbian entity and major features on the Bosnian and indeed Balkan political scene for some years. This is a reality that other power brokers in Bosnia and the international community were surely expecting, which should make it easier for them to come to terms with it.

Many analysts and opposition figures meanwhile see Dodik as a pragmatist, using populist calls for independence both to rally support and to win concessions at state and international level. This could include greater autonomy for the Bosnian Serb entity, though it is already almost a separate country, in exchange for a toning down of rhetoric.

Over the coming weeks and months, Bosnia's post-electoral political games will play out. Dodik and the SNSD will be key players with a mandate to speak for the Republika Srpska.

Threat of Violence Hangs over

As the weekend's anti-gay rioting in Belgrade has shown, EU-imposed anti-discrimination laws have done little to change deep-seated attitudes of homophobia in the region.



By Nela Lazarevic and
Bojana Barlovac

As Belgrade sweeps up the last of the broken glass from Sunday's violence-hit Gay Pride march, the jury was still out on whether Serbia's centrist government, or right-wing rioters, had emerged as victors.

While the government of President Boris Tadic could take comfort in having safeguarded several hundred marchers from physical attack, the rioters could also take pride in having demonstrated their continuing ability to mobilise large numbers of supporters on the streets.

As in 2008, when Serbia's capital almost exploded after the former province of Kosovo declared its independence, the extreme right has again shown it has a significant support base, especially among the young.

Jelko Kacin, European Parliament rapporteur on Serbia, said the weekend's events had sent a grim message that might negatively affect the Dutch government's stance on Serbia's progress towards EU membership.

"The images of Belgrade under siege that have circulated the world have sent a very bad message about the lack of basic tolerance towards minorities in Serbia and also [about] the inefficiency of state institutions," he said, in a statement that was scarcely a ringing endorsement of the way Belgrade had handled the business.

Irena Pavlovic, 26, a participant at the Pride Parade, agreed. Instead of rainbow flags waving on a sunny Sunday, the pictures coming out of Belgrade, of tear gas and street battles, confirmed stereotypical images of Serbia as a society plagued by extremism.

"We want to join the EU but we have once again proved that we do not belong there," she said.

Another participant, Petar Ladjevic, 33, said the rally had



The Pride Parade in Serbia last Sunday was marred by violence

turned into a complete fiasco. "The participants at the Pride rally helped every hooligan achieve his dream... while our city is damaged once again and our state has confirmed its weakness," he said.

One lesbian from Belgrade, who did not wish to reveal her name, told Prishtina Insight that Sunday's rally had left her feeling less safe than before. "Sunday's violence has just showed how real homophobia is in the country," she said.

Serbia's first Pride march was brought to a halt in June 2001, after anti-gay protestors clashed with police and marchers, resulting in several injuries.

Almost eight years later, the country's parliament adopted an anti-discrimination law prohibit-

ing, among other things, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and transgender status.

But, as in most other Balkan countries, changes to the law have not been accompanied by real changes to the public mindset.

Balkan Pride marches have been known for courting violence ever since the first attempts were made to hold them in 2001 in Belgrade and in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

However, as some Balkan countries have entered the European Union - Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania - while others are official candidates - Croatia, Macedonia - or potential candidates - Bosnia, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, Albania - governments have felt increased pressure to demonstrate readiness to extend democratic rights even to such an unpopular

minority as gays and lesbians.

In this light, gay and lesbian rights are becoming seen as an unofficial test of the democratic maturity of the countries of the region.

This is especially true when it comes to Gay Pride parades, owing to their visibility, Marko Jurcic, an organiser of Zagreb Pride, told Prishtina Insight.

As Zagreb Pride was taking place this summer, he recalled, EU candidate Croatia was discussing an important accession chapter on the judiciary and fundamental rights in Brussels, which is why making a good impression on the world was seen as additionally important.

However, the strategy turned out to be counter-productive, to a degree, when Croatian police were

seen attacking anti-gay protesters with what looked like undue force.

"Due to the huge political pressure, and paranoia that everything has to pass off with maximum security, the police often apply physical force to ease their jobs," Jurcic noted.

Gap between law and practice:

While police in Croatia and, this year in Serbia, have acted to prevent violence from being inflicted to Pride marchers, Balkan gays feel little or nothing is being done to protect their community from violence in general.

Aggressive soccer fans, neo-fascists, other extreme right-wingers and religiously inspired political parties regularly join together in

Bulgaria, Romania Worry Over Delays on Danube Bridge



Marian Chiriac and
Boryana
Dzhambazova

Construction of the second bridge over the Danube River between Bulgaria and Romania may face further delays, sparking fears in the two countries that EU funding could be lost.

The announcement of a possible delay came after the Bulgarian Transport Minister

Aleksander Tsvetkov and his Romanian counterpart Ana Boagiu on Wednesday visited the construction site of the bridge that is intended to link the Bulgarian town of Vidin with the Romanian town of Calafat.

Tsvetkov said that the Spanish company FCC, which is constructing the bridge, had asked for a six-month extension on the project, which the countries were not ready to grant.

Works have been delayed several times since the project was launched. According to the origi-

nal schedule, construction was due to be completed at the end of this year.

Both ministers stressed this week that any future delays are unacceptable and the FCC should complete the project by the end of next year, as agreed in the most recent project plans.

Boagiu said Thursday that Romania is considering suing the company if there are further delays.

"Construction works on the Romanian side will be finished in June next year, but the entire

bridge has to be ready at the same time. We will once again ask the Spanish company to comply with the last deadline, which is the end of 2011. If this does not happen, we will sue the company," said Boagiu.

Tsvetkov and Boagiu warned that any future slowdowns could cost both Balkan countries dearly, as they could lose EU funding provided for the project. The overall cost of the project is estimated at around EUR 226 million. Bulgaria and Romania previously negotiated with Brussels to secure an

extension of the deadline after construction slowed.

Although the Danube forms much of the border between Bulgaria and Romania, at the moment there is only one bridge along the entire 470-kilometre river stretch that provides a road connection.

This bridge is almost 60 years old and faces heavy traffic congestion - the two road and rail lanes are considered wholly inadequate for the increased volumes of traffic the bridge has seen in the years since it was built.

Neighbourhood

Beleaguered Balkan Gays



The Pride Parade was hemmed into a safe zone to protect the procession from right-wing protesters

attempts to sabotage Pride Parades in Croatia, Serbia and other Balkan countries, even though anti-discrimination laws exist to stop them.

"Death to homosexuals," is the common chant of anti-Pride protesters throughout the region.

While anti-discrimination laws prohibit hate speech in theory, the authorities in practice treat verbal and physical attacks against gays as minor offences.

Throughout the region, homophobes increasingly use Facebook groups to disseminate hate speech and threaten gays.

Since 2009, Albania, Serbia, Bosnia, Macedonia, and Montenegro have all introduced general anti-discrimination laws, mainly to improve their prospects of EU membership.

But international human rights organisations point out that a wide gap remains between actual practice and written legislation.

The international community has especially praised Albania's law for its comprehensiveness, for example. In 2009, Albania's Prime Minister, Sali Berisha, even promised a provision that would allow same-sex marriages, although this was not included in the

end in the discrimination law voted on in February 2010.

The international LGBT organisation, ILGA-Europe, has noted Albania as one of the few countries in Europe to explicitly ban discrimination on the grounds of gender identity.

But in the same month that Albania voted for its liberal anti-discrimination law, Claudian Cela's coming out on Albania's Big Brother show triggered anti-gay protests in his hometown of Lezha.

As in other countries of the region, most Albanian gays keep their sexual orientation a secret, owing to the persistent climate of homophobia.

The situation is similar in Kosovo, which, due to the influence of the international community, was one of the first countries in the region to introduce legal protection for sexual minorities, in 2004.

Today, five years on, there is still no visible gay scene in Kosovo and some gays have emigrated and sought political asylum abroad on grounds of their sexuality.

The implementation of anti-discrimination legislation in other countries has been even more problematic. Macedonia remains the only country in the region whose anti-

discrimination law does not even meet EU standards on paper.

Parliament in Skopje approved an anti-discrimination law in April 2010 with a narrow majority. But in spite of the demands of the civil-society sector, sexual orientation was not mentioned in its provisions.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, meanwhile, parliamentarians insisted on including an amendment banning the possibility of legal unions between persons of the same sex when it passed an anti-discrimination law in 2009.

In tiny Montenegro, the process of introducing an anti-discrimination law lingered until the EU listed it as a pre-condition for visa liberalisation in 2009. After that, the country's parliament suddenly approved the law with a large majority in July 2010.

Some minorities are better than others:

One of the challenges facing gays and lesbians in the region in seeking acceptance is that it is widely accepted that national and ethnic minorities are more important than most other minorities, especially sexual

minorities.

"If there are gays in Montenegro, this is bad news," the Minority Rights Minister and member of the country's ethnic Albanian minority, Ferhat Dinosa, said last November.

Dinosa has been at the centre of media attention thanks to his regular homophobic statements - while his ministry is officially responsible for protecting sexual minorities' rights.

Local civil society groups, and in particular the NGO Juventas, have called for his resignation as the only way to protect sexual minorities, but this has not happened. On the contrary, Dinosa continues to proclaim that protecting gay rights is "against the moral principles of society".

Montenegro's Dinosa may be something of an exception in his outspokenness. But while most politicians' official attitudes continue to evolve in a more liberal direction, if only under EU pressure, little else is changing for gays and lesbians in the Balkans, activists say.

According to Serbian activist Majda Puaca, from the NGO Labris, "The only thing that changed is the statements of the politicians."

Philip of Macedon Statue 'Planned' for Downtown Skopje

The latest addition to the ongoing "Skopje 2014" revamp of the Macedonian capital will be a giant EUR 5 million bronze statue of the ancient warrior king Philip of Macedon, local media say.

The tall statue of the father of Alexander the Great is to be erected opposite Skopje's central Macedonia Square, an unnamed source from Skopje's central municipality told Tuesday's edition of Vreme daily.

The municipality refused to publicly confirm the reports, however. Municipality spokesman Jovica Ackovski told Prishtina Insight: "In that location the urban plan envisages a sculpture of a warrior that should represent the centuries-old struggle of the people to survive and prosper."

Macedonian opposition parties have criticised the government for its decision to build the new statue, and for its failure to publicly disclose the figure who will be

depicted in the new monument.

The country's Bureau for Public Procurements recently published a EUR 5 million contract with an Italian company for the casting of "a statue of a warrior" which the city plans to erect at that location.

Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, whose government is financing the Skopje 2014 project, has not commented on the new statue.

Meanwhile construction works for the foundation of the statue of

Alexander the Great are underway at the Macedonia Square, while the monument itself is to be erected next year. It will cost EUR 4.5 million, the municipality said.

The planned installation of this very large statue has raised eyebrows in neighbouring Greece, where Alexander the Great is considered to be a great Greek hero. The countries have a number of ongoing disputes over historical figures, and their current disagreement over the use of the

name Macedonia has blocked Skopje's bids to join the EU and NATO.

The "Skopje 2014" project, which envisages the construction of numerous buildings and large monuments to historical figures, has also been slammed by various local NGOs and by the political opposition as being expensive and tasteless.

Some estimates say the project will cost the small country more than EUR 200 million.

Thousands of Kosovars Face Expulsion to

The case of nine-year-old twins, returned to Kosovo by Austrian Police on Wednesday, highlights the plight of thousands of families being thrown out of Western Europe.



By Petrit Collaku in
Prishtina and Vienna

Late at night, dozens of Austrian special police surrounded the Vienna home of eight-year-old Dorentina and Daniela and their father, Augustin, a skilled electric technician from Kosovo.

The family has exhausted all attempts to gain asylum in the Alpine state after arriving from Kosovo in September 2004.

Despite a campaign calling for the family to be allowed to stay in Vienna because they are well integrated, police arrived at their door on October 6 and Augustin and the children were soon on a plane to Prishtina.

Their mother, Vera, remains under psychiatric care in a Viennese hospital amid concerns that she could commit suicide.

Back in their native town of Gjakove, in western Kosovo, Augustin refuses to talk in public about the family's ordeal, telling Prishtina Insight "not to call anymore".

Grandfather Martin Komani told Prishtina Insight that his son was struggling to come to terms with his new life.

"Augustin is having problems and is not willing to talk to anyone about his past in Austria," he said.

Ulrike Lunacek, an Austrian Green MEP and European Parliament Rapporteur for Kosovo, criticised the decision to return the children. "These children grew up here; they came when they were two years old," she told Prishtina Insight. "They are Austrians not Kosovars."

But Austria's Interior Minister, Maria Fekter, is unfazed by the criticism. "Someone who does not leave the country voluntarily after an application to stay has been rejected... will be deported," she told the Austrian newspaper, Die Presse.

One family among thousands:

The Komani family is one of thousands facing return to Kosovo from Austria and other European countries each year as the security situation improves in Europe's poorest country and as repatriation agreements are signed.

One such deal was penned between Kosovo and Austria on September 30 and now looks set to speed up the process of returns.

The UN estimated in 2007 that about 100,000 Kosovars were living illegally abroad. Almost half are thought to be in Germany while sizable populations exist in countries such as Austria and Switzerland.

Many left following the end of the Kosovo conflict, which pitted the rebel Kosovo Liberation Army against the Serbian security forces. Those leaving include Albanians, Serbs and Roma.

Under pressure from EU governments, according to the human rights organisation Amnesty International, Kosovo has signed a raft of bilateral readmission agreements following its 2008 declaration of independence with Belgium, France, Germany, Switzerland and now Austria.

The agreements are necessary if Kosovo is to have any hope of joining the so-called Schengen White List. This will allow its citizens to travel without visas into European Union Schengen zone countries. Most other Balkan countries have already had visa restrictions to the Schengen zone relaxed.

According to the Kosovo government, European countries sent back more than 4,800 persons in 2009 after turning down



Dorentina and Daniela Komani sitting in their empty home before the police raid

their asylum requests. Austria alone sent back 1,129 persons that year; 907 were forcibly removed.

This year, according to Kosovo's Interior Ministry, which deals with repatriation, from January to August alone Austria sent back 622 people.

Islam Caka, head of the migration office within the ministry, said the government has allocated about 500,000 euro for the returnees, which he freely admits is not enough to ensure a soft landing for those returned.

He said the government accepts its obligation to protect and reintegrate them, but this is not easy due to shortages of funds. "We don't even know what to do with the people living here," Caka said, "so what can we do for those who are being returned?"

Caka added that the government aims to allocate some 3.5 million euro for returnees in 2011 but has yet to identify where the funding will come from.

The process of repatriation starts by verifying that the person applied for asylum is a Kosovar. "We start with birth registers, and if we have no information there we engage local police on the ground; in some cases, we find no trace of these people," Caka told Prishtina Insight.

"It is difficult to bring back families that have spent years in Western countries," he added.

But he said many of those attempting to stay in Western Europe have changed their asylum statements over time, making unrealistic claims about the problems they would face back in Kosovo.

Citing claims about 'the political situa-



Ulrike Lunacek, Austrian Green MEP



Maria Fekter, Austria's Interior Minister

Kosovo Serbs in the North Released on



The EU rule-of-law mission in Kosovo, EULEX, has released two Kosovo Serbs on remand due to obstacles surrounding jurisdiction in the northern part of Kosovo.

Jurisdiction in the Serb areas in the north of Kosovo is a complicated issue, in part because the Serb majority in those areas does not recognise Prishtina's authority. EULEX has begun increasing its presence in the north, but faces obstacles related to its jurisdiction and its attempts, together with the Kosovo government, to bring back local Serb and Albanian judges to the courts in the area.

The cases relate to the arrests last week of the Vulovic brothers

by EULEX police. Dejan Vulovic was arrested on October 4 and Srdjan Vulovic on October 6.

Dejan Vulovic was detained based on charges relating to attempted murder, unauthorised possession of weapons and causing general danger.

He was released the following day, but was ordered by a EULEX pre-trial judge to report to the police station in Leposavic twice a week. His travel documents were confiscated and he still remains a suspect.

Srdjan Vulovic was arrested on charges relating to threatening a public official, unauthorised possession of weapons and obstruct-

ing official persons in performing their duties. A pre-trial judge later ordered his detention for 15 days.

On October 8 and 9, the three-judge Appeals Panel of the District Court of Mitrovica issued two rulings in the cases against the Vulovic brothers.

The Appeal Panel quashed the two decisions handed down by the pre-trial judges because according to the panel, in both cases, the EULEX pre-trial judge lacked jurisdiction.

"The Appeal Panel found that the subsequent steps taken by the Prosecution to bring the cases under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Special Prosecutor's Office of

Feature

Forgotten Homeland



Romas returning to Kosovo face severe difficulties resettling

tion' or the economic crisis do not work anymore in Western countries, he noted.

Caka said many of these people have claimed that the now disbanded KLA would pose a threat to their lives if they returned to Kosovo.

"But there is no more KLA in Kosovo," he continued. "We have returned some of these families and nothing has happened to them since their return."

Christian Schmalzl, head of Austria's Immigration Police and Border Control, said Kosovars remain in the top three country categories of those applying for asylum, after Russians and Afghans.

The authorities in Austria, meanwhile, are attempting to persuade people who face forcible repatriation that voluntarily return is the best option. "They have time to sell their car and the things that they have earned during their time in Austria," he told Prishtina Insight.

Schmalzl said the lengthy nature of the asylum processes, including reviews in court,

allows asylum-seekers to become integrated in Austrian life. "We know that the main problem is the long-term stay... when families integrate in Austria," he said.

Lunacek agrees that part of the problem with asylum in Austria lies in the elongated process, but she believes her country would be better off proclaiming an amnesty for those who are well integrated.

Forcible returns of people who have effectively become part of Austrian life is being speeded up "because right-wing extremism is getting stronger [in Austria], and it is politically stupid", she said.

It's even worse for Roma:

While Kosovo Albanians face economic hardships on their return home, the plight of Kosovo Roma and Serb returnees is worse.

Both the Council of Europe and Amnesty International have called this year for countries to stop deporting Roma to Kosovo.

Germany alone expects to send

some 10,000 Roma, Ashkali and Balkan Egyptians to Kosovo. Half the Kosovo Roma threatened with expulsion from Germany are under 18.

In a report issued on October 1, Amnesty wrote: "Following Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence... Kosovo authorities have come under increasing pressure from Germany and other EU member states to accept returnees.

"However, the authorities in Kosovo lack the resources and political will to provide forced returnees with assistance."

Amnesty said that Germany's authorities "are obliged to provide them with protection until conditions for their safe and sustainable return and reintegration exist and there is no longer a risk of human rights violation".

The Council of Europe's migration committee last month also called on Germany to suspend its plan to return Roma to Kosovo. They should not be returned "until it is proved that they could live safely and sustainably" in Kosovo, the committee said.

Serbian Media Mogul Accused of Undermining Jolie Film

Officials in Bosnia have accused a powerful private television network in Serbia, TV PINK, of attempting to undermine a film project led by Hollywood star Angelina Jolie by spreading rumours about the film's storyline.

Sabina Arslanagic

The accusations follow a decision by the culture minister of Bosnia's Croat-Bosniak region, Gavrilo Grahovac, to suspend a filming permit previously issued for Jolie to shoot parts of her directorial debut in the Balkan country. Officials and film producers say that rape victims who protested against the film were misled by the television network about the movie's plot.

Grahovac said on Wednesday that Jolie had failed to submit the film's script to his Ministry, although this is required by law in order to be issued a permit. The permit, Grahovac said, was issued by his deputy without his knowledge.

While the minister explained that the Jolie's team could "resubmit the request... enclosing all necessary documentation", his decision appeared not to relate to procedural mistakes as it followed a meeting with representatives of an association of women who were raped during Bosnia's 1992-95 war.

The association, Women Victims of War, said they had learnt the film would tell the story of a Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) woman who falls in love with her Serb rapist and commander of a wartime prison camp in which she is held.

The association's president Bakira Hasecic, herself a rape victim, said such a storyline was an "outrageous and humiliating misrepresentation of our ordeal", but admitted she had not read the script.

The only people who have publicly claimed to have read the script are representatives of the Serbian entertainment television network PINK, which also owns a TV channel in Bosnia.

The editor in chief of PINK TV in Bosnia, Lajla Torlak, told local daily newspaper Dnevni Avaz that she had seen the script and was "disgusted" by it.

"It is about a Serb soldier who rapes a Muslim woman, cuts off one of her breasts and then they fall in love," Torlak said.

Torlak said she was among the people who advised TV PINK owner Zeljko Mitrovic against cooperating with Jolie. Several months ago, before Jolie officially confirmed her intention to write and direct the film, Mitrovic said that he had been approached by the Hollywood star to co-operate on the project, but that he rejected the offer because the film was "biased against Serbs".

Prishtina Insight contacted Torlak's office on Thursday, but she was not available for comment.



Angelina Jolie

The Sarajevo-based production company Scout Film, who are assisting Jolie on the project, said that the movie plot had "nothing to do with the accusations".

Scout Film's executive producer and location manager, Edin Sarkic, told Prishtina Insight that "nothing of the kind is in the script which, by the way, nobody has seen".

Sarkic said that they had submitted the script to Grahovac and "hoped to get a positive response as soon as possible, hopefully even today."

Emir Hadzihafizbegovic, the culture minister of the Sarajevo Canton, told local media that he was "absolutely shocked" and "could not believe that this is happening".

Hadzihafizbegovic said that it was "grotesque that the owner of a television network that was created with (Slobodan) Milosevic's financial backing was now concerned about the dignity of Bosnian women who were victims of war."

TV PINK owner Mitrovic was formerly a member of a Serbian party run for years by the wife of Serbia's strongman Slobodan Milosevic, Mira Markovic. The growth of his media empire is widely believed to have been due to the close ties with Milosevic's regime.

Hadzihafizbegovic said his message to Hasecic was that the two of them should "support with our signatures everything that Pink TV stands against".

Jolie has already started shooting the film in Hungary and was scheduled to film some of the scenes in Bosnia in November. Young Bosnian actress Zana Marjanovic, who was picked by Jolie for the lead role in the film, previously told Bosnian media that the Hollywood actress had written a highly "authentic" story.

Jolie has so far only said that the film is an apolitical love story between a Bosniak woman and Serb man who meet on the eve of the Bosnian war.

Technical Grounds

Kosovo, SPRK, and therefore under the exclusive jurisdiction of EULEX judges pursuant to the Law on Jurisdiction, could not retroactively cure the jurisdictional defect existent at the time that the pre-trial judge issued his rulings," EULEX spokesperson Karin Limdal told Prishtina Insight.

Limdal said that both defendants remain suspects and the prosecution is taking the necessary steps in order to make sure that the defendants are brought to justice.

She said that the Appeals Panel did not, in either of the two rulings, examine the merits of the

charges.

"The Appeals Panel could potentially very well agree with the Prosecution's claims, but the Appeals Panel's rulings did not take a stand on that whatsoever," she said.

She added that this was a purely technical ruling on procedures and not on evidence and because of that the defence lawyer's statements are purely his own opinions, as the Appeals Panel never examined the merits of the charges.

"On the contrary, the two rulings by the pre-trial judge, especially the one of October 6 where he ruled in full favour of the

Prosecution's request, show that the pre-trial judge found enough grounds to order the detention on remand for 15 days," Limdal said.

EULEX and Kosovo's government are still working to find a solution whereby both ethnic Serb and Albanian prosecutors, judges and other legal staff would be able to work side by side in the Mitrovica Court as well as in the jailhouse. The law-and-order situation in the north of Kosovo deteriorated sharply after Kosovo declared independence in February 2008, with majority Serb areas refusing to accept the authority of the government in Prishtina.

Double Thumbs Up, All the Way: Hitchhiking London to Prishtina

Sharing his journey with countless strangers between the capitals of Britain and Kosovo provided George Symonds with a study of humanity



By George Symonds

+

Studying international relations for four years can damage one's faith in humanity. Having completed such a Master's degree in London, I still have trouble understanding self-centred state actors unable to see beyond the narrow interests of their imaginatively defined borders; and pogroms of people divided between places of birth, creator lore, first language or hue of various body parts.

What better way to seek greater wisdom than to actually go and see and talk to people from places I've studied? What better method than hitchhiking, the most carbon efficient and interactive mode of transport? And the first stop? From the topic of statehood in international law: Kosovo.

Day one saw a young electrician, a car dealer who offered me money for the bus and a retired fishmonger get me from the outskirts of London to Dover.

As the white cliffs faded away I was soon greeted by 'Bienvenue à Calais'.

Having scared off a number or people with my attempted French, a middle-aged lady switched to English and gave me a lift.

In fact, worried that I may spend the

night in a ditch, she offered me shelter and let me join her colleague's birthday party.

In response to my questions about the *solidarité avec les sans-papiers* (solidarity for those without official papers) graffiti, and as teacher of children from immigrant groups, she later mused that, apart from Latin America, whenever she saw bad news on television she'd wonder how long it would take for those affected to reach her front door.

The following day in Belgium, a university student gave me a lift and let me stay at her flat in Leuven, even though she was going away camping that night.

Lifts through Germany involved an Islamophobic Icelandic man; a professor comparing the rights of women in the West and former East Germany (where she was under surveillance by the Stasi); sexual harassment by a middle-aged man in a boiler suit; and PhD researcher on self-healing concrete.

The kindness of strangers continued throughout the Czech Republic and Austria, where locals fed and housed me, exchanged cash free of interest and offered spontaneous tours. What struck me in the former was that despite the hospitality of Czechs, those I met seemed wary and disparaging of their fellow countrymen, and so discouraged hitchhiking. Austria was in the midst of departing Arigona Zogaj.

Croatia

started with a rainy night spent at a service station outside of Zagreb. For company I had a Bosnian man attempting to hitch back from Germany where he'd been forced to leave his family for overstaying his visa. It was his second night there.

The sunshine of Rijeka was a welcome change, even if the pot smoking and wine drinking chaps who gave me a lift nearly ran over a zaftig lady on the road.

Further down the coast, a doctor in her thirties stopped and let me join her mother for lunch. She briefly mentioned being in Rijeka during the war, but did not want to talk about it.

One girl nearly made me cry. Having spent a hot day failing to get a ride out of Split, a girl in her twenties approached to ask what I was doing.

As I attempted to explain, she produced a package full of fresh food saying her mother had prepared it after seeing me loitering. I could have fallen in love. Going to say thank you, her family fed me further and even gave me a lift.

Heading south, more people would ask if my friend in Kosovo was 'Serb or Albanian'. Luxembourgish seemed a better answer. References to Tito also became more frequent, usually in a positive light.

One topless marble carver who looked like Foucault lamented: "He was a dictator but fair. When he died his family got nothing."

A former Croatian Navy Captain described the British as 'Bastards ... Number one trouble makers in the world'. But he reserved the more offensive expletives for the Serbs.

Cutting in east towards Bosnia, an off-duty police man waved us through the Metkovi border:

He blasted out techno, turned on his wipers and shouted 'disco, disco!' while overtaking every car possible.

Stranded that night in Capljina, the owner of the local bar ROBOT warned: "There are lots of crazy people."

While I pondered the vicinity of the nearest landmine, locals outside a café called me over for a drink.

Seeing my predicament, they let me spend the night in the store-room.

Sarajevo is sprinkled with bullet holes. Wandering into the Holiday Inn, I followed signs marked 'interview'.

Walking into the restaurant, the woman within a nest of wires asked: "Are you here for the Afghanistan interview?"

"What? Yes, of course," I said.

"Which position?"

"Administrative."

"CV please," she concluded.

I have not heard back since, but it appears post-conflict territories are fertile recruiting ground for military contractors hiring at 17,000 dollars a year.

The hos-

tel owner, being one of those potential recruits, told me: "During the war I saw many bad things. Those people who left, they were smart, you know."

"Next time, I don't care. I will leave everything and go. The people here, they are not good people, you know, I would say some are really, evil, you know."

He also discouraged hitchhiking. In Serbia questions about my friend's ethnicity continued.

Somehow I had missed the popularity of ethnology in the region; and 1389 sprayed onto motorway signs was not an alternative speed limit.

Crossing into Kosovo, the driver exclaimed 'welcome to the jungle, Somalia!'

In Mitrovica the plethora of symbols – from Serbian flags to UN, EU and NGO logos – instantly assaulted the senses.

But what is the broader whole these various factions represent?

On the bumpy ride down to Prishtina, I felt hitchhiking had been therapeutic for my faith in humanity, but questions of how this humanity is divided and controlled remain as stark as ever.

Perhaps Nietzsche was right when stating that 'madness is something rare in individuals – but in groups, parties, peoples, ages it is the rule'.

But who is a hitchhiker to say?



From Polaroids to the Silver Screen: "Gezim is an Artist"

"Tell them I'm an artist," Gezim said as soon as his friends approached our conversation. Gezim, a former cigarette seller from Prizren, has crammed in photography, acting and hard labour in his short life. He tells Rina Meta about his dreams.



By Rina Meta

He is 20 years old. In his bag full of adventures, many things are difficult to understand. Ready to sacrifice the memories of his early childhood, Gezim carefully counts only the dreams he has had since being eight years old.

That was the time when Gezim moved from a small village, which had only a small school and an old mosque, to the big town – Prizren.

The past years have turned small Kosovar towns into fragmented images of the naive imagination of hopeless people, who saw hidden chances of success in city life.

With cold schools, without English teachers, and without a market to sell the rotting wheat in granaries, villages look more like scary shadows of beautiful landscapes rather than a source of hope for a better life.

Away from the complex of broken dreams

The seven members of the Kelmendi family – the mother, father, two sisters and three brothers – left the village of Bllaca to move into a house with an unknown owner in Prizren.

Today, they live in another house, the owner of which is not known either.

Their house is amongst a complex of buildings in Prizren, where hundreds of families have found shelter without an authorisation or resident permit.

But the second place is warmer, there are no leaks during the winter, and it even has glass in the windows.

Far away from this complex of broken dreams, Gezim spends most of his time downtown and in the surrounding neighbourhoods, which in his memories is the site of his first love.

The curiosity to find out hidden stories behind old town windows made Gezim drop out of school while in seventh grade.

Gezim now says that his family simply could not afford sending him to school. But a reoccurring theme in his story is the endless love for the town and its streets.

Polaroid cut 450 jobs in America and left one disappointed person in Prizren

Forgotten at school, but present in the museum-town, Gezim made money by selling instant photo-

graphs, taken with his first Polaroid camera.

He began in 2002 and his aim was simply to make some money. The enthusiasm for better composition and photos came later.

Summer holidays usually bring home many emigrants, whom Gezim calls 'schatz', from the German word for 'sweet-heart', and, as a result, golden times.

He introduced himself to almost all those that visited the town. He recalls making more money than university professors and gathering enough money to afford the house where his big family found shelter.

This beautiful fairytale of the little photographer, who was chased by many visitors for his photos, lasted five years.

"I quit photography. Or, I'd better say photography left me. The

factory is not making films anymore," says Gezim, referring to the closure of the factory in 2008, which produced films for his Polaroid camera. The production of the cameras halted much earlier.

Gezim does not recall the international news at that time, but the closure was the final action of this beautiful chapter of photography.

As film sales continued to drop yearly by 25 per cent from 2000, the company announced the closure of the factory in February 2008, cutting 450 jobs in the US and leaving at least one very disappointed person in Prizren.

Equipped with a sense for survival, Gezim left his Polaroid home, bought a variety of cigarettes boxes and joined the group of the most notorious street hawkers in the region. The little Kosovar cigarette sellers have

often attracted media attention, referred to in rap and folk songs, but they have never been a priority for social policies.

Due to this, the number of young cigarette vendors who see the sunrise and sunset in the cafeterias and bars of Kosovo towns has been on the rise.

Out of Love

Gezim does not like empty talk, and storytelling is not his most powerful weapon. But his scratched skin does not hide the experiences that gave Gezim unimaginable moments.

He does not have a recollection of everything that has gone on so far, but his face shines when he speaks about the most moving chapter of his life – the moments when he was an actor.

"Out of Love" is a fictional doc-



umentary that presents the stories of young Kosovar cigarette vendors to international audiences.

Danish producer Birgite Staermose and a small Kosovar team spent several months with the kids, compiling their stories into poems that were recited by Gezim and other young cigarette sellers.

Through the film, Gezim discovered himself – he found himself as one of the main narrators, surrounded by a team of professionals, and fell crazily in love with the attention he received.

Listing his potential occupations to make living, Gezim mentions construction work and agriculture, but acting remains his dream.

Gezim is in love with acting and believes that his selection for this role was not mere fate. He feels special. He is familiar with the streets and the stage. He has everything but an English language course, which was recently closed down in his town.

He recalls the immensity of the cameras, but he has forgotten the text he had learned by heart within a night.

He remembers the high professionalism of the team and feels equal with them.

Gezim is ready for a second film. He only needs a chance; meanwhile he has decided to do hard construction work in the Montenegrin seaside until next year.

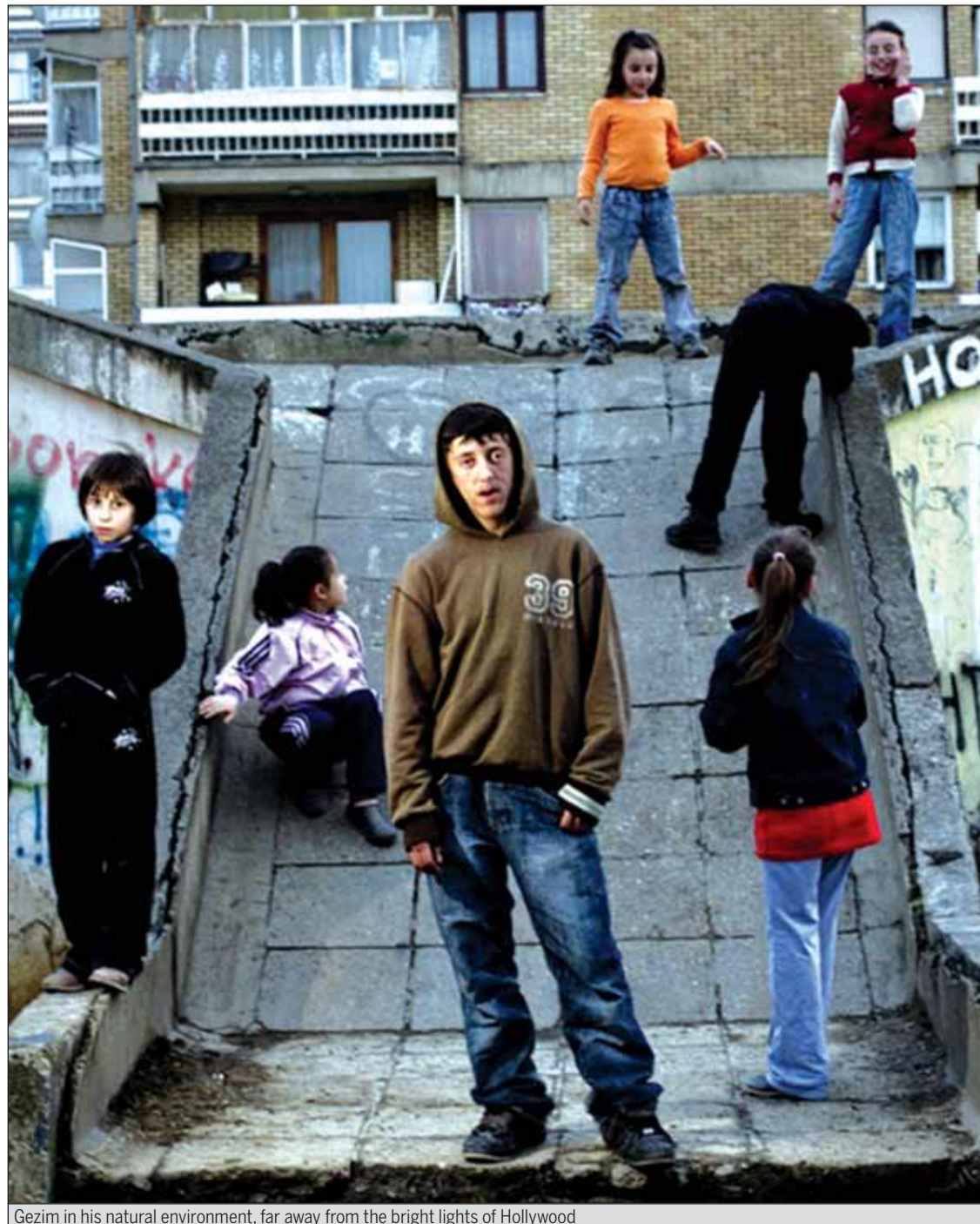
Now, several years after he dropped out of school, Gezim feels paralysed.

He was extremely happy when the film was awarded the "Golden Tiger" prize in the Rotterdam Film Festival, which is one of the five most famous festivals of the world, together with Cannes, Venice and Berlin. He proudly relives the minutes when his portrait was presented as the film logo for the Berlinale festival in Berlin.

But the anxiety of survival spoils his dream. Before going to sleep, Gezim prays – he prays to God for money, money to build a house for his mother, father, sisters and brothers. He has everything else, but he needs just a little money until he grows up.

But until then, remember that Gezim is an artist!

This story is an edited version of an article which appeared on www.kosovotwopointzero.com. Kosovo 2.0 is a web portal which documents and promotes Kosovar youth in English, Albanian and Serbian.



Gezim in his natural environment, far away from the bright lights of Hollywood

Enjoy Allbar's Romantic Vibe



By Fortuna

Hidden between the old OSCE building and City Hipermarket in downtown Prishtina, you can find one of the city's latest culinary gains, Allbar.

Although the days of summer have gone and the grim weather has put an end to outdoor lunching, the restaurant is well prepared for those sun beams to return; a covered modern terrace offers the possibility to enjoy your meal outside, undisturbed by traffic and people rushing by.

The restaurant has an original, arty interior; the flowery motives give the place a 'wintery romantic' feel: light and warm at the same time. The room is furnished with comfortable couches along one of the walls. In case you do not want to risk dozing off, or prefer a bit more privacy, go for one of the spaces on the mezzanine.

The restaurant offers a good place to escape your daily worries. The staff are very friendly and the music fits perfectly with the tranquil atmosphere; as soon as Sharika sounds from

the speakers it is quickly replaced by Tracey Chapman, something one has to appreciate.

The menu offers options for all meals of the day: breakfast (eggs and toast), the regular sandwiches for a light lunch and a small variety of pizza, pasta and meat.

We started lunch with one of Allbar's delicious salads, prepared with goat cheese, tomatoes, lettuce, carrots and peppers. A decent starter for 3 euro. The chicken soup, a bowl of plain (but colourful orange) bouillon, was less convincing but would work well to keep you warm during the cold winter days that are ahead.

Main courses are available from 3 euro up to 5 euro. The rump steak is served with very tasty fried onions and freshly baked potatoes, which offer an excellent supplement to the tender and succulent steak.

The chicken risotto with vegetables is not really up to snuff: the vegetables must have got lost on the way to our table and the overkill of salt prevented me from enjoying the otherwise tasty chicken.

For dessert, the restaurant presents the standard choice of tiramisu and 'chess cake'. But then again, why



The atmosphere in Allbar is all bar none

change a winning formula?

Allbar provides a lovely and relaxing environment to escape from a hectic day at work, with a nice variety of dishes on the menu.

If only they put the lid on the salt jar, after all modesty is a virtue, the

restaurant would be even more of an asset to the culinary scene.



Allbar
Rr Fazli Grajqevci, Prishtina
045 402 501
www.Allbar.com

Where to pick up Prishtina Insight?

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

Filikaqa Sports Bar

Prishtina's best sports bar offers the perfect setting to watch a game on over a dozen HDTV screens, guzzle down a metre of beer and tuck in to some delicious food. There is enough space to accommodate large crowds and still maintain enough legroom and breathing space between rival supporters, or those wanting to watch different games, whether it is a Liverpool match, NFL game, or cycling race. Filikaqa's menu includes spicy chicken wings, beef nachos, cheese-stuffed pizza, fried chicken, burgers and fries. Every Friday, join Filikaqa for karaoke nights.



Filikaqa
Rr. Mujo Ulqinaku BL 4/1
Pejton, Prishtina
www.filikaqa.com
+381 38 244 288

Cavallero Mexican Restaurant

You can almost transport yourself to the Mexican coast, with soaring palm trees and an immaculate five star resort, while dining at Cavallero Mexican Cantina. Mouth-watering appetizers and savoury main dishes are nicely washed down with countless cocktail options and even imported Mexican beer. Gather you're friends and bring on the fiesta. Cavallero has a great terrace where you can enjoy the summer breeze. For more information, visit their facebook page, or contact them.



Cavallero,
Located next to the ex-UNMIK
building
Prishtina
+377 44 508 980
Facebook page



Paddy O'Brien's

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cantina am-pm Restaurant

Cantina AM-PM, formerly known as Mexican Cantina, recently went through a transfer to new management, and although hardly noticeable from a distance, the new owners have transformed the venue into a more grown-up affair with good, cheap food. Cantina offers Mexican dishes at reasonable prices, starting from less than 5 euro. Although the majority of the food is Mexican-influenced, Cesar salad and pizza have been included too.



Mexican favourites served up at Cantina include tortilla, thicker pan-friend tortilla, nacho chips and burrito. Cantina's also offers a very pleasant area for al fresco dining.

Cantina AM-PM
Rr Qamil Hoxha
Prishtina
+377 49 710 710

Hotel AFA

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



15, Rr Ali Kelmendi,
Sunny Hill,
Prishtina
+381 38/225 226
www.hotelafa.com

Te Komiteti

Te Komiteti's large trees and a beautifully garden, which surround the small outdoor terrace, give you an impression of an exclusive place for ordinary people. And this is exactly what it is. From brunch to lunch-time snacks and special evening meals, this restaurant offers dishes comprising quality, varied ingredients, combined to perfection. Alongside one of Prishtina's best 'modern European' style menus, you'll also find a good selection of wine, and great sangria and cocktails.



Te Komiteti
Qamil Hoxha
Street
Prishtina
+381 38 24 96 63

Prishtina Diary

Friday, October 15, 2010

Mango shopping night, starting from 6 pm: buy a piece from the new winter 2010 collection and get 30 per cent discount; get a new purse for every purchase; make-up artists, stylist and photographers will take care of your look; special music from DJ Flow and refreshments.



The inimitable **Filikaqa** karaoke session will start from 9 pm; for reservations call 044 788 748; 038 244 288; 038 609 180. Visit the Facebook page for more information.

Trafik Gallery gets its second exhibition going in its small intimate space. Right turn Right is an exhibition of four new, Kosovar artists, Grab a beer and enjoy. Trafik is found at Boulevard Deshmoret e Kombit no. 6, near the main ProCredit Bank, Prishtina. The exhibition ends on October 30.

At **Pure Pure** (under Prishtina stadium) catch BimBimma and Dj Jungle

Until October 21, 2010

The **Art Gallery of Kosovo** has an ongoing photographic exhibition by Norman H. Gershman.

Besa: Albanians who saved the Jews during the Second World War

Wednesday, October 27, 2010

Kosova Kamer Fest, the festival of Festival for Chamber Music. Red Hall, 8 pm, British artists in Kamer Fest: Ristov Quartet, Marko Pop-Ristov (violin), Jorien Veenhove (violin), Thomas Besnard (piano), William Imbert (violoncello).



Friday, October 29, 2010

Red Hall, 8 pm, American and Kosovo artist in Kamer Fest: Derek Han (piano), Trio Harkor Kosova, Sihana Badivuku (violin), Blerim Grubi (violin), Aristidh Prosi (violoncello), Visar Kuci (violin).

Saturday, October 30, 2010

Red Hall, 8 pm, German artists in Kamer Fest: Dejean Quartet, Ulrich Puhn (flutes), Helmut Simon (violin), Joachim Schwarz (violin), Cornelius Schmaderer (violoncello).

Never Back Home movie

Never Back Home, Monday, October 18, 2010

Premiere of the documentary film *Never Back Home / Nachi Palem Kheredirected by Sami Mustafa* and produced with the support of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo.

This film has been in development for more than seven years. *Never Back Home* captures the stories and shows the living conditions of families from different parts of Kosovo who are internally displaced in Plemetina.

In 2000, a year after losing their homes in the Kosovo conflict, 161 Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian families from four Kosovo towns were moved to a 'temporary community shelter', the so-called Plemetina/Plemetin IDP Camp, 14 km north-west of Kosovo's capital city. The camp residents organised like a mini municipality. The years passed. The day

comes - the year was 2004 - and the first Kosovo Prime Minister, Bajram Rexhepi, and the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary General, Soren Jessen-Petersen, visit the camp. They promised to close it.

Two years later, some families have returned to their hometowns, and some still remain in camp barracks, but most families that did not own land are placed in two apartment buildings (now called Social Housing Buildings) at the same place where the camp used to be.

Prishtinë / Priština
Monday, October 18, 8 pm - ODA Theater
Plemetina / Plemetin
Wednesday, October 20, 6 pm - Community center
Prizren
Monday, October, 25, 6 pm -



House of Culture
Mitrovicë / Mitrovica
Tuesday, October 26, 2010, 6 pm
18:00 - Osterode Camp Youth Center
Ferizaj / Uroševac
Thursday, October 28, 6 pm - Youth Center
Nachi Palem Khere / Never Back Home: Synopsis

Prishtina Insight recommends

Nouvelle Vague in Prishtina, October 22, in the backyard of the Youth Centre, Prishtina. T

Tickets on sale from October 13, 7 euro each.

SURF Collective is a new Kosovar cultural initiative that aims to bring qualitative global cultural content to Kosovo public. Contemporary art, comics, graffiti, architecture, and last but not least - oh so cool music. Following the successful Morcheeba concert this summer, SURF is now bringing another top musical act - Nouvelle Vague.

Nouvelle Vague is a French musical collective led by musicians

Marc Collin and Olivier Libaux.

Their songs of innovative covers of punk rock, post-punk, and New Wave songs put to 60s bossa nova-style arrangements.

The Washington Post calls them "fabulous," while Rolling Stones hails them as "messengers of new wave of French music".

Official SURF shop, where you can buy tickets, T-shirts and posters will be situated in the DVD shop across 92 Police Station on Luan Haradinaj Str.

For more, you can find out at their facebook profile 'SURF Presents: Nouvelle Vague in Kosova'.



The Karate Kid

Every day, at 5 pm

ABC Cinema continues screening the movie *The Karate Kid*.

Action and adventure are promised in this two-hour movie, produced by Harald Zwart and with a cast of Jaden Smith, Jackie Chan and Tarji P.Henson.

Dre Parker, 12 years old, and his mother leave for China for work. There, he falls in love with a roommate but the cultural differences make their relationship difficult.

Dre starts having trouble with class bully Chengu. Dre knows some karate, but the most popular sport is Kung Fu and Cheng is a champion. Dre is left to learn Kung Fu from an old master and fights Chengu.



Eat Pray Love

Every day at 7.30pm and 10 pm

ABC cinema screens this recent release, starring Julia Roberts and James Franco, and directed by Ryan Murphy.

A woman who once made it her goal in life to marry and rear a family finds her priorities suddenly shifting in director Ryan Murphy's adaptation of author Elizabeth Gilbert's best-selling memoir.

In the eyes of many, Gilbert was a woman who had it all - a loving husband, a great apartment, and a weekend home - but sometimes you realise too little too late that you haven't got what you truly wanted from life.

On the heels of a painful divorce, the woman who had previously looked forward to a contented life of domesticated bliss sets out to explore the world and seek out her true destiny.



Donkeys of the Border

Cinema ABC will also screen the premiere of the movie *Donkeys of the Border (Gomaret e kufirit)*, by Jeton Ahmetaj, on Monday, October 25, 2010.

For more info and ticket reservations visit www.kinoabc.info or call 038 244 238.

Ecosovo

The hyacinths on the rubbish heap



By Elizabeth Gowing

I am going to have to come clean: I am not very good at getting dirty; not expert at work that gives you soil under your fingernails and leaves in your hair. But this week I have been muddying my trainers and making a tiny part of Kosovo a tiny bit greener.

I have done four mornings of gardening at the invitation of a group of impressive young men from Fushë Kosovë. Behar, Muhamedin, Veton and Ymri all attended the environmental summer programme in Rugova that our NGO, The Ideas Partnership, ran a few months ago together with local NGO, ERA, and the UK's Balkan Peace Park Project. During the summer camp all the kids who attended, aged 9 to 15, were supported to plan a project that they would like to carry out after the camp, to improve the environment of Kosovo.

Behar, Veton, Muhamedin and Ymri decided they wanted to create a garden for the Fidan Lahu centre in their neighbourhood.

We haven't yet managed to source any blackcurrant bushes ("we want just to be able to stick our hand in the bushes and eat the fresh berries, like we did in Rugova," suggested Behar as he surveyed the Fidan Lahu centre's concrete setting during our planning meeting). But we've made a start, with shrubs and creepers and the beginnings of a vegetable patch, with onions.

At the garden centre (the well-stocked Kalia, near Lipjan, on the road to Skopje), the boys also chose the bulbs they wanted to plant. They had strong feelings about the colours there should be in their garden, and we left the centre with a delicious array of hyacinth bulbs.

The boys dug the resistant ground outside the temporary buildings so they could plant these hyacinths. The ground was stony, filled with old bricks, bottles, plastic bags.

"It takes 400 years for plastic to biodegrade," said Veton, and we all vowed once again not to accept unnecessary plastic bags when we went shopping.

The digging continued, and we unearthed an old shoe, scraps of clothing.

Then I found a bone and really started to worry. One of the staff from the centre, who was passing, saw my face. "Don't be scared – it's just that this was a

rubbish heap before the war," he said.

"A huge rubbish heap; when we got permission to be able to use the land for a community centre we had to remove 100 truckloads of garbage before we could build."

Some wonderful things have already started blooming where that rubbish was once piled. Balkan Sunflowers base an impressive education programme for the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children at the centre, including homework clubs, women's literacy classes, pre-school activities and catch-up classes in Albanian and Serbian.

Another programme targets health education. And now the 370 people who use the centre every day will walk past green tendrils clutching the high metal fences that surround the building.

As the children line up for classes next year they will do so in the scent of spring flowers, and the free lunch served every day can include a side-order of home-grown onions.

Will the garden survive? We heard skepticism from some of the people who passed while we worked. "What if people trash it?" They asked. "Well what if we didn't plant it, just because we were worried that they might?" was the reply.

The boys discussed the deterrents at their disposal: razor wire, electric fences, calling the police.

In the end Veton went home and made a sign to tie to the fence: "We planted this garden. Please enjoy it."

The boys have learned all kinds of things from the project: why you don't kill worms, how the plastic bags you chuck out today might threaten the success of your garden tomorrow, but also, and most importantly, that you can have an idea to improve your neighbourhood, and turn the idea into reality.

For a community that has already transformed its rubbish heap into rooms where learning takes place, I am crossing my fingers that those bulbs make it safely into bloom.

Elizabeth Gowing is a founder member of The Ideas Partnership, a Kosovar NGO working on educational, cultural and environmental projects. Responses, offers of help for other community gardens or suggestions for inclusion in future columns will find her at theideaspartnership@gmail.com

Shop Review

Where to Find Antiques and Traditional Handcrafts

It's not easy to find original carpets and quality antiques in Kosovo's capital, so Prishtina Insight has compiled a list of some of the best places to shop



By Belinda Vrapi

Baruku: A Veritable Aladin's Cave

From the outside it looks like any other jewellery shop in Prishtina, but what you see inside is quite different.

The shelves of Baruku, a small shop on UCK Street in the Qafa neighbourhood, are heaving with all types of antiques, ranging from jewellery to religious icons.

Mr Fatmir has been running this family business for 43 years.

He has been working with silver, mainly filigree, a tradition in Kosovo among the jewellery makers.

The shop sells handmade pieces, but also other kinds of jewellery which Mr Fatmir has collected from villages and shops across the Balkans.

At Baruku you can find earrings, necklaces, bracelets, watches and other pieces of jewellery, with the price of silver being 10 euro per gramme.

But it is the collection of antiques which Mr Fatmir has been collecting over the years that make the place special.

"50 years ago, I travelled to Albania, to villages and markets, and collected jewellery and items. I kept them at home during the Serbian regime and started selling them only after independence" he told Prishtina Insight.

The antique items are more than 100 years old, and include heavy and intricate necklaces and other items, with beautiful elaborate designs.

There are crosses, two pieces of

Islamic art and an icon, several jewellery boxes and many candle holders and coffee pots.

Foreign customers seem to value his wares and one of the pieces was recently bought at for 3,000 euro.

So, delve into Mr Fatmir's Aladin's cave of antiques – you will not be disappointed.

*Baruku
Rr UCK, near the ProCredit
Bank, Prishtina*

Delvina For Traditional Handicrafts

While the streets of Prishtina are littered with substandard souvenirs mostly made in China, Souvenir Shop Delvina provides alternative keepsakes all produced at home. While mostly focused on traditional costumes, other items are also plentiful.

At first glimpse, Delvina comes across as a hectic bazaar stall, with heaps of fabric, rugs, costumes and ornaments hanging from walls and taking up every available space. The store may be small, but its collection is quite eminent.

Due to its long-standing family tradition, Delvina has earned a reputation for meticulously stitching traditional costumes for both men and women. The methods and materials used to sew the folkloric wear are equivalent to those used hundreds of years ago.

Although traditional Kosovar dresses varies by region, many aspects are prominent in many parts of the Balkans. Delvina uses varying styles, from Kosovo and neighbouring Albania.

Although costumes are readily available at the store, the family also creates custom designs for clients. These creations take

between four to five days to be completed.

Prices for male costumes start from 150 euro, and can reach 300 euro depending on the materials used. Heavier wool traditionally used for trousers contributes to the elevated price.

For female costumes, prices range from 80 to about 200 euro. However, rare items such as accessories created a century ago can cost more.

Delvina's fabrics can also be used for alternative purposes. Colourful and heavily embroidered materials can be used for home decorating and interior design.

Other souvenirs available at the shop include traditional instruments, footwear, headwear, jewellery, mini clay monuments, bowls and plates, bags, and post-cards.

*Souvenir Shop Delvina
Rr. Bill Clinton, above TEB
bank, Prishtina
044 336 159*

Souvenir Shop

Entering Boro Ramiz shopping mall right behind the NEWBORN statue, on the left side behind the bars there is a small shop which sells handmade traditional clothing.

Displayed on shelves are table cloths of various colours and materials, traditionally woven rugs, bags woollen socks, traditional clothing and a lot more, all handmade.

Although the shop doesn't have a name, it's easy to find as the display of goods is visible through the glass windows.

*Souvenir Shop
Boro Ramiz, Prishtina*



Some of Baruka's treasures

Inside Prishtina



Outside In An Election a Year, Keeps the Nation in Gear!



By Kreshnik Hoxha

There is something interesting about us as Kosovars when it comes to being uniquely special.

It's a special stuff that only people of Kosovo manage successfully: we are the best at being attention seekers and keeping the media obsessed with us; we are subject to hundreds of foreigners coming to explore us as if we are some sort of mutated scientific mystery; we produce more daily political drama than we can absorb ourselves; and more uniquely, we produce more elections than any other country on the continent.

So, there we are, again, we don't have a President. He is not dead, God forbid! But the Constitutional Court killed his presidential career, in this way dropping Kosovo in the middle of an early general election.

This state of affairs has definitely been worrying Serbia's President Boris Tadic, as this implies a delay in the Prishtina-Belgrade negotiations.

But, surely he should be having more important stuff to seriously worry about. His "Sejdiu-style" breach of Constitution could be a good start!

Anyway, that's their business and we as neighbours should not intrude. Our own internal mess is giving us enough work to sort out and if we come up with a solution, we can then, as a gesture of good-neighbourly relations, advise Boris Tadic on problem solving and this sort of basic dialogue should make Catherine Ashton smile.

And, of course, we all want to find out the definite date of the elections. That was just a Hillary Clinton away.

Being the hospitable nation we are, we were excited about her to visit and enjoyed the pleasure of her presence, but honestly, this time around, I was more excited about her departure, so that Jakup Krasniqi could finally announce the date of the elections and we could all catch up on some sleep.

Hillary's departure was important to ensure that Jakup remains sane. Running around between the parliament and the president's office is certainly good physical exercise, but since Krasniqi has no aspirations to compete in the London Olympics – it's best for him to concentrate on one job at a time. He must have been fed up with meeting all political parties in Kosovo, 'Skyping' with Ramush Haradinaj on a day-to-day basis, and even worse, dealing with the likes of Albin Kurti, Shpend Ahmeti and Ilir Deda, as if the others weren't enough of a pain.

The election date is important not just to Jakup but to all voters in Kosovo because, I guess, we love democracy so much, that we can't even wait a full mandate before we start to salivate and yearn for voting in the next round.

This must be some sort of fetish with the ballot. Even Americans don't manage this.

But hey, an election a year, keeps the nation in gear.

Bar Review:

Trafik Galeri

Trafik has rightly earned itself a reputation as one of Prishtina's best late-night watering holes.

Its grungy interior, comfortable seats, good music and very cheap prices make it difficult to resist when you are searching for that mythical 'one last drink'.

But the venue is moving beyond the usual peanuts-and-

beers ethos with the opening of its new gallery.

Ok, so it's a shame that Trafik has lost some of its already limited seating area, but the opportunity to sup a cold one and check out some of the Balkans' best up-and-coming artists more than makes up for it.

Trafik Galeri's first exhibition brought the work of a

Sarajevo-based graffiti artists.

But Milan Lazic's work is soon to be replaced with those of four Kosovo talents.

From October 15, the space will be displaying Driton Selmani's cartoons, and another three artists will follow.

The Exhibition will end on October 30.

Owner Burim Berisha said the new gallery has already

attracted a great deal of interest.

*Trafik Galeri
Open from 4pm to late
Boulevard Deshmoret e
Kombit no. 6, near the main
ProCredit Bank, Prishtina
Visit Trafik Galeri on
Facebook for more information*

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Rr: Fehmi Agani 44/1A (Kafet e vogla) Prishtinë

• Email: mejtani@gmail.com • Phone: 044 246 620



A woman looks onto her burnt home during the Kosovo conflict

Jeta ne Kastriot

Women's Charity Calls for Funds to Support Work



By Belinda Vrapi

“I saw women losing their husbands, being physically maltreated, raped and reduced to complete misery,” said Luljeta Selimi, a journalist and translator who worked as a reporter during the Kosovo conflict in 1999.

These memories led Selimi to create Jeta ne Kastriot (Life in Kastriot) in 2000 to help the women victims of war.

She also turned these traumatic experiences into a book, available at the Institute of Albanology, for 5 euro.

“The intention was to write it to inform the national and international public but also use the revenue to buy items for the women whom the NGO now helps,” said Selimi. The book has been translated into French, German and English.

Jeta ne Kastriot provides medical assistance, clothes and food to widows, women who have lost support from their families and victims of rape. Women from all ethnicities have received assistance.

The NGO has brought together psychologists, gynecologists and others professionals, who work on a voluntary basis.

“We all have full time jobs but do this out of compassion for these women who have suffered and are still deeply suffering,” said Selimi.

Every day, after standard work hours, the volunteers meet and visit families and women. During the week, due to time and travel constraints, they visit homes in Prishtina and nearby towns.

During the weekend, however, the team often put in a 12-hour day, travelling across Kosovo to speak to women, check on their health and deliver food and clothes.



Luljeta Selimi's book on the conflict

Women have been provided with free medical check ups in Prishtina and, when possible, have even been sent out of the country.

Anonymity is an important issue, so they are registered under the NGO's name.

Drugs, which are usually

donated from the Netherlands, are also provided to them for free.

At the moment, 48 women who have open scars on their face and need continuous medical care are waiting for assistance.

Two lucky ones are expected to leave for treatment in Norway soon.

Jeta ne Kastriot does not have regular donors, making it difficult for them to sustain their work.

Behgjet Pacolli offers 500 euros every month for food and basic needs.

“There are no permanent donors, and it's very hard to help these women. Any help would be of such great relief,” adds Selimi.

The NGO also provides care and assistance to children.

For holidays such as Bajram or New Year, Jeta ne Kastriot hands out gifts and for the start of the school term, it offers bags, notebooks and pens.

The NGO has been training its staff continuously and currently has the team learning about trauma recovery and psychology.

Apart from helping the women with medicines, clothing and food, Jeta ne Kastriot has also organised courses in hairdressing, tailoring and computer studies. “However,” said Selimi, “integrating the women into society is very difficult”

For more information visit <http://www.vajzat.com>

Swedish Troupe performs for RAE Children



By Lawrence Marzouk

A Swedish vocal ensemble and theatrical troupe which has performed at the Nobel Prize Ceremony put on a show for RAE children in Kosovo earlier this month.

The Romeo and Julia Choir held workshops with Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children at Balkan Sunflowers Learning Centers in Fushe Kosova, Shtime and Plemetina.

Founded in 1991 at the Royal Dramatic Theatre of Stockholm,

the thirteen-voice Romeo and Juliet Choir has been heralded as one of Sweden's most innovative ensembles.

Balkan Sunflowers is an international grassroots organisation, founded in 1999 to aid Kosovar refugees.

Since opening the Learning Centers Network in 2008, Balkan Sunflowers has seen many direct and indirect educational and social benefits.

Directly or indirectly, 6,400 Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians living in the four towns are positively affected through the education programme.

For more information visit <http://learningcentersnetwork.org>

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Parts of ICJ Opinion “Superficial and Ultimately Unconvincing”



By Gazzini Tarcisio

This short note discusses, from the standpoint of general international law, the declaration of independence as part of the process leading to the creation of a new state and the applicability to non-state actors of the obligation to respect the territorial integrity of states. It focuses on paragraphs 79 and 80 of the advisory opinion recently delivered by the International Court of Justice in relation to the declaration of independence made by Kosovo.

In paragraph 79 the Court makes two important points. A third one, which I am not going to discuss here, relates to the developments of international law during the second half of the 20th century and the emergence of a rule creating a right to independence for the people of non-self-governing territories and peoples subject to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation.

The first point is pretty obvious and purely descriptive: some declarations of independence since the 18th century resulted in the creation of new states; others did not. The process leading to the creation of new states is normally ignited by a declaration of independence. Such an act, however, is neither necessary nor sufficient. The outcome of the declaration of independence, and in particular the possible creation of a new state, is a matter of fact (see, for instance, Opinion 1 delivered by the Arbitral Commission established by the then European Communities in the context of the Yugoslav crisis). This is nothing but an application of the principle of effectiveness that permeates the entire international legal order. A state comes into existence when an independent government effectively and permanently exercises its authority over a population and a territory.

The second point concerns the existence of an international rule prohibiting the making of a declaration of independence. The Court held that such a rule has not emerged. It did not engage in a full discussion of the relevant state practice and *opinio juris*. Rather it limited itself to noting that state practice has not been uniform and general enough to affirm the emergence of such a rule.

However cursory, the finding is correct. The history of the United States is particularly interesting as it confirms the incoherence of state practice. In 1776 the thirteen colonies formally declared their independence from the British Empire and were able to establish an independent and effective government. France rapidly reacted to the new factual situation, and concluded with the new government a treaty of amity and commerce. Needless to say, the British government considered the declaration of independence to be unlawful and the conduct of France to be contrary to international law.

Less than 90 years later, in 1861, the

Southern States declared their independence from the rest of the United States. The declaration was followed by a long and deadly civil war. The outcome of the conflict, however, was radically different from the war of independence fought by the thirteen colonies, as the seceding government was defeated and the United States' territorial integrity preserved.

Once it is accepted that international law does not prohibit the making of a declaration of independence, it must be noted that, at any rate, such a prohibition would hardly have any impact on the behaviour of the entities that may contemplate making one. Such an act is already normally considered a serious criminal offence by the state concerned and is likely to meet the firm resistance of the same state, if necessary by military means.

The crux of the matter is not whether international law prohibits a declaration of independence made by an entity which may develop in due time into a state, but whether international law imposes upon other states any obligations in relation to a declaration of independence. These obligations may include the obligation not to recognise the new entity, the obligation not to support the new entity and so on. In other words, international law is more concerned with the consequences of declaration of independence for other states, rather than on the lawfulness of such a declaration.

From this perspective, states have clearly preferred to keep the question within the realm of politics and refrained from assuming any international obligations related to the making of the declaration of independence. This may be not the case if the declaration of independence is followed by the use of military force against the concerned state.

This brings us to the finding made in paragraph 80 of the advisory opinion that the principle of territorial integrity is confined to the relations between states. In order to refute the argument made during the proceedings that the prohibition of declarations of independence is implicit in the principle of territorial integrity, the Court moves beyond the declaration of independence, briefly discusses the general prohibition on the use of force existing under the United Nations Charter and customary international law, and finally – without offering any explanation – indicates that only States are subject to such a prohibition.

It is argued that the finding is both unnecessary for the purpose of this advisory opinion and possibly misleading as a matter of general international law. It is unnecessary as the Court could have simply built on its previous findings to hold that a declaration of independence is by definition contrary to the territorial integrity of the state concerned. Indeed, the act is deliberately aimed at affecting the territorial integrity of the concerned State.

The finding is also misleading as it conveys the idea that entities other than States are not bound by the general prohibition on the use of force. Here the Court is following its own

narrow approach on the right to resort to force in self-defence. In the Construction of the Wall opinion, it held that Article 51 can be invoked only by a state with regard to other states.

It is unfortunate that the Court failed to distinguish the question of whether the declaration of independence was consistent with international law from the question of whether the rules on the use of force apply to the authors of such declaration. The two questions are independent. The first one falls within the scope of the request from the General Assembly and is capable of a clear answer. The second one, on the contrary, goes beyond the competence of the Court and has proved intractable for several reasons, including the controversial legal status of the entity resorting to force and the rules on neutrality. Not surprisingly, the Court refrained from discussing the international rules applicable to such entities whether they possess international legal personality or not.

A legal paradox lies behind the question of the application of the general prohibition on the use of force to the entity seeking independence. The process of independence is normally an incremental one and goes through several stages. It starts with internal disturbances that are governed by domestic law and by some humanitarian rules if the hostilities reach the threshold of a non-international conflict. During the conflict, the insurrectional movement may become a subject of international law. Determining when this effectively has occurred may be particularly problematic as it requires an assessment of the independence and effectiveness. However, from this moment the relationship between the parties is governed by international law. It remains to be seen whether these rules include the prohibition on the use of force in spite of the ongoing armed conflict and whether such a prohibition would apply also to the State concerned.

By way of conclusion, whereas the findings in paragraph 79 are firmly based on and respectful of state practice, the final finding of paragraph 80 remains at once unnecessary and rather controversial. This is probably the only paragraph of the advisory opinion where the Court clearly went beyond what had been asked by the General Assembly. The answer it has provided is superficial and ultimately unconvincing, if not misleading.

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Dear Teta Mia...



Teta Mia solves your problems

It has come to my attention that you are dabbling in the dark arts of politics. As a result I have no alternative but to fire you.

*Regards, Ed
Dear Editor,*

First, let me take this opportunity to thank you for all your supportive editorial comments over the last year or so during which you have generously given me the column inches to express my dissatisfaction with the current political class, my despair for the state of Kosovo, and my respect and love for my chosen country.

I agree – I have not been able to resist the pull of politics. Anything I can do to be of service to improving the quality of life of Kosovars, I will. And the state of disrepair of this country is such that it will require an enormous effort to fix it. I would be honoured to be part of this long-overdue repair work.

But I disagree that politics is necessarily a “dark art”. Perhaps it has become so in Kosovo, where politicians rule from behind the tinted windows of their expensive cars, or bring governments down in the murky depths of jazz bars, and where still, 11 years on, power cuts plunge whole districts – and polling centres – into darkness.

Oh – sneer at my bright-eyed idealism, my naive certainty that things can be better and that the light at the end of the tunnel which appeared in the last two weeks is not a train. Sigh at the innocence of youth, which foolishly assumes that it is possible to award a tender in a transparent and competitive process, and that policy-making in times of financial uncertainty can be done to benefit the most needy in society. Prepare to mop up the tears when it doesn't work.

But imagine if it did?

Imagine a Kosovo where the executive is accountable to the legislature, and the legislature is competent to scrutinise constructively legislation and thus to improve it.

Imagine a Kosovo with a business-friendly environment that attracts foreign direct investment and itself invests in creating jobs for the 45% or so unemployed.

Imagine a Kosovo competing in international sporting championships after more countries recognise it because of its proven ability to run itself.

Imagine a Kosovo which is confident, proactive and proud.

Imagine a Kosovo where you are not afraid.

I am not a spy (sorry to disappoint). I do not “know better” because I'm a foreigner. In my home country, the best I could hope to contribute to is an improvement in the municipality's waste collection service or the type of parking restrictions imposed near my flat.

Here in Kosovo, the challenges are so immense that the need for a contribution – anyone's contribution – is exponentially greater.

So thanks, Editor, and indeed readers, for your patience and indulgence over the past 13 months. You can still find me on Facebook, moaning and cajoling, and very occasionally offering a snippet of useful advice.

Of course, this is basically shameless propaganda. But I have come off the fence of anti-all-establishment impartiality. I am partial. I have chosen. Where are you?

Breathe deeply the fresh air of change. And believe.

Teta Mia

Justice in Kosovo: October 2010 Newsletter



By BIRN

The court monitoring project of seven municipalities in Kosovo commenced in March 2008, with the preliminary aim of establishing a stable system of monitoring of what is reported to be the most challenging field in Kosovo, the judiciary.

The project has, among others, sought to identify the main factors that generate the low quality of services provided by the judicial system.

At present, the project, which has expanded over time, consists of twenty municipalities. So far, more than 2,000 court hearings have been monitored by law graduates on a regular basis, and the findings reveal serious shortcomings, both in technical and ethical terms.

The severities of the shortcomings vary to a great extent, but the most serious cases reveal among other things:

- Court hearings held without full trial panels
- Lack of translators for minority groups
- Cases of nepotism and corruption among the judges and prosecutors.

EULEX Judges Commits Irregularities

Many irregularities were noted during the hearing of court case KA.nr9/10, on the "issuing of an unlawful judicial decision", held in Prizren Municipal Court, which was led by EULEX judge Ingo Risch.

The defendant was not asked during the whole hearing if he found himself guilty or not. Also, the lawyer and the defendant were allowed to talk about the order of the evidence to be presented, which is strictly forbidden in this phase of the trial and constitutes a violation of article 314, paragraph 4 and 6 of the Criminal Procedure Code of Kosovo.

Moreover, the mobile phone of the leading judge, Judge Risch, rang during the trial, for which he apologised.

Judge Risch also did not prohib-

it an EULEX official interfering in the translation of the hearing, which was conducted by an authorised interpreter.

Lastly, although he asked for a ten-minute break, Judge Risch only returned to the court room after 40 minutes.

Rahovec Mayor Interrupts the Hearing

Court case P.no 396/09 on the "Impediment of an official person in conducting his official duty" held in Rahovec municipal court was interrupted by the mayor of Rahovec municipality, Qazim Qeska, who knocked on the door of the judge's office asking for the judge to come out.

The judge left the hearing, which resumed only after 20 minutes.

EULEX judge late for the hearing

The hearing of court case K.A.Q.nr: 271/10 on "War Crimes" held by Jonatan Carol in Peja District Court started half an hour late because of the delay of the EULEX translator and the judge.

Also, the hearing was not announced on the notice board or the EULEX website.

Other issues monitored by BIRN during September:

EULEX Invites Witness to Trial by Phone

In court case P.no.128/10, "Assisting an aggravated murder", held in Prizren District Court with EULEX judge Vladimir Kanev as the head of judging panel and EULEX judge Vitol Jakingo and local judge Xheladin Osmani, the witness Shyqyri Osmani objected to the way he was invited to court.

His summons had been made by telephone by an EULEX official, who justified this by saying they had no other address of him.

Judge Drinks Coffee, Listens to Radio Before Hearing

Before the start of the hearing on court case C.no 1524/09,



BIRN's Life in Kosovo show debating the justice system

"Compensation of material and non-material damage", in Prishtina municipal court, the judge Nexharije Hoti used her mobile phone, drank coffee and listened to the radio while she was waiting for the parties to come in.

As not all the parties involved in the court procedure were present, the hearing was postponed to a later date.

Three Sentenced to 12 years, despite Charges Being Dropped

Three men were sentenced to 12 years for robbery and illegal possession of weapons, despite the latter charge having been dropped earlier in the case.

The mistake was made in the case P.no.211/08, "robbery", held in Prishtina District Court and led by the president of the judging panel Marie Ademi.

Bajram Halilaj, Bajram Mustafa and Argjend Lahu were accused of robbery and illegal possession of weapons. The latter charge was dropped by the court because of a lack of evidence.

But the suspects were nonetheless found guilty of both and sentenced to 12 years in prison, a sentence which includes the charge of illegal possession of weapons, which had been dismissed by the same court and the same judging panel.

Privacy of Victim Not Respected by Peja Municipal Court

The judging panel in the case of P.no 451/10, "Grave robbery and attempted grave robbery", held in Peja Municipal Court, did not respect the privacy of the victim.

The damaged parties in this case had to give their statements in front of the full court, which is in violation of article 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code of Kosovo, according to which the witness is asked if he/her wishes to make testimony away from the defendant.

Unpaid Teachers Wins Case after BIRN Debate

For four months, Letafete Hyseni a teacher from the town of Vushtrri, has been waiting for her salary to be paid.

Hyseni, who celebrated her 65th birthday in April, an age when all the civil servants retire in Kosovo, worked another four months to finish the school year. But she has not been paid for that period, though according to the new administrative instruction nr.1/2010, teachers who become 65 years during the school year should complete the school year and then retire. This administrative instruction replaced an old administrative instruction no 18/2005.

The Municipal Departments of Education and the Ministry of

Public Administration were still applying the former administrative instruction, according to which civil servants retire on the day of their 65th birthday.

Hyseni decided to sue the Ministry of Education, which pays Kosovar teachers.

She also participated as a panelist in the BIRN TV debate Life in Kosovo where she revealed her problem.

Days after the show was broadcast, the Municipal Court of Vushtrri decided that Hyseni should be paid four salaries for which she had worked.

BIRN Probe Leads to Standard Court Documents

Kosovo Judicial Council has stepped in to standardise court certificates after BIRN revealed the problem on its show, Life in Kosovo.

The KCJ sent a format of a certificate that should be used by all the courts in Kosovo following the broadcast.

The information was confirmed to BIRN by the head of Kosovo Supreme Court, Fejzullah Hasani.

For years, the certificates issued by the courts in Kosovo were different from each other in form and content.

Some provided sensitive information on whether a person has a criminal record, information which can only be verified by the Police Department.

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