

# Prishtina Insight

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## Tirana Carnage Leaves Albania at Boiling Point

After anti-government protests left three dead and dozens wounded, there are fears that Albania's descent into chaos may have become unstoppable.

See Page 10 - 11

### NEWS

**Dutch Minister: "Kosovo is Run by Criminals"**

> page 3

### BUSINESS

**Foreign Investment in Kosovo Stalls**

> page 6

### INVESTIGATION

**Revealed: Vukovar Croats Tortured in Nis, Serbia**



> page 8

### FEATURE

**Guerrilla Gardening Grows in Prishtina**



> page 12 - 13

# Kosovo Agency Accused of Manipulating Land Sale

Auditor General says Privatisation Agency 'manipulated' auction of publicly owned industrial estate, short-changing the public of up to 200,000 euro.

By Petrit Collaku, Lawrence Marzouk and Shengjyl Osmani

Prishtina Insight has obtained documents under freedom of information rules that show the Privatisation Agency of Kosovo, PAK, advertised the site - a large industrial estate on the edge of Prishtina - as having five times less office space than was actually for sale.

The winning bidder, Liria FC 2, from Prishtina, bought the enterprise from the PAK for 1,050,000 euro.

Experts believe that delays in

signing the contract and the manipulation of the office space figure may have deprived taxpayers of around 200,000 euro.

The PAK first announced the auction of the site in November 2008 in a newspaper advert offering 550 square metres of office space within a total of 7,646 square metres of land.

In brochures provided to bidders, it then said that the location, formerly home to the publicly owned Kosova Elektro company, included 1,460 metres of office space.

But the final contract revealed

that the actual area of office space was 2,583 square metres, five times the size mentioned in the original offer.

The PAK correctly stated the total area of land for sale at each point at 7,646 square metres.

But real estate experts believe the difference in the size of the office space between the offer presented to bidders - 1,460 square metres - and the real size of the site - 2,583 square metres - was worth at least 90,000 euro.

Documents seen by Prishtina Insight show that the final transfer of the site was not signed until

at least 14 months later, in January 2010.

Over this time, according to a real estate expert in Prishtina, the value of the site would have risen by about 10 per cent, potentially adding a further 110,000 euro to its overall value.

According to the PAK's internal correspondence, which Prishtina Insight has obtained, the agency was aware of the costly discrepancy but pressed ahead with original deal with Liria FC for just over 1 million euro.

continues page 2



## Marty: Document is "Not a Report Against Kosovo"

It may come as little surprise that in the history of the Council of Europe no committee report has garnered as many media hits as Dick Marty's inquiry titled "Inhuman treatment of people and illicit trafficking in human organs in Kosovo."

In recent weeks...

Exclusive Interview:

page 4



## The People on the Pavement

'It's a Roma begging ring - organized crime', 'they make quite a lot of money; they're not really that poor', 'they're not from Kosovo, you know - they're bussed in from Albania', 'giving them money just encourages them.'

Walk for more...

opinion

page 21



# Kosovo Agency Accused of Manipulating Land Sale

from page 1

"It should be noted that total floor building surface area presented in the IM [Information Memorandum] (1,460m<sup>2</sup>) was miscalculated, which was noticed during the process of contract completion, and PAK's Regional Office of Prishtina has corrected it to a total of 2,583m<sup>2</sup>," a PAK employee wrote in a letter to its chairman, Dino Asanaj, in December 2009.

While the PAK official talked of a "miscalculation", the Office of the Auditor General complained in a report published last summer that the process had clearly been "manipulated".

"In the Kosova Elektro contract, we noticed that during the process of privatisation the PAK manipulated the surface area of the privatised premises," the office wrote.



The site on the outskirts of Prishtina which is believed to have been sold for less than its value

"We noticed irregularities and insufficient transparency in the privatisation process, as a result of unfair competition between the bidders," it added.

The PAK confirmed to Prishtina Insight that it was possible the contract had been manipulated, and said that it had reported the case to the Anti-Corruption Agency and to economic crime unit within Kosovo police.

"PAK had doubts that were noticed during the process and we reported them to the Anti-Corruption Agency and to respective institutions for further investigations," Yil Kaloshi, the PAK's spokesperson, told Prishtina Insight.

He said the sale took place during a transfer of competencies from the Kosovo Trust Agency to the Kosovo Privatisation Agency at the end of 2008.

Kaloshi confirmed that the contract with

the buyer was signed including the wrong data.

"I cannot prejudge anything. The responsible agencies are the ones to decide what will happen and who is involved. PAK is open [to an investigation]," Kaloshi said.

He added that the PAK management and board would welcome any probes.

Prishtina Insight contacted the Anti-Corruption Agency but it denied receiving anything from the PAK. "The agency has not received any information about this case," the agency said.

Fazli Cakiqi, owner of Liria FC, which bought the land, said he was unaware of any problems with the contract, or that he had received more office space than was originally specified.

"We haven't received any information from PAK that there is a problem with the contract," Cakiqi told Prishtina Insight.

22 December 2009

**ACTION MEMORANDUM**

TO: Chairman of the PAK Board - Dino Asanaj

THROUGH: PAK Front Office

FROM: PAK - DMD/Assets Division - Shkumbin Bicaj  
PAK - DMD/Corporate Governance - Naim Avdiu

CC: PAK - Director of Liquidation Department - Muharrem Arifi

SUBJECT: Wave 31 - Sale of Newco Kosovaelectro Offices Industrial Zone L.L.C., Prishtinë

**ISSUE FOR DECISION**

Whether to sign the contracts/agreements for the Newco.

**BACKGROUND**

This is a sale from Wave 31 (bid opening 19 November 2008). Newco Kosovaelectro Offices Industrial Zone L.L.C. was sold for €1,050,001 (the highest from 15 bids).

SOE "Kosova Elektro" initially as a part of SOE "Elektrotehna" Belgrade was established in 1986 and has been registered as an independent SOE in 1989. Its main activity was retailing of electrical equipments and cables but ceased operation in 1999 and its various premises were leased out. This sale includes a land parcel of 0.7646 ha and its various premises were located in the neighboring land parcels (equivalent land value of € 613,732 thousand per ari (100m<sup>2</sup>)), located in Industrial Zone, near Agriculture Faculty in Prishtinë. Premises to be transferred to the Newco have the total floor area of 2,583 m<sup>2</sup> that partially are located at the neighboring land parcels owned by "Instituti për Hulumtime Bujqësi" and "Instituti Hidrometro". The SOE has 32 workers (18 active). Currently there are no active employees at this location. However, 4 families of the workers of the SOE occupy one of the buildings to be transferred to the Newco.

1,460 m<sup>2</sup> noticed, per of the transfer of on by the t (one for oncoming



It should be noted that total floor building surface area presented in the IM (1,460 m<sup>2</sup>) was miscalculated that later during the process of the contract completion was noticed, and PAK Regional Office of Prishtina has corrected to total of 2,583 m<sup>2</sup> (number of the buildings remained the same).

# Net Closes on Suspected Kosovo Gang Boss in Ireland

The net is closing on one of Kosovo's most wanted men, currently under surveillance in Ireland, the country's Ministry of Justice has told Prishtina Insight.



By Petrit Collaku

The Ministry has confirmed to Prishtina Insight that the paperwork to start the extradition of Enver Sekiraga from Ireland is in its final stages. Sekiraga is wanted for organised crime and the murder of a police officer in Kosovo.

Sekiraga was located by Irish police in November last year and has been under 24-hour police surveillance since.

He is wanted under an Interpol red notice on charges of murder,

extortion, attempted extortion, two counts of rape and grievous bodily harm.

"Kosovo's Ministry of Justice and Irish authorities are in the final stages of fulfilling the legal basis for his arrest and we are at the beginning of the extradition procedure," Ehat Miftari from the department for international judicial cooperation within the Ministry of Justice, told Prishtina Insight.

Sekiraga is wanted for the murder of Triumf Riza, a member of Kosovo's special police force, who was shot dead in August 2007 on the streets of Prishtina by a hit-man suspected of working for Sekiraga.

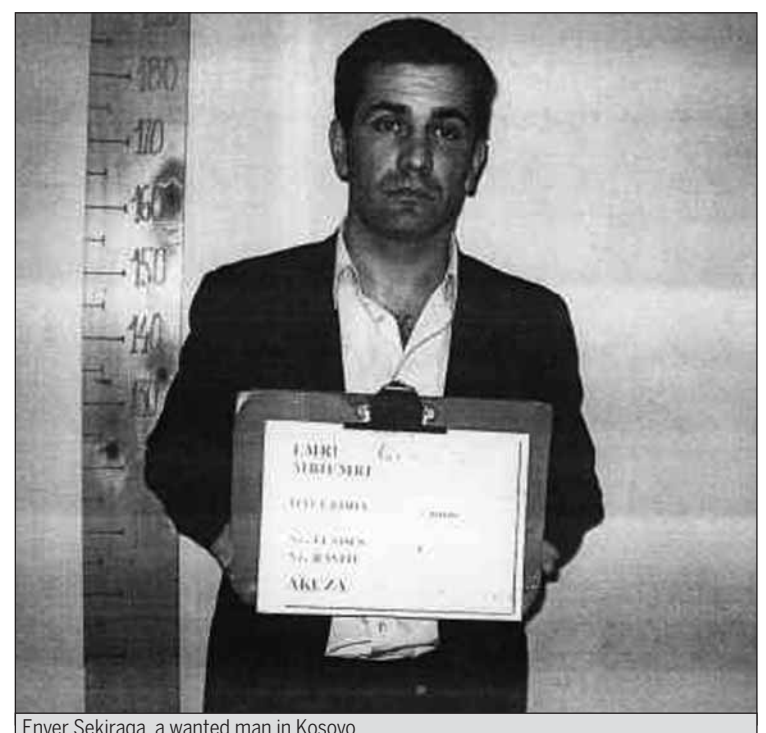
Kosovo sent a request for

Sekiraga to be extradited on November 17 and he was located by Irish police a few days later.

To date, Kosovo does not have a bilateral extradition agreement with Ireland, which currently has agreements only with Australia and the US outside of the European Union.

Kosovo cannot sign extradition treaties with EU member states as it is not part of the Council of Europe, but bilateral agreements with respective countries are allowed.

Prishtina has submitted requests to 40 countries for bilateral extradition agreements, although only a handful have so far agreed, including Switzerland, Albania and Norway.



Enver Sekiraga, a wanted man in Kosovo.



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# PDK Confident of Forming New Kosovo Coalition



By Petrit Collaku

The future partners of the Democratic Party of Kosovo, led by the outgoing Prime Minister Hashim Thaci, are not yet known, but the country's largest party says it is confident it will be ready to form a coalition after the December election results are certified.

The winning party of the December snap elections, PDK, said that it had not made any formal offers to other parties yet, but it is understood that discussions have been held with the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, AAK, and the New Kosovo Alliance, AKR.

"We are waiting for the certification of the results and the moment the new parliament is formed and gains its mandate, we will be ready to form the government within a few days," Memli Krasniqi, the caretaker government's spokesperson and PDK member, told Prishtina Insight.

"We will create a sustainable and stable coalition that will work towards our vision of Kosovo," Krasniqi said. "This will happen soon."

According to preliminary results of Central Election Commission, CEC, PDK has gained 32 per cent, LDK 24, Vetevendosje, Self-determination move-



Thaci is confident that he will be able to form a new government quickly

ment, gained 12, AAK 11 and AKR seven per cent. On top of this 25 seats are believed to have been secured by minority parties. Conditional ballots have not been counted yet.

Former coalition partner Democratic League of Kosovo, LDK, have said that they will not form a coalition with Thaci unless there is a technical government, including all parties and civil society.

"If there is an all-inclusive government and if the mandate is set until autumn when new elections will be held, LDK will be part of the government," Arben Gashi, a leading LDK member, told Prishtina Insight.

But this idea has now been rejected by caretaker PM Thaci, who could form a majority coalition with AKR, led by busi-

nessman Behgjet Pacolli, and minority parties, although he is known to be keen to tempt AAK also into the grouping.

AAK, whose leader Ramush Haradinaj is in The Hague awaiting retrial for war crimes, has called for a coalition including PDK, LDK and AAK.

"We have made it clear that AAK will not create a coalition just with PM Thaci," Besnik Tahiri, a member of AAK's leadership, told Prishtina Insight. "But this idea was not supported by [the LDK]," Tahiri said.

He said that the election process had damaged the legitimacy of any new government dominated by the PDK.

CEC said that the certification of election results should be completed in early February.

## Editor's Word Leak



By Lawrence Marzouk

Apparently there isn't an obvious translation of 'leak' into Albanian. I speak, of course, of the Xhavit- is-a-criminal sort of leak which we have seen this week, not the type which manifests itself daily in the form of a river running down my street.

But after the last few weeks, it might be time for the Academy of Arts and Science to put that spanking new building to good use and come up with a word. It will no doubt become particularly useful when our successors come to pen our chapter in history.

You see, the growing torrent of material which is emerging into the public domain about Kosovo's politicians is changing politics and this country irrecoverably.

It is as if someone accidentally drilled a hole into the ground outside the government building, unleashing onto the streets a stream of slurry that many of the ruling class had hoped would remain underground forever.

For the many Kosovars who continue to imagine a world in which any criticism of their country, and more importantly those who fought for freedom, has been "cooked up in the kitchens of Belgrade", this is no big deal.

When the shit hits the streets they prefer to hold their nose and pretend that nothing is there, like a steaming, smelly mirage.

Unfortunately, it is outside of Kosovo that these leaks are causing the biggest stink.

Much of the good work that has been done by Kosovo in recent years has all but been erased, I fear, and certainly any attempt by 'Kosovo, The Young Europeans' to frame their country in a positive light seems almost laughable now.

It is, of course, important to note that the 2004 US KFOR report, the 2005 BND intelligence paper and Dick Marty's bizarre oeuvre have not actually presented any proof that the county's leaders are the bunch of murderous, ruthless, organised criminals that is suggested.

The intelligence reports offer no guarantee of veracity and are both probably littered with inaccuracies. As a result, Marty's report, which is based in part on similar reports, is also likely to be wrong in a number of aspects.

It just seems unlikely that there is no truth at all in any of this growing body of evidence.

In any sane country, the emergence of such information from credible sources would have forced some serious soul-searching and a string of resignations pending independent investigations. Those fingered would want to step out of public life in order to clear their name. Not in Kosovo.

Instead, as the stream becomes a river the country's leaders stand aloof in their self-inflated rafts, hoping that the flood will eventually abate and they will be left in charge, unhurt.

They may well be left unhurt politically in Kosovo, but there are many in line to join the country's next government who will find themselves embarrassed when senior members of the international community refuse to stand shoulder to shoulder with them for those photo-ops.

Thaci made a call after Dick Marty's report for their friends to come forward and back Kosovo.

The only person to date who has been willing to fly to Prishtina and support him has been Denis MacShane, former Europe minister in Tony Blair's government, who is under investigation for fiddling his parliamentary expenses in the UK. He was kicked out of the Labour Party last year for the allegations, which he denies.

Kosovo needs its friends more than ever now, and its choice of ministers will be crucial in determining how many friends, and which ones, it will have left after this terrible chapter.

# Dutch Minister: "Kosovo is Run by Criminals"



By Lawrence Marzouk

Kosovo is run by people who live off crime, according to the assessment of the then Dutch State Secretary for European Affairs in a leaked cable from 2007.

Frans Timmermans, who remains a parliamentarian in the Dutch assembly but is no longer a minister, made the comments during a November 2007 meeting with US officials in The Hague.

The remarks appear in a cable, obtained by the Wikileaks website, made at the time of elections in Kosovo and in the run-up to the February 2008 declaration of independence.

"Timmermans was concerned about the future implications of the EU's outreach to Kosovo: Kosovo is run by people who live off crime...(they have) no other means to support themselves," the cable reads.

The former minister also suggested that the EU would never be able to agree on Kosovo's independence.

"He [Timmermans] also expressed strong doubt the EU could ever reach consensus on Kosovo," according to the cable.

"Timmermans noted that Russia was creating havoc in the Balkans, and Kosovo will be a messy affair.

"The Russians will react strongly (to a Kosovar declaration of independence), and the European reaction will be all over the place, I'm afraid," reads the cable, apparently referring to Timmermans' comments.

The criticism of Kosovo's leaders

emerges after a series of leaks which has already damaged the reputation of Kosovo's ruling class.

Leaked NATO documents identified Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim Thaci as one of the "biggest fish" in organised crime in his country and alleged that a senior member of his party ordered a series of political murders.

The focus of the 2004 NATO intelligence report was Xhavit Haliti, a senior figure in Thaci's Democratic Party of Kosovo, PDK, who was a key figure in running the Kosovo Liberation Army's fund from diaspora donations.

The document claims that Haliti is involved in a range of organised crime activities, ordered political murders against members of the Democratic League of Kosovo, LDK, and exerted a strong influence over Thaci because of his wealth.

But while Haliti is the focus of the surveillance report, it also details the alleged role of several other key players in Kosovo's business and political world, including the current caretaker prime minister, Thaci.

The information from the leaked intelligence reports was first published by investigative reporter Jürgen Roth last month but was given international media coverage by French daily Le Monde and British newspaper The Guardian in the past week.

The Kosovo government and Haliti have rejected the allegations contained in the report and the leaked NATO document, pointing out that similar claims have been circulating without being proved for a decade.



Former Dutch Minister Frans Timmermans



# Marty: Document is "Not a

Council of Europe Rapporteur, Dick Marty, tells Michael Montgomery that the emphasis placed on organ trafficking is obscuring the fact that "hundreds of people disappeared and were killed". His report is not anti-Kosovo but merely a search for the truth, Marty says.



By Michael  
Montgomery

It may come as little surprise that in the history of the Council of Europe no committee report has garnered as many media hits as Dick Marty's inquiry titled "Inhuman treatment of people and illicit trafficking in human organs in Kosovo."

In recent weeks, Marty has been likened to a Nazi propagandist, a bomb-throwing nihilist, a primitive ape and a terrorist. On the plus side he's been hailed as a dogged, courageous investigator who puts truth to power, a man who's unafraid to challenge the misdeeds of Washington, Moscow or any lesser power.

In person, Marty is soft-spoken, almost professorial in his demeanor. But behind this veneer is a determined former prosecutor and senator who occupies the curious position of human rights rapporteur.

Dick Marty spoke with reporter Michael Montgomery exclusively for Prishtina Insight and the US-based Center for Investigative Reporting.

**Q: In your report for the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly, you liken Kosovo's outgoing Prime Minister, Hashim Thaci, to a**

**mafia boss. Based on your information, is it fair to compare Mr. Thaci to a mafia boss?**

A: Some will take issue with the term, I'm sure. What is new in this report, in relation to what has been said in the past, is that we were able to obtain specific details, thanks to people who were eyewitnesses to what occurred and that we describe this group, Drenica, of which Mr. Thaci was no doubt one of the leaders. In this regard, you can say "boss" or you can say "leader," but either way he played an important role, in crime and in politics. And that is one of the details that was uncovered quite some time ago by very serious crime studies in the region.

**Q: You found evidence of a network of makeshift detention facilities in Albania that was used by the KLA or operatives linked to the KLA.**

A: Yes, from several testimonies, not just one, we learned that there was an entire network of small detention centres and that the detainees were moved from one centre to another. And it is through these eyewitness testimonies that we were also able to gather statements about organ trafficking. I would also like to say, in relation to organ trafficking, that the emphasis being placed on this in the media is exaggerated in relation to the rest of the criminal activity. We state that, certainly, not all of those who disappeared had their organs removed, only a small portion. But that should not obscure the basic fact that these people disappeared and that it is certain they were killed.



Dick Marty answering questions following the adoption of his report at the Council of Europe

**Q: You write how some of the abductees were subjected to a filtering process, including medical tests, and ended up at a location in Fushe Kruje near the airport. You have very specific information about how these victims were killed, and where their bodies were taken and what happened to the bodies.**

A: Based on testimonies we have gathered, there was a sort of selection among the prisoners. Certain prisoners - following, in addition, the collection of blood samples - were selected and taken to a centre where they were killed with a bullet to the head, after which their organs were extracted for transport abroad. I must emphasise that this did not occur systematically with everyone who disappeared. I am even stating that we have knowledge of only a small group of cases. And so I think we must stress that this organ traffic, while of the utmost gravity, is not the key point. The key point is that hundreds of people disappeared and were killed.

**Q: In your report you write about the relationship between events that happened in Albania in 1999 and 2000 and the more recent Medicus case in Prishtina. Is there a direct connection between the two cases?**

A: Several elements lead us to believe that there is a connection between the two cases: That, ultimately, it is the same international channels at work. It is even of interest to note that the latter case involves organ trafficking that occurred in 2006, while international forces were present in Kosovo. We did not provide further details because we do not wish to interfere with the ongoing investigation by EULEX of the Medicus case. But we believe - and there are several elements that point to this - that the two cases are related, in particular that the same people were carrying out the surgical operations, and the same international channels were involved.

**Q: In terms of the information you cite in these reports,**

**this is not hearsay, this is serious information that could be used to build an indictment?**

A: Our work is not the work of an examining magistrate or an attorney general; my work is the political work of an institution that defends human rights. So our work is not an indictment, but more a set of findings, and on the basis of those findings the proper authorities would have to open an investigation. Now, if you ask me personally as a former magistrate and prosecutor, based on the documents and on the testimony we have gathered, certainly an investigation should be opened and it should have been opened a long time ago.

**Q: In 2004 a team of officials from UNMIK and the ICTY travelled to Rripe, near Burrell, Albania, where they searched a house and spoke with the people who lived there. They also found indications of bloodstains throughout the first floor living area and collected evidence such as**

## Witness Safety Dispute Threatens

A major investigation into allegations that senior Kosovo political figures ran a violent criminal network could be hindered by witness safety and other security concerns, Prishtina Insight can reveal.



By Michael  
Montgomery and Altin  
Raxhimi

On Tuesday, the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly voted in favour of a resolution calling on regional governments and the EU rule-of-law mission, EULEX, to launch a new investigation into allegations of high-level corruption, murder and organ trafficking raised by special Rapporteur Dick Marty a month ago.

The contentious issue is whether any institution based in Kosovo or Albania is capable of investigating the claims. Marty has said he is open to working with EULEX or other institutions but only if they can guarantee the safety of witnesses and confiden-

tial information.

While EULEX insists that it can provide security for witnesses in a possible new organ trafficking investigation, Western officials, human rights groups and Marty doubt the mission has the capacity to run the probe.

Relocating witnesses outside Kosovo and Albania is emerging as a key obstacle. A Western diplomatic source close to EULEX said the mission did not have any relocation agreements with countries outside the region.

"Kosovo is a small country. If you can't move witnesses and their families far away - in some cases forever - you won't be successful in going after the big fish," the source said.

EULEX spokesperson Karin Limdal declined to say whether the mission had secured agreements to enable witnesses to live under protection in other coun-

tries.

"EULEX has the capacity to provide witness security to the highest international standard, which has so far been successful," Limdal said.

Western officials pointed out that no witness has been killed or hurt since EULEX took over authority from UNMIK.

"Given the circumstances and lack of resources and support from outside countries, EULEX is doing a pretty good job," a Western diplomat based in Prishtina said. "The question is whether that's good enough".

In the controversial report for the Council of Europe, Marty cites Western intelligence sources and eyewitness testimony linking outgoing Prime Minister Hashim Thaci and close associates to a network of "criminal entrepreneurs" drawn from the ranks of the Kosovo Liberation Army, KLA.

Marty alleges that the group led by Thaci conducted assassinations of political opponents and even executed civilians and sold their kidneys to organ traffickers.

Thaci has denied the allegations and denounced Marty. At the same time, he has expressed support for an investigation. Albania has also said it would support an investigation, either by EULEX or the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia, ICTY, in The Hague.

EULEX officials say they need to examine Marty's evidence to determine whether a criminal investigation is warranted.

"Marty has not provided us with any evidence despite us asking him for it," Limdal said.

In an exclusive interview with Prishtina Insight and the US-based Center for Investigative Reporting, Marty said he would not hand over any sensitive information such as

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Mensa e Studenteve, first floor

10000, Prishtina

Kosovo

Phone: +381 (0) 38 24 33 58

Fax: +381 (0) 38 22 44 98

lawrence@birn.eu.com

Editor-in-Chief:

Lawrence Marzouk

lawrence@birn.eu.com

Editorial Team:

Ana Petrusheva, Gordana Igric,

Jeta Xharra, Marcus Tanner,

Petrit Collaku, Inge Baanders, Shengjiyi

Osmani and Belinda Vrap

Marketing, Sales & Distribution:

lawrence@birn.eu.com

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# Report Against Kosovo"

used medicines and I.V. drip bags. Later, the ICTY's prosecutor's office destroyed this evidence without ever having it analysed and without informing any other authorities including UNMIK. A spokesperson for the tribunal said this was done in accordance with normal procedure. What is your comment?

A: This is certainly not a normal procedure for any tribunal in the world. When you gather evidence and you believe that you don't have the necessary proof or you are not the competent authority to continue the investigation, you never destroy the evidence, especially when no statute of limitation has expired. You keep the evidence, because at some later point in time, perhaps, there will be new evidence that will make the old evidence newly significant. So, I do not accuse the ICTY of a conspiracy; I think they made a mistake.

**Q: What do you think the main factors were for the West and the UN not to conduct serious investigations in Kosovo?**

A: I think that the philosophy in the beginning was - and this is the expression used by American diplomats - the past is past; we need to look toward the future. As they saw it at the time, they had chosen the team that seemed most up to the task of controlling the local authorities. Political stability and political expediency outweighed the sense of justice, to put it simply.

**Q: A close reading of your report suggests you penetrated the inner circle of this criminal network. Is that a fair statement?**

A: Those are your words. I think that you are not completely wrong, but you must understand that I cannot be more precise because I do

not want to endanger those sources that trusted and spoke with me.

**Q: Your report has been criticised for being long on commentary, some of it libellous, and short on verifiable facts. Why don't you cite many of your sources?**

A: First, I would like to remind you that there is a whole series of reports by intelligence agencies from a variety of countries: The [American] FBI, the [British] MI6, the Italian SISMI, the German BND, and other reports. They are crime studies. If we have been able to be more precise, it is thanks to our witnesses. And these witnesses risked their lives. I would remind you that there is currently no witness protection law in Kosovo, and that during the trial of the Haradinaj brothers, of the forty witnesses who spoke up during the investigation, none testified at the trial and several were killed.

So these witnesses will speak when they have an absolute guarantee that they will be protected, not only during, but also after the trial.

**Q: You've conducted some very difficult and disturbing investigations in your career, both as a criminal prosecutor but also as a human rights special rapporteur. How does this investigation compare?**

A: The greatest difficulty that I have encountered is finding witnesses and, even more, developing trust. Trust had to be built slowly, in order to make it understood that I was fully committed to protecting the witnesses' anonymity and their lives, and that I would never give out any indications regarding witnesses without their consent. It was very difficult to develop this trust. Perhaps the fact that I represent an institution such as the Council of Europe, that I work alone with a very

small team, and that I am known for my earlier reports, contributed to establishing this trust.

**Q: There's been talk in recent days about the need for clean hands. That is, that people who want to be in the new government in Kosovo need to have clean hands and not be under a cloud of suspicion. Do you have an opinion on whether or not someone facing an investigation should be able to serve in the government of Kosovo?**

A: I am of the opinion that anyone who assumes political responsibilities should be above suspicion. That is, not only should they be free of a criminal record, not only should they not be the object of an open investigation, but there should also not be all sorts of information casting doubt on their honesty. There is a well-known French expression: "even Caesar's wife should be above suspicion."

**Q: Is the concept of 'omerta' still important in terms of organised crime in Kosovo?**

A: There are aspects that are somewhat similar to the Sicilian mafia of twenty or thirty years ago, and I think that the police or judicial authorities of Kosovo should draw inspiration from methods used by the Italian police, for example, working with high-level informants, people who admit their crimes and help bring down the whole network. The financial aspects must also be taken on. There are Kosovo politicians who have enormous financial fortunes, yet declare absolutely insignificant incomes. And so we must also investigate finances. What is the origin of this money?

**Q: It's been said about the allegations you make in the**

**report, especially the organ trafficking case - they've been investigated many times without any success. Some people say Dick Marty is just rehashing old allegations. What's your response?**

A: I would respond that, probably, if I myself were a witness, I would talk to someone I trusted but not to international institutions that are not in a position to offer sufficient guarantees of protection. I think everyone knows that UNMIK had great difficulties in its work and that EULEX - and it is senior officials and judges in EULEX who tell me this - has major problems with interpreters, with local collaborators, with searching the information system. It is extremely difficult to keep records strictly confidential. If, as a witness, you do not have complete assurance that your statements will be kept confidential, and that you as a witness are truly protected, clearly you won't talk to these institutions.

**Q: The so-called yellow house. What was its function in this whole network? What happened there?**

A: The infamous yellow house was one of the centres in the private detention network. It was a transition centre where blood samples were also taken, in all likelihood to establish whether or not the person was compatible with recipients. So it was part of a network, but we know that it was not where organs were extracted.

**Q: Do you think people didn't pay enough attention to what happened to Serbs in Kosovo because of the devastation created by Serbian forces - the ethnic-cleansing, rape and murder. That is, when international institutions arrived in Kosovo, they treated the Serbs as the**

**aggressors and the Albanians as the primary victims?**

A: Yes, I think there was a perception that the Serbs were all guilty and the Albanians were all victims. It is true that Milosevic committed horrible crimes. What we refused to see is that there were also Albanian Kosovars who committed crimes. These crimes in no way diminish the gravity of the crimes committed by Milosevic. But I think that you can't have a justice system for only the vanquished and not the victors. And I would like to stress that this report - and for me it is important to underscore this - is not a report against Kosovo. It is not a report against Kosovars.

I met mothers who had lost their sons in Serbia and mothers who had lost their sons in Kosovo, and between a Serbian mother and an Albanian mother who have both lost their children, there is no difference. And both have the right to know what happened to their children. So this is fundamentally a report for the men and women of Kosovo, because I am certain that there can be no real future for this people without the truth, and this people, I know them well because there are many Kosovars in Switzerland. One tenth of the population of Kosovo is living in Switzerland and I know many. I believe they deserve a political class that is above corruption and that does not think solely of its own interests, but of the interests of the population as a whole.

**Q: Are you ready to immediately hand your information, your witness list, your testimony, to EULEX so they can conduct an investigation?**

A: I am certainly in favour of a judicial process, but justice must provide guarantees. And when it does, I will ask the witnesses to agree to testify.

## Organ Trafficking Probe

witness identities and testimony unless there are "absolute guarantees" that the information will be tightly protected.

Marty cited failures by both UNMIK and EULEX in developing tools to run sensitive investigations such as protecting witnesses' identity and other sensitive information such as intelligence reports.

"Everyone knows that UNMIK had great difficulties in its work and that EULEX - and it is senior officials and judges in EULEX who tell me this - has major problems with interpreters, with local collaborators, with search the information system," he said. "It is extremely difficult to keep records strictly confidential," he added.

"If, as a witness, you do not have complete assurance that your statements will be kept confidential, and that as a witness you are truly protected, clearly you won't talk to these institutions," he continued.

Marty likened the challenge of investigating organised crime in Kosovo to combating the Sicilian mafia 20 years ago.

"I think that the police or judicial authorities of Kosovo should draw inspiration from methods used by the Italian police," he said, "for example, by working with high-level informants, that is, people who admit their crimes and help bring down the whole network."

But Marty said there has not been the will in Kosovo to develop informants to target high-level suspects. As an example, he cited the case of Nazim Bllaca, a 37-year-old Kosovo Albanian who claimed he had been part of a network run by former top KLA officials that killed, tortured and blackmailed political adversaries in Kosovo after the war. Bllaca said he had killed one person and took part in the torture of 16 others.

EULEX only placed Bllaca under protection and house arrest

a week after he made his statements in November 2009.

Marty said Bllaca's experience did not bode well for other insiders who are considering co-operating with the authorities.

"I think that is a troubling indication of the state of the justice system in this country [Kosovo]," he said.

Human rights groups say witness protection has improved under EULEX but they still question whether the mission could safely undertake an ambitious investigation targeting senior government officials. Kosovo is the only country in the region that does not have a witness protection law in place, according to the Council of Europe.

Last week the US-based group Human Rights Watch called on EULEX to appoint a special prosecutor based outside the region to investigate Marty's allegations.

"The EU mission in Kosovo will face great obstacles in conducting



Marty questions EULEX's ability to safeguard witnesses

a credible investigation into these serious allegations," Lotte Leicht, European Union director at Human Rights Watch, said. "It is crucial to have an independent senior prosecutor, an effective witness protection programme - including the ability to relocate witnesses outside the Balkans - and the security required for such a delicate investigation."

In an interview last month, the

ICTY former chief prosecutor, Carla del Ponte, also questioned whether EULEX had the resources and political support to handle the case, citing the Tribunal's own experience with intimidation of witnesses in Kosovo.

"I fear that EULEX will not be able to do this investigation because you can imagine the obstacles they would face with personnel based in Kosovo," she said.



# Foreign Investment in Kosovo Stalls

Direct foreign investment in Kosovo failed to pick up in 2010, remaining at well below the level achieved in 2007, new figures reveal



By Besiana Xharra

**K**osovo is struggling to attract foreign businesses to the country, according to figures released by the Central Bank of Kosovo, CBK.

For the first three quarters of 2010, Europe's youngest country saw 203 million euro invested from foreign firms, the same figure as in 2009.

If the last quarter of 2010 also mirrored the previous year, Kosovo will have seen 291 million euro of direct foreign investment, well below the 2007 high of 414 million euro.

According to the bank, the largest investments came from Germany, Slovenia and Switzerland, while Austria, Great Britain, Turkey, Holland, Albania, the US and France also spent money in the country.

"The main areas where these countries have invested in Kosovo are in financial services, manufacturing, construction, processing industries and real estate industry," said Kada.

Mustafe Hasani, from the government-run Investment Promotion Agency in Kosovo, IPAK, said that he was pleased with the investment in Kosovo for 2010, given the global financial crisis.

He said that 563 foreign firms registered with the country's business agency in 2010. "These companies have declared that they have 2120 employees," he explained.

"We have organised conferences in the US, Turkey, Italy, Germany, Austria,

Holland, Greece, Croatia and Slovenia to promote investment," he added.

He complained, however, that funds promised by the World Bank to improve the business sector in Kosovo had been put on hold because of the country's lack of a government.

The World Bank has told Prishtina Insight previously that if Kosovo does not ratify its \$20-million [15-million-euro] package soon, it risks losing it. The funds, agreed last year by the Bank's board, include \$12 million to modernize the outdated land registry system and a further \$12 million, [nearly 9 million euro], for bringing other areas of the public sector up to date.

The project aims to attract more foreign businesses by improving the business registration, making it easier to obtain building permits and tackling the enforcement of contracts.

Currently, Kosovo is ranked 113 out of 183 countries in the World Bank's 'doing business league' because of its poor performance in those areas.

"For reforms in these areas we will work with the Ministry of Trade and Industry experts in cooperation with the World Bank.

"These reforms will be introduced by the new Government, therefore the delay in the creation of the new government has stopped this work," said Hasani.

The country has also recently been hit by the failure of the European Union to renew its preferential trade agreement at the beginning of the year, meaning that those importing Kosovo goods to the EU now pay tariffs. While a solution to the problem is



Kosovo's strategic position has failed to win over foreign investors

expected soon, the failure will do little to convince investors to put their money into Kosovo.

Kushtrim Puka of the Gap Institute, a leading think-tank, said that it is worrying that Kosovo continues to be ranked so poorly for foreign investors.

"Reforms in the five areas [mentioned by the World Bank] must happen but they will take time, especially now with the delay in establishing the government," said Puka.

Economist Musa Limani said the country must take a number of measures to attract

more investors. "We need to make reforms in the business environment through more favourable tax legislation," he said.

"Then we have to accelerate and regulate the issue of obtaining building permits and so on."

Officials of the caretaker Government agree. "After certification of the election, we will establish a government very soon and one of our priorities will be the work of attracting foreign investors," said Hajredin Kuci, deputy prime minister of the outgoing Government.

## News in brief

### Highway to Macedonia will cost 500 million euro

Kosovo's Ministry of Transport said it will fund the 55-kilometre motorway, connecting the two capitals, by offering the road as a concession to a firm that will pay for the construction and recoup the money through tolls.

No date has been given for a start to construction but the Ministry of Transport have said that it estimates the costs will be 500million euro.

According to the ministry, the highway will have three tunnels with a total length of 3.3 kilometres and four bridges.

The project is divided into two



sections. The first will start from Lipjan, near Prishtina, and run to Kacanik, 42 kilometres away. The second section, from Kacanik to the actual border with Macedonia, totals 13 kilometres.

### Avrupa granted licenses to explore minerals

Avrupa Minerals has announced that Kosovo's Government has granted it two exploration licences.

The Bajgora licence, which is located 30 to 40 kilometres north of Prishtina, targets the extraction of silver, lead, zinc, and gold. The licence covers an area of 76.5 square kilometres of land.

The other Rezhanc licence is located 55 to 60 kilometres south of Prishtina, close to the border with Macedonia, where the extraction of copper and gold is targeted. The



licence covers an area of 19.05 square kilometers.

Avrupa has already been granted two licenses before, that of Kamenica and Glavej.

Paul W. Kuhn, CEO of Avrupa Minerals, said: "The acquisition of the Bajgora and Rezhanc licences is an important milestone in bringing Avrupa to 'critical mass' in Kosovo."

## Kosovo Police Hope New Phone Law Will Slash Prank Calls



By Petrit Collaku

Kosovo police say that a new law requiring mobile phone users to register their SIM cards will cut down on prank calls to the police and fire brigade.

"We receive a lot of fake phone calls every day reporting robberies, fires or shootings," Kosovo police spokesperson Brahim Sadriu told Prishtina Insight, adding: "The police head to the locations and then we figure out that somebody was making a prank call."

Last December, employees at the Pristina municipality building were forced to evacuate after police received a tip off that a bomb had been placed in the building, only to find that the threat was bogus.

Pristina's fire brigade sent out firefighters and trucks 24 times last year to answer calls that turned out to be false alarms.

Police hope that a new law, which went into effect January 1, will cut down on the number of prank phone calls received by the



police.

Under the provisions of the law, residents who purchase a telephone SIM card for their mobile phones will be required to submit their identity cards.

"All SIM cards must have an owner," Ilir Imeri, chief of the telecommunications department at the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, TRA, told Prishtina Insight.

He added that such requirements are found everywhere in the region, and will help police track down users that phone in prank incidents.

Current mobile phone users, meanwhile, are expected to register their SIM cards as well. "All other current users are obliged to register their SIM cards [...] and the deadline for this registration is February 28, 2011," Imeri explained.



# Pressure Mounts on Kosovo to Reverse Wages Hikes

Hashim Thaci is being urged to revisit a controversial decision to raise civil service salaries by up to 50 per cent.



By Lavdim Hamidi

Acting Prime Minister Hashim Thaci faces growing pressure to cancel a decision earlier this month to increase public-sector wages by up to 50 per cent.

Opposition politicians have condemned the move, saying it will push the government's wage bill to over 30 per cent over the 1.3-billion-euro budget, making Kosovo public-sector wage bill the most expensive proportionally in the region.

Prishtina Insight has learned that Pieter Feith, head of the International Civilian Office, ICO, has called on Thaci to reconsider whether the country can afford such a rise - and whether the decision is legally sound, given that he only leads a caretaker government.

Kosovo awaits formation of a new government following general elections held late last year and reruns this month.

Kosovo's budget for 2010 was 1.1

billion euro, of which around 315 million went on civil service salaries. The latest decision would increase the wage bill to 415 million out of 1.3 billion euro.

Thaci announced the decision on January 6, after unveiling the pledge in the run-up to the December 12 general election.

The proposed increases were opposed at the time by the IMF in Kosovo, which said the outgoing government had agreed to limit state salary increases to 7 to 8 per cent.

The IMF warned that the decision could break an agreement between the two parties, which had opened the door for hundreds of millions of euros in donations and loans.

The outgoing economy and finance minister, Ahmet Shala, said that he was confident the government would reach a new agreement on the salary increases and is expected to reopen negotiations with the IMF next week.

According to Shala, the 100-million-euro cost of the salary increases can be covered from budget reserves and increased revenues as a result of fighting tax evasion.

But former economy and

finance minister Haki Shatri criticised the move, saying officials were isolating Kosovo from international monetary institutions.

The model of massive pay increases, according to Shatri, followed the poor example of Greece, which in consequence had faced huge budget deficit problems.

"This model of budget execution was taken by Greece and we are following in their footsteps," Shatri said. During his mandate in the finance ministry between 2000 and 2007, he said, he never dared spend more than 30 per cent of the country's budget on salaries alone.

No other country in the region spent more than 30 per cent of its total budget on salaries, he added.

Economy professor Nagip Skenderi said it was clear that the increases were being adopted to buy social peace. "This is a government effort to protect social welfare in the aftermath of big increases in prices of basic products," Shatri said.

According to the Statistical Office of Kosovo, the inflation rate at the end of last year reached 6.6 per cent. However, bread prices alone rose more than 28 per cent.

A spokesman for the ICO told Balkan Insight that budgetary



## Kosovo's North Remains a Smugglers' Paradise

The head of Kosovo's customs believes that the country is losing 30 million euro a year in smuggling through its northern, porous border with Serbia



By Besiana Xharra

Almost three years after Kosovo declared independence from Serbia, the northern border between the two countries remains a haven for smugglers.

Naim Huruglica, head of Kosovo customs, estimates that the country lost 30 million euro in 2010 because it cannot control two key check-

points - Gates 1 at Leposavic and 31 at Zubin Potok - in the former provinces' lawless north.

Business leaders believe the figure could be as much as 100million euro, 15 per cent of the total revenue for 2010 at 700 million euro.

The area to the north of the divided, flashpoint city of Mitrovica is home to Kosovo's largest Serb community which remains largely governed by Belgrade, despite attempts to weaken its grip on the area and impose rule of law from Prishtina.

In February 2008, following Kosovo's declaration of independ-

ence, a mob of local Serbs set gates 1 and 31 ablaze in protest.

Since then, full customs' control has yet to return, although the EU rule-of-law mission, EULEX, has been tightening monitoring of the two troubled crossings in the absence of Prishtina officials.

"We have information that through these two gates [1 and 31], large quantities of goods continue to enter Kosovo without passing the customs terminal in Mitrovica for final clearance," said Huruglica, referring to the customs centre in southern, Prishtina-controlled

Mitrovica, at which all vehicles importing goods through the northern gates are supposed to report.

"According to statistics we receive from EULEX, when we compare those with clearances in Mitrovica, we believe that our losses are around 30 million euro per year," Huruglica added.

Agim Shahini, chairman of the Kosovo Business Alliance, believes that the real figure is closer to 100 million euro and that smuggling is growing.

"The illegal economy is developing in that area," he said. "From our investigations we conclude that Kosovo annually loses about 100 million euro per year and the figures presented by Kosovo customs are not correct."

Shanini suggested that the north had been left deliberately lawless so that both Serbian and Albanian mafia gangs groups could profit.

"I think it is convenient to some to leave that part of Kosovo in this way," he said.

Economic professor Muhamet Sadiku said it was time to crack down on the problem.

"For the past three years, this area has been led by mafia groups, by persons involved in illegal trade, therefore I think the time has come to stop this phenomenon," said Sadiku.

Huruglica said that to tackle this issue required the deployment of anti-smuggling units in the north, which had been impossible to date because of the security situation.

The final step, according to Huruglica, will be the return of Kosovo customs staff to those gates, but he admits that this may only be possible following negotiations between Pristina and Belgrade.

Alexandra George, EULEX's customs spokesperson, said that while both Kosovo Customs and EULEX acknowledges that smuggling takes place in the north, as it does across all of Kosovo's borders and in all countries, the latest figures from Kosovo Customs show an increase in revenue from the borders, up 65 million euro to 700million euro in 2010.

"These include a successful fight against smuggling throughout Kosovo, including in the North, and improvement of post-import controls, including at the south Mitrovica terminal," she said.

"In addition, actions by EULEX at both gates and by Kosovo Customs at their check points at Kosovo's other border points, and through their procedures, have also considerably reduced the amount of fraud and smuggling taking place."



Mitrovica's main bridge, seen as the dividing line between Belgrade and Pristina controlled Kosovo



# Revealed: Vukovar Croats Were Tortured in Nis, Serbia

More than 400 Croatian civilians and soldiers were imprisoned in a camp in Nis, southern Serbia, during the war in Croatia, where at least one person died.



By Barbara Matejic  
and Zoran Kosanovic

Three former prisoners interviewed in Varazdin and Zagreb, Croatia, have told Prishtina Insight that the Yugoslav Army ran a detention camp for Croatian prisoners in Nis from mid-November 1991 to late February 1992.

Ivan Grujic, head of Croatia's Commission for Missing and Imprisoned Persons, says at least 447 Croats were held for exchange purposes in Nis's military investigative prison or correction facilities.

The prisoners, who included both civilians and soldiers, were moved to Nis mostly after other camps in Begejci and Stajicevo in Serbia's northern Vojvodina province closed following an international outcry in 1991.

However, several witnesses say that the Nis camp was the worst one that they passed through.

According to one witness, the commander was one Colonel Jovanovic, though Prishtina Insight was not able to reveal his complete name. Guards included young soldiers and conscripts.

In July 2010, an exhumation that took place in Nis's city cemetery on the request of the Croatian Commission of Missing and Imprisoned Persons revealed ten bodies, one of which was identified as Petar Mesic, whose name was on Croatia's missing persons list.

The other bodies had been buried with no identification and it is not clear whether they were also from Croatia. Autopsies are still ongoing.

In 2008, a Croatian ex-detainees' association, "Vukovar 1991", handed Serbia's war crime prosecutor criminal charges against persons unknown, accusing them of war crimes against prisoners-of-war imprisoned in several camps, Nis included.

Serbia's state prosecutor has confirmed to Prishtina Insight that a pretrial process is underway, with new information being collected, mostly on the Stajicevo and Begejci camps.

However, the Serbian police need to do additional work and locate perpetrators before the investigation can be completed, and it is not clear when police can finalise this, mainly because the Serbian army, successor to the Yugoslav Army, denies all knowledge of the Nis camp.

At least 21 Croat prisoners were killed in Serbian detention camps in the early 1990s, according to a Croatian County Court in Osijek.

## Nis – the 'worst of all the camps':

Fr Branimir Kosec, a former parish priest in Vukovar, captured when the town fell to the Yugoslav

Army in November 1991, was among the many Croats taken prisoner in November 1991. At first, alongside other people from Vukovar, he was held in prison in Sremska Mitrovica, in Vojvodina.

He was then taken to an army barracks in Aleksinac and transferred to Nis from where he was released for exchange on December 10, 1991.

Fr Kosec said the regime in Nis involved routine torture. "The guards beat us most at night and did not spare anyone," he said. He said he was held in a cell containing around 40 mostly elderly people from Vukovar, "civilians just like me". At the time of his arrest, he had been a parish priest in the monastery church of St Philip and Jacob in Vukovar.

He says that one Colonel Jovanovic ran the camp but he could not recall his first name.

A second witness to the conditions in Nis, Niko Mirosavljevic, now living in Zagreb, told Prishtina Insight that he spent 270 days in camps in Serbia after capture in Vukovar and was exchanged as a 50-per-cent invalid, with broken chest bones, jaw, nose and ribs.

"All the camps were nasty but Begejci and Nis were the worst," he said. "We were beaten all the time in Nis. They would storm the rooms day and night and beat people even in bed. They beat us both with batons and rifle butts."

Zoran Sangut now heads the former detainees' association, "Vukovar 1991". Back then, aged 21, he spent 130 days in camps in Stajicevo, Sremska Mitrovica and Nis in 1991 and 1992.

In the Nis camp, "they beat us with fists, boots, batons, especially on the day when the first countries recognised Croatia's independence," Sangut said.

"It was worst for those who ended up in solitary," he added. "They had to stand half-naked and barefoot on bare cement beside open windows in winter for the whole day and night."

Sangut says the guards in Nis included young soldiers and conscripts who gave each other action movie-style nicknames, such as "Rambo" and "Tyson". He believes these nicknames were deliberately chosen to avoid recognition in future criminal trials.

## Exhumation shows Croats were held in Nis:

Fr Kosec remembers that in 1991, while he was being held in Nis, Colonel Jovanovic asked him if it was possible to perform a Catholic service following a man's burial, because they had not found a local Catholic priest in time.

"He didn't tell me what had happened to this prisoner, who was called Petar Mesic," recalled Fr Kosec, from Varazdin, in Croatia, where he now lives.



The prison in Nis, Serbia, where the crimes were allegedly committed

"But the night guards had bragged [to the prisoners] before this conversation that they'd beaten a Croatian soldier so badly that he'd 'croaked right away and that his liver was showing.'"

The exact cause of Mesic's death is unknown. But on July 14, 2010, following an exhumation carried out on the request of the Croatian Commission for Missing and Imprisoned Persons, it was confirmed that he had been buried in Nis cemetery.

Veljko Odalovic, head of Serbia's Commission for Missing and Imprisoned Persons, said at least one Croat died in Nis.

He said that after the ten bodies were exhumed in July 2010 from the city cemetery, "It was determined beyond doubt that one body was directly linked to people from Croatia held in 1991 in collection centres in Serbia, some of whom were temporarily held in Nis."

"Some detainees from the centres in Stajicevo and Begejci were held in the military prison in Nis," he added.

"We have established that Petar Mesic was on that list, was brought from Croatia and ended up in Nis, where he died and was buried, and we have returned his body to Croatia," Odalovic continued.

The other nine bodies can also be related to the conflict in former Yugoslavia, Odalovic added, without adding any further details.

Ivan Grujic, who attended the exhumation in Nis, said that a network of camps and prisons had functioned in former Yugoslavia in 1991 and 1992 under Yugoslav Army command, located in Serbia, Bosnia, Montenegro and Serb-held regions of Croatia.

Grujic says that at least 447 Croats passed through Nis, either the military investigation prison or the correctional facility. "It is hard to determine whether these were two separate camps, or whether people were transferred for interrogation from one place to another," he said.

His commission says a total of 7,666 people were exchanged from all of the Yugoslav army-run camps from December 1991 until August 1992. Of that number, 219 were under 18, 932 were women and 424 were over 60. Almost half the number were civilians, 46 per cent, while 52 per cent were combatants.

The status of the other 4 per cent has not been established.

"In all these prisons in Serbia, there was mental and physical torture, without exception," Grujic said. "The camps closed when the international community began greater monitoring and pressure," he said.

The camps in Begejci and Stajicevo, former cattle farms, closed in late 1991, following an International Red Cross inspection. They were later demolished, former detainees say in order to destroy evidence of their existence.

Former detainees said most of the murders and disappearances in the camps happened before the Red Cross visited and listed the prisoners in 1991.

## Long road to justice:

In May 2008, "Vukovar 1991" handed Serbia's war crimes prosecutors criminal charges against persons unknown, accusing them of war crimes against prisoners-of-war in Sremska Mitrovica, Stajicevo, Begejci, Nis and the military investigative prison in Belgrade.

The charges say that contrary to the Geneva Convention, unknown camp commanders and guards beat prisoners, tortured them with electricity, burned them and killed them.

The charges say prisoners were not given enough food and water; were kept in barns, were forced to sleep on bare cement floors without blankets, were interrogated day and night, were threatened with death, and were taken to false executions and false exchanges.

Sangut said that since his association filed criminal charges in May 2008, he had received no response from the Serbian prosecution although he had made several inquiries.

For its part, Serbia's War Crimes Prosecutor's Office, says it acted immediately on the charges, requesting information from the police and army.

"A pretrial process is underway and we have new information largely relating to concealment of this crime," deputy prosecutor Bruno Vekaric said. "The most data we collected so far is for the centres at Stajicevo and Begejci," he added.

Vekaric said the war crimes

office was waiting for the police to do their part of the job and an investigation would be launched once they had located potential suspects for the offences.

But the Serbian Army says it has no information on the existence of former Yugoslav Army prisons for Croat prisoners in Nis.

Forty days after it received a request for information, the Ministry of Defence had not responded to Prishtina Insight's questions about how many Croats were held in Nis, what conditions had been like, who the prison commander was and whether he remained active in the Serbian Army.

Acting under Serbian Freedom of Information legislation, the ministry set an additional 40-day deadline to respond to the request. At the end of this, Prishtina Insight received a written answer, saying that the ministry did not possess the requested data.

Rights activists in Belgrade say Serbia's defence ministry is simply stalling, by denying knowledge of some of the camps and what went on there.

"As around 5,000 people went through the camps in Serbia, they are all witnesses to what happened in them," Sandra Orlovic, from the Humanitarian Law Centre from Belgrade, said.

"This is a grave violation of human rights and all these facts can be unpleasant, but it must not be an obstacle for the victims to claim justice," she added.

Sangut agrees. "Serbia is not willing to face the past and its political leadership is trying to postpone the opening of a discussion about the camps for as long as possible," he said. "We twice asked to put up a memorial plaque at the camp in Stajicevo but President Boris Tadic turned us down."

Sangut said the existence of the camps in Serbia and the forced removal of Croats to Serbia confirmed that the war was an international conflict, not a civil war, "and that Serbia was committing aggression against Croatia, which is why this issue is not being discussed openly".

This investigation was done with support from the Scoop, a Danish network for investigative journalism.



# Bosnia Football Receives Funds as Presidency Question Looms

International football's governing bodies FIFA and UEFA have approved funding for construction of a sports centre in Bosnia, as the country's possible exile from the two groups looms.



By Sabina Arslanagic

Following a visit to Bosnia by FIFA and UEFA representatives this week, the Balkan country's soccer federation, the NSBiH, announced that four million euros for a modern sports centre in the central town of Zenica had been released and that the construction works will begin shortly.

The decision to fund the modern centre comes just over two months before the NSBiH must decide whether to end its ethnically selected presidency or face international exile.

A member of the NSBiH presidency, Sulejman Colakovic, described the decision to release the funds for the sports centre in Zenica as a "goodwill gesture" and voiced hope that Bosnia's soccer federation will meet a FIFA and UEFA requirement to change its management structure.

The European and international governing bodies have told Bosnia that its national and domestic teams will be suspended from international competition if the NSBiH does not replace its three-member presidency - made up of a Bosniak, a Croat and a Serb - with a single president.

The NSBiH has been given until March 31 to change its statutes to meet the demand, which has been

vehemently rejected by Bosnian Serb football officials.

The NSBiH is made up of representatives of the football associations of the country's two highly independent entities, the predominantly Serb Republika Srpska and the Bosniak-Croat Federation.

Bosnian Serbs do not agree with the concept of one president as they fear this might jeopardise their autonomy.

If sanctioned, Bosnia would also lose international funding, which currently makes up between 70 and 80 per cent of the NSBiH budget.

Local media quoted UEFA national associations' director Theodore Theodoridis as saying that the construction of the mod-



Bosnia's Football team is line for a new ground

ern sports centre in Zenica was a development project which his organisation and FIFA did not want to link with the decision about the NSBiH governing structure.

"Clearly, we expect your federation to be organised in the same way as those of all other (UEFA and FIFA) members," Theodoridis was quoted as saying.

## Craigslist Ad Drives Yugo Fans into Fury

Legendary automobile has found its place on the US site Craigslist, but a for-sale advert has made many Serbs angry.



Yugos parked in central Prishtina in the 80s



By Bojana Barlovac

A 43-year-old American from Orange County, in the US, has angered patriotic Serbs by describing his car as a "pile of crap".

"I have for sale this pile of crap Yugo, designed by a retarded engineer and assembled by a group of drunk workers," the advert reads.

The rest of the advert sounds even less promising, describing the car as no more reliable than jailed US trickster Bernie Madoff.

The Yugo broke into the

American car market in the mid-1980s. About 147,000 vehicles were shipped to the US, where it was a relative hit due to its low price. It cost about \$4,000 at the time.

But the car became infamous in the US for its underwhelming performance. Car Talk magazine voted it worst car of the millennium.

The Yugo had a brief moment in the Hollywood spotlight, being used extensively in a 2000 comedy starring Danny DeVito, "Drowning Mona."

The American selling this "piece of history", as he called it, is selling his car for 2,200 US dollars.

Instead of potential buyers, many Serbs have filled his email

box with offensive messages, some threatening him with violence, he says.

"I got really lots of emails, and about half of them with racial slurs (at the expense of Americans), profanity and other ugly words, including death threats. Serbs do not have a sense of humour," the man was quoted as saying in the Serbian daily Politika.

After 30 years of production, the last Yugo rolled off the Zastava company's assembly line in the Serbian town Kragujevac in 2008. Yugos are still alive on the roads, however, as well as in a book, entitled The Rise and Fall of the Worst Car in History, by Jason Vuic.

## Romanian Hunting Party Draws Criticism

Environmentalists criticise a hunting excursion for high-profile politicians and businessmen.



By Marian Chiriac, Bucharest

A hunting party in north-western Romania, which drew many local and foreign businessmen, ended on Sunday with what media and green activists called "true carnage" - over 150 wild boars were killed. The hunt was organised by tennis player turned businessman Ion Tiriac, who is also one of the country's richest men.

Tiriac holds the lease to the Balc hunting facilities in northwest Romania, where the gathering took place. With him were some 30 guests, including businessmen Wolfgang Porsche and Klaus Mangold of DaimlerChrysler, and Spanish banker Jose Merino Jimenez, according to local media reports.

"These kind of events are an excellent opportunity to socialise, make new friends and discuss politics or business," said Elan Schwartzberg, an Israeli with businesses in Romania, who was one of the few participants who agreed to speak about the hunting party.

While Ion Tiriac's lawyers have argued that the boars are brought in from a local breeding facility and are not a protected species, environmentalists say the magnitude of the hunt and the involve-

ment of so many top-level executives and politicians are matters of concern.

The international environmental group Vier Pfoten has criticised the size of the hunt. "It's time that this kind of animal massacre comes to an end. We are not questioning the legality of this hunting event but its magnitude, as in the last six years around 1,200 wild boar were killed in the Balc contained area," Veronica Tulpan, head of national programme at the group, argued.

In the past, Romanian authorities also questioned the management of the animals in the Balc area and the legality of the contract under which the hunting ground was leased, though no irregularities were discovered.

In late 2004, the government of former Prime Minister Adrian Nastase granted Ion Tiriac a 49-year lease on the Balc grounds without a public auction. Soon after, Nastase lost elections but for several years he was among the participants at the hunting events in Balc.

In Romania, like in many other ex-communist countries, hunting has long been associated with the old nomenklatura. Former dictator Nicolae Ceausescu often hunted bears, wild boars, and black goats in the mountains.

Since 1990, hunting has become increasingly popular among rich foreigners and Romania's nouveau riche and political elite.



# Tirana Carnage Leaves Albania at Boiling Point

After anti-government protests left three dead and dozens wounded, there are fears that Albania's descent into chaos may have become unstoppable.



By Besar Likmeta,  
Tirana

As police armed with AK-47s and riot gear reinforced a barricade against a crowd of anti-government protesters holed on the roof of the pyramid-shaped former memorial museum of ex Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha on January 21, Andi, a Tirana resident, took another sip from his beer and turned to the barman at the Rockwood Cafe.

"Maybe this is the time to play that song about Che Guevara," he said, looking at the TV pictures, which showed the clashes down the street.

The scene at the cafe was surreal, considering that just a few metres away, opposition protesters and police were fighting for turf outside the gate of the Prime Minister's Office.

Like him, most Albanians throughout the country, haunted by a long and tumultuous transition after the collapse of Hoxha's regime in 1991, were glued to their TV screens, feeling a sense of déjà vu about past riots.

Meanwhile, outside the door of the café, police in riot gear and Special Forces armed with automatic rifles lined the street.

Holding the high ground on the slopes of the pyramid, a ruined building adjacent to the Premier's Office, whose ripped-off marble slabs served as ammunition, protesters pelted the riot police for hours.

There were only a few hundred of them - mostly angry young men bussed in by the opposition Socialist Party to bulk out a bigger rally held to denounce government corruption.

Following a series of high-profile corruption scandals, the opposition called the demonstration in an attempt to topple the centre-right government of Prime Minister Sali Berisha and force an early general election.

Berisha's Democratic Party and the Socialists have been locked in a bitter power struggle for almost two years over the results of the 2009 general election. The opposition has staged several peaceful protests since then. But Friday was different.

Like the customers at the Rockwood café, most of the 20,000 or so people who marched on Tirana's main boulevard before the clashes started, looked baffled by the battle unfolding in front of them.

The protesters had begun to march along the avenue which bisects Tirana from the railway station to the university, at around 2pm before an advance guard of

protesters carrying sticks, stones and Molotov cocktails attacked the police barricade protecting the Prime Minister's Office.

The opposition leaders who had organised the rally had moved to the fourth floor of a glass and concrete office building, known as Tirana's Twin Towers, in front of the pyramid, from where they watched the clashes unfold.

The protesters took aim at the police lines who initially adopted a defensive approach. But as the attack from the crowd grew more ferocious, police used tear gas and a water cannon.

At first, the police tactics seemed to work, and the crowd retreated. But they regrouped around Hoxha's former memorial from where they continued to bombard the police with stones and set cars on fire.

## Shots fired, blood on the street:

As the battle raged between protesters and riot police, there were loud bangs from stun grenades and the air filled with tear gas. As time passed, the situation became tenser.

At around 4pm, a group of protesters on top of the pyramid charged towards the police cordon protecting the northern gate of the Prime Minister's Office.

The National Guard responded with a barrage of automatic rifle fire in the air that lasted for nearly half-an-hour.

By the time the shooting was over, police in plain clothes started detaining protesters, forcing them into police vans, three people lay dead.

On Saturday, the police spokesperson, Alma Katragjini, announced that 113 protesters had been arrested following the clashes. Most of those detained were freed by Tirana's district court on Monday.

Video filmed by TV stations shows that two protesters were shot outside the gate of the Prime Minister's Office, although they did not appear to have been attacking the building or behaving aggressively.

One video shows one of the protesters falling to the ground after being shot in his chest. The bullets appear to have come from a National Guard soldier stationed inside the Prime Minister's Office.

## Before the Storm

Two decades after the fall of the Communist regime, Albania's transition to democracy remains nightmarishly fraught and protracted.

Before the violence erupted in Tirana last Friday, for nearly 18 months the ruling Democrats and

the Socialists had been locked in a stand-off over the results of the June 2009 elections.

The Socialists, headed by Tirana Mayor Edi Rama, insist that the election was marred by fraud and demand a recount. Prime Minister Berisha's coalition maintains that the elections were the best managed in history. A recount was impossible because the opposition had exhausted all legal appeals, they said.

For the better part of last year, the opposition boycotted parliament and held peaceful rallies in Tirana and across the country, demanding a ballot recount. The protests included a 21-day hunger strike by 200 opposition supporters and two dozen MPs who were holed up in tents in front of Berisha's office.

The stand-off has poisoned the political climate and has halted the reforms needed to expedite Albania's progress towards EU membership.

Despite several mediation attempts launched by President Bamir Topi, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament, Berisha and Rama failed to budge from their entrenched positions.

Throughout this period the opposition and the government hurled daily accusations and threats at each other but events took a new twist two weeks ago following the publication of a video showing Deputy Prime Minister Ilir Meta and former Economy Minister Dritan Prifti allegedly discussing corrupt deals.

Meta, who then also held the economy portfolio, resigned following the exposure and the start of a probe into the affair by prosecutors.

Meta has denied wrongdoing over the corruption scandal, while Prime Minister Sali Berisha called the tape a fabrication orchestrated by the opposition. The government "would not collapse over [spying] bugs," he said.

The opposition meanwhile demanded Berisha's head and hoped that Friday's protest would force him out. International and local calls for the opposition to refrain from violence, issued on the eve of the rally, went unheeded.

## Who was to blame?

As calm returned to Tirana on Friday evening, both Berisha and Rama traded blame for the violence.

The opposition first claimed that the police "provoked" protesters into attacking them, and that the government bore responsibility for the violence, despite the many television cameras present that showed opposition protesters

attacking police without provocation.

Then, following the airing of TV footage of the death of one protester, Rama accused Berisha and Interior Minister Lulzim Basha of murder.

"I accuse the Prime Minister of being the political orchestrator of this bloodbath," Rama said. "I accuse the Minister of Interior Lulzim Basha of abuse of power, resulting in the death of three people, and call for the immediate arrest of this socially dangerous worm," he added.

The government accused Rama and his supporters of trying to take power by force.

"Bandits, criminals and terrorists, orchestrated by Edi Rama, tried to usurp the Prime Minister's Office and take power through violence," Berisha said.

At a press conference on Friday, Berisha blamed the protesters for the demonstrators' deaths, arguing that they were shot at close range with weapons that do not form part of the police arsenal.

Over the last two days, however, faced with growing evidence to the contrary, he has retracted, admitting that the National Guard might have shot them.

## Violence Condemned:

Friday's clashes were the worst that Albania has seen since 1998, when armed supporters of the then opposition Democratic Party attacked government buildings following the murder of one their MPs, for which they blamed the



Berisha and his Democratic Party returned to power in 2005 after eight years in opposition, campaigning on a "clean hands" platform against corruption. He was re-elected Prime Minister with a thin majority in 2009.

Despite the political turbulence of the past decade, the economy has recovered. It grew at an average rate of 6 per cent of GDP per year.

Moves towards membership of the European Union, an aspiration backed by 90 per cent of the population according to polls, continued.

In 2006, Albania signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement with Brussels and in April 2009, alongside Croatia, joined NATO.

But following the carnage in Tirana at the weekend, observers fear the situation could become increasingly unstable. Appeals for calm and dialogue have rushed in and Albania's principal foreign ally, the United States, has criticised the demonstrators for resort-



Three people were killed and dozens injured in the protests

former socialist Prime Minister, Fatos Nano.

A year earlier, Albania was plunged into anarchy following the collapse of a series of pyramid investment schemes, which robbed nearly a billion dollars' worth of savings from the impoverished population. Almost 3,000 people died in the violence that ensued.

The collapse of the pyramid schemes led to the demise of the Democratic Party government and the resignation of Berisha, who then served as Albania's president.

ing to violence.

The US State Department assistant secretary Philip J. Crowley condemned the violence unambiguously.

"We regret that the demonstration in Tirana was not peaceful and that earlier calls for calm were not heeded and we note with regret that several deaths and many dozens of injuries have been reported from these clashes," Crowley said.

"The use of provocative rhetoric and the suggestion or tolerance of any form of violence is a deep dis-





service to the people of Albania. They deserve better," he added.

The Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjørn Jagland, called for restraint and dialogue. "I am very concerned about the outburst of violence and casualties during the demonstrations in the streets of Tirana," he said.

"I condemn all kinds of violence and urge all political forces to engage in constructive dialogue within the existing democratic institutions of Albania," he added.

Human rights organisations, the OSCE and top EU officials also expressed concern over the loss of life.

"Demonstrations are instruments of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly of citizens," EU Foreign Policy Chief Catherine Ashton and Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Fuele said in a joint statement.

"We deplore that today's event has spiralled into violence. We urgently appeal to all political forces to call for calm and refrain from provocation," they added.

"The right to demonstrate comes with a responsibility to do so peacefully," Lithuania's Foreign Minister, Audronius Azubalis, currently chairman of the OSCE, said.

"The police have a right to maintain order and protect the public but they must not use excessive force against those carrying out their legitimate right to protest," said Andrea Huber, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for Europe and Central Asia.

American, British and EU ambassadors in Tirana and other diplomats met Prime Minister Berisha on Sunday and called for calm and dialogue between him and Rama.

"We have repeatedly urged Albania's political leaders to search for compromise," US Ambassador Alexander Arvizu, who also met President Bamir Topi, said on Saturday.

"When one side or both insist on maximalist positions that it knows the other side cannot accept, I'm sorry, that's not compromise," he said.

"Resolving political differences through street battles is also not compromise, and does not reflect the democratic aspirations of Albanians."

### Coup accusations:

Immediately after the clashes on Friday, Albania's General Prosecutor, Ina Rama, (no relation to Edi Rama) launched an investigation into the deaths, sequestering video shot by the police, questioning witnesses and requesting police and National Guard duty activity reports.

After collecting initial evidence, prosecutors issued a warrant for the detention and questioning of the six highest ranked National Guard officers suspected of ordering the shootings of the protesters.

But the police, under Berisha's control, have refused to enforce the warrants.

On Monday, the human rights watchdog, the Albanian Helsinki Committee, KSHH, urged the police to enforce the prosecutor's orders, describing the refusal as a breach of the constitution and "a dangerous precedent with grave repercussions".

In a televised cabinet meeting on Sunday, Berisha accused General Prosecutor Rama of being party to an attempted opposition coup.

The General Prosecutor was one-sided for having launched high-profile corruption probes against his minister and not against the opposition, Berisha said. [Rama was voted into her post in 2007 with the support of his Democratic party.]

Berisha said that the warrants for the officers "meant to decapitate the chain of command of the National Guard, which is protecting institutions".

Half an hour later, at an extraordinary session of parliament, MPs from the governing coalition set up an investigative committee tasked with probing the alleged coup d'état. Deputies from the Socialist opposition did not attend.

Apart from repeating his accusations against Edi Rama and the general prosecutor, in his speech to parliament Berisha lashed out at the head of the secret service, Bahri Shqiri.

Berisha accused him of being part of the plot because his department allegedly failed to forward warnings about the nature of the riot to the police.

"I urge you to create this parlia-

mentary investigative commission to investigate fully the mechanism of the coup," Berisha told MPs before they voted unanimously to create it.

Government critics see the investigative commission as an attempt by Berisha to pressure and eventually replace the two heads of the only independent official institutions that he does not control, the general prosecutors office and the secret service.

In 2007, the government used a similar parliamentary investigative commission to fire former general prosecutor Theodhori Sollaku. Berisha tried to replace the secret service head Shqiri back in June, but backed off under US and NATO pressure.

### Growing anger on both sides:

Despite the appeals for calm, mutual accusations of murder have continued and the opposition has announced a new protest to honour the victims of Friday's clashes. Berisha has responded by calling a rally of his own supporters a day later.

As the two parties play a blame game over the violence, many Albanians are growing angry at both sides, accusing Rama and Berisha of sacrificing the country's future for their own narrow political interests.

In an online petition circulated since Saturday, hundreds called for both Berisha and Rama to quit, describing them as equally responsible for the deaths of the three protesters.

"The Albanian political scene should be cleansed once and for all of these greedy creatures," Nina, one of the signatories to the petition, wrote. "Leave us alone," wrote another.

"It's not that they care that much about this petition but we should show them that Albanians are not blind and see these two as the main culprits," Ervin Duka, another signatory, wrote.

But while Albanians rant at each other in the street or on online petitions, most people realize that ousting Berisha and Rama from their posts will take much more than that.

# Republican Guard Shot Us, Claims Albanian Journalist

A reporter for the local broadcaster ABC News, wounded during Friday's violent anti-government rally, has told Prishtina Insight that the National Guard shot him and two of the protesters who died in the clashes.



By Besar Likmeta

In his testimony, which has also been given to prosecutors, Fatos Mahmutaj gives a detailed account of how an officer from the National Guard, standing in the courtyard of the prime minister's office, opened fire, wounding him and killing two protesters. "I saw the [National Guard] officer when he stood up because before he was covered with his shield. He removed the shield, took aim and shot," said Fatos Mahmutaj, who was reporting live for his TV station at the time of the incident.

"I saw the fire in his [gun] barrel, I felt the impact of the bullet in my hand, and also heard a crack only ten centimeters from my right ear, which was the skull of the killed protester that was cracking," Mahmutaj added.

Photos taken by photojournalist Hektor Pustina show the man standing next to Mahmutaj fall to the ground after being shot in the head.

Three anti-government protesters died during Friday's clashes and several others were wounded after the National Guard officers inside the courtyard of the prime minister's office appear to have fired into the air to disperse the crowd, which was pelting them with stones.

"Then I heard another barrage of automatic rifle fire, but it was not fire from an AK-47, it was more muffled. He stopped shooting for a moment, then directed the fire toward the gate, and shot the other person at the gate," Mahmutaj said.

Videos published by several local TV stations show a National Guard officer with an automatic MP5 rifle shooting at protesters standing at the gate to the prime minister's office when the protester at the gate is shot in the chest.

According to prosecution sources, the protesters were shot with 9mm caliber bullets, which

are used by MP5 automatic rifles.

When questioned about the shooting of Mahmutaj during a press conference on Friday, Prime Minister Sali Berisha said that the journalist had only been pushed.

Albanian General Prosecutor Ina Rama has issued a warrant for the six high ranking National Guard officers that led the operation, but the police, in breach of the constitution, have refused to enforce the warrants and arrest the officers.

Prime Minister Sali Berisha has said the police will not enforce the arrest orders, and has accused the chief prosecutor of being part of a failed coup d'état orchestrated by opposition leader Edi Rama. Berisha has also accused the head of Secret Service, Bahri Shqiri, of being involved.

The fighting on Friday broke out when several hundred protesters attacked the police barricade set up to protect the prime minister's office, using sticks, stones and Molotov cocktails, and police responded with tear gas, a water cannon and later with live ammunition fire to disperse the crowd.

The group of violent protesters threw rocks and set several cars on fire as they clashed with police. Another group of protesters, estimated at 20,000 people, demonstrated non-violently on Tirana's main boulevard.

Berisha's ruling Democratic Party and the Socialist opposition, headed by Tirana mayor Edi Rama, have been locked in a power struggle since the end of the June 2009 parliamentary elections.

The Socialists allege that Berisha stole the elections through voter fraud, while the ruling majority rejects the accusations as baseless and maintains that the polls were the best the country has ever held.

Friday's anti-government protests were called by the opposition following the publication of video which allegedly shows two government ministers discussing corrupt deals.



Reporter Fatos Mahmutaj was shot while covering the protests in Tirana



# Guerrilla Gardening Craze

Kosovo's capital is colourful, but only figuratively, strewn with drab concrete blocks and grey thoroughfares. But a growing movement of guerrilla gardeners are adding a splash of colour by planting flowers in tawdry public and private spaces, without permission.



By Inge Baanders

By day they don suits and work for international organisations and civil society groups. But by night, they swap the pinstripes for ripped jeans and take to the derelict plots of Prishtina to plant flowers.

Welcome to the slightly strange world of guerrilla gardening in Kosovo's capital.

The term refers to unsanctioned cultivation on someone else's land. It encompasses any activity that aims to beautify a piece of wasteland, from planting flowers to cleaning up litter.

Guerrilla gardening happens without permission, as Richard Reynolds explains in his blog at [www.guerrillagardening.org](http://www.guerrillagardening.org). Therefore, guerrilla gardening activities take place mostly at night.

The concept first emerged some

thirty years ago in New York where the so-called Green Guerrilla Group transformed a vacant private lot into a garden. After nearly three decades, the group continues to be active and counts 600 members.

The craze has now arrived in Prishtina, brought by members of its large international community, but is also winning followers among Kosovars keen to spruce up their city.

Jeff, who asked for his full name not to be published, came to Kosovo in early 2010 with no prior experience of guerrilla gardening. This, however, did not deter him from launching the idea on an unprepared public.

"When I was standing on my balcony overlooking piles of garbage, I became aware of the need for green spaces here," he told Prishtina Insight.

So he assembled a group of seven friends and since last spring, the enthusiastic team has transformed five spots in Prishtina.



Guerrilla gardeners at work in Prishtina

## Prishtina's inner beauty

"Prishtina is struggling to expose its inner beauty," says Jeff. "We are trying to lead by example and create a sense of ownership of common property."

The first guerrilla gardening

project took place opposite the former OSCE building in downtown Prishtina, where the team planted flowers in concrete flower boxes near the bus stop.

Several days later the flowers had gone. But Jeff and the team were not discouraged.

"People took out the roots of

the plants so they could plant them at home," he told Prishtina Insight. "We went back and planted some more. After they had gone, we went back again. Every time they lasted a bit longer," he added.

"You have to use flowers that can resist cold weather and also



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# Blossoms in Grey Prishtina

must be careful not to be too ambitious; you have to be able to be in and out of the place in an hour," he advises.

The most challenging aspect of guerrilla gardening is post-planting maintenance; flowers need watering and newly accumulated litter needs to be removed.

For this, Jeff stresses the need to involve local residents; involving them in the process will increase feelings of ownership and encourage them to look after the garden.

This sense of ownership towards public space has been one area that NGO activist Elizabeth Gowing, of The Ideas Partnership, has been working on.

"First, it is related to culture and habit forming," she said referring to the lack of care towards public spaces. "There is a need to change what is acceptable; throwing litter on the street is not."

But it is not just the mentality which must change, Gowing believes; the state must also provide infrastructure.

"There is a lack of infrastructure and a poorly developed system of waste collection," she said, adding that Kosovo simply produces too much litter.

"Don't just tell people not to do

something, but explain to them why. We have to counter the prevailing belief that one person cannot make a difference," she added.

Meriton, a translator from Prishtina, tried to encourage his neighbours to transform a vacant plot outside his apartment block into a green area.

"I figured, although it's public, if you can put garbage and cars there, why not trees?" he said. Enthusiasm among his neighbours was lacking though. "I knocked on every door of my block, but only five out of a thousand people could muster the effort to help."

## Convincing the sceptics

And Meriton's newly transformed public garden did not last long. "One day, I saw a car driving over the young trees as there was no other space in sight where he could park," he said. "If people do not know how much effort you put into it then they simply don't care. Even the few green areas of Prishtina are ruined by litter."

But Meriton is still hopeful and supportive of Jeff's initiative. "I will try it again this spring and I am sure fewer trees will get destroyed that time," he said.

After a summer camp in Rugova Valley, The Ideas Partnership, Era

and the Balkan Peace Park Project helped children from Fushë Kosovë to transform the litter site next to the town's community centre into a garden.

At first people were sceptical. "They would walk by and tell us there was no point in what we were doing," Gowing said. Four months later however, the garden is looking good.

Jeff believes that perceptions of the need for green spaces and acceptance of guerrilla gardening are changes for the better.

"First I was considered a curiosity, and then people started thanking me for what I was doing," he said. "Change only happens one pace at a time."

Now that winter has arrived in Prishtina, the guerrilla gardeners are hibernating, waiting for spring.

But the team has already identified their next project and as soon as the first rays of sunshine return, be prepared wake up one morning to see a pile of litter next to your office transformed into a flowery scene.

*Feeling motivated to roll up your sleeves and join the group to help make Prishtina a greener city?*

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An international example of the guerilla gardener movement from California



An Ideas Partnership project to create a garden in Fushe Kosove



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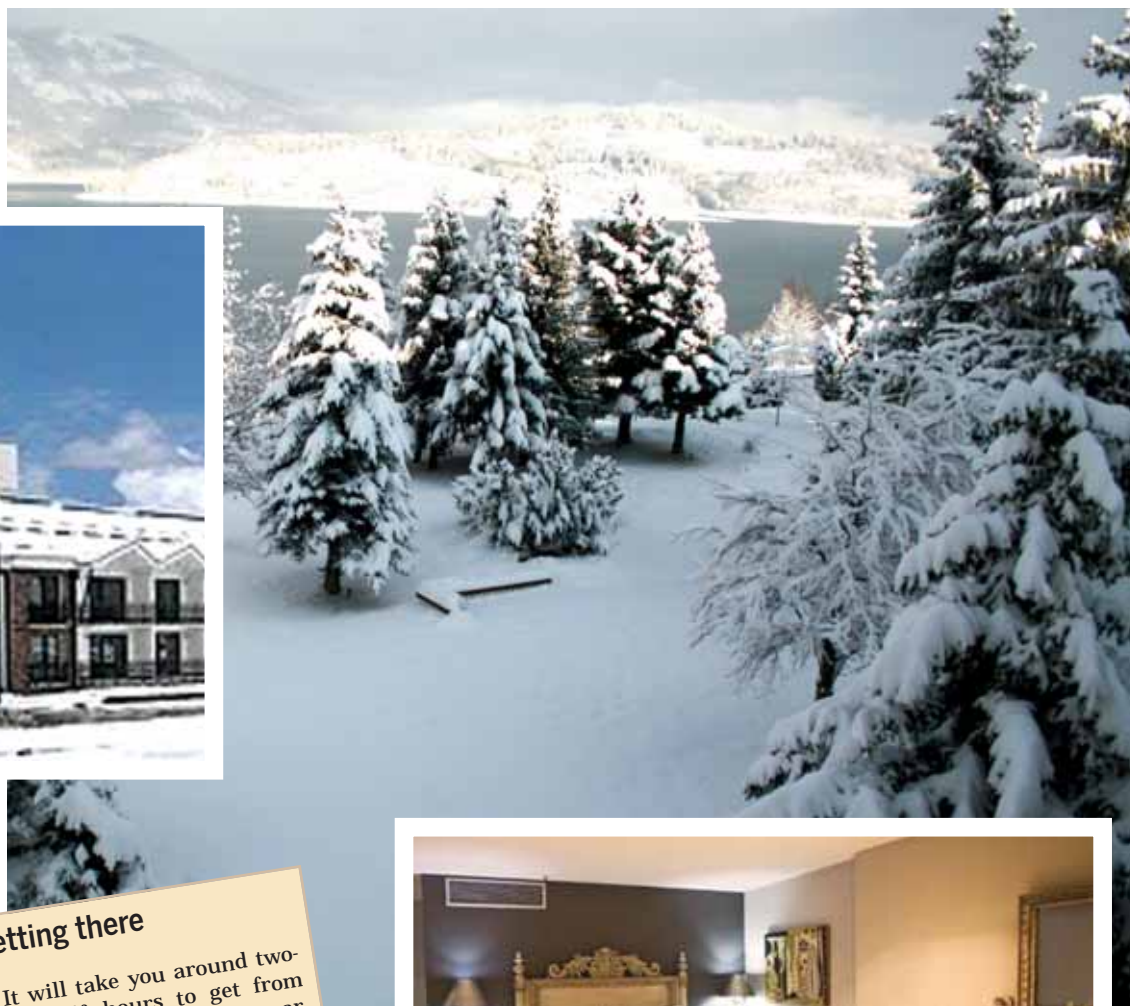
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# Pamper Yourself or Hit the Slopes at Radika

Hotel Radika offers great access to Macedonia's best ski resort, a top-class spa and magical views across Lake Mavrovo, making it an ideal destination for a winter weekend



By Mia Marzouk

As usual, we missed the sharp left turn to Hotel Radika, nestled on the western shores of Lake Mavrovo in Macedonia's most gorgeous national park. Only two and a half hours from Prishtina, this luxury hotel off the beaten track is the perfect base from which to enjoy the country's best ski slopes, most stunning views and a skin-tinting spa.

Mavrovo, smothered by the half-metre of snow which fell over the weekend, is eerily quiet, its lake semi-frozen and its windy roads cushioned by snow drifts. Radika itself overlooks the lake, and the views to the mountains opposite, and even in winter part of the outdoor swimming pool is open for those brave enough to poke their heads out of the water and watch the steam rising.

To head to this part of the world in January, you would likely be a skier, drawn by the cheap prices and proximity to Skopje or Prishtina for a weekend workout for the quadriceps.

A day's ski pass, which gives you access to lifts, will set you back 20 euro per day. While not the most extensive network of ski runs in the Balkans, you'll find

5km of west-facing pistes, stretching down the mountain overlooking sprawling Lake Mavrovo, from black down to 1,250metres.

And when you've worked up an appetite from all that exercise, you can grab a surprisingly good pizza at Hotel Lodge right next to the foot of the slope, by the chairlift.

Watch the weather though – the uppermost pistes can get very windy, and because the slopes are relatively low-lying, averaging only 1,600m above sea level, the ski season often has a late start, early end and even some wobbly bits in the middle.

If you're there just for the skiing, then there's a good selection of hotels just at the foot of the ski centre, including the decent Hotel Bistra (40-65 euros per person) with its alarming collection of stuffed animals lining the corridors, and the more modern Hotel Alpina (25-55 euros per person depending on when you go and what room you stay in). There are also cheaper hotels further along the main road.

But if, like ours, some of your party eschews the knee-wrenching dangers of misjudging a parallel turn, then Hotel Radika really is the best place to stay – as long as your wallet can stretch to it. About half an hour's slow drive from the slopes in thick snow (despite the valiant efforts of the

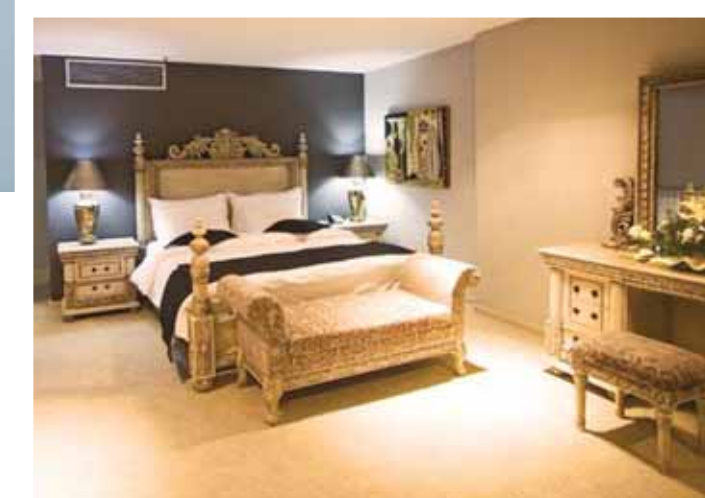
## Getting there

It will take you around two-and-a-half hours to get from Prishtina to Mavrovo by car, via Skopje, on mostly good roads and excellent Macedonian highways. It is well signposted throughout. Distance wise, it is shorter to take the mountain route directly from Kosovo to Tetovo, but it rarely works out as quicker.

municipal snow plough services), Radika's facilities include something for everyone on a weekend break.

The spa in the basement of the hotel boasts four different saunas (two Turkish-style steam baths and two Swedish dry saunas), a "Dead Sea" pool that, it is to be hoped, does not actually contain water from the Dead Sea, two Jacuzzis, a large swimming pool and a smaller pool for children. You can also push the pampering boat out and plump for a professional massage.

Table tennis, a pool table and table football can also amuse, they're in rather soulless surroundings, and I have to confess we did not venture into the ubiq-



uitous Balkan casino.

The restaurant is also good, especially the a la carte menu, serving hearty portions imaginatively presented, and some excellent Macedonian wine.

The rooms are sublime, with vast comfortable beds and huge baths. Make sure you get a lake view, and regardless of the level of luxury you can afford, your room will be suffused with the bright light of a snow-covered winter wonderland stretching out ahead. Prices range from 39 to 218 euros, and don't include meals – but if you treat yourself to staying at Radika, give yourself a break from saving money.

There's also a free shuttle "bus"

to the slopes and back. It's amazing what local drivers can do with an ageing two-wheel drive Berlingo.

In fact, Radika's only drawback is the likelihood of encountering Kosovar politicians in the restaurant or, worse, in swimming gear in the sauna.

Top tip: Instead of leaving work early on a Friday, arrive late on a Monday, beating the border queues and taking advantage of cheaper hotel prices for Sunday nights.

*Hotel Radika  
v. Leunovo*

*Mavrovo & Rostusa  
Tel: ++ 389 (0) 42 22 33 00*



## Brezovica Ski Season Opens, Finally

Brezovica's ski centre opened this week for the first time this season after the heavy snowfall of last weekend.

And with another big dump of the white stuff expected in the next few days, the centre looks well stocked for the season.

Bright, sunny weather is predicted for Sunday and early next week, so if you can escape from work, conditions should be perfect.

To check the weather and read the latest news visit [www.njeri.net/snow](http://www.njeri.net/snow).





# Balkan Winemakers Strive To Match Grape Expectations

From Croatia to Kosovo, growers face challenge of replacing “plonk” with higher quality wines that they can market abroad.



By Tim Judah

In the Western Balkans winemakers are looking at the books and chasing invoices. It is time to see if the holidays have been kind to them.

After all, Christmas comes twice, first on December 25, and then for Orthodox Christians on January 7. In between, there is New Year, which is celebrated by all, including Muslim Bosniaks and Kosovo Albanians, many of whom are partial to a drink at Christmas, too.

Good year or bad, Balkan winemakers agree on one thing. The year ahead is one of challenges.

In the wider world, wines from former Yugoslavia and Albania are not well known. But after two decades of huge change in the industry, the emphasis now is on quality over plonk and, for the former, finding new markets beyond the former Yugoslav comfort zone.

Across the region, the wine industry has been transformed since the Yugoslav era. In many areas rich businessmen and even former politicians like Zoran Zivkovic, Serbia's ex-premier, seeking a new passion or status symbol, have invested heavily in wine. But beyond this common story, the picture from country to country is radically different.

Facing the sea, standing on the slopes of the Saints Hills vineyard on the Peljesac peninsula in Croatia, wine maker Dubravka Serkovic says wine has been produced here “forever”, or at least

since the time of the Ancient Greeks.

It is also clear what the challenges are for up-and-coming producers who have invested large sums in the country in recent years. These slopes produce Dingac wine.

The Dingac area is only five square kilometres in size but, Serkovic says, there are at least 15 producers here. They include Saints Hills, which is the passion of Ernest Tolj, a Zagreb industrialist who has invested heavily here and in other Croatian vineyards.

Sasa Spiranec, a Croatian wine writer, says Dingac is special because the vineyards run down to the sea so steeply that everything has to be done by hand, which makes the wine expensive to produce. He thinks that the coming years will have to see a shakeout in the industry.

Quality has recently improved, he says, but the country has some 17,000 producers, only 2,500 of which produce for the market.

Meanwhile, 50 per cent of the Croatian market is dominated by a few big companies, including food and retail giant Agrokor, which produces wine for its own supermarkets and represents one-third of the total sold in Croatia.

Tourists drink large amounts of the stuff. But since the recession, even if, like the Croats, they have not been drinking less, they have been drinking cheaper.

Croatia's many expensive wines have seen sales fall by 40 per cent in the last two years, Spiranec says, which means that for the first time, producers of high-end wine are being forced to look seriously for

sales abroad. Until recently, only 5 per cent of Croatian wine was exported and 50 per cent of that went to the rest of the former Yugoslavia.

South of Peljesac, in Montenegro, it's a different story. Here, while there are a handful of small wineries, Plantaze, the biggest producer of bottled wines in the former Yugoslavia, dominates the scene totally.

With 2,310 hectares, it boasts one of the biggest vineyards in one piece in Europe. Like everyone else, Plantaze has suffered in the recession but in 2010 it still sold 16.9 million bottles.

Unlike Croatia, less than half of that is drunk at home. The tiny domestic market consumes 40 per cent of Plantaze's production. One-third goes to Serbia, 15 per cent to Bosnia, 5 per cent to Russia and 5 per cent to Western Europe.

The accent in recent years has been on investing in quality. But director Verica Maras says Plantaze can no longer rely on its traditional, regional market.

As the quality of Serbia's own wines increases and as Italian, French and others muscle into the former Yugoslav market, local producers are being forced to take their wines abroad. Because they are mostly too small to produce large amounts for big Western supermarket chains, the emphasis has to be on quality.

Curiously, for a country which otherwise hardly exports anything, Kosovo has made a breakthrough abroad with Stone Castle, which can be bought in Waitrose, an upmarket British supermarket chain. Along with Slovene wines, Stone Castle is the only other former Yugoslav wine there on offer.

Just as Plantaze dominates Montenegro, Tikves plays the same role in Macedonia, producing 67 per cent of its wine. But, again, the story is different. In the

Yugoslav period, 80 per cent of Macedonia's grapes and wine were exported in bulk and ended up being bottled elsewhere in the old Yugoslavia.

That has all changed, says Katerina Kostovska, Tikves' export manager. Now almost all Macedonia's wine is branded and bottled at home. Of that, 45 per cent is consumed domestically and 45 per cent exported to Serbia. Here, too, the emphasis is on improving quality.

Macedonia has its own particular problem. Because of the coun-

try's 19-year dispute with Greece over its name, its winemakers face an increasingly aggressive campaign waged by Greece.

The government in Athens argues that because it registered to protect the name “Macedonia” in 1989 (like “Champagne”), only wines from the Greek province of Macedonia should be sold as Macedonian wines. “T'ga za Jug”, is the name of the former Yugoslav republic's best-known wine. It translates as: “Longing for the south”.



**Kosovo's only real Irish Pub...**

**Every Thursday at 7.30pm**

For charity

**20% off all bar food!**



## Enjoy a Pizza Heaven at Napoli



By Gravlox

When it comes to pizza, Prishtina is blessed, at least in the sense that you'd be hard-pressed to find a bad, let alone inedible pie in this town. The frequently hand-tossed creations undoubtedly benefit from the many former diaspora who've returned to spread the sizzling gospel of crust, cheese and sauce gleaned from tours in the West. But true greatness eludes most of these crisp wheels of Italian bounty. This is not to disparage the talents of the countless local pizzaiolos. They deserve our gratitude for maintaining a standard that many cities should envy.

But they've got nothing on Napoli Pizza. The Sunny Hill stalwart has dispatched a mission to the centre, and it is nothing short of exceptional.

The oven is the most striking feature of the new Napoli. Flames from the brick pizza-baking apparatus glow behind the windows of the eatery, tucked away off Rr. Luan

Haradinaj, next to The Cuban bar. Although Napoli only opened its doors in December, it seems right at home. Checkered tablecloths and pictures of Italian gangsters offer a comforting lack of pretentiousness and a healthy dose of kitsch.

It took me a few minutes to digest the menu. It features pizzas from Mexican to rocket, priced between three and six euros. Napoli also offers pasta dishes and some salads. However, the classic margarita pizza of just tomato sauce and mozzarella seemed the best and fairest way to assess Napoli's prowess.

I was but a few sips into a big house red from the ample selection of foreign and Kosovar wines when my pizza arrived. This was a very good sign. Despite the current slow-food fad, faster often is better in the case of pizzas. Hot ovens mean less cooking time and more importantly, a crust crisp encasing a tender interior.

Perhaps 40 centimeters across, the sheer size — Napoli's only one — of this margarita pizza stunned me. It was enough to feed two. A layer of mozzarella glistened across this flat expanse, having melted with perfection before a sprinkling of oregano sealed the

deal.

Bright red accents told of the tomato sauce below. The thin crust bore battle scars from its brief visit to a very hot oven: slightly blackened and puffed in parts.

The waiter supplied a steak knife, fork and bottle of chili oil for the attack. I cut off a small piece of the pizza, almost feeling guilty for mutilating this work of art. Any apprehension vanished as I tasted the hints of charring play off the subtle sweetness in the crust in a harmony of crunchy delight. I soon entered a sauce full of zest that mingled with the indulgence known as mozzarella. This was a great pizza by any measure. It could have used a little more crunch toward the middle, but it was a nearly perfect execution in the Neapolitan tradition for merely three euro.

A Prishtina native and self-professed margarita enthusiast declared between bites that it was the best he'd ever had in the city.

Napoli's version of the mainstay shtëpisë, or house, pizza also did not disappoint. Slices of spicy sausage did a brilliant job in the role of pepperoni. Peppers seared by the baking process, retaining their freshness. All supported by a chorus of ham, olives and mush-



A perfect pizza at Napoli

rooms. Each ingredient retained their distinct flavor while still supporting the greater good of the whole pie, which was a steal at five euros.

Napoli Pizza might not be in the same category as a place working with hand-pulled fresh buffalo mozzarella, kobe bresaola and an oven excavated from Pompei. Nor should it be. Napoli is about sheer deliciousness, simple and affordable. And in Prishtina, it towers above the competition.



*Napoli Pizza, off Luan Haradinaj  
11 a.m. – 11 p.m., Monday to Saturday.  
5 p.m. – 11 p.m., Sunday.  
045-402-402 / 049-402-402  
Delivers.*

## Where to pick up Prishtina Insight?

Prishtina Insight has teamed up with these six 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.

### Jinglebells

If your soul is affected by the grey season then pay a visit to Jinglebells, where you will find all the colours that you've been missing.

Jinglebells is a perfect one-stop-shop for internationals offering a selection of books in various languages and the quickest supply of international newspapers in town. It also offers souvenirs and gifts, such as local handicrafts.



*Jinglebells.  
Bookstore and more.  
Ernest Koliqi  
12, opposite  
EULEX HQ  
+386(0)49 741 170*

### 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. Skopje-based 'Los Ritmos' entertain diners every Friday and Saturday with their latin beats. For more information, visit their facebook page, or contact them.



*Cavallero,  
Located next to the ex-  
UNMIK building  
Prishtina  
+386 49 619 375  
Facebook page*

### Pizzeria Napoli

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



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

### 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.hotel-  
afa.com*

### 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-fried 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 Victory

Victory is more than a place to meet and do business. Its doors are always open for guests to enjoy the tranquility of our guest rooms and lobbies, and the finest cuisine in the region. The only hotel in the region where real plants, original art and fine solid furniture decorate the space and turn it into a homelike environment. Hotel Victory is established to offer travellers the most complete, comfortable accommodation available in Kosovo and the region. Our professional staff will offer guests the highest standard of service and support, and we will use our resources to greater lengths to make your stay as complete as possible.



*Hotel Victory  
Mother Teresa  
Prishtina, Kosovo  
Tel: +381 38 543 277  
+381 38 543 267  
Email: info@hotel-  
victory.com  
http://www.hotel-  
victory.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*

### 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*





## TEATRI KOMBËTAR I KOSOVËS NATIONAL THEATRE OF KOSOVO

### Theatre schedule

# National Theatre of Kosovo



**Friday, January 28, 2011,** the National Theatre of Kosovo will host the play Rock'n'Roll from the famous British author Tom Stoppard. The play is directed by the Albanian-Bosnian director, Dino Mustafic, a successful director in the region.

Rock'n'Roll is his last text from 2006. This modern play, takes place in Prague and Cambridge during the period between the Prague Spring of 1968 and the Velvet Revolution of 1989. It ends with the concert of the band Rolling Stones in 1990 in the Czech capital.

The last performance of this excellent show will be on Saturday, January 29, and Monday, January 31, starting from 8 pm.



**Tuesday, February 1** Duke prituri Godonë [Waiting for Godot], a play by Samuel Baket, directed by Drita Begolli.

**Wednesday, February 2,** The Ballet play Lidhja [Relationship], choreographer

Mehmet Ballkan, assisted by Lale Balkan, costumes by Tayfun Çebi, and music by Peter Tchaikovsky, Sergei Rachmaninoff.

**Thursday, February 3 and Friday, February 4,**

Play Rock'n'Roll, from Tom Stoppard, directed by Dino Mustafic

**Saturday, February 5,** Eugene Ionesco's play Martins Couple will be played in the National Theatre of Kosovo, directed by Bekim Lumi

**Saturday, February 5,** Kosovo Ballet Troupe will be performing Oh Zot [Oh God], by the choreographer Arthur Kuggeleyn, and music by Christian Meyer, in the National Theatre in Kosovo, starting from 8 pm.

**Sunday, February 6,** Ballet play Dashuria që vret [Love that kills], by the choreographer Ilir Kerni.

**Monday, February 7,** The play Më afër [Closer] from Patrick Marber, directed by Kushtim Koliqi (small stage of the National Theatre).

**Tuesday, February 8,** Beselem pse me flijojnë from Rexhep Qosja, directed by Fatos Berisha.

**Wednesday, February 9,** Lidhje gjaku from Sharon Pollock, directed by Fadil Hysaj.

Lidhje Gjaku [blood link] from the popular Canadian author Sharon Pollock, directed by Fadil Hysaj. Includes prominent Kosovar actors: Irena Cahani, Hazir Myftari, Aurita Agushi, Lumnije Sopi, Bislim Muçaj, Lirak Celaj and Shpetim Kastrati. Play's set designer is by Austrian stylist Sylvia Weber, Vesa Kraja has designed the costumes, and Valton Beqiri has arranged the music. The play is directed by Kastriot Saqipi. The play will be repeated in 18, 28 and



29 December.

Lidhje Gjaku was put on stage in 1980 and marks a shift in attention to individual dramatist in the context of family and social connections.

**Thursday, February 10,** Përgjuesi [listener], a stand-up comedy with Adem Mikullovc, to be performed on the small stage of the National Theatre.

All the plays at the National Theatre start at 8 pm and are in Albanian language, unless otherwise noted. For a complete schedule of the plays, and more detailed information, visit its brand new web page <http://www.teatrikombetar.eu/c> om. For ticket reservation call at 044 430 693, 038 224 397, or send an email at [info@teatrikombetar.eu](mailto:info@teatrikombetar.eu), or visit the ticket place at the entry of the theatre every day from 10am to 12noon, or 5-8 pm.



## Prishtina Diary:

**Friday, January 28, 2011** Duplex Club will host a concert with the well known Albanian rock band from Macedonia, Elita 5. The concert starts from 10 pm.

**Friday, January 28, 2011** Full House Club hosting the best rapper from US, Nappy Paco, New York City and DJ Rafoo from Switzerland. Entry: 3 euro for men and 2 euro for women.



ABC Cinema is broadcasting the movie Takers, everyday from 6, 8, and 10 pm.

Takers takes you into the world of a notorious group of criminals (Idris Elba, Paul Walker, T.I., Chris Brown, Hayden Christensen and Michael Ealy) who continue to baffle police by pulling off perfectly executed bank robberies. They are in and out like clockwork, leaving no evidence behind and laying low between heists. But when they attempt to pull off one last job with more money at stake than ever before, the crew find their plans interrupted by a hardened detective (Matt Dillon) who is hell-bent on solving the case.

ABC Cinema is continuing to broadcast the movie The Tourist with Angelina Jolie and Johnny Depp starting from 8 and 10 pm.

During a trip to Europe, Frank meets Elise. Soon they both are involved in a chasing game through beautiful Paris and Venice.

For ticket reservations or additional information contact them at 038 243 117 or visit their web page [www.kinoabc.info](http://www.kinoabc.info)







# + Prishtina Takes First Steps to Stub Out Smoking in Bars

Five years after the introduction of an antismoking law requiring bars and restaurants to provide large non-smoking areas, some venues are finally acting under threat of massive fines.



By Inge Baanders

Once a haven for committed smokers, Balkan countries have one by one been limiting or outlawing smoking in public places.

Now, even Kosovo is getting in on the act. Having ignored a 2005 law which demands that all restaurants and bars provide at least 70 per cent of their space to non-smokers, venues are now being forced to think again after the Ministry of Health issue a warning this month that non-compliance will result in hefty fines.

According to UN estimates, monthly cigarette consumption in the small country weighs in at 300 tonnes, and it has proved almost impossible to date to find smoke-free zones in restaurants, hotels or even taxis.

"From the beginning of February, health inspectors will visit the field to see whether the law is implemented," the ministry cautioned earlier this month, saying that breaches will be met with a 5,000 euro fine.

According to the ministry, it has decided to start implementing the law now because "resistance against the law has started to decrease after raising awareness among the population [about the dangers of smoking]".

In preparation for this, an

increasing number of venues in Prishtina have begun displaying no-smoking signs.

The popular café chain Amélie was among the first to adopt a complete smoking ban.

Nisim Ben, Amélie's owner, told Prishtina Insight that reactions from customers had been mixed. "Although many do appreciate it, we have experienced some disappointed customers," he said.

The law stipulates that the smoking area must be physically isolated from the rest of the venue and equipped with air condition-

ers and fire extinguishers. For Prishtina's glut of small drinking dens, this part of the regulation may prove impossible.

Burim Rizvanolli of the upmarket restaurant Te Komiteti said: "The fact that areas have to be physically divided is a problem for small bars. The law should either require a complete smoking ban or allow some small places to be smoking."

Guri Shkodra, one of Prishtina's fervent smokers and owner of the Crème de la Crème bar, agrees. "70/30 is a joke," he

said. "There is a reason why the Albanian word for 'to drink' is the same as it is for 'to smoke' [pi]. Can you imagine drinking a raki and not smoking a cigarette?"

"Of course I would miss my cigarette but if I want one I will just go outside." But, he continued, "I will probably smoke less."

James Leigh, who works for an NGO in Prishtina, disagrees. "I don't think people will smoke less, they will simply stay at home."

This is the reaction many businesses are afraid of. "As the majority of people in Kosovo smoke, I

expect it might damage our business," said Amélie's Ben.

Rizvanolli is slightly more optimistic. "If not everybody complies it will affect our business but otherwise I see no reason why it would," he argued.

But for long-suffering non-smokers the move is a godsend. Emma Kay, deputy Dutch Ambassador, is one of them. "During winter, when the smoke becomes even more unbearable, I avoid going into restaurants and bars," she said. "This seems like a positive development."



## Café Review:

# Furra Lumi



By Shengjyl Osmani

After fifteen years of excelling at organic baking, Furra Lumi is branching out into the world of cafes. This means you can now enjoy their delicious food alongside a macchiato in the stylishly designed venue.

The new place, opposite the original bakery, has been three

years in the making and still offers great homemade baked products, with no additives.

The shop also makes available different jams, honey and cheese, which you can add to the tasty pastries and eat in store.

Shop-owners Luz and Merita Mita strenuously monitor all products being sold at the bakery to ensure everything consumed is of the highest quality.

This has earned Lumi the reputation as one of the best bakeries in town.

All the products from Lumi



# Inside Prishtina

## Shop Review

# Jinglebells

In desperate need of an original birthday present? Looking for souvenirs for your family, friends or yourself? Or simply browsing the international newspapers? Jinglebells, bookstore and more, is the place to be.



By Inge Baanders

Jinglebells opened a few months ago opposite EULEX, a few minutes outside Prishtina's city centre. Entering the small, cosy shop is a blissful escape from the glass and brick jungle of Prishtina.

The friendly staff speak English and German and are more than happy to explain the background of various items and help you choose the perfect

souvenir, which is then nicely wrapped.

The shop offers a wide selection of souvenirs, ranging from simple postcards and the ubiquitous flags to vases and paintings. You will find it difficult to resist the gorgeous, handmade jewellery on display - including Kosovo's ancient metal-working craft of filigree.

Jinglebells is well equipped to help you through the cold weather and wintry evenings. The shop sells charming, colourful traditional socks and shawls which are guaranteed to keep you warm - and all at reasonable prices.

If you're feeling especially

frostbitten, Jinglebells also has a selection of homemade raki ("rrushi", grape) on offer in beautifully designed bottles; this traditional drink is always a good gift and definitely something you need either when you leave Kosovo or simply when you prepare yourself for a grim winter's evening.

Should you prefer a warm cup of tea with honey, Jinglebells sells a variety of homemade honey from Gjakova, Kosovo's historic city in the south-west.

When it's cold and dark outside, curling up on the sofa is often all you can face. Jinglebells' modest section of

international books, including language-learning books, and films, and wide selection of magazines and newspapers in various languages, including Italian, French, German, English and Albanian, will stop you getting bored.

Jinglebells, bookstore and more, is definitely worth a visit. Don't be fooled by its modest exterior; its large selection of gifts will make it difficult to keep your purse shut.

*Jinglebells. Bookstore and more.  
Ernest Koliqi 12, opposite  
EULEX HQ  
+386(0)49 741 170*



Jinglebells does a good line in souvenirs for those difficult coming-home presents

Prishtina through the Eyes of:

## Atle Andersen

of the Norwegian Embassy



**What surprised you most about Prishtina?**

That the city was so lively all the time. There are a lot of people in cafés, bars and in the streets even on a Tuesday morning. I really did not expect this.

**What's your favorite hang-out?**

I am trying to discover new places every week - which is easy! However, I am ending up at the Mexican place Cavallero a lot. Others nice places are Paddy O'Brien's, especially for watching sport, and Crème de la Crème on a late Saturday.

**Do you do anything cultural?**

That depends on the definition, but I think I do a lot: Concert with Nouvelle Vogue, salsa nights at Cuba, hiking in Rugova Valley, several really nice movie festivals. And perhaps the most extensive; I am exploring the Balkan wine culture a lot... This weekend we are going on a wine tour to the Tikves region in Macedonia.

**What is the most annoying thing about Prishtina?**

The garbage pretty much everywhere.

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

One day limits the opportunities. I would have tried to make a plan for garbage recycling.

**How many macchiatos do you drink a day?**

Probably one a day. Plus a couple of big black ones, if I manage to explain it to the waiter.

**What's the tastiest Kosovar food?**

Flija - great stuff and it keeps you going for a long time!

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

The National Museum.

# [Lumi Bakery]

are baked in German ovens, combining Teutonic efficiency with Kosovar recipes.

Lumi also delivers some of its products to local restaurants and bars, but mostly produces a limited number of goods in order to have fresh ones each day.

The new "Furra Lumi" is located in front of the old bakery, on Anton Çetta, next to the former Restaurant 'Rugova'. The other is in front of the Philological Faculty. For any orders visit their stores, or call them at 044 278 550.





# The main findings of BIRN's monitoring process during December 2010

## Chief inspector Zef Komani at the Ministry of Health sentenced for corruption

The former chief inspector of the Health Inspectorate Office within at the Ministry of Health, Zef Komani, was sentenced to one year and eight months in jail for corruption and abuse of his official position.

At the time of the unlawful activity, Komani was responsible for inspecting private clinical centres, whether they conform to the laws and health regulations of the Ministry of Health. Komani issued and threatened to issue huge fines for certain private medical clinics on grounds of breach of health regulations. The clinics could avoid these fines by paying Komani thousands of euros for his "silence" at the ministry. A citizen, who owned a private medical centre, paid Komani 2,500 euros to avoid a 12,000 euro fine. Months later, Komani approached the citizen, asking for another 2,500 euros in order not to receive a huge fine from the ministry. The citizen agreed to meet Komani and hand over the money. He also informed the police about this, which resulted in Komani being arrested for receiving bribes.

Komani argued that the money he received from the plaintiff was for purposes of completing some documentation for a new clinical centre, which the plaintiff was planning to open soon. Komani's lawyer also argued that his client is a professional and responsible person, noting some cases where Komani had issued fines against some clinics where his relatives work.

## Lawyer Tomë Gashi sentenced to six months for obstructing police officers

Tomë Gashi, a lawyer from Prishtina, has been found guilty of obstructing police officers while on duty in an incident in a Prishtina restaurant which occurred more than four years ago, and sentenced to six months in jail, suspended for one year.

Kosovo's Chamber of Advocates, which is the highest lawyer's institution in Kosovo, should now investigate and initiate disciplinary action which may result in Gashi having his licence removed. According to the Law on the Bar, which regulates the activity of the Bar and its organisation, the Board of the Chamber of Advocates can decide to remove a lawyer from the Bar registry if he or she is convicted by an adjudication entailing more than six months in prison.

On the day the sentence was delivered, Gashi told media he was not in court for his own case, but instead was there in relation to a client's case.

Gashi, who is one of the most well-known lawyers in Kosovo, serves as legal advisor to Kosovo's Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi.

## Numerous irregularities in court's proceedings for former Minister of Communities and Returns

Former Minister of Communities and Returns Slavisa Petkovic, together with ten other suspects, is being tried on charges of corruption, abuse of his official position, falsification of official documents and fraud in office. The allegations refer to the time when Petkovic served as a minister in the Kosovo Government.

Due to numerous violations of procedure, the first hearing of the case was postponed; the defendants had not received the invitation for the hearing on time and lawyers had not received indictments of their clients. One of the lawyers, quoting financial reasons, resigned from defending his client. The court decided to postpone the hearing.

Another suspect in this case includes Branislav Grbic, who replaced Petkovic at the Ministry of Communities and Returns.

## Medicus case trial

The first hearing in the Medicus case, the confirmation hearing of the indictment of seven doctors, was postponed because some relevant documents were missing.

After nearly three years of investigation by Kosovo Police and UNMIK Police, the doctors are facing charges for trafficking in

persons, organ trafficking, organised crime and unlawful exercise of medical activity.

The doctors used to work in Medicus, a private medical centre, where it is alleged that poor people from Kosovo and other countries sold their organs, mainly kidneys, after receiving promises of large payments. The organs were then transplanted to foreign nationals paying large sums of money.

Two other doctors, an Israeli and a Turkish national, are believed to be key figures in the organ trafficking case. The Turkish doctor, Yusuf Sonmez, was arrested in Turkey earlier this month, and has been released on bail while the Turkish authorities consider the case.

## Kaçanik extortion trial continues

The Kaçanik extortion trial, with Kaçanik's mayor Xhabir Zharku as one of the suspects, has proceeded with a witness statement.

The witness, who is also the injured party, described a meeting he had with the suspects and said he received a death threat from Xhabir Zharku. In 2006, two Kosovo citizens won a bid in the privatisation process of a farm and land near Kaçanik. It is alleged that the injured parties were threatened and extorted to withdraw their winning offer, in order for the defendants to win the tender as second bidders.

## Low number of prosecutors makes courts and prosecutorial offices less efficient

The low number of prosecutors is evident after the reappointment process and has a negative impact on the efficiency of courts and prosecutorial offices in Kosovo.

The Municipal Court of Vushtrri was unable to continue a hearing on a case because the public prosecutor was absent. The public prosecutor assigned to that case had also been assigned to another case in the Municipal Court of Skenderaj. The Municipal Court of Drenas also suffers from this problem, with prosecutors arriving late and trials having to be postponed.

## Two lay judges absent from hearing in Peja Municipal Court

In case P.nr:243/08 on "Grievous Bodily Harm", at the Municipal Court in Peja, BIRN's monitors noted numerous important violations of the Criminal Procedure Code of Kosovo (CPCCK).

According to the CPCCK, a trial panel should be composed of one judge and two lay judges when judging criminal offences carrying a sentence of more than three years. The Peja District Court began proceedings without the two requisite lay judges in a case carrying a sentence of up to five years. Moreover, the court continued proceedings although one of the parties involved in the case was not present during the hearing, another violation of the CPCCK.

## Addresses remain key problem in delivering official documents to parties

In Kaçanik Municipal Court, a hearing was postponed because the court invitations to the parties were not delivered. Instead of sending the invitation to the defendant, the Court sent it to the Kosovo Trust Agency.

The problem with addresses is known to all Kosovo courts. The root cause is the lack of an updated and complete database of addresses held by the Post and Telecommunications of Kosovo.

## Good Practice: For the first time, Prishtina District Court records a case audio-visually

BIRN monitors have noted good practice in the Prishtina District Court. After a lawyer's complaints on the record drafted on a previous hearing, the Court started audio recording. The defendant had said that the written record did not represent all that had been said during the previous session. According to the Criminal Procedure Code of Kosovo, all trials should be audio and/or video recorded.

# Fundraising Drive for Child Emergency Care



By Inge Baanders

One of Kosovo's imminent challenges lies in its health-care system, with infant and maternal mortality rates among the highest in Europe. Its health infrastructure is poorly developed and struggles with a lack of necessary equipment and clinical training and expertise.

In 2009, the American International Health Alliance launched the three-year, USAID-supported Partnership to Improve the Health of Women and Children in Kosovo. The project aims to improve maternal and child healthcare, in particular the quality of delivery of paediatric emergency care at the University Clinical Centre of Kosovo.

According to Mary Packer, programme director at the American International Health Alliance, the current facilities are inadequate.

"At present, children must be taken to the general emergency centre, an extremely busy unit and far from an ideal environment for sick children with needs different from adults. The small area set aside for children is just one corner of a larger room and often has to become an overflow space for adult patients," she said.

AIHA seeks to establish a paediatric emergency room with, among others, observation, resuscitation and intervention areas. The Clinical Centre's management is supportive and currently working with AIHA to identify a suitable area for the emergency room. The room, with an estimated capacity for treating 9,000 children a year, will be specially equipped to be able to respond to children's needs.

Additionally, AIHA's project focuses on an educational component, both to raise community awareness of the importance of antenatal care through patient education and community outreach, and on clinical training. For the latter, AIHA co-operates with experts from Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia.

"To date, there have been three visits of five specialists to provide training and guidance to local emergency specialists and paediatricians," explains Packer, stressing the importance of this aspect of the project. "None of the emergency specialists had received sub-specialty training in paediatric emergency medicine prior to this project."

One of AIHA's partners is the Livermore Rotary Club from Oakland, California. One of the club's former presidents visited Kosovo in 2009 to meet members of

Kosovo's Rotary Clubs, which have been very supportive of the project.

The Prishtina International Rotary Club is one of them. Philip Smith of the Club told Prishtina Insight: "Last fall, we heard about the problems with emergency care for children in Kosovo and we immediately agreed to support AIHA's project."

In an effort to raise money for the project, the Rotary Club is organising its first ever gala event,

to be held on February 12. "The programme includes classical music, dinner, an auction of donated items and then dancing," explains Smith. "So far, almost 100 people have made reservations to join what we believe will be the social event of the season."

With the gala, the Rotary hopes to raise 8-10,000 euro.

Packer is optimistic: "It would be a great achievement to see the paediatric emergency room in operation by the end of 2011."





# Community Focus

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I don't know how many of the bundled women on the streets, with their hands stretched out to you, go back to homes like hers, facing the multiple challenges of poverty, illiteracy and institutions which don't do what they are required by law.

## The People on the Pavement



By Elizabeth Gowing

It's a Roma begging ring – organised crime', 'they make quite a lot of money; they're not really that poor', 'they're not from Kosovo, you know – they're bussed in from Albania', 'giving them money just encourages them.'

Walk for more than a few blocks in Prishtina and you will come across a dark-skinned figure huddled on the pavement muttering prayers to God and to passers-by, with hands outstretched for charity. Many of these people begging have children cradled in their arms; many of them are children themselves.

When I arrived in Kosovo, like lots of people, I worried about what I could do in the face of such need, expressed explicitly from the street corner, asked of me directly. I asked Kosovar friends, and people who had lived here a while. Their answers, at the beginning of this article, will be familiar to you.

So perhaps there was nothing I could do; I was certainly dissuaded from giving any cash. I started carrying small packs of coloured crayons in my handbag to give to children asking for money – I reckoned that couldn't count as supporting organised crime, or encouraging dependency, and at least it honoured the childhood of the kids who were approaching me.

But these kids weren't from Kosovo, and they weren't that poor anyway: my friends' reassurances allowed me to walk through town with a light heart – and the occasional extra glow when I was able to give away one of my pathetic packs of pencils.

No-one likes having their comfortable certainties rocked, so apologies for the family I'm about to introduce you to. I met them in October, when we had some clothes and materials to give away and asked staff at the Balkans Sunflowers community centre in Fushë Kosovë whether there were families locally who might be in need. "Not all, no, but there are some people who could do with help," we were told. We were taken by them to knock on the door of Hateme and Agron, an Ashkali couple who received the bag of clothes with polite thanks.

Just walking to their home expanded my understanding of Kosovo. Kids in this neighbourhood, on a cold autumn day, were running around barefoot in mud and through rubbish heaps. The rubbish is a dominant feature of their area – not just the drifts of plastic bags that make you tut on many a city street or road verge in Kosovo, but great piles of it, as high as the houses, with dogs snuffling through them, along with the occasional adventurous toddler.

I returned on another occasion to take some prescription ointment to Agron and Hateme for their son who I had heard had been badly

burned, and they invited me in to their home. We went past the old car door panels which make an improvised fence around the home, past the overflowing latrine, the cold water tap outside which is their only source of water, to a single room, three metres by three metres, where the whole family lives and sleeps. Inside, the children were eating their lunch off the floor – serious 9 year-old Gjelane, her mischievous brothers aged 7 and 6, the subdued 3 year-old who'd been burned, and a two year-old giggly sister, Elhame. The children are smaller than you'd expect for their age, and some of them have swollen bellies, the signs of malnutrition.

The family made polite conversation – asked me about my family and my work, and I asked them a bit more about themselves. They live on 60 euros a month of social welfare. That's less than 9 euros per person per month; that's basically not possible. So Agron goes out rooting through the bins in Prishtina for scrap metal to sell on. And Hateme begs, outside the Xhamia e Llapit mosque on Fridays, taking Elhame with her. I thought about what my friends had told me and wondered about the three year old's burns – "Do you take Ramadan with you too?" Hateme frowned like any mother would. "Of course not – it would be too uncomfortable for him with his burns, to sit in the cold."

I've been back to visit Hateme and the kids a number of times.

I've had some more glimpses into their life, their compromises. I discovered that Hateme can't read or write, though Agron can – he's showed me his school leaving certificate. "Education is the most important gift you can have," he told me solemnly.

"Yes; do your children work hard at school?" I asked. He looked uncomfortable. No, the children didn't go to school.

"But you've just told me that education is the most important gift you can have." I asked him. He gestured at his kids' feet. "They've got no shoes. They can't go to school like that."

In November we sorted out shoes for the 6 and 7 year old boys and they have registered to start school in September this year, and already began catch-up classes run by Balkan Sunflowers to get them ready.

Gjelane has shoes too, but it turns out she can't start school in September: two years have passed since she should have registered, and so she won't be accepted unless she passes a test.

Until last week she couldn't even write her name, so it's not likely she will pass the test. By law, Municipal Education Departments should provide accelerated learning out-of-school for pupils like her, but at the moment such state-funded education isn't available in Kosovo – you miss school for two years, and you've missed your chance forever.

Balkan Sunflowers are offering

to help her as much as they can, and Gjelane is determined to learn the stuff her brothers are coming home with.

One Thursday we brought her a workbook for the first grade in school; when we returned on the following Tuesday she had finished every exercise. Her mum had started carefully tracing the alphabet too.

Her mum is pregnant again; I congratulated her when she told me, but she frowned. 'I didn't want to be pregnant. Look at the space here. Sixty euros a month?'

I don't know how many families there are in Kosovo like Hateme's. I don't know how many of the bundled women on the streets, with their hands stretched out to you, go back to homes like hers, facing the multiple challenges of poverty, illiteracy and institutions of which they don't do what they are required by law.

I don't say that giving money to Hateme outside the mosque on Fridays will solve the problems – though I know it will mean that the kids will eat that weekend. But when I've visited Hateme I drive the ten minutes home to the capital in disbelief and shame that it took me four years living here before I met the people who had been calling out from Prishtina's pavements.

*Elizabeth Gowing is a founder member of The Ideas Partnership, a Kosovan NGO working on educational, cultural and environmental projects. She can be reached at [theideaspartnership@gmail.com](mailto:theideaspartnership@gmail.com)*



# With a little help from Kosovo's friends



By Seb Bytyci

Kosovo is facing some pretty big challenges for such a new and small country. It is currently wrapping up an election process that has turned sour. Its poll results look unlikely to produce a stable government. It is facing new talks with its adversary Serbia. And on top of all this, a report by Council of Europe rapporteur Dick Marty accuses some of its political leaders of involvement in organ trafficking during and after the war.

## Electoral fraud

Fraud during December's general elections occurred primarily in the strongholds of two of Kosovo's former "war parties", the PDK and the AAK, although it also happened elsewhere.

The fraud in the strongholds is important because Kosovo is one electoral zone. It does not matter where votes are from – or, for some how they are cast. And for the parties, it is easier to commit fraud in their strongholds, where pretty much all the commissioners and even observers are loyal to one party.

The solution is to split Kosovo in several constituencies, so that each region has members of the assembly responsible to their populations or constituencies. This system would be more representative and more democratic. Minorities would not lose out because they would not be subjected to thresholds. On the contrary, such a system would encourage the minorities to go out and vote, even more the case when the current reserved seats expire after this parliament, as provided in the Ahtisaari package.

Fraud happened in other regions as well, but usually in villages where the entire village is loyal to one party. And throughout Kosovo, manipulation of the vote for candidates within a party is the norm.

After the revoting in several municipalities, the PDK, although still the largest party, comes out the principal loser, and it seems did not manage to increase its support since the 2007 general election. The biggest winner in this election is, of course, Vetevendosje.

## Election observations

The ENEMO international observation mission made up of several NGOs from abroad, monitored the December 12 2010 elections, but their mission structure is problematic.

Before the elections, concerns were raised regarding ENEMO's small number of observers, unsurprising given the short time period to organise extraordinary elections. They only have mobile observers and not nearly enough

to cover all polling stations.

This sort of election observation does not actually constitute monitoring in the real sense because observers are not permanently present during the voting process. However, it allows fraudsters to say that the results are legitimate because the international observers said that the process was 'generally good' – having missed all the bad parts. This is a serious issue; one solution is to have full international observation missions in the future with static observers in every polling station.

Democracy in Action, the monitoring mission made up of a coalition of local NGOs, did not ensure fast and accurate reporting of the process. It suffered from internal divisions and some of its member NGOs were perceived to have loyalties to different political parties. Moreover, observers on the ground often in effect work for certain political parties, especially in the party strongholds.

Now three NGOs have left the coalition, and there will probably be a new coalition of NGOs for election monitoring.

What was remarkable in this process was the deafening silence of Kosovo's friends before the election, although concerns were being raised about possible fraud. International representatives and ambassadors of friendly countries have great influence with Kosovo's political leaders. But no one publicly warned any party leader that Kosovo's friends would not tolerate the manipulation of the free will of the citizens. If this had happened, Kosovo would probably be having an easier time of it now.

## New government

The problems with the elections are not the last of Kosovo's woes, however. It will be very difficult to form a stable government.

The anti-PDK rhetoric among the other Albanian parties is aggressive, while the largest Serb party, the Independent Liberal Party, SLS, is the PDK's most reliable partner now. The AAK is quite interested in joining the government, but they are unsure how such a move would impact on their party's future. A grand coalition between the PDK and the LDK is possible but not very likely, and would happen only under severe international pressure.

More likely seems to be a national coalition of all parliamentary (and even some non-parliamentary) parties, probably except Vetevendosje. A 'technical government' is also possible, but only with the support of a solid majority of the parliamentary parties, because formally such a thing is not mentioned in the constitution and could be opposed.

## Mr Marty and 'dialogue' with Serbia

Council of Europe rapporteur Dick Marty's report was published amid all this uncertainty. The

report is very damaging both to the image of Kosovo – having been widely covered by international media – and to the internal democratic process.

First, it contains several sweeping prejudiced generalisations about Albanians, sounding similar to the view promoted in Serbia for a long time that Albanians cannot create a functional society. Internally, the report has drawn attention away from the election process, allowing many politicians to revert to the nationalistic rhetoric to distract from their parties' behaviour during the elections. Coming prior to negotiations with Serbia in which Kosovo's leaders are expected to make concessions, the report could not be more badly timed – and any concessions are now considerably less likely with so many of Kosovo's politicians on the defensive.

So this dialogue with Serbia has inevitably been delayed. Right now, it is not realistically a priority for Kosovo. Kosovo is now at a disadvantage because it will be more difficult to compose a competent team for the dialogue with all the political tension that has built up. Such a team must have the backing of the Kosovo Assembly since any new government coming out of these damaged elections will suffer a lack of legitimacy in the eyes of the electorate.

## Friends in a time of need

It is therefore time for Kosovo's friends to revitalise their engagement in Kosovo. The European Parliament took an important step when it adopted a resolution calling for dialogue with Serbia not to include the issue of the status of Kosovo. The European Commission, the President, and the High Representative should take the initiative to ensure that all member states recognise the independence of Kosovo. This would create a more level playing field for the dialogue with Serbia. And, the EU and its member states should increase their support to EULEX to fight corruption and organised crime. This includes prosecuting those responsible for electoral fraud.

While the role of the US in Kosovo remains irreplaceable, it must call on all its allies that have not recognised Kosovo to do so. And it must assure Kosovo's citizens that the US is committed to Kosovo's democracy by insisting on the prosecution of those suspected of vote fraud.

It is crucial for Kosovo's closest allies to understand that the current electoral system must be changed. And, that Kosovo should not be pressured into creating a government which will not have sufficient legitimacy and one that would collapse soon. Kosovo needs its friends more than ever to help it through these stormy times. Let's hope that its friends are not only for fair weather.



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