

Prishtina Insight

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Special Report: Spotlight on South Serbia

From Sandzak to Southern Serbia, Belgrade is failing to turn its verbal pledges into action when it comes to guaranteeing ethnic Albanians and Bosniaks fair levels of state sector employment

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Kosovo's Smuggled Medicines Pose Threat To Lives

A BIRN investigation can reveal that Kosovo pharmacists are full of drugs that have been illegally imported, jeopardizing people's health and depriving the country of much-needed taxes.

By Besiana Xharra

Drugs smuggled into Kosovo, bypassing all safety and customs measures, make up a high proportion of goods sold by pharmacists, a BIRN investigation has revealed.

One pharmacist in the capital told Prishtina Insight that he believed that up to 60 per cent of the drugs sold in Kosovo were illegal imports.

He said he had little choice but to sell them because the Kosovo Medicines Agency, KMA - the body

tasked with licensing medicines - often had not authorised the use and sale of key drugs.

"We sell drugs that aren't licensed because if we don't, people may die, because they cannot find a replacement," he said. "We have no choice," he added.

Kadri Bytyqi, of the Pharmacists Association of Kosovo, said the problem was the restricted number of licensed drugs, which did not meet the demands of the market.

According to him, more than 300 types of drugs that are essential for patients are not licensed

for use in Kosovo.

"The KMA needs to license these necessary drugs so that pharmacists aren't forced to keep illegal ones," Bytyqi said.

Shkumbim Deda, another chemist, agreed. "There are many drugs in Kosovo that are necessary but not licensed, and if we do not stock them, patients suffer," he said.

Deda cited two common examples: Natrium Valproate, which is widely prescribed for epilepsy, and Farin, used to treat high blood pressure. Neither is licensed in Kosovo.

Stamps forged or absent:

Drugs can only be legally imported into Kosovo under a license from the KMA. On arrival at customs points, importers need also to show certificates proving the origin of the products and detailing the contents.

Customs duty on these imports is then collected and a stamp placed on the package, showing that tax has been paid and the product has been checked before it reaches the shelf.

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Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians Explore Mainstream Media

Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian community members will be given the opportunity to speak for themselves about their problems in the media in a bespoke project that includes attending learning centres and protecting their cultural heritage.

"The project aims to decrease by five per cent...

NGO focus

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Power Plant Delay Blamed on Meddling Consultants

Minister of Energy in the last administration Justina Shiroka-Pula has broken a two-year silence to blame delays on deciding the design and construction of a new power plant on the project's international transaction advisors.

"Ever since the beginning, the transaction advisors...

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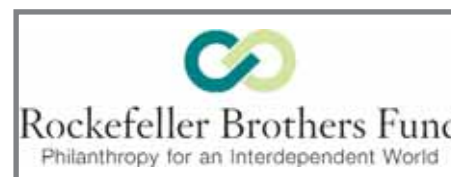
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Kosovo Mayor Jailed For Extortion

News in brief

The mayor of Kosovo's southern municipality of Kacanik, an influential figure in the governing Democratic Party of Kosovo, PDK, has been jailed for three years for extortion and illegal possession of weapons. Xhabir Zharku was found guilty of the crimes, along with three other defendants, at Prishtina's district court on Thursday.

In July 2006, Zharku, alongside Arsim Kolshi, Besnik Hasani and Nusret Cena, threatened to kill the winner in the auction of a publicly owned sheep farm unless he withdrew his bid.

The threatened man did so, allowing the second highest bidder, Kolshi, to buy the 30 hectares of land.

When police searched Zharku's property, they found two automatic weapons, made in Iran, as well as explosives and a mortar.

Zharku, who was also mayor at the time of the offences, has been handed three years of imprisonment on the charge of extortion and given a fine of 1500 Euro on the charge of unlawful possession of weapons.

Medicus Trial Confirmed

An appeal panel composed of two EULEX judges and one Kosovo judge from Prishtina District Court has confirmed the indictment against five defendants in the Medicus, organ trafficking case.

The offences were allegedly committed in 2008 at the Medicus Clinic on the outskirts of Prishtina and involved victims from various countries.

Four defendants will face charges of trafficking in persons for the purpose of removal of organs and organised crime. Three defendants will face a charge of unlawful exercise of medical activity. Two defendants will face a charge of abuse of official position.

The case will now be listed for trial at Prishtina District Court.

Two other defendants involved in the case remain at large.

Albania and Kosovo Sign Joint Border Control Deal

Albania and Kosovo are to bring their border posts together, meaning that travellers will be checked just once. The agreement was signed earlier this week by Albanian Minister of Interior Bujar Nishani and Kosovo Minister of Internal Affairs Bajram Rexhepi.

The rule will apply to the countries' three border crossings. Nishani and Rexhepi also signed the relevant protocols for carrying out joint border patrols.

Kosovo's Smuggled Medicines Pose Threat To Lives

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The KMA changed its stamp last March, following complaints that it had become too easy to forge. It has since been replaced but Prishtina Insight found many products on shelves either had no stamp, or only bore the old stamp.

Haki Ejupi, the KMA's chief inspector of pharmacies, said that pharmacists selling unlicensed drugs were gambling with people's lives. "If the medicine hasn't been subject to due controls, they are risking patient's health, because we don't know the contents," he said.

Ejupi said he suspected many people fell ill after taking such medicines, though official data on this phenomenon is absent. Patients often don't know that they have been sold an unlicensed product.

A health ministry official said the ministry routinely received complaints from patients, alongside samples of poor quality drugs. But they were unable to act on these complaints because the KMA's testing facility was out of action.

Health Minister Ferid Agani has said that restarting the KMA's laboratory is a priority but has yet to offer a date.

Coming from the north:

No official figures exist on the quantity or type of illegal drugs confiscated by Kosovo customs or police.

It is generally believed that the Serb-run far north of the

country, which is not under the control of the Kosovo government, is the main point of entry.

"Most illegal drugs come in from the north, but they also enter from Albania and Macedonia," KMA chief inspector Ejupi said.

Adriatik Stavileci, spokesman for Kosovo Customs, said that half the 20 cases of smuggled drugs that they had intercepted this year came from Serbia.

The bulk of the seizures occurred in April as part of a joint operation conducted by the KMA and the customs service.

Following this mass confiscation of unlicensed products from chemists, many pharmacists went on strike for two days, demanding that the KMA issue new licences for goods.

Little seems to have changed since April.

When Prishtina Insight visited ten pharmacies recently to check the stock on sale, we found shelves still full of unregulated goods.

Most of these products were not stamped at all, indicating that they had been smuggled into the country. Others bore old, out-of-date import stamps.

In a bid to standardise the prices of medicine and curb import tax evasion, the health ministry issued new import stamps in 2009.

By law, products with the old, blue-coloured stamps, which allowed pharmacists to write in their own prices, ought to have been removed from the shelves



Products marked with expired (top) and current tax stamps

by March 31, 2010.

But more than a year after the deadline expired, Prishtina Insight found dozens of products on sale with the old stamps.

A source in the industry said counterfeit versions of the old stamps were still in circulation. They were easy to falsify, and were being used on unlicensed products to make them look official.

Our spot check on products for sale also showed many unlicensed versions on shelves, even when licensed alternatives exist.

One pharmacist said that this is because customers are often used to, and ask for, well-known Serbian products, many of which are not licensed in Kosovo.

Unlicensed products included many from Serbia's state-owned pharmaceutical giant, Galenika, whose medicines are not licensed for sale in Kosovo.

Other drugs found on pharmacy shelves, which do not appear on the KMA's list of licensed

products, included Bensedin, Brufen, Diklofen, Bedoksin, Daonil, Deprim, Glibenklamid, Loperamid, Furosemi and Metildopa.

BIRN has discovered that doctors throughout Kosovo continue to prescribe unlicensed medicines.

"Almost every day patients come in with doctors' prescriptions, prescribing some unlicensed drug," Xhin Hoti, a pharmacist from Pristina, said. "It all starts from the doctors, so we're forced to stock such drugs for our patients."

KMA head Jeton Shala said he agreed that the issue needed to be discussed but until a solution was found, illegal drugs would continue to be confiscated.

"We will set up a working group tasked with increasing of licensed drugs," he said. "But for now we have also increased inspections in order to confiscate unlicensed drugs on the market."

Probe Stalls Into Marty Report Claims on Kosovo



By Petrit Collaku

Four months after the release of the controversial Council of Europe report, the EU law mission in Kosovo says it has not received any evidence enabling it to start investigating its grave claims.

Months after a Council of Europe report accused Kosovo's top leaders of trafficking in organs, the EU rule-of-law mission said a preliminary probe was still trying to establish whether enough evidence exists to begin a formal investigation. The mission says it can only launch an official investigation if enough hard evidence is received, and no specific per-

sons are as yet under the spotlight.

EULEX said that anyone who had evidence to support the grave accusations made in the report, including Marty, needed first to come forward and submit their findings to EULEX prosecutors.

"We have exchanged letters with Mr Marty. We have not yet received any hard evidence from him," a EULEX spokesperson told Prishtina Insight.

"At this stage we have nothing more to add. When we have more to say, we will say it," the spokesperson added.

The report caused a bombshell when it was released in December, as it linked former Kosovo Liberation Army, KLA, fighters, including the current Prime Minister, Hashim Thaci, to organised crime and accused them of harvesting the organs

of Serbian prisoners and others in Albania.

But Marty has refused to provide any evidence for his claims to the EU mission in Kosovo, saying the mission was not up to handling the investigation and thus an "ad hoc" judicial structure needed to be set up, which would operate outside Kosovo.

EULEX disputes this. "We have full confidence in our own witness protection unit, which has already shown itself capable of handling high-level and sensitive cases," EULEX said.

Serbia, meanwhile, has sent a proposal to the UN asking the international body to launch an independent investigation into the allegations.

Kosovo's government reacted angrily when the report was made public, accusing Marty of basing his report on rumours



CoE Human Rights Rapporteur Dick Marty

and falsehoods.

Kosovo officials refused to be drawn further on the probe, or on its likely results. "It's in EULEX's competence," Hajredin Kuci, Kosovo's Deputy Prime Minister, told Prishtina Insight, declining to comment further.

The Kosovo government earlier called on Marty to present all his facts and proof to the competent judicial bodies.



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Albania Asks to Play France Qualification Game in Prishtina

International football may be coming to Kosovo earlier than expected after it emerged that Albania's national team is hoping to use Prishtina stadium for its final qualification games for the European Championships



By Petrit Collaku

While Kosovo's Football Association is continuing lobbying FIFA and UEFA to take part on the international stage in football, Prishtina Football Club is trying to raise funds to renovate the stadium in order to meet the minimum requirements for international matches.

The club president, Remzi Ejupi, said that the capital has to be ready with a stadium to offer to Albania so they can move their Euro 2012 qualifications to Kosovo.

Albania will soon start the construction of a brand new stadium in Tirana and will not be able to continue holding matches there while work is ongoing.

In April, Ejupi said he was contacted by the president of Albania's Football Federation, Armand Duka, who told him that Albania's team would like to play in Prishtina for the team's next home games against France on September 2 and Romania

on October 11.

"He has chosen Prishtina because Kosovo has contributed a lot to Albania with football players and fans that make absolutely amazing atmosphere in every match played in Tirana," Ejupi told Prishtina Insight.

The president of Kosovo's Football Federation Fadil Vokrri told Prishtina Insight that the federation has not received any such request from UEFA or Albania.

"But it all depends on the government," Vokrri said.

Ejupi stated Kosovo's Football Federation is currently unable to participate on the international stage because to become a member of FIFA and UEFA it must first secure a seat at the United Nations, but added Albania's request to Kosovo is not illegal.

He explained that in those situations it is up to the football teams that can correspond with neighbouring teams seeking support.

"Now, experts are working on the draft project but I can say, roughly, we will need around one million euro to do the renovations in the stadium," he said, adding that the work could be finished in two months if the constructors works in two shifts.

The club needs to improve the pitch, install better lightning and renovate the player facilities.

After renovations, the stadium could offer a capacity of up to 20,000 seats. Ejupi stated that France would not mind playing Prishtina since this country has recognised Kosovo's independence.

He stated that the city's stadium is under Prishtina municipal responsibility. He said that it is a dream of every Kosovar, and particularly of the "Red and Black" fan club which supports Albania, to have Albania play in Prishtina.

"I hear people talk about Kosovo's and Albania's unity," he said. "Aren't these matches the best example to show the unity."

"I have just had a meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister Behgjet Pacolli and he supports me," he said. "If we all are engaged, we can make it," Ejupi ended.

Albania is third in group D with five matches played, having won two, lost two and drawn one.

France is leading the group followed by Belarus.

Editor's Word

Buxheti



By Lawrence Marzouk

I've been poring over the contents of Kosovo's 2011 budget in the past few days.

What I find most depressing are the savage cuts to a string of absolutely key ministries in order to accommodate a road.

The budget for infrastructure improvements to the health service this year was supposed to be 11.5 million euro; it has been cut to 8 million. Education has been slashed from 29 million to 23 million. But that's ok girls and boys, patients and doctors, you can all clamber into your cars and drive to Durres for the weekend. The creaking hospitals and crowded schools will sort themselves out.

Tony Blair – the guy named after a small side-street in Ferizaj – once said he had three priorities: "Education, Education, Education." It wasn't a great joke, but it did win him a landslide election.

Hashim Thaci's priorities seem more akin to "Excavation, Excavation, Excavation". Again, not hilarious, but evocative, perhaps, of the insane spending decisions that this government has embarked on.

One in every five euros of the government's budget in the next three years will be spent on building the glorious stretch of tarmac with its tear-jerking moniker, the Patriotic Highway. If you look at just the infrastructure budget, the Merdare-Vermice motorway accounts for about half the total spending for the next three years.

We don't know whether it is going to have any real impact on Kosovo's stunted economy, bar the actual boost that the increased capital expenditure will bring in terms of short-term job creation. And even this point needs to be seen in the context of most of the cash going to the US-Turkish consortium, Bechtel Enka, not to Kosovo firms.

Will the highway increase trade? Will it bring more investors to Kosovo? Will it become Europe's most embarrassing white-stripy elephant? No one has the faintest idea because no one has bothered to do any proper work finding out.

If you throw 750 million euro at any capital project, there will be some benefits, but the key questions are, what the cost-benefit analysis is and whether the cash could be spent better elsewhere. But answers came there none.

To make matters even worse, the government doesn't know how it is going to pay for it, how much it will cost – certainly some experts believe the country was duped into a deeply one-sided contract – and what route it will take.

Unfortunately, because it is unpatriotic not to cheer-lead the road, expensive bridge by expensive bridge, no one has really got hold of this disastrous decision.

People, politicians, sensible members of the public tell me to shut up and stop complaining because "it's popular". Well, so is xenophobia and petty tax fraud, but it doesn't mean it is right. If this is right I most, definitely, want to be wrong.

So, instead of a balanced programme of hospital buildings, improvements to education, environmental projects and road building, we get a big road which has no economic rationale – certainly not one that has been presented to the public.

It's probably too late now to change the road plan, but it's not too late to demand better decisions by the country's leadership and a little more consultation on how taxpayers' money is spent.

Questions Raised Over Highway Rerouting

The legality of a Kosovo Government decision to reroute a 700 million euro highway is being questioned by opposition members and civil society



By Besiana Xharra

Kosovo Government's decision last week to reroute the country's fist highway, and largest ever infrastructure project, has been criticised by opposition parties and civil society.

Prime Minister Hashim Thaci has announced that the new road, dubbed the Patriotic Highway because it will eventually connect Tirana and Prishtina, will no longer pass through a mountainous section in southern Kosovo.

Instead, Thaci said the road will take a longer but less expensive route via the town of Malisheve, home to the former Transport Minister Fatmir Limaj, saving 350 million euro.

Thaci added that the detour will add just seven minutes to journey times.

A leading thinktank, Gap Institute, said the rerouting would take an extra seven minutes only if drivers were able to maintain an average speed of 130km an hour.

It also pointed out that the move contradicts an earlier Government decision, giving the assembly final say on the route.

According to the institute, the Government, in its meeting on April 27, has not requested that the assembly consider the decision.

The institute added that the savings suggested by the government remain unclear,



One of the bridges near Prizren, forming the Patriotic Highway

as a 350 million euro saving would leave the total cost at 400 million euro, even though 225 million euro has been set aside this year, 265 million euro in 2012 and 269 million euro in 2013.

Ismet Beqiri, of the main opposition party Democratic League of Kosovo, LDK, says that the decision is illegal.

"The government is trying to present the LDK as if we are against the highway, while we oppose only the illegal procedures that are being carried by Hashim Thaci in this case," he said.

Burim Ramadani, a senior figure in the opposition Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, AAK, said that Thaci's decision

confirmed the government was willing to take decisions unlawfully.

The Government nor the Ministry of Finance was available for comment and the criticism leveled against them.

Ela Ruci, construction firm Bechtel Enka's spokesman, said that their work is progressing well.

She said the section from the border, through Prizren to the town of Suhareka would be opened within the year.

"So far we have worked on ten bridges, some of them have already been completed," she said.

Work on the highway began in April 2010 and should take three years.

Davutoglu: 'I'm Not a Neo-Ottoman'

The Turkish foreign minister on why Turkey is a Balkan country, neo-Ottomanism, achieving lasting peace in the region and relations with Serbia and Macedonia.



By Altin Raxhimi

Ahmet Davutoglu, Turkey's foreign minister since 2009 has perhaps made a greater impact in the Balkans than his predecessors in recent times. His role in mediating between Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia has been widely acknowledged. On top of that, once frosty relations between Belgrade and Ankara have now begun to thaw on Davutoglu's watch.

However, some in the Balkans remain concerned that Turkey, one time Ottoman occupiers of Serbia and large swathes of the Balkans, is pursuing a 'neo-Ottomanist' foreign policy – with Davutoglu at the helm. Critics within Turkey, believe this neo-Ottomanism is a result of the ruling AK Party's increased confidence and growing assertiveness. Party members seem less shy of recalling the Ottoman past as a golden era.

This glossy, some say rose-tinted, view of the Ottoman Empire in Europe, is highly contentious in many Balkan states, particularly those who hold the Ottomans responsible for arresting economic development and those who forged their national identities in opposition to 'the Turk' on gaining independence from the Ottomans.

Davutoglu replied by email to some questions about his approach

to the Balkans.

Q: What place does the Balkans occupy with regard to Turkish foreign policy?

A: Due to its geographical, historical and cultural heritage Turkey is a Balkan country itself.

Therefore, the Balkans is neither a bridge with the EU nor a Turkish 'backyard'. We have very strong historical, social, cultural and human ties with all the countries in the region.

There are millions of Turkish citizens that have their origins in the Balkans. Turkey aims at lasting peace and stability in the Balkans. We share and actively support the Euro-Atlantic vision of the Balkan countries. We believe all the Balkan countries should be sheltered under the umbrella of EU and NATO, in a not too distant future.

Our Balkan policy is shaped by the defining principles of regional ownership and all inclusiveness. It is based on four main pillars which can best be summarised as security for all, high-level political dialogue, further economic integration and the preservation of the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious social structures in the region.

Our perspective on the Balkans envisages a zone of prosperity and welfare, instead of a region beset by conflicts and tension. We want the Balkans not to be considered as at the periphery of Europe, but as an integral part of it.

Transport corridors and energy pipelines must go through the Balkans and trade, financial transactions and cultural interaction should grow. Historical centres like Sarajevo, Belgrade, Skopje, Plovdiv, Mostar and Dubrovnik must prosper along with Thessaloniki and Istanbul.

The people of the Balkans should make best use of the energy created by the common cultural and historical heritage they share, and convey it as a valuable asset for a common future to their next generations.

Q: Following your 2009 Sarajevo speech, you have been accused by some of promoting an anti-European Union agenda and a return to 'neo-Ottoman' nationalism. How do you respond to this?

My speech during a visit to Sarajevo in 2009 on contemporary Turkish foreign policy has been misinterpreted as advocating a policy of neo-Ottomanism. I am not a neo-Ottoman. Actually there is no such policy. We have a common history and cultural depth with the Balkan countries, which nobody can deny. We cannot act as if the Ottomans never existed in this region. My perception of history in the Balkans is that we have to focus on the positive aspects of our common past. We cannot create a better future by building on a negative view of history.

We need to build a better future for the next generations that is based on common history, shared

values and a joint vision. To this end, we wholeheartedly support the Euro-Atlantic orientation of all Balkan countries. We believe in the importance of securing the entire region under the European and Euro-Atlantic structures.

Q: Many commentators in the Balkans view you as an apologist for the role the Ottoman Empire played in the Balkans. They believe Ottoman rule is the root of the region's poor economic development and internecine conflicts. Don't they have a point?

I guess I already answered the question. However, as a matter of fact, the Balkans had its golden age of peace during the Ottoman reign. This is a historical fact. Those who blame the Ottoman period for the region's economic backwardness and internecine fights are under the influence of historical prejudices and stereotypes.

It will be enough to travel only a few hundred kilometres to identify the patrimony created during the Ottoman rule. Therefore, we do not want to be part of this blame game. As I told you before we have to focus on the good. To start with, we have to take a clear and realistic picture of the history. Those who do not know history cannot make history.

Despite the positive developments taking place in the region recently and the rapprochement efforts of local leaders, which we welcome wholeheartedly, the Balkans remains to be the fragile part of Europe and the test case for lasting peace and stability in the continent. Important challenges are yet to be overcome.

We must admit that wounds are fresh and need constant attention to be completely healed. We must deal with the legacy of the conflict - from organised crime to refugees and displaced persons; from war crimes to shattered economies and infrastructure, carefully and with a visionary approach while leaving behind the misgivings without delay.

Q: Turks of Macedonian origin seem to want to apply for Macedonian citizenship. According to a 1950s agreement with the former Yugoslavia, those who left do not have the right to return and recover their Macedonia citizenship. Should that agreement be revised?

The citizenship laws of Macedonia - as far as we are informed - do not give many possibilities to acquire citizenship. Having said this, we are not aware that a large number of Turkish citizens, whose families originate from Macedonia, are willing to settle in Macedonia and acquire citizenship. These are just speculations that should not be given credit.

Q: Does Turkey's involvement with Serbia hinge on Belgrade's position as central to security in the Balkans? What is Turkish policy towards Serbia?

Turkey and Serbia consider each other as neighbours and key part-



Ahmet Davutoglu on a visit to Greece

ners for peace and stability in the Balkans.

We have a common will and desire to forge a strategic partnership. This has been confirmed and encouraged at the highest possible level through numerous high level visits and frequent contacts at all levels. In line with our strategic partnership perspective, we have launched a close and frank cooperation on bilateral and regional matters.

We converge on many aspects and we have a common vision for the future of the region. We have great potential for cooperation in various fields.

Q: You have taken a lead role in negotiating between Serbia and Bosnia and even in internal Serb disputes involving the Islamic and non-Islamic communities in Serbia. How did you build trust and overcome the negative view some majority Christian Balkan states have of Turkey?

Turkey's primary interests in the Balkans are to help normalize bilateral relations among the Balkan states to deepen regional integration.

Turkey has a clear, honest and open approach in its efforts towards the region. We do not have a hidden agenda. Hence our relations are based on mutual trust with the countries of the region. All the Balkan countries show great efforts to eliminate stereotypes and prejudicial attitudes from their history books. We are trying to generate a new perception of the Balkans based on mutual understanding, tolerance, cooperation, integration and local ownership. We are happy to witness our efforts yielding positive results.

Turkey is reaching out to all countries in the region on every front through bilateral high level visits, business contacts, NGO activities, direct investments, energy connections, and by fostering cultural and humanitarian efforts to strengthen bridges between peoples and in conducting development aid.

On a regional level, Turkey is actively pursuing multi-layered diplomacy. We have initiated two trilateral consultation mechanisms with Bosnia and Herzegovina, BiH, and Serbia on the one hand, and with BiH and Croatia on the other.

In this context, I met with my colleagues frequently and took up issues that hinder the normalization of relations among these countries and particularly with BiH.

Lack of trust towards one another among ethnic communities is still a major impediment to undertaking reforms and to building a functioning state in BiH without prejudice to the rights and obliga-

tions stemming from the Dayton Peace Agreement.

Turkey's interest coincides with that of Serbia and Croatia, for forging a climate of reconciliation and cooperation in BiH.

If we see the people of the Balkans in peace and sharing mutual comfort then we, at home in Turkey, are also in peace, as there are many Turkish citizens of Balkan origins.

Q: What does Macedonia mean to Turkey? Why does Macedonia have so much support from Turkey?

Macedonia should be a model country for cohabitation in the Balkans. Its multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-lingual structure can be a good reference for the whole region. There is also a sizeable Turkish minority in Macedonia and a large group of Turkish citizens have their origins in Macedonia.

Dialogue and mutual understanding should be encouraged to preserve and strengthen Macedonian society. Respect for the cultural/religious sensitivities of all communities should be encouraged to ensure the harmonious co-existence of the people of Macedonia.

We are strongly committed to supporting Macedonia's full integration with the Euro-Atlantic institutions, which is vital not only for the strengthening of peace and stability domestically, but also that of in the Western Balkans.

Turkey was among the very first countries to recognize the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name and, national identity. We continue to support the right of Macedonia as a sovereign nation to determine its constitutional name.

Macedonian people need to see the light at the end of the tunnel. We regret that Macedonia's path to the membership to NATO and EU remains impeded due to the name dispute. Euro-Atlantic integration is essential for lasting stability in this country. It must not be taken hostage by the name issue.

Macedonia collaborates actively with its neighbours and other countries in the region. An important example is the finalisation of the border demarcation with Kosovo, which deserves to be appreciated.

Ahmet Davutoglu, the Turkish foreign minister, took part in this question and answer over email. It was compiled by Altin Raxhimi with Darko Duridanski. This Q&A was produced as part of the Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence Alumni Initiative, established and supported by the Robert Bosch Stiftung and ERSTE Foundation.

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Heritage Handover to Kosovo Police Embitters Serbs

As protection of Orthodox churches and monasteries shifts from NATO to Kosovo Police, many in the Serbian community complain that their cultural and religious monuments are not in safe hands



By Besiana Xharra

The theft last month of lead roofing from a UNESCO world heritage site church in Prizren has reignited the row over protection of Serbian patrimony in Kosovo.

While Prishtina officials argue that the sites will be safe under the watch of the Kosovo Police, Serbian Church and political leaders disagree.

Kosovo is home to many of the Orthodox Church's holiest sites, leading off with the Patriarchal church complex in Pec/Peja, official seat of the head of the Serbian Orthodox Church, and the monastery churches of Decani and Gracanica.

Six years after riots left dozens of churches and monasteries badly damaged, following days of ethnically motivated violence, NATO's Kosovo force, KFOR, last year began handing over control of 10 protected sites of importance to Serbs to Kosovo Police.

The first was Gazimestan, the site of the legendary Battle of Kosovo of 1389 between the Ottoman and Serbian armies as well as the location of one of former Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic's most notorious speeches, marking the battle's 600th anniversary.

Since then, Kosovo Police has taken over protection of the Gracanica monastery, another world heritage site, as well as the churches of Zociste, Budicavci and

Gorioc.

KFOR remains responsible for the safety of four other monasteries: Holy Archangels in Prizren, Devic, Decani and the Pec Patriarchate. But it intends to hand over protection of them as well, as it reduces troop numbers.

The move has raised hackles in Belgrade, and despite a reduction in tension since KFOR's decision was announced, Serbia continues to protest.

Serbia's President, Boris Tadic, was quoted in the Belgrade media in April as saying that he did not want to see Serbian monasteries "in the hands of Albanian extremists".

The remarks came during a visit to the Serbia by a senior member of the Russian Orthodox Church, a key foreign backer of Serbia's hard-line policy towards Kosovo.

Soon after the meeting, news emerged that thieves had stolen part of the lead roof of the Church of the Mother of God of Ljevis in Prizren, known as the Bogorodica Ljeviska, in Serbian.

Although it is not one of the sites protected by KFOR, Belgrade officials quickly protested over the Kosovo Police's failure to protect the building.

According to Church experts, 20 square metres of roof have disappeared, allowing in damp, which will damage the UNESCO-protected frescos.

The Church says it is the third time in five years that bits of the roof have been stolen.

Oliver Ivanovic, Belgrade's minister for Kosovo, told Prishtina Insight that Serbia had opposed the transfer of responsibilities from KFOR to Kosovo Police from

the start.

"Here we see the consequences of this," he said. "The international community urgently needs to change its approach and not allow Kosovo Police to protect the Serbian monasteries," he said.

Marko Jaksic, a hard-line Serb representative in the divided northern town of Mitrovica, said the incident showed that ethnic Albanians did not want to protect the Serbian nation's historic sites.

"We are in contact with the Serbian government and we believe that very soon there will be a solution for the Serbian monasteries in Kosovo, because in the hands of the Kosovo police they are always threatened," Jaksic said.

According to a report last year by the International Crisis Group, ICG, a think tank, some Serbian Church officials would like to see a small force looking after their religious sites, modelled on the Swiss Guards who protect the Vatican.

According to the same to ICG report, Belgrade officials agree, hoping to force Prishtina to grant Orthodox monasteries the same extraterritorial status that the Vatican enjoys from Italy.

Under the Ahtisaari Package, the blueprint for Kosovo's independence, which is enshrined in the constitution, important Orthodox sites enjoy special status and a degree of autonomy - but not extra-territorial status.

KFOR told Prishtina Insight that it sees the Kosovo Police as capable of protecting the sites, and it intend to continue to hand over responsibilities to Kosovo's institutions.

"The task of guarding four



Protection of Gracanica monastery was handed over to Kosovo Police last year

monasteries and one monument has been handed over [already] to Kosovo Police," Alexander Feja, deputy chief of public affairs in KFOR, said.

"Depending on the security situation on the ground, KFOR intends to hand over responsibilities [for the rest] to the respective institutions of Kosovo," he added.

Feja said he understood the concerns felt by many Serbs: "In Kosovo, following the destruction and damage of some of the most valuable sites in 2004, the Church is understandably sensitive to potential threats to these cultural treasures."

Kosovo's government said that the incident in Prizren did not mean that Serbian Orthodox churches generally were under threat.

"Kosovo police are diligently protecting these monasteries," Hajredin Kuci, the deputy prime minister, said. "The latest case [in Prizren] doesn't mean that Albanians are extremists - we don't even know yet who was responsible."

The Interior Minister, Bajram Rexhepi, said that Serbia was using the plight of the church for its own political capital.

"Serbia is using these monasteries to make Kosovo appear extremist in its policies," he said. "But Serbia should know that Kosovo protects not only Serbian monasteries but also other religious

objects."

The minister said that Kosovo would not allow Serbia to make acts of theft as an excuse to intervene in Kosovo's internal affairs.

Behxhet Shala, director of the Council for the Protection of Rights and Freedoms in Kosovo, a civil society group, said Serbian churches, monasteries and monuments were a wing of Serbian foreign policy.

"Gazimestan was a centre of [Serbian] political empowerment at the time of Slobodan Milosevic, and now it is protected by Kosovo Police," Shala noted.

"On the other hand, at Decani monastery, people living there are not allowed onto their own private property [because of security measures] and don't even dare to speak out about it," he said.

The idea that monasteries were being handed over to "Albanian extremists" was nonsense, he added. In the 1999 conflict in Kosovo, Serbian churches were routinely used to store weapons for Serbian forces, he claimed.

"Yet now those churches are proclaimed as protected areas and Serbia uses them to present Kosovo as an extremist country," he scoffed. Serbia was "playing a terrible game", he concluded.

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Kosovo Debates Future Role of International Presence

Calls by local politicians to diminish the international presence in Kosovo have become increasingly vocal in recent days, as state bodies consider changes to the country's constitution.



By Petrit Collaku

Arsim Bajrami, an MP from the ruling PDK who heads a state commission on constitutional reform, said that according to the Ahtisaari Plan for Kosovo's independence, Prishtina should assess the need for continued international presence three years after the declaration of independence, which was made in February 2008.

"Kosovo today is a sovereign and independent country and is becoming functional and the time has come for all executive powers of an international type to be transferred to local institutions," Bajrami told Prishtina Insight.

Bajrami noted, however, that reductions in the international presence would not happen in the short term.

"On the occasion of the constitutional changes, we will discuss whether... during this government's mandate, there will be the transfer of all executive competencies from international institutions," Bajrami added.

Kosovo set up commissions to examine the constitution and propose a number of changes in April this year after controversy surrounding its presidential election, and major reforms to the document are expected.

Bajrami said the government would first examine the nature of the presence of the international community in Kosovo's institutions and agencies.

"For example, the Constitutional Court has nine judges, three of whom are international. It should be discussed whether there is a need for an international presence in the court, or whether the court should have only local judges," Bajrami told Prishtina Insight. Bajrami said the constitution contained a chapter

dealing with "transitional provisions" that regulates the presence of the International Civilian Representative, ICR, whose role is to supervise Kosovo's independence.

Regarding the International Civilian Office, ICO, Bajrami referred to the experience of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where he said the international community has remained present for longer than was needed.

He added that sharing powers creates dual competencies, which creates a situation in which the international community blames local institutions for problems and vice-versa.

The main representative of the international community in Kosovo, meanwhile, has said it supports Kosovo's constitutional reform so long as the result is consistent with the international strategy for Kosovo's post-independence, and is aimed at improving democracy in Kosovo.

Pieter Feith, the International

Civilian Representative, says the authorities in charge of preparing the reforms should engage in a consultation process, and his office is ready to provide advice on the matter.

"Constitutional reform is not a process that will affect the ICR's mandate on which the International Steering Group alone makes decisions in light of progress achieved," Andy McGuffie, ICO spokesperson, told Prishtina Insight.

The International Steering Group, ISG, consists of countries that support and guide Kosovo's independence and was established after Kosovo declared independence.

The ISG appointed Feith as International Civilian Representative for Kosovo. He is also the EU's Special Representative for Kosovo.

What happens next with the EUSR?

The future of the EU's representation in Kosovo remains in the balance.

The mandate of European Union Special Representative in Kosovo Pieter Feith ended on May 1 without a replacement having been selected.

Prishtina media reported that 13 people have applied for the job, including the current European Parliament rapporteur on Kosovo, Austrian Green Ulrike Lunacek.

The EU has so far failed to decide what type of new mission will be set up in Kosovo due to disagreements between the 22 states which recognise Kosovo's independence and the five that don't.

Power Plant Delay Blamed on Meddling Consultants

Kosovo's former energy minister Justina Shiroka-Pula claims that delays to a massive new power plant were due to meddling from international advisors, a suggestion ridiculed by others involved with the scheme



By Lavdim Hamidi

Minister of Energy in the last administration Justina Shiroka-Pula has broken a two-year silence to blame delays on deciding the design and construction of a new power plant on the project's international transaction advisors.

"Ever since the beginning, the transaction advisors with their ever-changing proposals and the international pressure have been responsible for the stalling of this project," said Shiroka-Pula.

Both US and World Bank funded advisors had been working on a proposal to create a giant, 2000 MW power plant in Kosovo, in order to tap into the country's massive reserves of brown coal.

But the much delayed project has faced a number of set-back and changes, including the decision last year to massively reduced the scale of the plan.

Shiroka-Pula's predecessor Ethem Ceku said she was acting "totally irresponsible" to make such a claim after being silent for so long.

"It is a total irresponsibility that after three years someone comes up in front of public opinion and says that there were pres-

ures from internationals in the project," said Ceku.

According to him, Shiroka-Pula herself was managing the project, but contracted advisors are there only to give advice and cannot exert pressure. He says that under his leadership from 2004 to 2008, the ministry had a professional team, which, according to him, was more prepared than contracted advisors and therefore was able to triumph citizens' plans.

Officials of the renamed Ministry of Economic Development did not want to comment on the declarations of former minister Shiroka-Pula.

Gezim Baxhaku, advisor to Shiroka-Pula's successor Minister Besim Beqaj, told Prishtina Insight that he is sure Minister Beqaj is not being exposed to any kind of pressure from international representatives regarding the power plant project, called New Kosovo, Kosova e Re.

"The Government and the Ministry of Economic Development are committed to implementing development plans and the construction of Kosova e Re is part of our capital projects," said Baxhaku.

According to Baxhaku, the winner for constructing the power plant should be announced at the start of 2012, and the works could begin after the financial package is completed and the investors



Replacements for Kosovo's aging power stations have been long delayed

have transferred their assets.

This is a huge delay on initial plans for 'Kosova e Re', launched in 2006, which foresaw that in 2012 the new power plant would start producing electricity. As a result of the delays, the big European energy companies such as RWE withdrew from discussions.

The original idea of a 2,000 megawatt energy production capacity was later scaled down to 600 megawatts in two states.

"In the meeting on December 16, 2009, when the proposal was agreed that Kosova e Re would be 600 MW, 300 plus 300, apart from contracted advisors' interventions there were interventions even from diplomatic representa-

tives in Kosovo," explained Shiroka-Pula, although refusing to mention anyone's names. Shiroka-Pula was project leader for constructing the power plant during 2008-2010.

Regarding contracted advisors, she said that they are being paid by internationals and that they do not protect Kosovo's interests in this project.

Despite her earlier openness on the subject in mid-April, Shiroka-Pula is now refusing to discuss her comments regarding pressure from internationals.

"Please contact newly appointed minister [Besim Beqaj] and you can ask him regarding this issue. I do not want to talk anymore

regarding this issue," Shiroka-Pula told Prishtina Insight.

She refuses to comment on whether there was any controversy after her April remarks, and also declines to comment on why she had not spoken out earlier, for example when still minister. "All I had to say, I said. Now I do not want to talk anymore," she said.

The four prequalified consortiums for constructing 'Kosova e Re' are Adani Power/PT Adani Global from India and Indonesia, the American-Turkish consortium AES Electric Ltd/Demir Export AS, the Turkish company Park Holding and the Greek, UK and USA consortium, PPC/Contour Global LLP.

Kosovo's Economic Plan Unrealistic, Experts Warn

Local economic experts say the Kosovo government's newly launched plan for economic development, which aims to increase growth by cutting red-tape and reforming the business sector, is unrealistic.



By Petrit Collaku

On April 18, the government approved the plan for 2011-2014, which foresees economic growth from seven to eight per cent and hopes to reduce the unemployment rate by eight to ten per cent, but it has been met with scepticism by some analysts.

The plan aims to fight the informal economy, create a sole agency for tax and customs revenues, improve fiscal policies, and revitalise agriculture.

It also addresses the business sector, looking to reduce barriers for firms through a comprehensive reform of the permits system that would eliminating 50 per cent of required licenses.

The country hopes that such efforts will rank it as one of the World Bank's top-reformers for business in 2012 and 2013.

The government's strategy also aims to declare the winner for privatization of the country's telecom company in October and close the financial aspects of the sale in December 2011.

It said it would privatise the distribution and supply of power during the coming year as well.

Musa Limani, head of Economic League of Kosovo, said he was sceptical of the government's plan for economic development that was revised in Bulgaria last week.

Professor Limani told Prishtina Insight that given Kosovo's current situation, the target of seven to eight percent economic growth is not attainable.

"To reach economic growth of seven to eight per cent in Kosovo means that we need an annual

accumulative investment of four to five billion euros," Limani explained.

He said that the plan is purely political, with the aim of showing the people of Kosovo that the government has an economic strategy in place.

"It's a political plan because such strategies existed before but never succeeded," he said.

"There was a strategy for the economy for 2004-2008 that failed totally," he said.

Agron Demi from the think-tank GAP, meanwhile, says the new economic development plan is incomplete and only presents priorities.

"The government's objectives presented in the plan are not more or less than what we heard during the election campaign or the existing plans," Demi told Prishtina Insight.

He said that the government has taken a reactive stance to address-



Economic experts have questioned the government's economic plan

ing challenges which are discussed in public debates.

He added that such a reactive attitude was seen at the beginning of 2010 when Kosovo's government approved a strategy for the north of the country.

"But, more than a year has gone and no results have been seen from that strategy," Demi said.

Demi stated that the government's economic plan does not explain how the economic growth and unemployment reduction will be achieved.

"Even those two objectives do not come across because there is a

need for greater growth than 7 to 8 per cent in order to have the unemployment drop by eight to ten per cent," Demi said.

He said that the economic growth in the last three years has come only through public expenditures and not from the development of the private sector.

"The same thing will happen during the period 2011-2014 with this plan," he said. "For the last three years, economic growth was six per cent but unemployment remained the same at around 45-47 per cent."

Construction Halt Leaves Belene's Fate in Balance

Temporary work stoppage on controversial nuclear plant, pending review of costs, is unlikely to be end of the story, given the country's hunger for new energy sources.



By Vera Ovanin

The future of Bulgaria's controversial Belene nuclear power plant appears in the balance again. In early April the government suspended construction at the site on the Danube for at least three months pending a re-examination of the plant's cost, viability and safety issues.

Nonetheless, there are clear signs that the government wishes to persevere with the project and that a new accommodation with contractors and investors may be reached.

With a planned installed capacity of 2000MW, Belene would be a major contributor to Bulgaria's power output and could substantially increase the country's electricity export potential.

Work on the plant was de facto stopped in October 2009, when Bulgaria's strategic investment partner RWE, a German power firm, withdrew.

The decision to back out reflected RWE's continued concerns about the cost of the project, a subject of dispute between the Bulgarian government and the contractor, Russia's Atomstroyexport, majority-owned by Russia's state nuclear power firm Rosatom.

In 2008, the then Socialist-led government signed a 4bn-euro deal with Atomstroyexport to construct the nuclear plant, which was to be Bulgaria's second

nuclear plant, supplementing and eventually replacing the unit upstream at Kozloduy.

The Belene project was first proposed more than 30 years before, and construction first started in the 1980s but was abandoned after the fall of Communism in 1990.

In 2002, the plan was resuscitated, in part due to the closure of four 440MW reactors at Kozloduy, which was a requirement for Bulgaria's European Union accession. The shutdown was deeply unpopular in Bulgaria at the time.

As the Belene project gained momentum, RWE won the contract to be the government's investment partner, taking a 49 per cent stake in the project.

Atomstroyexport started construction. However, the German firm's involvement lasted only a year, as concerns about the costs mounted. Some estimates went as high as 10bn euro and questions were raised about the plant's viability in a more difficult economic environment, with investments in power being made elsewhere.

Since RWE's withdrawal, not only has work effectively stopped but Rosatom has demanded a revaluation of its contract to 6.3bn euro, from which it is apparently refusing to budge, while the Bulgarian government, now led by the rightist Boyko Borisov, is sticking to its own new estimate of 5bn euro.

It is ostensibly due to this impasse that on April 13 Sofia finalised a 2m-euro contract with British bank HSBC, which will undertake a cost feasibility study on Belene.

But a clause in the contract also awards the bank 0.95 per cent of any new external investment that it drums up for the plant, which some suggest creates a conflict of interest and could encourage the bank to give the project the green light.

At the government's own valuation, HSBC would take upwards of 23m euro, more than 11 times the original contract cost, from a new deal involving a partner taking RWE's 49 per cent stake.

Meanwhile, Rosatom has appointed Valentin Zlatev, chair of Lukoil Bulgaria, considered a close confidant to Borisov, as a consultant on the negotiations. For his part, Russia's ambassador in Bulgaria, Yuriy Izakov, has said he is "100 per cent sure that Belene will be constructed".

This has all been grist to the mill of Belene's opponents, who include environmentalists, renewable power lobbyists and a number of critics of the project's cost to Bulgaria.

There have been renewed protests about safety, given Belene's location in a seismically active region, especially in the wake of the crisis at Japan's Fukushima nuclear plant. Questions continue to be asked about the plant's viability at a time of general fiscal cutbacks. Finally, the role of Rosatom remains controversial, as Bulgaria's official policy is to reduce Russian influence over its energy resources.

The government's response has been to declare the feasibility study objective and to sign an agreement with French energy



The Belene nuclear power plant

firm Areva, which was involved in upgrading Kozloduy's two currently operating reactors, for consultancy on Belene's safety.

In the past, Sofia has suggested that it might be willing to see an investor take a controlling stake in the plant, reducing the burden on the strained national budgets, a possibility that may be raised again. Borisov has pointed out that Rosatom has the right to appoint whomever it wishes as a consultant, and he might have added that HSBC and Areva are major and reputable international firms.

Despite vocal and articulate opposition, surveys continue to find that only a small minority of around 15 per cent of Bulgarians are opposed to the plant, according to a recent Gallup poll, with 48 per cent actively in favour.

Given Bulgaria's need to boost its export-oriented sectors in the long term, as well as to provide for its domestic demand, the momentum behind Belene is likely to remain significant. Ongoing investments in Bulgaria by power companies including US-based AEG are indicative of its appeal to international energy companies.

Croatia Blocks Trading in INA Shares Again



By Pristina Insight

Croatia's market regulator, HANFA, has again ordered the Zagreb Stock Exchange to suspend trading in shares of the country's oil and gas company INA until May 6.

HANFA, which made the request on Thursday, said that it had detected considerable trading in INA shares by foreign investors and had requested information from foreign regulators and investors to establish facts and ensure transparent trading and investor protection.

INA closed trading on Wednesday at a record price of 4,200 kuna [570 euro] per share.

HANFA said that it had asked Hungarian oil group MOL, which owns a 47.26 per cent stake in INA, for information on how it had acquired INA shares, on financial resources it had secured for another entity to purchase INA shares, and on a possible agreement with another entity to purchase INA shares, but had not yet received a response.

Croatian media has recently accused

MOL of attempting to increase its ownership of INA through private investors, allegations the Hungarian firm denies.

The Croatian government holds 44.84 per cent of INA, and recently put forward a bill to cap ownership in INA at below 50 per cent.

Meanwhile, MOL issued a statement on Thursday saying it had purchased shares of the Croatian oil and gas group INA from private investors whenever the conditions met MOL's investment criteria. As regards its stake in INA, it said it had not yet reached a level that would have required it to make any stock exchange announcements.

"Outside the offer period there is no agreement - neither formal nor informal - no regulation or law that would restrict MOL from buying additional INA shares. Indeed, there were private investors who offered their shares to MOL which we accepted and purchased provided that the conditions met MOL's investment criteria," the Hungarian company said.

It said that "there have been many misinterpretations and allegations recently in the Croatian media on INA share-buying, where MOL faced many unfair attacks causing damage to its reputation", adding that MOL always believed in a strong alliance with the Republic of Croatia and aimed to

make INA "a regional champion".

MOL said it had made two offers in the past for the purchase of INA shares from small and private shareholders and that a vast majority of the small shareholders had seized those opportunities. It noted that the offers had been completed in line with the applicable laws.

"MOL also followed the guidance of HANFA not to buy shares on the market during the latest offer, even though we disputed such guidance from the first moment. At that same time MOL also called HANFA's attention to the speculative purchases experienced on the market. MOL believes it is not in the interest of INA if speculative investors build positions with the possible aim to challenge the unity of the shareholding partners in INA," the statement said.

The first suspension of trading came in March, just days after INA's CEO, Bojan Milkovic, was arrested on corruption charges. An investigative judge ordered Milkovic, who was detained on March 25, to be held for 30 days, as the probe continues. Milkovic became the chief of INA in June 2009.

In December MOL attempted to increase its ownership of INA with an offer to purchase INA shares from small shareholders,



INA shares have been suspended

and the offer intensified trading in INA shares on the Zagreb Stock Exchange.

The Hungarian company had hoped to become the majority owner of INA through its offer to buy stock, but did not manage to buy enough to significantly increase its ownership share.

Bosnian Serbs May Leave State Institutions, Reports Say

Bosnian Serbs are reportedly planning to withdraw from state institutions if they are sanctioned by the international community over their plans to hold a referendum on the state court.



By Eldin Hadzovic

While print media from Bosnia's predominantly Serb entity, Republika Srpska, have quoted anonymous sources saying that Bosnian Serb officials plan to leave state bodies if High Representative Valentin Inzko introduces sanctions against Serb leaders, officials told Prishtina Insight that such a move is possible.

Inzko, who is the top foreign official in the country, is set to announce the international community's response to Republika Srpska's planned referendum on the state court on Thursday.

Sredoje Novic, Bosnia's Minister of Civil Affairs and a member of the strongest Serb party, the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats, SNSD, told Prishtina Insight that while he hoped Inzko would not impose sanctions, he would withdraw if asked to do so.

"Of course, I am the representative of Republika Srpska in the state Council of Ministers. If a decision on withdrawal from the state institutions is passed in RS, I will withdraw too," Novic said.

Novic said he read about the possibility of Serbs leaving state institutions in the newspapers.

"We didn't receive any official instruction on that," Novic said. "But, generally," he added, "I am not much of an optimist."

A decision to withdraw could affect the Serb member of the tripartite presidency, as well as a number of Serb ministers and lower-level elected and appointed officials in state bodies.

This latest row between Republika Srpska, RS, and the international community comes after the RS National Assembly adopted on April 13 a decision to hold a referendum on support for the state court and prosecutor's office, and to challenge the laws imposed by the High Representative.

The decision was condemned by the other ethnic groups in the country and the international community, and High Representative



Bosnian Serbs could withdraw from state institutions

Inzko warned that he would use the authority of his office to stop the referendum.

Inzko repeated on Tuesday night that his office will annul the parliamentary decision on the referendum if the National Assembly doesn't do so itself.

Milorad Dodik, president of RS and SNSD, recently stated that the RS would respond to sanctions, but declined to elaborate on the planned measures.

Mladen Ivanic, president of the leading Serb opposition in RS, the Party of Democratic Progress, PDP, told Prishtina Insight that it is hard to predict what the SNSD will do.

"It is early to speculate on whether they will leave the state institutions or not, but it looks to me that SNSD doesn't have the capacity at this point to fulfil such a threat," Ivanic said.



Poll Predicts VMRO-DPMNE Victory in Macedonia



By Sinisa Jakov Marusic

Governing VMRO-DPMNE party of Nikola Gruevski looks set win the June 5 early general election, according to a local survey.

The poll, carried out by a Skopje-based think tank, the Institute for Democracy, and a civil association, the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation, shows the

ruling party on double the support of the main opposition Social Democrats.

Just over 22 per cent of respondents said they would vote for VMRO-DPMNE while only 10 per cent said they would support the main opposition party.

Another 5 per cent said they would vote for the junior ruling party, the ethnic Albanian Democratic Union for Integration, DUI, while another 1.9 per cent said they would support the ethnic Albanian opposition party, the Democratic Party of Albanians, DPA.

A total of 28.1 per cent said they would not vote at all, while 16.4 had not decided.

Asked why they would not vote, 39 per cent of the abstainers said they felt disappointed with all political parties, while 11 per cent said they were simply not interested in politics.

According to the survey, Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski remains by far the most trusted politician in the country. Almost 20 percent of respondents said they trusted him the most, while only 4.6 per cent said they most trusted the Social Democrat leader, Branko Crvenkovski.

Another 4.3 percent opted for Ali Ahmeti, the head of the DUI, and 2.9 per cent expressed trust in Radmila Shekerinska,

the Social Democratic candidate for the post of Prime Minister.

Of the rest, Rumi Osmani, mayor of Gostivar and head of a newly formed Albanian party, National Democratic Rebirth, got 2.3 per cent, Imer Selmani of the New Democracy party got 1.7 per cent and Menduh Thaci of the DPA got 1.6 per cent.

Some 47 per cent of respondents said they trusted no one, while over 13 per cent did not know who they trusted, or refused to answer. The telephone survey was carried out in late April on a representative sample of some 1,100 respondents

ALBANIA LOCAL ELECTIONS 2011

Campaign Tapes Fuel Media Freedom Row in Albania

Broadcasters are again coming under pressure to air pre-packaged campaign tapes, prompting renewed concern about the blurring of the line between news and propaganda.



By Besar Likmeta

A decision by the Central Electoral Commission, CEC, ordering broadcasters to air pre-packaged campaign tapes produced by candidates ahead of the May 8 local elections, has stirred fresh debate over media freedom and political pressure on the media in Albania.

The CEC reached its decision following a recommendation from the Media Monitoring Board, a commission comprised of representatives of both ruling and opposition parties and which controls the airtime allocated by broadcasters in the 30-day campaign period.

The campaign for the ruling party's candidate for Tirana, Lulzim Basha, had complained that several TV stations were not airing the pre-packaged tapes and so were not balancing the airtime allocated to him and Edi Rama, the incumbent mayor and opposition leader.

Broadcasters describe the tapes as political propaganda and say the lack of coverage of Basha's campaign is down to the fact that the candidate has refused to publish the agenda of his campaign events, making it impossible to report on them.

The latest dispute represents the tip of an iceberg, experts warn. They say that the media is increasingly being used as a propaganda tool by rival political groups, as a result of which it is failing to fulfil its watchdog mission.

Albania has a large number of broadcast and print media, which compete fiercely for limited advertising revenues and generally depend on businesses to subsidize them.

Combined with other interfer-



Albania's media is being told to air pre-packaged party political stories

ences in editorial policy from politicians and business interests, it has had a clear impact on the Albanian media's independence.

Albania ranked 88 out of 173 countries in the 2009 Reporters without Borders "Freedom of the Press Index". This rating represents a significant downgrade from 2003, when Albania ranked 34 and was the best performer in the Western Balkans.

While the decline in the independence of the media is a broad phenomenon in the Balkans, Albania has remained the worst performer since 2006.

Pre-packaged tapes of political events in Albania have been around for almost a decade, but they have taken a prominent role in the last two election campaigns, with editors increasingly feeling under pressure to air them and not provide independent coverage of campaign events.

In its interim report, published on the eve of the campaign, a local coalition of NGOs monitoring the

May 8 ballot has expressed concern about the coverage of the campaign in the media.

"Election staff send texts and the photos for publication to the print media and send already produced stories shot by campaign staff to the broadcast media, which is against the journalists' mission, truth and the objectivity of the news that is transmitted," the report said.

"Media outlets are not only failing to meet their informative role but are also contributing to the disinformation of citizens by creating a virtual reality, which influences and manipulates the citizens' vote," the report added.

Since the start of the campaign, three television stations, including Top-Channel TV, Ora News and Vision Plus, have announced that they will not air pre-packed campaign tapes in order to better safeguard their editorial independence.

"With this decision, Top-Channel believes that is fulfilling its obligation to citizens to provide impartial

coverage of the campaign," the TV station said.

Top-Channel, the country's largest broadcaster, and part of the powerful Top Media group, is perceived as favouring the opposition in its coverage. It has thus come under fire from the ruling Democratic Party, which has accused it of placing an "information blackout" on their candidate in Tirana.

Oliver Vujovic, general secretary of the South East Media Organization, based in Vienna says forcing the media to broadcast PR material violates the rules of professional reporting; the media should work independently and without any pressure.

"Especially if we are speaking about the election period it is important that the media respects all professional standards – not respecting them can have fatal results for democratic development in any country," Vujovic said.

"News aired before elections must be professional and critical,

which means that the media should follow all pre-election activities and report on what's positive and wrong in the views of all parties and politicians," he added.

Lutfi Dervishi, executive director of Transparency International Albania, agrees, but warns that Albania's broadcasters have reacted far too late, considering that they have broadcasted such pre-packaged tapes for years and some candidates are so used to it that they now feel an injustice is being done to them.

"The public does not receive its information from the media but from political parties, which is pure propaganda and political advertising," said Dervishi. "This the worst thing that can happen, when the media does not do its job and does not control information but only reflects it like a mirror," he added.

This article was made possible through the support of the National Endowment for Democracy.

Blast Hits Albania Opposition Gathering



By Besar Likmeta

An explosion hit a gathering of young supporters of the Socialist Party in central Tirana on Monday at 8.15 pm, only metres from the prime minister's office, leaving one person lightly wounded.

The explosive material is believed to have been placed in a trash can behind an opposition tent, where young supporters for

the re-election campaign of Socialist leader and current Tirana mayor Edi Rama have gathered in the evenings to dance to the beat of DJs mixing house music rhythms.

"We heard a loud explosion and then a young man came across the street bleeding from his foot," said Nexhmi, a taxi driver who witnessed the blast. "He hailed a taxi that was passing by and went to the hospital," Nexhmi added.

A dozen officers and investigators were present at the blast site on Monday evening, poring over the trash can where it is believed

the explosive material was placed.

"It was a loud blast and dozens of young people were gathered at the tent," said Nyrja another witness. "The music was so loud that the youngsters did not immediately realise what happened," he added.

Police said in a statement that the wounded person was a 29-year-old passerby, named Armando Dyrnishi, who is currently recovering at the hospital.

"During the investigation at the scene parts of a gas can were found inside the trash can where the explosion originated," said Tirana police spokesperson Alma

Katragjini.

Monday's blast is the latest in a series of violent incidents that have marked Albania's electoral campaign for the May 8 elections.

The clashes, which range from minor scuffles to exchanges of gunfire between supporters and the bombing of the home of an opposition candidate in Tirana, will have negative effect on voter turnout, experts warn.

The May 8 vote is seen as a key test of Albania's democratic credentials following a violent anti-government rally on January 21 that left four protestors dead and

which has been the source of a heated dispute between the opposition and the ruling party.

The ruling Democrats and the opposition have blamed each other for the riots, adding to already tense relations between Edi Rama's Socialists and Prime Minister Sali Berisha's Democrats.

Berisha's Democrats and Rama's Socialists have been locked in a power struggle since the last general election in June 2009.

This article was made possible through the support of the National Endowment for Democracy.

OSCE Accused of Ignoring Albania PM's Campaign Abuses

OSCE/ODIHR observers may be turning a blind eye to the Prime Minister's party political use of public events ahead of May 8 elections.



By Besar Likmeta

A review by Prishtina Insight of recent public events and inaugurations in Albania

based on press releases and photos issued by Sali Berisha's own press office - shows the Prime Minister avidly campaigning at these nominally national events.

The press releases show the ruling Democratic Party's logo and flags on display while Berisha calls on crowds, gathered to celebrate new public works, to vote for his party in the May 8 local elections and attacks opposition leader Edi Rama.

The ODIHR's mission spokesperson Giuseppe Milazzo told Prishtina Insight that its assessment of candidates' compliance with OSCE commitments in the election, including the political use of official events, will not come until May 10, when it releases its official Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions.

"The mission will not draw conclusions about the [election] process before that time," Milazzo said.

The mission's interim report highlights dozens of problems related to the election campaign, including the behaviour of political parties, violent incidents and the use of public funds as campaign adverts. But the official English language version of the report - in contrast to an Albanian language version - fails to mention Berisha's use of official events for campaign activities.

Albania's May 8 local elections are considered as key to the country's democratic credentials, following January 21 riots in which four opposition protesters died, and nearly two years of political deadlock over the contested June 2009 general election results.

Since it emerged from Enver Hoxha's Stalinist regime in 1991, Albania has yet to hold an election that fully met internationally recognized standards.

The last general election, narrowly won by Sali Berisha's Democratic Party, has been widely contested, with the Socialist opposition complaining that it was marred by fraud.

The feud has fuelled a crisis that has poisoned the political climate and stopped reforms dead in their tracks.

Albanian election results are often contested - with the loser crying foul and accusing the winning party of having resorted to electoral fraud. The quarrels have highlighted the key role of the OSCE monitoring missions as an arbiter.

The ODIHR mission for the May 8 local elections has come under particular scrutiny in the local media since one of its officials told Prishtina Insight that two ambassadors allegedly advised it to sugarcoat its report to safeguard the country's stability.

"They [the two unnamed diplomats] don't want us to write what we see," the unnamed official from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, ODIHR, said April 5, noting that the advice would not be followed.

The allegations have since been dismissed. The head of the mission, Jonathan Stonestreet, and the OSCE ambassador in Tirana, Eugen Wolfarth, both said they were untrue.

Use of official inaugurations as campaign rallies, blurring the distinction between state and party activities, have been considered by past ODIHR missions as a violation of paragraph 5.4 of the OSCE Copenhagen Document.

The document is a far-reaching set of commitments agreed by OSCE member states on how to conduct democratic elections, and lays the groundwork for the organization's activities in the area of election observation.

The Albanian translation of the ODIHR interim report covering the period March 17-April 11, published on April 15, included a sentence that referred to Berisha's use of official events for political purposes.

But the sentence was not found in the official English copy of the report, prompting accusations of falsification in the local media.

After the discrepancy was spotted by the daily Gazeta Shqiptare, Milazzo told the newspaper that the sentence had appeared in the Albanian translation by mistake.

"It was included in earlier draft of the interim report; however it was not considered sufficiently appropriate," Milazzo told the newspaper.

"Only the English language versions of OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission reports are official; unofficial translations are provided as a courtesy," Milazzo told Prishtina Insight.

Although the ODIHR seems to have had second thoughts on whether to report the use of official inaugurations by Berisha as political events, Berisha's press office appears less troubled.

Recent press releases on the Prime Minister's speeches in at least six villages and towns, where public works have been



Albanian PM Sali Berisha has been accused of using public events for electioneering

inaugurated, detail Berisha's use of election rhetoric.

The press releases are illustrated by pictures showing him among supporters who are waving Democratic Party flags.

"We have considered this campaign with you at the centre, as we as a government want to learn about all your problems and possibilities," Berisha is reported as having told supporters in the village of Dais on April 1, inaugurating a revamped middle school.

Neither the government nor Berisha himself are running for office on May 8.

"Apart from this alternative, which is based entirely on your problems, potential possibilities and your community as whole, there is also another alternative, based on accusations and slander," the Prime Minister is quoted as saying, in what appears a clear broadside aimed at the Socialist opposition.

Milazzo of the ODIHR maintains that the mission continues to monitor the use of such events for political activities; but local observers note that the mission will have to dance on a tightrope with its reports, considering Albania's highly polarized political landscape.

"In a tense and polarized political situation there is little space for voices that are not on one side or the other," political analyst Lutfi Dervishi said.

"In this extreme [political] situation they [the mission]... have to be careful, because the abuse of their statements has reached a scale not seen before," he added.

Lulzim Basha, Tirana's Would-Be Mayor

The controversial ex-minister, who has strong ties to the Berisha family, is bidding to take over the capital - but even if his gambit fails, it's unlikely to ruin his political career.



By Dardan Malaj

In his six years of political life, Lulzim Basha has always been a minister. Part of a group of young professionals who joined the ruling Democratic Party before the 2005 elections, he has been selected as the Berisha's man to gain control of the capital, which has been run by the opposition Socialist leader Edi Rama for the past 11 years.

Born in 1974, Basha was trained as a lawyer at the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands, specializing in EU law and international relations.

After finishing his studies in 1998, he worked as member of the UN Hague Tribunal team investigating war crimes committed in Kosovo during the conflict between ethnic Albanian fighters and forces loyal to Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic.

After the war he worked as an adviser to the UN Mission in Kosovo, UNMIK, and in 2001 became the deputy chef-de-cabinet for UNMIK's justice director.

Working for UNMIK, the future minister struck up a close relationship with Argita Malltezi, daughter of Albania's Prime Minister Sali

Berisha, who worked in the same department as a legal adviser.

Basha returned to Albania before the 2005 general elections as head of the Democratic Party's committee for policy orientation and as spokesperson of the party's election campaign, which brought the Democrats back to power on an anti-corruption platform after eight years in opposition.

Although previously unknown on the local political scene, with Berisha's support Basha was swiftly elected to the Democratic Party's top posts and secured a seat in parliament.

After the elections, Berisha made Basha his transport and telecommunications minister, where he set out to negotiate construction of the Albania-Kosovo highway, the country's largest public works project in decades.

The road has been dubbed the "patriotic highway", reflecting the widely perceived geo-political motives behind the project - and the fact that no feasibility study was ever undertaken into whether it would ever return the money invested in it.

The 61km-long Rreshen-Kalimash section, built by the Turkish-American consortium Bechtel-Enka at a cost of over a billion euros, drew particular attention.

Corruption allegations and cost overruns led many to question the value of the motorway's construc-

tion. In March 2007 the General Prosecutor launched a probe. This led to Basha's indictment for abuse of power, which had allegedly cost the state about 230 million euros.

After the investigation was launched, Berisha reshuffled his cabinet, moving Basha to the foreign ministry. Although the government accepted the general prosecutor's request to lift Basha's immunity, it launched a public campaign against the justice system, putting pressure on the investigation.

In April 2009, the Albanian Supreme Court closed the case against Basha, arguing that the prosecutors had exceeded the investigation's time limits.

As foreign minister from 2007 to 2009, Basha led Albania's negotiations with the EU and with NATO. Tirana joined the Atlantic alliance in April 2009.

After the contested 2009 general elections, which Berisha's coalition won with a slim majority, Basha was made interior minister, where he worked on supervising Albania's fulfillment of the roadmap towards visa liberalization with the EU.

Tipped early on as a possible candidate for the municipality of Tirana, he was still heading the interior ministry during the violent January 21 anti-government protests in which four opposition protesters died and dozens were wounded.



Lulzim Basha meeting Condoleezza Rice, former US Secretary of State

The protest turned into a riot when several hundred of the demonstrators attacked the police barricade protecting the Prime Minister's office with sticks, stones and Molotov cocktails. Police responded with tear gas, water cannons and later with live ammunition fire.

Prosecutors are currently investigating the deaths, the organisers of the protest and the violent demonstrators who attacked the police.

Prime Minister Berisha claims his government was the victim of a failed coup attempt.

Opposition leader Rama blames Basha and the Republican Guard for turning a protest into a bloodbath.

In the May 8 local elections, Basha

will try to achieve what three of his former ministerial colleagues have failed to do - unseat Rama as Tirana mayor.

To achieve this goal, the former minister has resigned from the cabinet and is betting on his record in government, which for many remains a topic of heated debate.

If he wins, he would most likely become the second most powerful figure in the Democratic Party after Berisha.

Failure to win Tirana won't necessarily derail his career in the Democratic Party. Berisha has shown leniency before to those who have tried and failed to unseat the mayor of Tirana.

Spotlight on South Serbia

Serbia Makes Uneven Progress on Integrating Minorities

From Sandzak to Southern Serbia, Belgrade is failing to turn its verbal pledges into action when it comes to guaranteeing ethnic Albanians and Bosniaks fair levels of state sector employment



By Pedja Obradovic in
Belgrade, Novi Pazar,
Presevo and Bujanovac

In a café across the road from the local assembly in the town of Presevo, customers sit sipping small coffees and teas. It is a pleasant, sunny day in the reconstructed central square in the shadow of the town mosque, which recently received a new facade. Discussion turns to local news, one of which is the 60-plus new state jobs being created here and in neighbouring Bujanovac. Jobs in the civil service are big news in Presevo, bearing in mind the town's high unemployment rate. Local politicians say around 70 per cent of adults are jobless, although there is no agreement on this. Serbia's National Employment Service puts the figure at 23.9 per cent. Regardless of the big difference in figures, new jobs are needed. Ten years after the end of a brief armed conflict in ethnically mixed southern Serbia in 2000 and 2001, the process of normalisation is far from complete. The integration of the region's

ethnic Albanians into Serbia's political and economic system was a key element of the internationally brokered plan aimed at restoring peace to this troubled borderland.

But progress remains uneven. The number of Albanians working in the public sector in the three municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja remains out of sync with the ethnic structure of the local population.

Ethnic Albanians make up over 89 per cent of the population of the total of 34,904 inhabitants, according to 2002 census in Presevo, and around 54 per cent in Bujanovac, which is home to 43,302 people. In Medvedja, Albanians are a significant minority, at 26 per cent of the population of 10,760.

Research carried out by BIRN confirmed that the ethnic make-up in most state institutions in the three municipalities still does not reflect the ethnic structure of the population.

Belgzim Kamberi, a journalist and president of the locally based Committee For Human Rights, says multi-ethnicity, which began to be introduced as a concept after the end of conflict in 2002, "has not taken root" to this day.



Albanian newspapers for sale in southern Serbia

"On the one hand, the government in Belgrade has not done much, and on the other hand, the Albanians remain internally politically divided," he says. "Some local leaders still see the region as a part of Kosovo and are not interested in the concept [of integration into Serbia]," he adds. Some 200 kilometres southwest of Presevo, the local political scene in Novi Pazar is equally complicated by the politics of ethnicity, although the conflict here involves Bosniaks [Bosnian Muslims], not ethnic Albanians. The leading local politician, a controversial mufti, Muamer Zukorlic, sees his main political goal as "establishing the full equality of Bosniaks in Serbia", which among other things, means greater participation by Bosniaks in state institutions nationally and at local level as well.

The Bosniak Cultural Community, whose ticket was headlined by Zukorlic in last summer's elections to the National Council of Bosniaks, is vocal in presenting these demands to Belgrade.

But the mufti is not alone in his criticism of the unequal representation of Bosniaks in state bodies. It is shared by the region's other two leading political options, the Party of Democratic Action, led by Sulejman Ugljanin, and the Sandzak Democratic Party, founded by Rasim Ljajic - both ministers in Serbia's Democrat-led government.

In elections to the Bosniak National Council on June 6, 2010,

most votes went to the mufti's Bosniak Cultural Community, the harsh tone of whose election campaign was set by Zukorlic.

With assistance from two councilmen of the third-placed Bosniak Renaissance, the mufti's ticket "constituted" - that is, assumed control of - the council. But Belgrade has never recognised it, disputing the right of the two councilmen to give their mandates to another party.

An extra complicating factor was the decision of Serbia's Ministry of Human and Minority Rights to abruptly change the council's constitution by altering the threshold for constituting the council from a simple majority to a two-thirds majority.

This last-minute manoeuvre further inflamed an already tense situation in Sandzak - with Zukorlic and the Bosniak Cultural Community saying that it provided fresh proof that Belgrade discriminated against Bosniaks.

Semiha Kacar, president of the Sandzak Committee for the Protection of Human Rights, says political disputes over the council have overshadowed the bigger problem - employment levels among Bosniaks.

"We have a problem with the employment of Bosniaks who remain insufficiently represented in bodies such as the judiciary, the interior ministry, army and the tax office," he says, "[although]... in the judiciary there has been some progress". Ten years after the fall of hard-

line nationalist regime of Slobodan Milosevic and the change to a more democratic system, statements by Serbian officials about the need to employ greater numbers of Bosniaks, primarily in the police, remain unsupported by action.

This prompts some Bosniak leaders to suspect that Belgrade still instinctively distrusts citizens of Bosniak nationality.

Sandzak politicians have regularly taken part in post-Milosevic governments but it hasn't resulted in the resolution of this issue - or of other open issues left over from the war in neighbouring Bosnia between 1992 and 1995.

An overview of available data paints a more positive picture of the participation of Bosniaks in state institutions than is the case among Albanians in southern Serbia. But progress towards Bosniak inclusion in the police and judiciary remains halting.

In south Serbia, the change in the ethnic structure of employees in state institutions - to the detriment of Albanians - first became noticeable at the end of the 1980s, matching the rise of Milosevic.

Official attitudes towards Albanians in southern Serbia deteriorated especially sharply after 1989, when Serbia formally abolished the autonomy of the province of Kosovo. Violation of the right to labour and the exclusion of ethnic Albanians from public life, especially from educational institutions, became routine.



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Spotlight on South Serbia

After armed conflict erupted in Kosovo in 1998 and 1999 and after NATO intervened against Yugoslavia in 1999, an insurrection broke out among ethnic Albanians across the border from Kosovo in southern Serbia. The conflict between the security forces and the self-styled Liberation Army of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja in 2000 and 2001 additionally alienated local Albanians from the authorities.

Matters did not start to improve until an agreement on the disarmament of the rebel force was signed at Konculj in 2001. To help stabilise the region, the government also formed the

Coordination Body for Southern Serbia, tasked with mediating between local Albanians and Belgrade.

The change to the ethnic structure of local courts and police in Bosniak-majority parts of Sandzak also occurred in the Milosevic era.

Bosniaks were expelled from public order bodies such as the police, state security, army, as well as from other state institutions, publicly owned companies and the judiciary.

In part, this was a spillover of tensions from across the border in Bosnia, where armed conflict raged between Serbs and Bosniaks [and Croats] between 1992 and 1995.

Monitoring the exact levels of the participation of ethnic minorities in the civil service in Serbia today is difficult.

Serbia's 2006 constitution in theory guarantees the equality of all citizens in the conduct of public affairs. Article 77 says that "members of national minorities have the right to participate in administering public affairs and assume public positions, under the same conditions as other citizens."

The same article says that "when taking up employment in state bodies... the ethnic structure of the population and appropriate representation of members of national minorities shall be taken into consideration."

Participation of minorities in public affairs is also defined by the "Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities" of the Council of Europe, which has an obligatory character, as well as an OSCE document, "The Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life", which has the character of a desirable framework for action.

However, just as the constitution guarantees the participation of minorities in public affairs, Article 47 says that "no person shall be obliged to declare his national affiliation". Serbia's Law on Personal Data Protection also treats national affiliation as sensitive data.

In consequence, no official records monitor the ethnic background of employees in state institutions.

In the pursuit of its research, BIRN sent queries to a number of



South Serbia is home to the country's most youthful population

bodies about the level of minority representation in state institutions, agencies and services in the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac, Medvedja and Vranje in southern Serbia, and in Tutin, Novi Pazar and Sjenica in Sandzak.

The queries were sent to the Interior, Justice, Economy and Trade ministries, the Supreme Court Council, the Institute of Health Insurance, the National Employment Service and the Geodetic Authority.

Beside the Ministry of Finance - more precisely, the Customs Administration and Tax Administration - and the Ministry of Interior, which submitted part of the requested data, and the Supreme Court Council, which submitted data on magistrates, all the other institutions cited the said constitutional and legal provisions and said they not keep such records.

At the same time, BIRN collected its own data, by sending queries to local authorities, as well as conducting journalistic investigations on the ground.

Concerning the participation of ethnic Albanians in local state

institution, we used an unofficial working document used by some Albanian political parties. This tracked the ethnic structure of employees in state institutions, local authorities and publicly owned companies until the end of 2008.

As most state institutions say they possess no records on the ethnic structure of their employees, questions remain about which data have been used as the basis for political polemics on the participation of minorities in state bodies.

One official from an ethnic Albanian party in southern Serbia maintains it is easy to get an overview of the situation, irrespective of the lack of official data.

"It is obvious from looking at the names on the list of [public] employees," he said.

Obvious differences in names and surnames is also the way used to acquire rough information on the participation of Bosniaks in the civil service in Sandzak, a source there said.

The sample chosen by BIRN, and the results that this produced, represent an overview of the situa-

tion, providing some understanding of how minorities are represented in state institutions at local level as well as in certain publicly owned companies.

The research was done between February and April 2010, creating the possibility that slight changes happened in the meantime.

Southern Serbia: No consensus on need to integrate

In the basement flat of a residential building in downtown Presevo is the office of the Party of Democratic Action, the most influential party among Albanians in southern Serbia.

Party leader Riza Halimi, the only ethnic Albanian MP in the Serbian parliament, talks constantly on his mobile phone, which seems glued to his ear.

"Sloppily," says Halimi, looking at his phone and shaking his head, responding to questions about how the competition is going for the 63 new jobs opened by Tax Administration, the Administration of Public Revenues and 11 inspecting services.

Key Political Parties in South Serbia

PRESEVO

- **Party for Democratic Action** Founded in December 1992. The first and current president is Riza Halimi. This is the only Albanian party that has committees and influence in all three south Serbia municipalities

- **Democratic Party of Albanians** Established in August 1993. President Ragmi Mustafa

- **Democratic Union of the Valley** Established in December 2003. President Skender Destani

- **Albanian National Movement** Established in 2006. President Orhan Rexhepi

- **Democratic Alliance** Established in June 2007. President Basra Memeti

BUJANOVAC

- **Movement for Democratic Progress** Established in 2002. President Jonuz Musliu

- **National Democratic Party NDP**, Established in 2006. President Nedzemedin Sacipi

- **Democratic Union of Albanians**, Established in 2008. President Mejdi Zeciri

MEDVEDJA

- **Movement for Democratic Integration** Established in 2006. President Rexhep Abazi.

BIRN Conference Addresses Integration of South Serbia

More than 100 people from Serbia and abroad have gathered in Belgrade at a high profile BIRN conference on the integration of minority communities from South Serbia into the country's wider society and institutions.



By Bojana Barlovac

Education Minister Zarko Obradovic and Interior Minister Ivica Dacic at BIRN Serbia conference on South Serbia

Under the name 'Integration: Combining Ethnic and Democratic Principles', BIRN Serbia organised on Wednesday

an international forum that aims to serve as a platform for the domestic and foreign public to gain insight into current developments in the region, and for those involved in initiatives in the area.

Ivica Dacic, Deputy Prime Minister in the Serbian Government, Bill Longhurst, Charge d'Affaires of the UK embassy in Serbia, Riza Haljimi, Member of the Serbian Parliament, Thomas Moore, Acting Head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia and Gordana Igric,

BIRN Regional Director, opened the debate.

The forum, organised under the auspices of the British Embassy in Belgrade and the Balkan Fund for Democracy, featured two panels. The first focused on education as the cornerstone of successful integration. Participants in the second panel discussed the effectiveness of international aid sent to the region.

The first international forum on the development of South Serbia and possibilities for the

increased integration of ethnic Albanians into Serbian state institutions was organised by BIRN Serbia in April 2010 in Belgrade on the occasion of the first anniversary of the reinstatement of the Coordinating Body for South Serbia.

The conference was entitled 'South Serbia: From Frozen Conflict to Sustainable Solutions: Opportunities for Long-Term Integration and Development of the Region'.

The southern Serbia municipal-

ities of Presevo, Bujanovac, and Medvedja are home to the country's largest ethnic Albanian population and are among the least developed in Serbia. High unemployment rates and an average wage lower than the state average of about 350 euro are two of the many challenges facing the area.

In 2000 and 2001, the region was the scene of an armed conflict between state security forces and local ethnic Albanian militants in the Liberation Army of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja.

Spotlight on South Serbia

“Competitions are being cancelled, the conditions are inappropriate... essentially, the problems are not being solved,” an obviously discontented Halimi says. “So, what happened? Over 300 people applied to the open competition for the Customs Administration but only five people from Presevo got an interview and only two got the job,” he explains. “Only three Albanians from Bujanovac were hired and at the same time they hired seven Serbs,” Halimi adds, noting that he went there to inquire in person about this. “They told me that many people did not meet the conditions, or they had no practical experience because the condition was six months’ work experience,” he continues. “Well, so many people round here didn’t have a job for years, so who is going to have six months’ work experience?” he asks. “The conditions are even stricter for the competition to join the Administration of Public Revenues – they want two years of work experience. “The problem is that Coordination Body did not coordinate the whole thing, because if it had, the competition could have been called for trainees and then previous work experience would not have been a condition,” Halimi concludes. The offices of the Coordination Body, the body set up in 2002 to mediate between Albanians and Belgrade, are located at the end of a long hallway in the Palace of Serbia in New Belgrade. In this silence atmosphere, where people are rarely encountered, few

would imagine that great and important affairs are underway. But for southern Serbia, the creation of over 60 public service jobs is certainly important business. “A lot of people are applying to compete but there are a lot of problems because many people do not know what they have to do when they apply,” explains Nenad Djurdjevic, who was, at the time this interview was conducted, the director of the Service of the Coordination Body, which is tasked with carrying out the decisions of the body’s presidency. He says the competitions for the jobs in the Customs and Public Revenue services are a prime example of the problems involved in integrating Albanians from southern Serbia. “In the competition for the Customs Administration, only 55 of around 400 candidates met the formal conditions, a third of whom were Albanians,” he explains, adding that seven Albanians and seven Serbs had got jobs so far. It was much the same with the competition for the Public Revenues jobs, he says. Only eight of the 167 candidates who applied for eight jobs met the conditions, which included two or three years of working experience. All were Serbs. “Besides lacking work experience in both competitions, many candidates applied with incomplete forms, documentation was lacking; many did not know how to apply for the job,” he continues. Djurdjevic says many candidates clearly did not grasp the difference between relevant work experience and “years in work”. These problems had since been presented to local Albanian political leaders. “That’s why we’re preparing a manual and a series of seminars, where we can explain to people what they have to do and how to prepare themselves for competitions,” Djurdjevic goes on. But he adds that the Coordination Body cannot change public sector employment criteria, just to fit the capacities of candidates coming from southern Serbia. MP Riza Halimi says the disappointing outcome of these competitions poses an additional political burden for him, as a signatory to a deal on reviving the Coordination Body. After signing an agreement in 2009 on the reconstruction of Coordination Body, which stipulated the establishment of multiethnic local authorities in Bujanovac, Presevo and Medvedja, and the greater inclusion of ethnic Albanians in state institutions throughout southern Serbia, his Party of Democratic Action had lost credibility. “We who signed the agreement made a mistake because these problems haven’t been solved,” he says. “Because of that signature, the Party of Democratic Action lost power in Presevo in April 2009, three weeks after agreement was signed, to the Democratic Party of Albanians under Ragmi Mustafa,” he adds. Mayor Mustafa “boycotts the Coordination Body and scores political points with such a poli-



Graffiti in Bujanovac, southern Serbia, one of the poorest areas of the country

cy,” Halimi complained, explaining that his radical stance goes down well in southern Serbia, where people feel alienated by their dire economic situation. The Agreement on the Reconstruction of the Coordination Body contained three broad elements. Firstly, Albanian leaders agreed to return to the work of the body. Secondly, ethnic power sharing was to be established in all three ethnically mixed municipalities of southern Serbia. The third element of the deal was the greater inclusion of ethnic Albanians in the work of state institutions. But Halimi says that only parts of this deal have since worked out. Albanians rejoined the Coordination Body and Serbs joined the work of the Albanian-led local authority in Bujanovac but the other part of the equation, the inclusion of Albanians in the work of state institutions, has proceeded only haphazardly. Meanwhile, in Presevo, “people are not interested in the whole process,” Halimi admitted. Presevo’s mayor, Ragmi Mustafa, leader of the Democratic Party of Albanians, freely admits he takes no interest in the open competition for state jobs in Presevo. “I don’t know much about it,” he says. “It’s an agreement between the [ruling Serbian] Democratic Party and [Halimi’s] Party of Democratic Action. “I am not informed about it, nor did they ask me anything,” he adds. Mayor Mustafa describes the agreement between Albanian leaders and the government on the inclusion of Albanians in state institutions and in local government as a deal between the authorities and Party of Democratic Action, which does not concern him, or Presevo. He claims pressure was brought to bear on Albanians to reach the agreement, conditioned on “money and employment.”

“In Presevo we have are only around 1,000 Serb voters, which is a small number,” Mustafa continues, explaining why ethnic power sharing has not been extended to the town hall in Presevo. Mustafa says he has no faith in official pledges about the integration of Albanians into state institutions. Nor does he think much of the latest public sector jobs on offer. “They are offering 65 jobs, and I’ve

heard they plan to hire 30 Serbs and 35 Albanians but I don’t know whether a job in customs is any kind of long-term solution because the borders will disappear once we join the EU,” he says, “so those people will once again lose their jobs. “Inspectors are not the solution either, because I believe those jobs will be also cancelled once the government changes,” he adds. Belgzim Kamberi says the mayor

South Serbia Demographics Facts and figures on the population, ethnic composition and geography of South Serbia

Map of South Serbia
Area, all three municipalities - 267 km2

Bujanovac: 461 km2
Presevo: 264 km2
Medvedja: 542 km2

Population
(2002 census) - 88,966

Bujanovac: 43,302
Presevo: 35,191
Medvedja: 10,759
Ethnic Composition
(2002. census)

Bujanovac: Total 43,302
1.Serbs: 14,782 (34.14 per cent)
2.Albanians: 23,681 (54.69 per cent)
3.Roma: 3,867 (7.25 per cent)

Presevo: Total 35,191
1.Albanians: 31,089 (89.1 per cent)
2.Serbs: 2984 (8.55 per cent)
3.Roma: 1,118 (4.72 per cent)

Medvedja: Total 10,759
1.Serbs 7363 (66.57 per cent)
2.Albanians 2916 (26.17 per cent)
3.Montenegrins 373 (3.46 per cent)
4.Roma 107 (1 per cent)

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Spotlight on South Serbia

of Presevo's disinterest springs from the fact that his party advocates the long-term inclusion of mainly Albanian municipalities in Serbia into Albanian-ruled Kosovo – therefore issues of integration into Serbia do not engage them.

“The agreement was accepted by the parties that have agreed to fight for Albanian rights within the [Serbian] system, which are in power in Bujanovac [but not Presevo],” he explains.

Kamberi says the agreement remains worthwhile for practical reasons. Where Albanians are in power in southern Serbia, Serbs have difficulties in getting a job, while in places where Serbs are hiring, Albanians have trouble finding jobs.

“That’s why in local government and companies in Presevo there are almost no Serbs, while in Bujanovac, there are still more Serbs than Albanians [in state jobs] because Serbian parties were in power there until 2002.

“All this will remain difficult until progress in relations with Kosovo is made. Until then, this region, as well as the process of the integration of Albanians, will remain hostage to these unresolved issues.”

Kamberi is referring to the ongoing dispute between Serbia and Kosovo over the latter's self-proclaimed independence in 2008. Serbia maintains that Kosovo remains a Serbian province.

Meanwhile, problems for the ethnic Albanian community in southern Serbia continue to multiply.

“Lots of educated people have left the region for European countries and for Macedonia and Kosovo,” Kamberi explains. “Graduates with diplomas from Kosovo find they’re not recognised in Serbia,” he adds. “Many young Albanians also don’t speak Serbian well.”

When it comes to competitions, the Coordination Body does not want to enter into political polemics, although it admits it is aware of the complexities of the

internal Albanian political scene in the south.

Officials dismiss Mustafa's alleged ignorance of the jobs competition, noting that the Body regularly informs all municipalities of all important matters, including the competitions.

“The Presidency of the Coordination Body... informs all presidents of municipalities and they are getting all the information on the competitions,” insists Djurdjevic.

The new civil service jobs project is the first major joint action of the Belgrade authorities and local leaders since a project for a multi-ethnic police force was launched ten years ago in cooperation with the OSCE.

The project, begun in 2001, shortly after the end of the conflict in southern Serbia, aimed to create a police structure that would win the confidence of both Albanians and Serbs. The program was seen as successful and Albanians today make up a little over 50 per cent of the police force in Presevo, close to 35 per cent in Bujanovac, and close to 5 per cent in Medvedja.

However, both MP Riza Halimi and Mayor Ragmi Mustafa express deep reservations about the future of the police project.

“The number of Albanians in the police has fallen in the last ten years - some left, others were dismissed for violations,” Halimi says. “We need to find a way to resume training courses and admit new people.”

Mustafa also doubts the multiethnic police project will survive. “The international representatives left the project and the jobs vacancies were never filled,” he says. “I think there are 30 open jobs both in Presevo and Bujanovac right now.

“The idea of a multiethnic police, which was well-received here, is not a long term solution and I don’t believe it will survive,” Mustafa adds.

However, the Serbian police have

Education and Culture in South Serbia

Resources and institutions of South Serbia

Although South Serbia is well outside the cultural mainstream, it would be overstating the case to conclude that there is no cultural life in Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja. Most events concentrate on the regions cultural heritage and its rural way of life.

Cultural centres are the focus of cultural life, providing the necessary resources for the organisation of events.

Education is, in theory provided in both Albanian and Serbian, but in practice not all schools have classes in both languages. Albanian language higher education establishments are in development, with a faculty opened in 2010 and new facilities announced for Bujanovac, and later, Presevo.

Medvedja

- University of Nis, Department of Law and Economics, classes are held



in Serbian and in Albanian.
- One secondary school where classes are taught in Serbian, with translation in Albanian.

Bujanovac

- Two secondary schools with total of about 1,000 students. Classes in both Serbian and Albanian languages.
- Higher Technical School

Presevo

- High school, technical studies.
- Two secondary schools, bilingual.

Culture

- All three municipalities have cultural centres and libraries, but cultural life is very under-developed.

organised a new open competition for ten applicants for the police station in Medvedja, and for 20 applicants each for the police stations in Bujanovac and Presevo. These 50 new jobs in the police have the potential to change the statistical ethnic make-up of the force, which may then more closely resemble the population structure in the municipalities of southern Serbia.

Sandzak: the problem is the police

Sandzak, or Raska, as the region in southwest Serbia is called, depending on whether you are a Bosniak or Serb, has become a popular des-

tination for ambassadors, representatives of international organisations and local representatives of civil society groups.

Mufti Zukorlic has wound all the various discontents of the local Bosniaks into a political agenda, based round the thesis that Bosniaks in Serbia are “discriminated against”.

With often inflammatory speeches and open verbal conflicts with authorities in Belgrade, the mufti has caught the attention of the public in Novi Pazar and Sandzak as a whole, which is why Sandzak has again become a centre of attention for the local and international public.

According to data obtained by BIRN Serbia, Bosniaks make up

around 50 or more per cent of employees in the majority of institutions in Novi Pazar, such as courts and prosecutor's offices, the National Employment Service, the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund, the inspecting services, as well as in publicly owned companies such as the Electric Power Company or Telecom.

The percentage is greater in municipalities such as Tutin, where Bosniaks make almost 95 per cent of population. Representatives of three main political options in Sandzak emphasise the police as the one state institution in which the absence of Bosniaks is most visible.

According to Serbian police data submitted in response to BIRN's

The Economy of South Serbia

A snapshot of South Serbia's business and industry

Serbia's south is among the least developed regions in the country. It faces a tough social and economic situation and the population struggle with high unemployment and low incomes.

Most of the businesses considered 'industrial giants' in the former Yugoslavia and which employed thousands of workers, have gone and the small and medium business sector is still underdeveloped.

Based on 2010 official data, some 40,000 employed people in Pcinja district, which includes Presevo and Bujanovac, received salaries averaging 250 per month. Incomes for the 33,500 people employed in Medvedja and the wider Jablanica district, were roughly similar.

The official unemployment rate is estimated to be well above 20 per cent, but unofficially some ethnic Albanian political leaders claim the rate is closer to 70 per cent.

Key companies

Bujanovac:

- Heba - mineral water and juice company. Since 2009 it has been owned by the Nectar company from Backa Palanka. Heba is among the five largest producers of mineral water in Serbia.
- Bi-voda – mineral water and juice company. Owned by the Jumko textile company from Vranje.
- DIB, Duvanska industrija Bujanovac - Tobacco factory in Bujanovac, owned by the state. The only factory in the Balkans, which produces tobacco foil a product incorporating cellulose often used in locally manufactured cigarettes.
- Heba, Bi-voda and the Tobacco industry employ a total of around 600 people.
- Bujanovacka banja - Spring water from Bujanovacka banja is used in the treatment of rheumatic and gynecological illnesses

Presevo

- Simpo – a Vranje based furniture factory.
- Fluidi - privately owned factory that produces soft drinks.

Medvedja

- Lece mine – gold mine, reopened in 2010. now owned by Farmakom from Sabac.

Natural Resources:

- Mineral water sources in Bujanovac and Presevo
- Gold mine in Medvedja.



Spotlight on South Serbia

queries, Bosniaks comprise 30.2 per cent of the police administration in Novi Pazar, where Bosniaks make up over 75 per cent of the total populations and 10.06 per cent in Prijepolje, town in which Bosniaks make up around 40 per cent of the local population, according to 2002 census. “It’s very important to say that these are relative data on representation of members of national minorities among employees in the Ministry, because according to Article 47 of the Constitution... ‘no person shall be obliged to declare his national affiliation’,” the written reply adds. Elmir Elfic, leader of the newly founded Bosniak Democratic Union and vice-president of the unrecognised Bosniak National Council, from the ranks of the Bosniak Cultural Community, describes the percentage of Bosniaks in the state sector, primarily in the police and judiciary, as “inadmissible”. “In Novi Pazar, which is always an indicator of the situation in the whole of Sandzak, the unemployment rate is over 50 per cent and... we estimate that in the police and judiciary only 20 to 30 per cent are Bosniaks,” he says. “The effect of this is to increase Bosniak distrust in state institutions - with their greater participation, that lost trust would be reclaimed,” he believes. Muamer Smalbegovic, president of the local SDA council in Novi Pazar, says the situation with the representation of Bosniaks in state institutions is not generally alarming, though it is not “as it should be”. However, he describes the situation in the police as “drastic”. “The issue has been dealt with by Bosniak MPs in parliament and by ministers but I don’t see any progress,” he says. Mirsad Jusufovic agrees. The chef-de-cabinet of Novi Pazar mayor Meho Mahmutovic, from the ranks of the Sandzak Democratic Party, the ruling party in town, he recalls that the number of Bosniaks in the local police dropped sharply in the

Milosevic era. “At the time, Bosniaks were being sacked, because, among other things, they refused to go to [fight in] Kosovo, while at the same time the overall numbers of police were increasing,” he says. “The problem, however, is that police here are not popular, and even if someone finds the courage to apply to join, he does not pass the tests,” he adds. His party boss, Rasim Ljajic, today is a prominent member of the Democrat-led government, one of whose coalition partners is the Socialist Party of Serbia. Its president, Ivica Dacic, is the minister of police. Asked why more local Bosniaks do not get hired, Jusufovic replies that this is not the result of “bad intentions” on the part of anyone – but the data underscore the nature of the problem. “We believe Dacic has good intentions, but the data shows this [problem],” he says. Dacic himself, on several occasions in December 2009 and May 2010 in Novi Pazar, publicly pledged to increase the number of Bosniaks in the police, but there hasn’t been much progress. The Serbian police did not reply to BIRN’s query as to whether there were any plans to include a greater numbers of Bosniaks in the force. They also did not reply to queries about the problems experienced by students who studied criminology in Sarajevo, Bosnia, and who have failed to get jobs in the Serbian police. One such is Emir Hodzovic who claims that for several years, together with a group of his colleagues, he regularly submitted job applications for the police in Novi Pazar, but was rejected every time until he was over the age limit of 30. “We are urban boys, from downtown Pazar, from good families. We all had ambitions to work here, to deal with crime, drugs...” he says.

Hodzovic says many of his co-job-seekers had parents who already worked in the police or army, but they still failed to get the jobs, although they had all the necessary qualifications. “After a while, we didn’t care what job we got any more. Even with high school diploma, we were ready to work as ordinary officers, court guards, or prison guards,” he says, “and still we were rejected all the time. “I applied from the time I graduated almost to the time I reached the age limit, and now I don’t have the right to apply anymore,” he adds. “They always returned my forms with the explanation that they didn’t have a budget for new staff, or they had enough staff.” Asked why he and his colleagues studied in Sarajevo, not in Belgrade, Hodzovic says the choice was dictated by the circumstances of the time, when non-Serbian students could expect a grim reception in the Serbian capital. “People went to Sarajevo until 2002, but now there is a course at the International University in Novi Pazar,” he notes. “People rarely go [from here] to Belgrade.” Semiha Kacar, from the Sandzak Committee for Human Rights, says people have an impression that the police routinely wait for Bosniak candidates to cross the age limit, after which they lose the right to be admitted into the service. “That group from Sarajevo addressed everyone but they did not manage to solve the problem. They addressed us, we passed it on to the ombudsman, but the police only say they acted in accordance with the law,” she adds. “We addressed minister Dacic, but we did not get any answers.” Kacar says the Rights Committee have looked at what was happening with the levels of Bosniak employment in the prosecutors’ offices in Sjenica, Prijepolje, Priboj and Nova Varos - but in the last two to three years the situation in the judiciary has been slowly changing for the better. “Only the police remained [as a problem], and only under great pressure from the OSCE have there been some small, small steps forward,” she says. Mirsad Jusufovic, however, adds that while the problem of employment of Bosniaks in the police is regularly highlighted, there are other problem areas. “The branch of the electric power company [covering Novi Pazar] is in Kraljevo, not in Novi Pazar, for example, and so is the branch office of the Institute of Health Insurance... and the Institute for the Protection of Monuments in Kraljevo is also in charge of the protection of monuments over here,” he says. “Opening branch offices [for these organisations] in Novi Pazar would mean decisions on Novi Pazar being made here, and it would also mean new jobs, and for people with higher education to boot,” he says. “That would mean a lot to us,” he adds, “because right now it’s very difficult for people who have invested in their education for years to get jobs here.”

Nikola Lazic and Amela Bajrovic contributed to this article

Key Figures in South Serbia

Profiles of main political leaders in South Serbia

Riza Halimi

The only Albanian MP in the Parliament of Serbia, and leader of the Party for Democratic Action, the largest (by number of members) and most influential political party in the region. Halimi, before entering politics, taught physics in high school.



Shaip Kamberi

As a member of the Party for Democratic Action, Kamberi is now mayor of Bujanovac and Riza Halimi’s “right arm”. Kamberi was founder and, for many years, leader of the local Committee on Human Rights.



Jonuz Musliu

President of the local parliament in Bujanovac and one of the commanders of ethnic Albanian Liberation Army of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja during 2000. – 2001. armed conflict in souther Serbia. Musliu is the president of the Movement for Democratic Progress. He is a biology teacher. In the nineties, during the reign of Slobodan Milosevic, Musliu spent four years in prison in Nis, sentenced for "hostile activity".



Stojanca Arsic

Local Serb leader, as a first on citizen group ticket. By education, Arsic is a doctor, specialised physiotherapy and rheumatology. In times of conflict in southern Serbia, he was the mayor of Bujanovac, as the candidate of the Yugoslav Left, led by Mirjana Markovic, wife of Slobodan Milosevic, former president of Yugoslavia and Serbia.



Ragmi Mustafa

Mayor of Presevo and leader of the Democratic Party of Albanians. Before entering politics, Mustafa worked as a professor in Presevo High School, where he was teaching Computer Science.



Skender Destani

Leader of the Democratic Union of the Valley. By education, Destani is a doctor in pediatrics.



Orhan Rexhepi

President of the Albanian National Movement, a graphic designer by profession. During the conflict in southern Serbia, Rexhepi was one of the commanders of ethnic Albanian Liberation Army of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja during 2000. – 2001. armed conflict in southern Serbia.



Slobodan Draskovic

Mayor of Medvedja, economist by profession. Before entering politics, he worked as a teacher in elementary school.



Milan Markovic

Minister for human rights and Local Self-Government, and also President of the Coordinating Body for Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja. Milan Markovic is a member of Democratic party and, by education, graduate lawyer.



Galip Beqiri

President of Albanian National Council. Under a law adopted in 2009, all of Serbia’s ethnic minorities are empowered to elect national councils, which are bestowed with a number of competences in education, culture, use of symbols and the media.



South Serbia Politics after 2000

A timeline of South Serbia politics since the turn of the century

Mid-2000 - December 2000 -	the first armed clashes take place. the Serbian government establishes the Coordination Body for Presevo, Medvedja, and Bujanovac (in Bujanovac), to address the security situation in South Serbia.
May 2001 -	the Yugoslav army begins a phased reoccupation of the Ground Safety Zone, GSZ.
May 2001 - May 2001 -	the Konculj peace agreement is signed. the Covic plan is launched (This is a detailed blueprint for the development of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja, written by the then Deputy Premier and President of the Coordination Body Nebojsa Covic. The Coordination Body took the lead in coordinating the implementation of the plan.).
August 2001 -	the first group of trained multi-ethnic police becomes operational in the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac, and Medvedja.
August 2002 - February 2006 -	an ethnic Albanian is elected mayor of Bujanovac. an ethnic Albanian judge is appointed to the Bujanovac municipal court.
September 2008 -	ethnic Abanian leaders boycott Coordination Body over Kosovo faculty diploma dispute.
March 2009 -	ethnic Albanian representatives rejoin Coordination Body.
June 2010 - July 2010 -	Elections for national minority councils. Albanian national council established.
December 2010 -	Municipality of Bujanovac gets first multi-ethnic government.

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*

A taste of Napoli in Prishtina.

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 Quint's 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. hote-
lafa.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 Prishtina

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



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

Hotel Victory

But 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 travelers 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*

Friends Bar

Friends Bar is owned by a Swiss-Albanian couple. The modern interior and the calm terrace behind the bar will make your stay comfortable. They offer a wide range of beers, including Dark Lasko and Murphy's Irish Red, which can rarely be found in Kosovo. You can also try eight different tastes and colours of vodka. Starting from May 14 there will be barbeques every Saturday from 5pm to 9pm, and brunch every Sunday from 9am to 1pm. BBQ and brunch will be offered with a wide choice of local and international food.



*17, Rr.Fehmi
Agani
045244 498
Facebook Page:
Friends Bar -
Prishtine*

Odyssea Bistro

Odyssea Bistro Bar is a beautiful bistro located in the heart of Prishtina, offering a combination of a quality menu with inspiring dishes and a modern bar with a large variety of drinks and exotic cocktails.

Odyssea Bistro Bar's unique design is a mixture of classic French influence and a modern touch.

Busy during lunch breaks, romantic for diners and classy for evening drinks, Bistro is a great place to visit at any time of the day.

Sample Bistro's brunch on Sundays, or enjoy live music on Wednesday, Fridays and Saturdays

*Bistro,
Sejdi Kryeziu, Pejton, Prishtina
045402095 and 049333959*



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*



Prishtina Diary:



Prishtina International Half-Marathon

Sunday, May 8, 2011
The Athletic Federation of Kosova, Sports Department and Directory of Sport and Youth is organising the eighth Prishtina International Half-Marathon on May 8, 2011. Like last year's event, this run will again promote the values of peace, co-existence and excellence in sports.
In 2010, 536 runners of many nations enjoyed the smooth organisation of the ninth edition of the Pristina International Half-Marathon, the international atmosphere and the colorful programme around the race.
This year, the organisers hope that the positive experiences of last year will motivate even more athletes to join this event, which is at the same time joyful and competitive. While all finishers will be awarded certificates with their names, ranking and finishing time, attractive prize money of a total of 12,000 euro will be waiting for the best finishers in senior, veteran and disabled category for men and women, and the first three finishers in 5km run in the men and women category.
Visit www.prmaraton.com for more information.

Every day, at 4pm and 6 pm, ABC Cinema will screen the animated movie Rio.

Blu, a rare macaw who believes that he is the last of his kind, shortly discovers there's another macaw out there, a girl named as Jewel.

Then, to set up a life with her, he leaves his cage in small town Minnesota and heads to Rio de Janeiro.

Blu is domesticated and flight-challenged, and Jewel is the fiercely independent, high-flying female.

They embark on an adventure of a lifetime, where they find out about friendship, love, courage, and being open to life's many wonders as unpredictably thrown mutually.

Rio also brings collectively a menagerie of bright characters, a heart-warming story, colorful backdrops, stimulating Latin & modern music, and family-friendly song & dance.

ABC cinema is also screening the brand new film The Roommate, every day from 8pm and 10 pm.

The Roommate is a 2011 thriller film directed by Christian E. Christiansen and starring Minka Kelly, Leighton Meester, Daneel Harris, Cam Gigandet, Sharon Leal, Katerina Graham, Nina Dobrev and Alyson Michalka.

An emotionally unstable college freshman (Leighton Meester) grows obsessed with her unsuspecting roommate, in Danish director Christian E. Christiansen's English-language debut.

For detailed information, ticket reservations or movie schedules contact ABC on 038 243 117 or visit their web page www.kinoabc.info

TEATRI KOMBETAR I KOSOVES NATIONAL THEATRE OF KOSOVA

National Theatre of Kosovo,

Monday, May 9, 2011
'Pergjuesi,' [peeping], a stand-up comedy with Adem Mikullovc, a successful actor and director from Mitrovica.

Wednesday, May 11, 2011
'Klubi I Kokurrecit' [Tripe's Club] a play by Rushit Ramabaj directed by Iliriana Arifi.
The play is also repeated on Saturday, May 21, 2011

Friday, May 13, 2011
'Rock'n'Roll," a play by the famous British author Tom Stoppard, is on stage again. The play is directed by the Albanian-Bosnian director, Dino Mustafic, a successful director in the region.
"Rock'n'Roll" is Stoppard's last text, written in 2006. This modern play takes place in Prague and Cambridge during the period between the Prague Spring and the Velvet Revolution (1989) and ends with the concert of the band Rolling Stones in 1990 in Prague.

Saturday, May 14, 2011
"Majmuni I Diellit," [Sun Monkey], by by Sofia Fredén, a Swedish dramaturge, directed by Olle Tornqvist, will be played at 12pm.
'The Sun Monkey' is a nervous monkey who likes to lead and take decisions on behalf of its friend, Trench Coat. Trench Coat is gentle, obedient and kind and feels fine with the Sun Monkey. It feels fine even when it is tied up to a tree. One day the Sun Monkey comes up with a golden cage she wants to put Trench Coat into. La Nia, the grand-daughter of the north wind, decides to set Trench Coat free against his will, and then gives the Sun Monkey a lesson about friendship and life. A seducing story about friendship, rivalry, freedom and power, about being afraid to be left with no friends.

Friday, May 20, 2011
'Lidhe Gjaku,' [blood relations], a psychological murder mystery play by Sharon Pollock. The play is based on historical fact and speculation surrounding the life of Lizzie Borden and the murders of her father and stepmother, crimes for which Borden was charged.
The play is directed by Fadil Hysaj.
All the plays are in Albanian language, and start at 8 pm. Ticket cost 3 euro, and there is a discount for students and pensioners at just 1 euro per ticket. For reservations call 038 224 397 or 044 430 693, or visit the National Theatre from 10 am to 1 pm and 5pm to 8 pm; or email info@teatrikombetar.eu

Exhibitions:

From Thursday, May 5, Kosova Art Gallery is hosting the exhibition of the great Hungarian artist Victor Vasarely. Vasarely is widely regarded as the father of Op-Art. He is a major master of 20th Century art. His paintings are in the permanent collections of many important museums around the world. During the 1960s and 70s his optical images became part of the popular culture, having a deep impact on architecture, computer science, fashion, and the way we now look at life. Even though he achieved great fame he insisted on making his art accessible to everyone. His motto was "Art for All". The breakthrough brought by his "kinetic" visual experiments transformed the flat surface into a world of unending possibilities, book marking an era in the history of art and foreshadowing a new global reality shaped by programming and the Internet.
Visit www.kosovaart.com/f2.html for more information.



Inside Prishtina

Guerrilla Gardeners Spruce Up Town Centre



By Lawrence Marzouk

Guerrilla Gardeners took to the streets last Monday in a bid to spruce up the city.

Around 30 gardeners donned their overalls and gardening gloves to clean up three locations, including the area near Procredit Bank and the Liburnia Restaurant, on UCK Street.

Jeff Fox, one of the organisers, said: "We had about 30 folks out and what was exciting for me was the fact that they were overwhelmingly Kosovars and young."

"In each instance it drew really positive feedback from those passing by and in a couple of instances they joined in to help

"Everyone had a great time and felt really good about the experience and the statement their actions made."

The land that is guerrilla gardened is usually abandoned or neglected by its legal owner and the guerrilla gardeners take it over to grow plants.

+ For more information visit the Facebook page Prishtina Guerrilla Gardening.



Shop Review



VICKO 2

Greek Accessories for Modern Living

A Greek retailer of household and decorative items, newly opened in Prishtina, is offering modern, luxurious and well priced products.

From candles to clocks and saucepans to suitcases, if you are looking for an attractive but useful item for your home, visit VICKO, and for sure you will be amazed by choices available.

VICKO first opened in the Albi Shopping Mall, and have now expanded their work with a shop in Prishtina city too.

In their stores you can find house and kitchen accessories made of crystal, ceramics, metal, glass and bronze, electrical appliances, furniture, paper items, plastic products, linen, wall decorations and lamps.

All their items are designed and produced by Greek designers and all are reasonably priced.

For more information about their products and store locations, go to www.vicko.gr, and you can order any product shown online that is not in Prishtina's stores. Perhaps more importantly, there are currently discounts on offer – spending more than 50 euro nets you a 10 per cent discount, for 100 euro you get 15 per cent discount, and for 200 euro you get 20 per cent.

Visit them at www.vicko.gr, at Albi Shopping Mall in Veternik, or in 'UCK' street (in front of Bank for Business), Prishtina
Open Monday-Saturday from 8 am – 8 pm



Inside Prishtina

Restaurant Review

Te Komiteti: Sin and Redemption at Suppertime



By Gravlax

Te Kometeti has a lot going for it. The smart bistro on the Qamil Hoxha restaurant row is the kind of place I could see frequenting with little pretense for simple, elegant meals.

It occupies that sadly lacking nexus of casual and class, and enjoys a well-deserved reputation as one of Prishtina's best lunch spots — with exceptional sandwiches.

And if it weren't for some rather basic execution issues, Te Kometeti would deserve an equally enthusiastic endorsement for dinner, too.

On my visit, the single-page menu had just seven starters and seven main courses. This was a refreshing departure from the common jack-of-all-trades, master of none menus that permeate the local dining scene. I'm always more than happy to let the kitchen to handle as much decision-making as possible.

Most of the starters sounded a bit on the heavier side both in price and substance, including options such as grilled king prawns (7.50 euro) and spinach and ricotta tortellini (4.90 euro). So I went with the mixed salad (3.50 euro), given that spring stood a good chance of yielding some excellent produce. From a creativity and freshness standpoint, Te Kometeti's salad did not disappoint.

The components were largely separated, with sections of cabbage slaw, green-leaf lettuce, kidney beans, topped with slices of tomato and cucumber. Their deliciousness seemed to reflect care by the kitchen to pick top-notch vegetables.

It's a shame, however, that they were swimming in an excessively oily dressing. I found some solace in glass of the light, dependable Castillo de Liria white wine from Spain (2.50 euro).

I was immediately drawn to the chicken for the main event. Eschewing the temptations a couple of fish specials and a pork chop, the two poultry dishes bore more creative hall-



marks at least in description.

Faced with chicken breast with sautéed carrots and porcini sauce (7.60 euro) and a half-bird roasted in piri-iri — or chili — sauce, with mashed potatoes and piquant sauce (7.90 euro), my decision was easy. Latter with came with promises juiciness and heat from the piri piri.

The chicken was a sight for sore eyes at it arrived slightly charred, resting on the potatoes and bright red piquant sauce. I struggled to cut into the meat, which I initially attributed to dull cutlery. But in fact it was the chicken that was tough and a bit dry, the telltale signs of overcooking. Also absent was the promised heat from the piri piri.

I found greener pastures in the velvety mashed potatoes and the spicy piquant sauce, which partially made up for the chicken's inadequacies.

At the waiter's suggestion, I ordered "chocolate truffle" for dessert. While most definitely not the confection known as a truffle, what arrived was something special.

The large rectangle most closely resembled a torte: Creamy, held together with ground nuts and most importantly bursting with deep chocolate flavor.

I've come to expect very little from dessert in Kosovo let alone one involving chocolate, which usually is more of a colour than a flavor. But this was damn good and an exceptional finale to an uneven dinner.



Te Komiteti
Rr. Qamil Hoxha 5/2
038 24 96 63

Monday-Saturday, 8 a.m. – 11 p.m.
Sundays, 10 a.m – 11 p.m.

Prishtina through the Eyes of:

Daniel Cosentino

Professor at the American University in Kosovo



What surprised you most about Prishtina?
It's the safest city I've ever lived in.

What's your favourite hangout?

This changes, but I like Tingell Tangell for morning espresso or late night drink, Germia for a stroll and some secret places that keep me wandering and wondering if I'm at the centre of humanity or off on a distant tangent.

Do you do anything cultural?

Art and music. If I'm out, usually I'm engaged with these.

What is the most annoying thing about Prishtina?

I miss being anonymous.

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

I'd would speak with the citizens of Prishtina for their thoughts on change then report that to the mayor the very next day.

How many macchiatos do you drink a day?

One, then several espresso.

What's the tastiest Kosovar food?

Yummy yummy mixed meats. Also Burek. I have my favourite places.

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

Skenderbeg, of course.

Bar Review:

ArtCaffe

Grab a Cozy Coffee and Some Albanian History



By Kanarina Shehu

This newly opened bar in downtown Prishtina brings Albania and Kosovo together in one place — with good food and friendly staff.

With a modern, carefully designed interior, ArtCaffe takes you on a trip down memory lane, through Albanians' history, tradition and culture.

On the walls hang beautiful printed pictures of 20th century Albanian and Kosovo cities, traditional clothing, and key moments of state creation — the declarations of independence of Albania in

1912, and Kosovo in 2008. Sipping your coffee you can sail though national history, yet from a modern and very comfortable corner.

In a cozy place, making you feel at home, ArtCaffe, serves many different dishes, including two traditional ones. The chicken wings and chicken strips are cooked to a traditional recipe, making this a unique and special bar in the town.

It also prepares food to order, and serves all kinds of drinks.

Located in front of ABC Cinema, next to Maxi store

Str. "Rexhep Luci" No 6

Tel: 044 377 707

Working hours: every day from 7am until midnight





Can Identity Cleansing be Negotiable?



By Bella Murati

The long-awaited negotiations between the two remaining 'enemies' of the former Yugoslavia - Kosovo and Serbia - have finally begun. The two governments have embarked on a dialogue sponsored by the leading Western democracies which is to take place every two weeks in Brussels.

Interestingly, neither Kosovo nor Serbia seems to like the idea. The egregious violations of human rights which occurred in the past are deeply conserved in the memory of the majority in Kosovo, and unfortunately every possible movement which leads towards Serbia is seen with mistrust and suspicion. The same degree of suspicion appears to be present among the Serbian population as well, richly nourished with the traditional way of understanding the concept of sovereign rights. Yet, both parties have something in common: both consider themselves to be 'victims' and feel excessive nationalism towards each other. One thing is crystal clear: the outcome of this dialogue will depend on how hard the Western democratic leaders have twisted the arms of the negotiating parties.

Initially, the dialogue is organised so as not to tackle the suffering that occurred in the past. Instead, it will deal solely with 'technical matters which are to facilitate life of the citizens'. In this regard, both sides are expect-

ed to work constructively in a mutually beneficial manner and make this endeavour successful. They were both promised that a successful negotiation will enable them to move from a divided past to a shared future, namely the EU political structures.

Apparently, Kosovo is seen as the biggest stumbling block on Serbia's path to the EU, and as such dialogue itself is one of the preconditions of Serbia's integration into the above structures. On the other hand, Kosovo is convinced that by participating in this dialogue, it shows itself ready to fulfil its obligation to establish good neighbouring relations with Serbia, a key precondition for EU integration. Those who oppose such dialogue consider that Kosovo is doing Serbia a favour in speeding up its accession to the EU, because Kosovo itself will need to wait quite long before it obtains an entry ticket to join the EU family.

In the last round of talks, the central issue on the negotiating table was the return of the registry books (birth, marital and death records) and cadastral records of Kosovan citizens, seized by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia machinery during the war. It is well known that during this period, amid a widespread campaign of terror and violence against ethnic Albanians, which included deportations, murders, forcible transfers and persecution on racial grounds, the former state machinery (both military and police forces) were widely engaged in acts of removing or destroying personal identification documents of ethnic Albanians with an attempt to destroy their civic,

social and cultural identity.

Those particular acts have been investigated by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in the case involving Vlastimir Djordjevic, former Assistant Minister of the Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs and Chief of its Public Security Department. He was found guilty of participating in a joint criminal enterprise in 1999, through criminal means consisting of a widespread or systematic campaign of terror and violence against Kosovo Albanians which included crimes against humanity, punishable under Article 5 of the ICTY Statute.

In this regard, the ICTY Chamber noted that in most cases identification documents and vehicle licence plates were seized from the Kosovo Albanians by Serbian police and army. The judgement summary reads, "Telling, in this respect, is the evidence of General Karol John Drewienkiewicz and Colonel Richard Ciaglinski, two British officers, who observed police officers burning tens of thousands of identification documents in a courtyard adjacent to the Ministry of Interior building in Prishtina on 12 and 13 June 1999, just before the cessation of hostilities in Kosovo, and when Serbian forces were about to leave Kosovo". This indicates the intention to change the ethnic balance of Kosovo to ensure Serbian dominance.

One may note that the very act of confiscating the registry and cadastral books was not specifically raised by the ICTY. However, taking into consideration that there is no arcane distinction

between 'identity documents' and the 'registry books' which serve as basis for issuing such documents, one may ask whether such an issue requires a specific explanation. Perhaps it simply leads to the next questions: why was the issue of confiscation of the collective identity documents not addressed by the ICTY? Is this only an unfortunate omission by the Tribunal or one of those "purposeful omissions" that were disclosed by the former ICTY spokesperson Florence Hartman in her book *Peace and Punishment*?

These very acts of systematic identity document destruction have come to be known as 'identity cleansing', a form of ethnic cleansing which is carried out forcefully by the state machinery.

In the light of the above, defenders of legal norms may find it difficult to understand why such a matter has become the subject of negotiations at all. It is unacceptable that the party who denies acts of 'identity cleansing' committed by their predecessors is allowed to discuss such acts on the negotiation table instead of being subject to justice.

On the other hand, one should take into consideration that due to the fragility of the international criminal justice regime, there is always a possibility for states and individuals to politicise justice.

First, it has been proven that international criminal justice is the product of political compromise and as such not immune from political interests. Moreover, its legal framework does not provide a sufficient guarantee that it fulfils the task of justice, since there are no specific legal sanctions, aside from reporting non-compliance to

the United Nations Security Council, which may pressure the non-compliant state into fulfilling its obligations arising from an order or verdict rendered by an international tribunal.

Due to this limitation, the Western democracies have made cooperation with the ICTY a sine qua non for some former Yugoslav states, and thereby recognised it as an imperative condition for EU membership. Presently, the EU condition plays an instrumental role in bringing about Serbian cooperation with the ICTY. Unfortunately, all successive Serbian governments have shown an ambiguous attitude when it comes to fully cooperating with the ICTY and for this reason have been reported several times to the Security Council for non-compliance.

In such circumstances, it is not difficult to receive the impression that international criminal justice is negotiable, and that its enforcement depends upon external coercion exercised by the relevant authorities. It remains to be seen whether 'the actors bargaining about justice' will use their authority and remind the Serbian government that any further refusal to return those books amounts to continuation of 'identity cleansing', the aim of which was the elimination of an ethnic group.

However, one should bear in mind that, so far, the Serbian Government has proven rather resistant to external coercion.

Bella Murati, Doctoral researcher in Public Law Department/Human Rights Centre at Ghent University, Belgium

Opinion



Skopje 2014: One small sad story



By Irena Jordanova

The project "Skopje 2014" has become a source of frustration among Macedonian intellectuals, particularly those born in Skopje. If you mention the issue the conversation will immediately become disturbing.

The faces of the speakers quickly become serious and there is a reason for that. The words "Triumphal Arch", "Lions" and of course "Baroque" heat up the debate. To be clear, I will mention just two things:

- In 1963 Skopje was devastated by a catastrophic earthquake that destroyed many monumental buildings. Since then only a few significant structures that mark the new post-earthquake Skopje have been built, which has left quite a poor architectural mark for a city that for 50 years has had an entirely different community spirit than the old city that existed before 1963.

Of course this happened not only because of the different architecture but also because of the overwhelming migration from villages to cities.

- In 1991 Skopje became the capital of independent Macedonia and the centre of a 20-year-long transition that continues even today, with an unemployment rate of 33.8 per cent.

According to the Global

Property Guide in 2010, Macedonia ranked among the ten countries in Europe with the lowest gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, more precisely with 4,657 dollars per capita.

Well, it's impossible to escape these two facts, which completely marked the city. So I will just tell one small and sad story:

Let's say that in 1963 there was a bohemian gentleman who had his own house.

Let's call him Mr. X. He came from an intellectual and educated family and had a wonderful (albeit small) house. The house had a landscaped yard, great facade, strong pillars, impressive wooden window frames, and rooms for him and his children.

He had an excellent water supply, good sewage, toilets, electricity for every room and every home appliance. He had some baroque style furniture, and a few valuable paintings.

He earned enough to afford food, clothing, and education for his children and sometimes he could afford travel and vacation. Then the earthquake struck Skopje and his house was destroyed.

Mr. X was forced to move with his family to a small, one bedroom apartment in a residential block and the same year his son (let's call him Mr. Y) was born.

Working very hard, Mr X managed to feed his family, but since the situation was difficult and he gave only a partial education to his children, as much as conditions permitted. His memories of the

old house remained and he passed them on passionately to his children.

Mr Y was fascinated by the ruined house of his father. The bare ground and the dream of his father's old house were left for Mr. Y to pick up.

Mr. Y and his family started to rebuild his father's house in 1991. This half-educated gentleman (of course because of the conditions he was raised in) worked different jobs to support his family.

He was rarely accepted in high society and clubs. The rich almost never cooperated with him, nor invested in his projects. He had serious problems with his name and his greatest enemy was a former neighbour who lived next to his father's house (the neighbour's house was not destroyed by the earthquake, and he was part of high society in the city).

This neighbour stubbornly alleged that Mr.Y had false home property documentation, and was convinced that Mr. Y had laid claim to the property by using another person's name.

But Mr. Y somehow managed to survive. He borrowed money and toiled under serious debt. He did not educate his children, he taught them to cope by themselves.

He did not have health care, but somehow managed to set the foundations of the house, he cleaned the yard and even erected the building's skeleton and put in a roof.

He might have achieved much more in the twenty years he

worked on the house if he didn't get involve with gambling, drinking and criminal activities. In 2006 he died and he left his unfinished small house to Mr. Z, his son.

Mr. Z and his family decided that he would behave the exact opposite of his grandfather and father. So he immediately told off his neighbour.

He decided that his wife and children must never interfere in his decisions for their joint future. He forced his wife to give birth to many children even though the children they already had walked naked and barefoot and had nothing.

He decided that he should invest in expensive suits and ties so that his relatives would think highly of him, even though he was not accepted in high society circles and had problems with his name.

The house was still just a bare external structure. There was no plumbing; they lived without electricity and heating.

He accused his father for his under-achievements and he was not far from the truth, only that he also did not care for his children, they were left on their own, except they weren't given the right to decide about their own future. He continued to raise his family the way his father did - by borrowing money.

One day he became fed up with the beautiful homes of people from high society circles that he sometimes visited. He decided that he too wanted such a home. It's all about the furniture, he thought; he must buy expensive

furniture at any cost.

His wife cried, she begged him to install heating, or put in the windows, or at least to pay for electricity with that money! Yet, she only got a slap in the face, some of the older children who were trying to reassure him got a similar response.

Only the youngest children, who did not understand anything, were delighted that they would have something to climb on. That was enough for Mr.Z - the youngest are happy! He invested a large amount of money in furniture pieces by questionable designers. He spent almost everything on terribly expensive Mona Lisa reproductions and other works of art. He sadly hung the pictures inside the unfinished building.

At last he sat down, dressed in one of his suits, to look at his work, while his exhausted and hungry wife, dressed in tatters, sat on the floor surrounded by her dirty and sick children.

Well, my dear, that is a sad family history about a small country called Macedonia.

Irena Jordanova is a Macedonian writer. Her novels (In Between; Catalyst 33) have been met with excellent reviews from critics and the public. She usually writes urban fiction about modern society. She also worked as a journalist and was founder and owner of the first Macedonian online lifestyle magazine, Dynamic.

NGO Focus:

Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians Explore Mainstream Media



By Shengjyl Osmani

For the first time in Kosovo, Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian community members will be given the opportunity to speak for themselves about their problems in the media in a bespoke project that includes attending learning centres and protecting their cultural heritage.

"The project aims to decrease by five per cent the number of RAE children who drop out of school, make the learning process more interesting, and provide them with an opportunity to represent their cultural heritage," said Muamer Niksic, project manager of the EU-funded project for the implementation of the RAE strategy, implemented by the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society, KFOS. "It should improve representation of RAE culture and coverage of RAE problems in the mainstream media by training young people to become part of the mainstream media."

"The culture and media section of the project covers a festival, an art exhibition, a

theatre play, a concert closing the project, music and dance performances, all representing the RAE cultural heritage by RAE artists," explained Niksic.

The structure of the festival is to be defined by KFOS together with the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports. It will take place in Prishtina for one week, starting on May 23, 2011.

The RAE strategy covers several packages for young Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians, including how to present their cultural heritage in the best possible way, and exploring representations of the communities in the mainstream media. It also includes encouraging young community members not to drop out of school, and to motivate them to go on to university.

"We included a culture and media section in the project because not many RAE community problems have been covered by the media, and we do believe that that's a great field for them to show and talk about their problems, try to find solutions, and let others know more about who they are," said Niksic.

Moreover, this week, 200 high school RAE children will be given a scholarship for monthly monetary assistance as a stimulus to continue their education.



"Based on their difficult economic situation, many children from the RAE community are forced to drop out of school at an early age to become part of the labour force. This week we will announce the names of 200 RAE high school students who have been selected to be given a scholarship, which is a monthly assistance of 30 euro, while attending high school," said Niksic.

Undergraduate or university students from the RAE community are also encouraged to continue their education.

"As our public universities currently don't have many people from the RAE community enrolled in their academic curricula, this project also covers a scholarship for them too," said Niksic.

He added that the scholarship is for 100 euro per month, an encouraging amount to register with a university and cover basic academic expenses.

The project began in September 2010 and will last until September 2012. Niksic is looking forward to any possible extension, since he says that until now the project has shown great results and high interest from the RAE community.

Ecosovo

Join Me in the National Geographic's Energy 'Diet'



By Elizabeth Gowing

Recently I was selected by National Geographic to be one of their bloggers in the '360 degree energy diet'. Beginning this month, for eight weeks, I'm going to be challenged to take steps to 'diet' and reduce not my waistline but my 'wasteline' - my carbon footprint. Each challenge completed will gain me points and every week I'll blog about how it's going on the National Geographic site. You can see more at 360energydiet.com.

Looking through the suggested challenges in preparation, I occasionally felt smug: vegetarian. Check. Buy carbon offsets for plane travel. Check. Hang up clothes to dry rather than using the machine. Oh yes, I am frequently in slightly soggy jumpers and proud of it.

But there are other challenges for improving my lifestyle which I found more needling. 'Swap three chemical housecleaning products for eco-friendly or natural methods'. Hmm, I used to do that in the UK where you could buy Ecover on the shelf just below the eye-watering products that mess up the ecosystem. But in Kosovo, I've not found eco-friendly products available, and even if I did, they would have been imported which would surely cancel out most of their benefit. Our NGO is actually in the process of setting up a vegetable soap-making project in the community we're working with in Fushe Kosove, but in the meantime I can see that it's going to be labour-intensive to switch to eco-friendly cleaning products. Somehow, I foresee lots of vinegar and bicarb of soda in the weeks ahead.

In this area and in others, the challenges are going to make me do more research - I'm going to be asked to recycle my batteries, for example. Where is there a battery-recycling collection point in Kosovo?

Another thing I'm being asked by National Geographic to work on between now and July is to go vegan or raw for a certain number of days per week. Vegan? But that would mean no cheese... Ouch.

But a raw food diet is something I've just got interested in. Thanks to a weekend away at a retreat in Andalucia (yes, I know, and a carbon footprint bulging with every airmile) last month I experienced my first raw food feast. It helped that the caterer for this banquet was the picture of curvy, sun-tanned health, and enthusiastically told us about the raw food diet she'd followed for the past three years. Among other things she made us cold smoked trout canapés and delicious carrot 'spaghetti' (made with a 'spiraliser' instrument which carved out fine strips from the carrot) in pesto sauce and a cheesecake where nothing had been cooked - not the pounded nut crust nor the coconut milk and lime filling. She told us about sprouted seeds and about the way that heating kills the enzymes naturally present in food which are good for you. And of course she reminded us that cooking food uses energy. I still have the fabulous taste of that 'cheese' cake from last month and am hoping that every mouthful of my raw food days could be as delicious. That's a challenge to look forward to.

I would love to have support within Kosovo over the next eight weeks as I try to reduce my carbon footprint. When I last did a 'diet' (a real one, for weight loss, using those horrendous meal replacement shakes) some years ago, I had an online 'buddy' who really helped. Mostly our communication consisted of wistful nightly online conversations about forbidden food, but just having someone there helped with willpower and the occasional practical tips. If you're interested in joining the National Geographic's challenge with me then please get in touch. We could meet together for a coffee (or a slice of my extraordinary non-cook non-dairy cheesecake on the week when we're trying our raw food pledge) or we could email supportively about the location of battery-recycling facilities. As Kosovo's countryside blossoms around us, who is up for joining me in making May-July the greenest months yet?

Elizabeth Gowing is a founder of The Ideas Partnership, a Kosovan NGO working on educational, cultural and environmental projects. She can be reached at theideasp@partnership@gmail.com

NGO News

Tree-mendous Work Turns Obilic Green



By Petrit Collaku

Obilic, long Kosovo's most painful eyesore with its aged power plants belching out dust and pollution, is becoming a model for community tree planting efforts across the country, with some 10,000 trees being planted as part of a five-year project run by a small forestry-focused NGO.

The project, Kosovo Peace Trees, began in 2010, with strong support from the UK-based NGO InterSilva and the active involvement of various local NGOs and volunteers.

Over three to five years, the aim is to plant 2.5 million trees in streets and school yards, near hospitals, in police station yards and near private homes - and of course the area around the Kosovo Energy Corporation, KEK.

Sami Kryeziu, representative of InterSilva for Kosovo, said that given its proximity to KEK and the resultant environmental damage, Obilic town was their first target.

According to 'Thinking Green', a 2009 study by the Kosovar Stability Initiative, IKS, on the state of environment in Kosovo, the KEK power plants at full capacity emit approximately 25 tonnes of dust and ash per hour, 74 times what is allowed by European standards.

"This is sufficient reason to start there, and again [what we are doing] is not enough," Kryeziu told Prishtina Insight.

Out of 10,000 trees planned for Obilic's streets, Kryeziu says 7,000 are fruit trees but the organisation is seeking to plant the remaining trees of a dif-

ferent, more efficient in absorbing the dust, type.

"The aim is to plant broadleaf hardwood species such as oak, ash, maple and birch that would increase the effect of gas absorption in this particular area," Kryeziu said.

Raising public awareness of the initiative was also crucial, Kryeziu said. Earlier planting of trees by the municipality had been hit by vandalism, with 60 fruit trees damaged a short time after planting.

"It's pity to see something like this. The trees were not able to survive because of Obilic's own citizens," said Kryeziu.

Therefore, Kosovo Peace Trees began by preparing a campaign with students in town. Kryeziu said that the campaign had been received positively after training for around 40 local students, providing them with information on silviculture, the science of growing trees.

"Those students were also volunteers to plant the trees. After some time, when we went back to the location, we saw amazing results. Around 93 per cent of some 7,000 trees survived without damage and also because of suc-



cessful planting," Kryeziu said proudly.

The project also involves other communities such as religious locations, such as Orthodox Church in Babin Most and Mazgit Mosque, where trees were planted in yards.

InterSilva and its partner in Kosovo, Agro-Vet Development, are now seeking donations to continue the next stage of the project.

Kryeziu said that five municipalities are included in the plan to start in the autumn.

"There is not a need to collect a lot of money," he said. "If we collect some 25,000 euro we can cover all five municipalities decently."

The price of seedlings varies from one to ten euro. "Various locations such as school yards require expensive trees because of decoration and other effects."

For more information visit the Kosovo Peace Trees Facebook site.

How it all started

The whole mission began with an email sent from the US Embassy to Prishtina to Richard Ince, founder of InterSilva in the UK. Intersilva deals with sustainable forestry projects that engage with, educate and help transform developing communities.

Richard Ince is a dirt forester specialising in silviculture. His forestry experience spans 40 years, during which time he has worked for and owned a number of forestry companies in the USA and UK and worked for the Pan-American Development Foundation, Organisation of American States, New England Forestry Foundation and International Tree Foundation.



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Phone: +381 (0) 38 249 995

Luxemburg
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Easy

	5						8	
6	1		9	8		4		
9	8							
2		3	5			1		
	6						3	
		9			6	2		5
							6	4
		5		4	9		7	2
	2						5	

Medium

6							7	9
		1	3			4	8	
3				7				
			4	5			9	
	8	9				7	1	
	3			9	1			
				3				6
	4	6			9	8		
2	1							7

Hard

	7		9		1			
		9		3			7	
4					6	9		
			4			3		6
		4				5		
2		3			8			
		2	5					7
	5			9		8		
			8		4		2	



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