

# Prishtina Insight

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## No Justice for Kosovo Woman Forced to Abort Baby

Six years after her parents-in-law allegedly forced her to abort her first baby, and then took her second one from her, M B blames police, the courts and social workers for ignoring her plight.

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# Kosovo Factory Sale Broke Privatization Law

A once flourishing car parts factory in Prishtina appears to have been sold at a bargain price to people under a fraud investigation – violating the country's law on privatization.

By Prishtina Insight

Kosovo's Privatization Agency, PAK, broke two key rules in the sale of the state-owned Suspension Factory to Devolli Group, one of Kosovo's biggest and most influential firms, Prishtina Insight can reveal.

According to PAK rules, the agency cannot sell state assets to individuals under criminal investigation - and a minimum of three bidders must take part in the process.

But the sale of the factory on the outskirts of Prishtina in

September 2010 took place three months after police from the EU rule of law mission, EULEX, raided Devolli Group offices as part of one of the highest profile anti-corruption investigations staged in Kosovo.

The raid formed part of a probe into an allegedly corrupt mobile phone contract between the Devolli Group and Post Telecommunications of Kosovo, PTK.

Devolli's owners, brothers Blerim and Shkelqim Devolli, and the company director, Ismet Bojku, were due to appear in court on Thursday on fraud charges. The judge has now postponed a decision

on whether to hold a full trial or drop the case until October 27.

Real estate experts meanwhile have told Prishtina Insight that the site alone of the factory - which was sold for 2 million euro - was worth more than twice that amount.

The privatised company was registered under the Devolli Group at the Business Registration Agency at the Ministry of Trade and Industry in May 2011, after PAK gave the group the go-ahead to buy the firm in October 2010.

PAK accepted an offer of 2 million euro - the only offer submitted

- nearly three months after EULEX police opened its investigation into Devolli and its owners.

EU police raided Devolli offices on July 15, 2010, with an authorization provided by a EULEX judge and under the supervision of the Kosovo Special Prosecutor.

The Devolli Group's owners and the director, Bojku, are suspected of negotiating "harmful contracts" with the PTK, which led to the launch of Kosovo's third mobile phone operator, Z Mobile, which Devolli owns.

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## Mineral Looters Destroying Kosovo's Rivers

The Drini i Bardhe, Kosovo's longest river, is being destroyed through the widespread, illegal exploitation of its bed for quartz and gravel.

While this activity has not been licensed by the authorities, the operators continue to act with virtual...

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## Toxic Toys on Sale in Kosovo

Importers and shop owners in Kosovo are mostly ignorant of the EU's warning system for dangerous products and some are even unworried that they are selling dangerous toys to children.

Prishtina Insight tested a number of children's toys bought...

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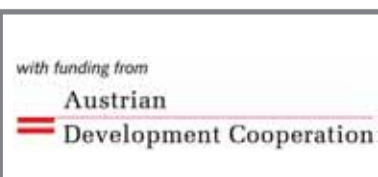
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## Kosovo Factory Sale Broke Privatization Law

from page 1

In July a EULEX prosecutor filed an indictment against the Devolli brothers, Bojku and the PTK head, Shyqyri Haxhaj, seeking 20 years' imprisonment.

This is one of the highest profile corruption cases to have reached the courts in Kosovo.

Former Kosovo MP Driton Tali, who sat as an independent until last December's general election, estimates that the contract that the PTK signed with Devolli Group has lost the PTK and the taxpayer revenue worth 250 million euros.

This week, Croatia Telecom, one of the potential bidders for the purchase of the PTK, said they were reviewing their participation in the sale as result of the court case.

In the document describing the rules of the tender for the sale of the New Enterprise Suspension Factory, obtained by Prishtina Insight, Article 3 "prohibits participation in a bid to acquire a social enterprise of any persons convicted of a crime committed since June 1990 or who are subject to criminal proceedings".

It adds: "Any bid submitted by a person not eligible to bid will be disqualified automatically, regardless of whether such a bid is in accordance with the set terms and conditions specified in these Rules of Tendering."

PAK rules on privatisation were issued following adoption of a Law on the Privatisation Agency of Kosovo in 2008.

Under this legislation, the board of PAK is required to "set out transparent and uniformly applied rules governing the bidding procedures" that "ensure fair competition of bidders".

The law further stipulates that PAK's Board is legally accountable for the agency's compliance to these rules.

Devolli Group director Bojku told Prishtina Insight said he would not comment on the pur-

chase of the factory, or on whether PAK should have stopped the sale as a result of the ongoing investigation. "You should contact the company lawyer," Bojku said.

We were not able to contact the company's legal representative, Valon Basha.

However, the Devolli Group's lawyers did send Prishtina Insight a letter this week maintaining that PAK rules ban only individuals under investigation from taking part in a privatisation - not companies, and that the factory in question was purchased by the Devolli Group.

According to a close reading of the rules, however, PAK defines a person to include "natural persons, unincorporated associations or corporate bodies".

The company lawyers also said the firm had not broken the law, a claim which Prishtina Insight is not making at Devolli.

Ylli Kaloshi, PAK spokesperson, said the Interior Ministry vets the backgrounds of all bidders in privatizations and if the data do not reveal criminal procedures that are ongoing, they give the sale a green light.

"In this case it was not proven that there were criminal proceedings against the bidder, so PAK continued with the sale," Kaloshi said.

Kaloshi added that even after a bidder is declared successful, PAK may not authorize the sale if any court decision is pending against him or them. "In this case, there was no prohibition by the court," he added.

He declined to address the question of why PAK had not stopped the sale when only one firm had entered a bid, instead of the three required by the agency's rules.

PAK's decision to go ahead with the sale even though only one bidder submitted an offer may also have led to it receiving less than the market value for the asset.

Real estate experts told



The Devolli brothers leaving court yesterday.

Prishtina Insight that the final sale price for the firm was well below what might have been expected.

Based on the factory's location at the crossroads of a series of major roads, and on its size, the site alone could have fetched 5.1 million euro on the open market, Halil Sulejmani, owner of the Visi real estate agency, estimated.

"The buyer bought it [the site] at a very low price because the real price [of such a site] in the market is much higher," he said. Albulena Azemi, from Zogu real estate, also said the land appeared to have been sold for well below its true value.

In its heyday in the 1970s and 1980s, the suspension parts factory produced 3 million items a month for blue chip automobile firms such as VW and Peugeot. The factory was the only one in the Balkans to produce suspension for cars such as Golfs, Peugeots and Zastavas.

It then employed about 1,700 workers and - unusually for Kosovo - did not rely state subsidies.

Ramush Berisha, a workers' representative, says the sale of the company has been an "unprecedented scandal."

"We thought our institutions would protect the country's wealth but this factory has not been sold, it's been given away," Berisha said.

The 920 remaining employees insist that the land alone is worth far more than the 2 million euro price tag. They are claiming ownership of more than seven hectares of land, the last part of the former factory that has not been privatised.

Bojku of the Devolli Group says he has met the workers several times. "Their arguments about the value of the company are mere nostalgia," he said. "It's much better to invest as little as two euro and revitalize an enterprise than for it to remain in ruins," he said.

However, it is not yet clear what Devolli intends to do with the site.

At the same time the factory was privatised, PAK also sold the factory's adjacent Administration Headquarters for 5.1 million euro.

The Administration Headquarters, which is registered as a separate business, is now owned, according to official records, by Euro-Nex, owned by Elvis Goga, who appears to have no links to Devolli.

But others listed as "authorised persons" for the business, a term which refers to senior managers, are high-ranking officials in the Z-Mobile mobile operator, which Devolli Group owns.

When this newspaper inspected the business register earlier this month, it listed Z-mobile's legal

officer, Valon Basha, marketing manager Fjolla Rexha, Burim Alija and Nita Krasniqi - also employees of the telephone company - as the "authorised persons" for the Headquarters.

Official business records, which we again consulted this week, showed that just Basha remained as an "authorised person" for the Headquarters firm.

Milot Gjikolli, Z-Mobile's manager, told Prishtina Insight that he did not believe his four colleagues had bought the Headquarters. He did not offer any additional explanation as to why they were listed as managers.

Concern over the sale of the factory is not new. In June 2010 a report by Kosovo's Auditor General uncovered irregularities in relation to the sale of the factory in terms of how the sale was advertised.

The report noticed a difference in the size of the land on offer in the public announcement and the amount listed in brochures provided to bidders.

"Different land surfaces for these enterprises were presented in newspaper advertisements and memos of information," the auditors' report said.

"The noticed deficiencies related to the privatisation process in general are very serious and drove us to a conclusion that there is a weak control within PAK," the auditors concluded.

## Kosovo Medicus Case Suspects Plead Not Guilty

Four Kosovo doctors and an economist, implicated in an alleged organ trafficking ring, have pleaded not guilty at the beginning of the Medicus trial.



Fatmir Aliu Pristina

The case began this week and charged seven defendants with one or more counts of trafficking in persons, organised crime, unlawful exercise of medical activity and abusing official position or authority.

Urologist Lufti Dervishi, accused of being the ring-leader of the alleged activities, called on the District Court of Prishtina to allow him to re-open his Medicus clinic in Prishtina during his first appearance.

His lawyer, Linn Slattengren said: "The electricity bill is 5,300 euro. My client is not able to pay for the electricity he spent. Therefore we request that the Medicus Clinic is granted permission to re-open."

According to the indictment, 30 operations involving illegal kidney transplants were allegedly conducted at the Medicus clinic, which has been closed since the start of the investigation.

Kosovo and UNMIK police officers began their investigation at the clinic in 2008. In November of that year, the alleged criminal activity was broken after a young Turkish man was found weak and frail at Pristina airport.

The man allegedly told the police that his kidney had been stolen. When law enforcement raided the Medicus clinic they discovered an elderly Israeli man who had allegedly received the younger man's kidney.

According to the indictment, the defendants are accused of luring people from slums in Istanbul, Moscow, Moldova and Kazakhstan with promises of up to 15,000 euro for their organs but many never received a cent.

Another surgeon, originally from Turkey, was charged with a role in the alleged trafficking of human organs. He has been arrested and bailed in his native Turkey. Yusuf Sonmez was arrested in Istanbul after he was charged along with eight others by EU prosecutors in Kosovo late last year. He is said to have previously denied organ trafficking and cannot be extradited to Kosovo due to Turkey's policy on extradition.



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## Kosovo Hails Promise of EU Visa Talks

Minister admits many shortcomings presented in the report but describes promised start of a dialogue on visa liberalization as the greatest achievement since independence.



By Fatmir Aliu

Kosovo's government has welcomed the European Commission's findings in its annual Progress Report, describing the assessment as an incentive to continue reforms.

Europe minister Vlora Citaku said although many shortcomings were identified, the announced start of a dia-

logue on liberalization of the visa regime with Europe was good news.

The start of such a dialogue would be "one of the greatest achievements since the declaration of the independence of Kosovo [in 2008]," she said.

Kosovo was left isolated after Europe scrapped visas for Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro in December 2009 and Bosnia and Albania in 2010.

The Minister for European Integration said the report would encourage Kosovo to

intensify reforms with a view to obtaining eventual membership of the European Union.

The report was "an essential roadmap in orienting policies to strengthen the rule of law, economic growth and the well-being of the citizens of Kosovo," Citaku said, adding that the report "represents a realistic picture of factual developments on the ground".

The report did not underestimate the serious challenges facing the former Serbian province.

It highlights a weak public administration and numerous problems with the judiciary, freedom of expression, human rights, corruption, drug trafficking, money laundering and economic crimes.

In all those areas, the document says the government of Kosovo has achieved only limited progress.

But the minister said the findings would serve as a basis for the development of a constructive dialogue, building towards an overall consensus on "deep political, economic and social reforms".



Khaldoun Sinno, Acting head of the European Commission in Kosovo, said: "This year was marked with lengthy electoral processes. Overall, because of that, the progress achieved in the reform agenda, was limited...The weak rule of law, organized crime and corruption remain major challenges.

"In our opinion Kosovo is not a failed state," Sinno replied when asked if all the shortcomings in the report did signal that.

### EU Progress in the Region

The European Commission has officially recommended that Serbia gets EU candidate status but a final decision on whether it receives this status will be decided when EU members meet in December.

Montenegro's EU membership bid has received encouragement with the European Commission's confirmation that the country is reaching the benchmarks necessary for launching accession talks.

Albania has failed to receive a recommendation from the European Commission for it to be considered as a candidate for EU accession in the latest progress report from Brussels.

For the third year in a row the Commission is urging a start to membership talks with Macedonia at the end of a generally positive progress report on the country.

## KFOR Takes Control of Illegal Bypass in Northern Kosovo

NATO peacekeeping troops and EULEX officers have re-established traffic control on a makeshift bypass road erected near the Kosovo-Serbia border in Jarinje.



By Fatmir Aliu

In a joint operation conducted yesterday, peacekeeping troops, known as KFOR, and EULEX officers, set up a vehicle check-point on the bypass road in Jarinje.

Lieutenant Commander Frank Martin told Prishtina Insight:

"We now control an illegal border crossing. We are now on the bypass, checking for vehicles coming and leaving Kosovo. At the bypass we have build-up a VCP [Vehicle Check Point]. The VCP is controlled by EULEX".

He added: "The last information I got, was that, at least 40 cars have passed through our VCP at the bypass".

No incidents were recorded during the

operation that lead to the taking of control of the bypass.

An identical operation, conducted two weeks ago, resulted in a very different situation. Local Kosovo Serbs clashed with KFOR soldiers and nine peacekeepers and seven Kosovo Serbs were injured.

The Jarinje border-crossing is technically open, but for weeks it has been unreachable and inaccessible to traffic, due to an illegally erected roadblock manned by Kosovo Serbs a couple of meters away from the gate.

For the past two months, local Serbs have maintained an additional 15 illegal roadblocks so as to block the main access roads to the border crossings.

In response to the continued presence of the road obstructions, Major General Erhard Drews, the commander of KFOR, stated in a press release issued today:

"KFOR reserves the right to remove the barricades when appropriate and will not tolerate them endlessly. People should stay away from roadblocks and barricades and not participate in illegal protests and activities".

Elsewhere, in Serbia, some media agencies have claimed that KFOR and EULEX have drawn up a joint plan to remove the barricades.

EULEX spokesperson Nick Hawton told Balkan Insight today that "all options remain open. Let us see what happens in a few days."

Northern Kosovo, which borders Serbia, has long been susceptible to violent incidents. Its predominantly Serb population does not recognise Kosovo's declaration of independence nor the Albanian-led government in Prishtina.

### Editor's Word

## Te jashtit



By Lawrence Marzouk

Have you ever considered the irony of the black market sale of cigarettes in Kosovo? I'm not talking about those cartons piled high at Prishtina market or on sale from tables outside a shopping centre. I refer to the sale of cigarettes which were destined for sale in Western Europe and are actually more expensive than the official, legal ones you purchase in shops.

Concern about the origin and authenticity of those little cancer sticks is so strong that it has produced its own extraordinary shadow industry. It is an honour to offer "cigare te jashtit", a delicacy brought from a far off land.

Let's just pause on that thought for a moment: cigarettes are illegally brought from Western Europe and sold on the black market in Kosovo for more than the legal alternative, because consumers don't believe that the official ones available in your average shop are either very good or authentic. It is a truly bizarre state of affairs.

So, if the consumer is so savvy about cigarettes, there must also be parallel markets in all sorts of other areas where the shopper is concerned about quality, I hear you say. Well, and correct me if I am wrong, I do not think that's the case.

I've never seen a grubby faced teenager wandering the streets with cooler boxes stuffed full of authentic, German-sourced steaks. And the guys whose shop consists of a square metre of radioactive concrete paving on the Mother Teresa Boulevard haven't yet branched out into toys originally destined for British children. But while I'm supping on my beer in the Little Cafe District I can choose from a wide variety of cigarettes, ranging from red-topped locally sourced to blue ones which were supposed to be in a Czech's top pocket.

So why is there so little interest in everything but cigarettes? Surely what is destined for your digestive system and for your children's hands is at least equally important as that accompaniment to a coffee or that morning pick-me-up?

And here's some more news for you to chew on: our investigation into the safety of toys on sale in Kosovo has shown that goods which are banned in the EU, because they can poison or badly injure your child, are available in your local shop.

The manager of Maxi supermarkets sarcastically pointed out that "Kosovo is a long way from the European Union", so he was not going to worry himself about the EC's warning system.

Perhaps, in the cut-throat world of business he is right not to encumber himself with extra, unnecessary red tape when profit is king.

Perhaps, it is inevitable that Kosovo's state inspectors, underfunded as they are, cannot prevent the shelves of stores groaning under the weight of crap but cheap Chinese products, many of which would be turned away by the Slovenes or Slovaks.

But perhaps, just perhaps, if the consumer demanded more and was better informed, by using websites like RAPEX, EU rapid alert system for all dangerous consumer products, then supermarkets wouldn't be able to just shrug their shoulders and continue selling goods which would be banned in the EU.

We're going to help out a little with this by featuring more stories for consumers. So if you've got a story, or a product that needs investigating, let us know.

After all, smokers shouldn't be the only ones with standards.

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# The Extraordinary Diary of Witness X

Agim Zogaj's diary of alleged war crimes committed by KLA members, including Fatmir Limaj, made him an ideal witness in the EU-led investigation into murder and torture at Klecka prison, but also condemned him to a life of persecution and intimidation and, ultimately, suicide.



By Genc Nimoni

**W**itness X, a prison guard at the now infamous Klecka prison, committed suicide earlier this month in Germany as the trial against 10 former KLA men was set to start.

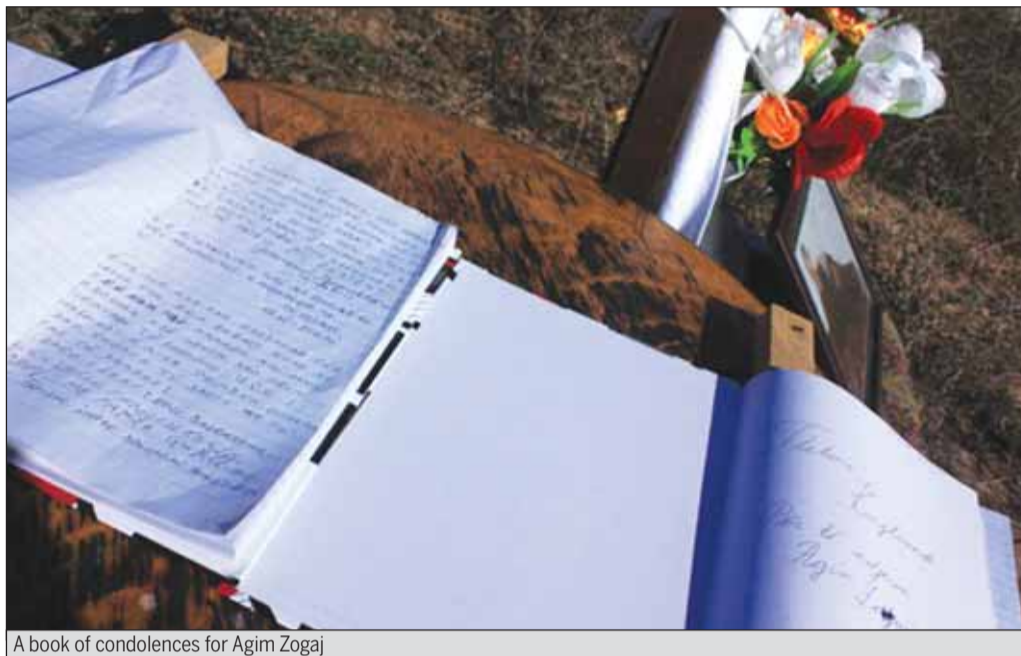
It is not clear what drove him to take his own life, but evidence submitted to the court as part of the war crimes case, discloses that he had been repeatedly threatened and an attempt was made on his life.

Agim Zogaj's journey started in 1998 when he took up arms and joined the KLA. From the start he decided to keep a secret diary, taking fastidious notes of the surreal but true events of life inside the KLA.

He was also no ordinary soldier, he was much praised by the Brigade Commander, Fatmir Limaj, then better known as his *nom de guerre*, Steel.

Zogaj was trustworthy, and was therefore appointed as the prison guard at the improvised Klecka Prison. From this position, he witnessed everything that went on.

The prison guard kept a secret diary where he wrote the details of the prisoners: names, personal information, reason of imprisonment, date of imprisonment, release or execution.



A book of condolences for Agim Zogaj

When the wounds of the war healed with time, these notes took a new life and formed the basis of his confession to prosecutors. Its author became known as Witness X.

His confession began with a description of the murders of Nebojsa Djurcic and Veljko Markovic, two Serbian police officers who were held in the prison for a long period of time and who were executed by him under the orders of, he says, Fatmir Limaj on either April 4 or 5, 1999.

The witness told EULEX about the location of the execution - the grave of the two bodies, were found at this exact location described by him. Their identities were verified by DNA tests that confirmed X's description.

The autopsy revealed the cause of death of the two victims, several gunshot wounds, again, in line with the testimony of Witness X.

Evidence also showed that X had murdered another Serb with a scythe, for which he showed two possible locations of this execution and burial. Investigators discovered a mass grave containing five bodies. In the same grave, a blade was also found. An autopsy of two human remains, found as the cause of death "cut in the neck with a sharp instrument".

The evidence provided to Prishtina Insight shows how witness X, had also said that the other victims had been shot in the head with AK 47s. X wrote down the names and birth dates of the dead.

The bodies were found at the exact location he described, whilst their identities were confirmed through DNA tests. The autopsy shows that three of them were killed by gunshots to the head.

The former prison guard provided the investigators with official documents originating from KLAs military court judgments, disciplinary decisions, lists of prisoners, dates of incarceration and release, as well as the number of prisoners detained in the Klecka prison.

In his last special note, X says that he had issues with Fatmir Limaj and his men after the war. He says that Limaj forced him to be admitted to a psychiatric hospital in order to falsify an incriminating statement that witness X had made against him to KFOR.

During April 2010, a raid conducted on Limaj's property, in the context of another special investigation, led to the discovery of medical records of witness X in Limaj's bedroom.

Besides the cooperative Zogaj's testimony, the indictment is based on the testimonies of other witnesses, as witness Y, anonymous witness I, Witness A, anonymous witness H, which according to the indictment all back X's evidence.

X's diaries were kept secret even after the war. Apart from one other man - Witness Y - to which X had confided, and asked him to hand over these logs to the judicial authorities in case something happened. Witness Y also confirmed all the evidence to the prosecutor, while the notebooks were stored inside his mattress and underneath several pillows.

According to the indictment, witness X's relationship with Limaj and his group had changed after the war, after the investigation of the Hague Tribunal for war crimes in the prison of Llapushnik against Fatmir Limaj, Isak Musliu and Haradin Balaj.

After The Hague's arrest of Fatmir Limaj, his people accompanied Witness X to Albania, and told him never to return to Kosovo. However, despite this, X returned to Kosovo and kept his whereabouts secret, avoiding contact with Limaj's group.

There were attempted assassinations against Witness X, evidence shows. In June 2009 he was shot and wounded in his house in Prizren. He also found a grenade in his car in July 2007. After this incident X gave an overall statement regarding his relationship with Fatmir Limaj, his group and all the threats he received.

In front of the Prosecutor, X testified that Fatmir Limaj's brother, Demir, had threatened his life, and that of his family, should he testify in regards to the war, he would "blast him and his family up". Such threats were received also from Limaj's other people.

In August, this year, the indictment on Limaj and his nine comrades was confirmed. Almost all of this based on witness X's statements to the prosecution which are considered reliable and detailed.

According to the indictment, Fatmir Limaj along with other co-defendants had "violated the bodily integrity and health of an unspecified number of Serb and Albanian civilians, Serb military prisoners, detained in a detention center in the village of Klecka, Lipljan municipality. These Serb and Albanian civilians and Serb military prisoners, according to the indictment, were held in inhumane conditions (which includes keeping prisoners in chains, in extreme cold, lack of sanitary, food shortage and frequent beatings."

News in brief

## Kosovo Ombudsman: School Hijab Ban Should be Respected

**S**ami Kurteshi, Kosovo's ombudsman, has said the public should accept a recent Constitutional Court decision ruling that the Muslim headscarf should not be worn in schools.

His comments come just days after Kosovo's Constitutional Court, ruled against 19-year-old Arjeta Halimi being allowed to wear a Muslim headscarf to the "Kuvendi i Lezhes" high school in Vitina.

The court's decision sparked numerous protests in Prishtina. Some Muslim leaders consider the verdict a breach of human rights and have said they will take the government to the European Court of Human Rights if it is not revoked.

"The Constitutional court has received the plea of the young lady. It has analyzed it, and ruled it as inadmissible. So, it has taken a decision that the [Muslim] headscarf should not be worn at schools," Kosovo's Ombudsman Sami Kurteshi told Prishtina Insight.

He added that "Kosovo is a secular state, therefore its decisions are based within that concept."

The constitutional court's ruling came at a delicate point for religion in Kosovo's capital. In recent months, there has been public controversy over religious instructions in public schools and the construction of a new mosque in downtown Prishtina.

## EULEX Judge Places Kosovo Official Under House Arrest

**I**nterior minister inspector Kadrush Koliqi was ordered to remain under house arrest by a judge at Prishtina District Court after a pre-trial hearing earlier this week.

Two businessmen arrested in connection with alleged corruption and procurement fraud were also given one month of detention on remand by the EULEX judge in Prishtina.

The EU rule-of-law mission to Kosovo conducted inspections yesterday at offices of the Kosovo Police and government of Kosovo, arresting an employee of the Interior Ministry, two senior Kosovo Police officers, and three businessmen.

After being interviewed by EULEX police, two senior Kosovo Police officers, the Head of the Police Administration, Ragip Bunjaku and his colleague Xhevahire Vatovci, the head of the Procurement Department, were released from police custody. One individual still remains in police custody.

In total, twelve locations were searched all over Kosovo, including private houses, business premises and public offices. As part of this investigation, German Police also searched one business premise and one private house in Germany.

The EULEX organized crimes unit confiscated computers, documents and servers from the office of the Koliqi.

The two detained businessmen, own the companies "Friends" and "Jolix" which are both licensed by the Interior Ministry for importing weapons for the need of the Kosovo Police.

The investigation on alleged procurement fraud has started in 2009, at the time when Zenum Pajaziti was the minister of Interior.

Pajaziti told Prishtina Insight, that the "procurement for the Kosovo Police, was a process lead by the police itself, and the ministry had nothing to do with it".

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# No Justice for Kosovo Woman Forced to Abort Baby

Six years after her parents-in-law allegedly forced her to abort her first baby, and then took her second one from her, M B blames police, the courts and social workers for ignoring her plight.



By Leonora Aliu

When M B, now 25, married Afrim Hajdari from Gnjilane in 2003, she never thought her love story would turn so soon into a nightmare.

M B, whose identity is being guarded by this newspaper, was only 17 when her boyfriend put a ring on her finger. She was already pregnant. "We got married because love bonded us," she recalls. "I was also pregnant at the time."

But the bonds of love did not extend to her prospective mother and father-in-law.

Metush and Sevdije Hajdari were less worried about the fact that she was pregnant than by her lack of documents entitling her to live in a wealthy Western country like Switzerland.

"My mother and father-in-law never loved me; they wanted a bride with Swiss documents who could send them money," she says. "I didn't have money, I was just a plain girl."

"I often asked them, 'Why don't you want me, what have I done to you, why do you beat me?' But they simply told me that they didn't love me - full stop."

M B was in her third month of pregnancy and still a minor when her mother-in-law told her to abort the child because she had allegedly swallowed some pills that would result in the child having deficiencies.

She did not agree to abort her child, whom she says she and her husband could not wait for.

It seemed like any other routine morning when Sevdije Hajdari took M B to Dr Ramadan Maliqi's clinic in Gjilan.

"It was around noon when we went to that clinic. We went in, there was a nurse who was pregnant, and they said they were going to give me a check-up," she recalls.

"But then they began to kill my baby with their instruments."

M B says she started screaming when the doctor told her that the child was already dead and needed to be removed from the womb.

Today, M B accuses her in-laws of arranging the abortion without her consent or knowledge - and she says Dr Maliqi was clearly paid to perform a forced abortion. M B says she filed a statement to this effect in 2005 to the police in Gjilan.

But then she went back to her

husband because, she says, she was young and did not know where else to turn. "I went back with the hope that everything would get resolved," she says.

After a year-and-a-half she was pregnant again but this time she did not dare to tell anyone except her husband, fearing that she would have to abort her child again.

"Besides my husband, no one knew I was pregnant. I tied in my stomach to conceal the fact that I was pregnant," she says.

But somehow news got out. One of the neighbours noticed the bulge in her stomach and spread the word. Once again, her in-laws tried to stop the birth.

"When my mother-in-law noticed I'd got pregnant again she reacted with violence," M B says.

She says her father-in-law even ripped out her hair and the beatings continued after she had her daughter. "Even after I gave birth, they did not stop their violence," M B says. "They never watched over our daughter. They did not like either of us."

## Forced to flee:

On April 26, 2006, she finally left home. That day, she says she bathed her daughter in a bucket of lukewarm water in the living room because it was too cold to wash her in her room.

But her in-laws were angry and attacked her, she says. "My father-in-law slapped me and yelled... I told him I had no alternative because it was cold, but he did not listen and grabbed a chair to hit me with," she says.

M B says she left her daughter in the bucket and fled the house barefoot, never to return. "I ran until I came out on the street and met a police patrol. They took me to the station where they took my statement."

This was not the first time that M B had told her story to the authorities. Police had been several times to her home, probing reported domestic violence.

Arbnore Leka and Shaban Hajdari, two police officers from the department of domestic violence, took her statement that day, claiming her father-in-law had torn her hair from its roots.

But M B says her statement did not satisfy them. According to her, they told her that she had to put up with her in-laws because they were senior family members.

Neither officer has agreed to speak to Prishtina Insight about

the case. Once they understood the purpose of the conversation, they left Gjilan police station.

Meanwhile the police spokesman for the region, Ismet Hashani, has denied M B's accusations against his officers. "I absolutely cannot believe that this is true. The police did their job in the best way possible," he said.

Gjilan's District Attorney, Fahri Nuhiu, filed criminal charges against Haydar Metush for causing bodily injuries to M B on May 24, 2005.

But while the District Court in Gjilan received the charges, the case was never completed because it ran out of time.

Emine Salihu, former District Judge in Gjilan, did not summon either party involved in this case for years.

Prosecutor Nuhiu confirms this. "We have never received an invitation to this case and we understand that the case is abandoned," he said.

In 2009, Judge Drane Simani, Salihu's successor, then dismissed the case as it had long exceeded the period by which time cases must close.

## No one is responsible:

Neither the Police nor the Prosecution has accepted responsibility for the effective collapse of the case.

Gjilan police spokesman Hashani said the police had done their job, while the prosecution blames the court for not following up the case.

Former Judge Salihu has declined to give a statement about the case. However, during the time when this case was on the books, she worked on and completed other new cases.

Lawyer Kole Ramaj, who is representing MB, says if true, this would amount to abuse of her official position.

"If she closed other new cases and let this one enter the period of statutory limitation, there is room for speculating that she purposely left the case unfinished," Ramaj said.

This was not the only bungle. While the prosecution was informed about the forced abortion claim, no one went to the clinic of Dr Maliqi to verify if the alleged victim had undergone an abortion.

Prosecutor Nuhiu says it was more logical to speak with the Regional Hospital of Gjilan, which told him that no person called M B was on the registra-



tion list of abortions.

However, Dr Maliqi had already told police he did not keep such lists of clients. "The doctor told us he does not register patients," police spokesman Hashani said.

Visiting Dr Maliqi's Nataliteti clinic, Prishtina Insight asked him whether he had this woman in his register, but he said he didn't know. He also said that he could not remember what might have happened back in 2003.

Today, six years on, disappointed with the official indifference to her plight, M B is vainly trying to regain custody of her lost daughter, having had little luck with the welfare department in Gjilan in 2009.

Reshat Zeqiri, the social worker responsible for her case, appears to left her request for custody on the shelves of the Centre as the case was never taken into consideration.

Zeqiri also did not want to comment on the case. However, his superior, the head of social services in Gjilan, Mehar Berisha, admitted the centre had received a request from M B about her

child.

M B's child now lives far away. On October 15 last year Judge Miodrag Pavic awarded custody of the girl to her father, Afrim, who now lives in Switzerland with a new wife.

M B only learned about this judgment this summer. She says she is amazed that the courts ignored her own request for custody.

But Judge Pavic said the court was never even informed that the biological mother had asked for the child.

Metush Hajdari, M B's former father in-law, denies the accusations made against him. Speaking by phone, he says the courts have now dealt with everything.

"I finished with her [M B] seven years ago and I have my people in the court," Hajdari said.

Today, M B lives in Cyprus. She has also remarried, to a Turkish man with whom she has a son. But she continues to mourn her two lost children - the first violently aborted against her will, and her living daughter, now growing up with her father in Switzerland.

# Mineral Looters Destroying Kosovo's Rivers

Kosovo's rivers are being plundered for quartz and gravel on an industrial scale, leading to widespread destruction of ecosystems and rapid changes to the rivers' courses.



By Leonora Aliu

The Drini i Bardhe, Kosovo's longest river, is being destroyed through the widespread, illegal exploitation of its bed for quartz and gravel.

While this activity has not been licensed by the authorities, the operators continue to act with virtual impunity.

The 122-kilometers-long river is not just of important esthetic value to the Dukagjini Plain, but is also essential to the region's ecosystem and agriculture.

The accelerated destruction of its riverbed is leading to changes in the rivers course, adversely affecting its ecosystem, depriving fertile lands in its vicinity of water and raising the risk of floods.

Quartz from the river is sold to variety of industries, from glass-makers to computer builders, while gravel is used in construction.

The scale of the post-war construction boom in Kosovo, specifically the construction of roads, has made the exploitation particularly attractive. This illegally mined gravel has mostly been purchased to build the country's road with public money.

Environmentalist Avdi Gjonbalaj says that the intervention of authorities to protect this river would only be the first step in overcoming the "pre-apocalyptic state faced by Kosovo waters".

"The extraction of sand and gravel decreases the water level of

the rivers," he said. "The river tries to maintain its equilibrium and this increases the speed of its flow, which, in turn, causes riverbed erosion and its deviation," explained Gjonbalaj.

He said that a good example of this phenomenon is the Drini i Bardhe riverbed at Pirane. From that point towards the Prizren - Gjakova road, it can clearly be seen that the river is about to destroy the road beside it, because of its new course due to illegal extraction.

A report in 2010 on the state of waters in Kosovo, published by the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, noted the uncontrolled river and riverbank degradation. "The rivers most affected by this phenomenon are river the Drini i Bardhe (with the most severe damage), Ereniku and a part of the Peja Lumbardh. The most degraded area continues to be the Drini i Bardhe sector between Kramovik and Gjonaj. As far as the damage on river Ereniku is concerned, the most affected part is the section between Korenica and Ura e Tabakut," the report states.

The report underlines that the degradation of "water is performed without adhering to any criteria in respect to water regime preservation or use of mineral resources". "As a consequence, entire surfaces of fertile lands were lost," said the report.

"Deregulated riverbeds and their devastation, through unregulated sand and gravel exploitation, represent some of the most significant factors in flooding."

Gjonbalaj also emphasizes that the river's ecosystem was under threat because of disappearing



Diggers at work illegally exploiting the Drini river.

food and the destruction of suitable nesting areas.

Azem Rexhaj, director of the Independent Commission for Mines and Minerals, ICMM, said that sand and gravel exploitation operations in rivers are prohibited by law. The commission he leads has issued 29 orders to halt such works and filed 170 cases of failure to adhere to such orders with the State Prosecutor.

However, regardless of this, illegal operators continue to exploit riverbeds with impunity.

Skender Elshani, owner of 'Egzoni' Company, from Pirane, Prizren, sells minerals he extracts from the river and opposes any preventative measures by institutions. "There can be no talk of confiscating my digger. I bought it for 50 thousand euro. I feed my family with the income it generates."

He says that he is willing to do whatever is required to prevent the confiscation of his excavator.

"If the ministry officials want to take me along with the digger as well - so be it," says Elshani.

Elshani submitted a request for the relevant licence at the Prizren municipality, however, it was rejected on the grounds that no

river exploitation is allowed. He said he has nowhere else to work. "Then, let them find me another place where I can work. I have requested the municipality's permit many times and it's not right that I was not provided one. As a result, I will not stop."

The Coordinator for Environment in Prizren, Ramadan Tafallari, said that no licence can be granted for Elshani to operate in the river Drini i Bardhe, because it is being totally destroyed.

The MESP inspector Mustafe Hyseni was not able to say how many times his ministry's inspectors have left their officers to inspect the state of rivers and to stop the operations of illegal diggers. He insisted that those activities were inherited from the pre-war period, that they were serious and emphasized the lack of "political will".

But perhaps the noise of the diggers will no longer be heard in the Drini i Bardhe riverbed in the near future as the state's apparatus is preparing action against such heavy machinery users.

The Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning is drawing

up a decision on the confiscation of excavators around Drini i Bardhe.

Gazmend Avdiu, political advisor in MESP, confirmed to Prishtina Insight that an initial draft of this decision is being prepared and that it is hoped that it will be issued and applicable before winter. The Ministry is also planning to conduct an awareness-raising campaign, which will underline the sanctions to be imposed in case of non-adherence.

According to Avdiu, MESP also held a meeting with representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Justice, the Independent Commission for Mines and Minerals (ICMM) and Kosovo Police, in an effort to coordinate the activities.

Gjonbalaj remains unconvinced. He says that the Ministry has not proven to be committed to the safeguarding the country's rivers. "It is terrible. I can say very responsibly that as far as institutional responsibility is concerned, Kosovo is in a catastrophic state. River Drini i Bardhe is severely damaged and it's not the only one."

## Ferronikeli Fined for Pollution



One of Kosovo's most powerful companies, Ferronikeli, was fined this week 40,000 euro for failing to monitor pollution.

The privatised state firm, which processes Ferronickel in central Kosovo, admitted in court that it had failed to install pollution monitoring equipment, as required by law.

Its manager Johanos Gajtanos was also fined 1,500 euro, despite arguing that the compa-

ny had already purchased the necessary equipment from a Macedonian firm and expected it to be operational by November.

"We have not left this out of negligence, nor because of the cost, but because we could not find companies that would deal with the installations," he said.

The Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning (MESP), which had brought the action, welcomed the court's decision.

## Senior Kosovo Official Killed in His Office

A senior official of the local government in Kosovo was murdered in Prishtina as he sat at his desk.



By Fatmir Aliu

He was shot from close range, with five bullets in his chests, while sitting in his office.

Police said that the victim Remzi Salihu, was the Director of the Education Directorate of the Pristina Municipality.

"At approximately 10 am, police received a phone call, that shots were heard inside the municipality building of Prishtina. We later found out that the director of education, Remzi Salihu was shot dead," Agron Borovci, police spokesperson said.

Eyewitnesses told Prishtina Insight that the murderer entered



the director's office by force.

"He pushed away the secretary, entered the office and shot five times the director, who was sitting in his chair. The murderer then walked away from the office, with the gun in his hands. We were all so terrified, because we thought that he might shot us too," a lady that was inside the building explained at the scene.

According to the local security guards, the suspect entered the municipality building saying that he had an appointment with the director.

The municipality as such has no "metal-detector" and the individual entered inside the building armed and undetected.

"We were horrified. The guy walked out with a gun in his hand,

out in the courtyard and no one stopped him. In fact, he stopped a police car and then got arrested! It's a real shock," said a woman who works as an office clerk at the municipality.

According to police sources, the suspect's name is Gani Sahiti, a biology-teacher at the school of Dabishec, a small village some 30 kilometers west of the capital Prishtina.

The suspect had applied earlier for the school director post, which was vacant.

The spokesperson of the municipality of Prishtina, Muhamet Gashi told reporters that "this may well be the motive of the murder, but the police investigation will prove whether this is right or not."

# Dino the Painter – The Man Who Sold Kosovo

The man who was at the wheel of Kosovo's flurry of privatisation for the past three years, Dino Asanaj, is to stand down, with questions marks still over the legacy he leaves Kosovo.



By Lavdim Hamidi

**D**ino Asanaj has decided to raise the white flag on his career leading the Board of the Privatization Agency of Kosovo, PAK, a month before his contract expires. The head of the most powerful agency in the country has announced his resignation, as he says, for personal reasons.

He says that when he was elected to this position, his other commitments were less weighty. Years have passed, as have many privatizations, and the powerful Dino feels tired.

As he lights cigarette after cigarette at the posh Puro restaurant on the outskirts of Prishtina, the 54-year-old from Peja, who for two decades has lived and worked in the United States of America, talks in superlatives about the independence of the board he directed, even though most members were delegated by political parties.

"Although there were political representatives on the board, the latest board has been 100 per cent independent and politically unaffected," he told Prishtina Insight.

Asanaj, however, accepts that some things have not gone well with the old PAK Board, which, according to him, was characterised by conflict.

"PAK's Managing Director was a board member and also eligible to vote. He had prepared the privatisation of social enterprises, managed the process and was able to vote on the Board. This in a way was a recipe for conflict," said Asanaj.

The long experience in the business sector in USA did not help, he said. Hundreds of enterprise pri-

vatizations occurred while Asanaj was in charge of PAK's Board, but no important investor came in the country, except some Turkish and English ones - often with questionable backgrounds.

All privatizations took place in the municipalities with Albanian majority, but enterprises in Serb residents proved to be an impossible mission for PAK.

He also says that the privatisation process has been painful, and difficult during this political and diplomatic period for Kosovo. "This process occurred during the time when we had many political problems with Serbia and, in diplomatic terms, when many states still have not recognised Kosovo's independence," argues Asanaj.

He deflects many criticisms of PAK to its predecessor, the Kosovo Trust Agency.

But, according to him, those most satisfied with this process should be the workers, since there has been a remarkable acceleration going on with the disbursement of the 20 per cent which should be handed to them once a state-owned enterprise is privatised.

"There are no labour strikes in front of PAK's gate, while before workers have died waiting to receive their due," claimed Asanaj.

He denies the fact that because another board member, the head of The Union of Independent Trade Unions of Kosovo, BSPK, Haji Arifi, is his relative this constitutes nepotism.

"The BSPK head is my relative, but this is not nepotism, because I did not elect him - he was already on the board. Kosovo is one family and there are many cases when people are related," said Asanaj.

According to him, in the United States, where he lived and worked

for more than two decades, two brothers happened to be governors at the same time, while their father was a President of USA, George Bush Senior.

Asanaj emigrated to the US in 1985, where he was initially engaged as a worker in some construction companies, and in 1990 opened a company named "DD Interiors" in New York.

This company, according to Asanaj does interior decor of buildings and, he continues, in some cases its annual turnover exceeded 15 million dollars.

Precisely because of the work his business is in, he got the nickname "Dino the Painter".

## The Friendship with Thaci

In the USA, Asanaj was also the representative of the Provisional Government of Kosovo, which had established regular contacts with former political director of KLA and the current Prime Minister, Hashim Thaci.

He says that there were contacts before and after the Kosovo war, but, according to him, Thaci did not elect him as board chairman.

"The government proposed me, while the Assembly elected me as board chairman. However, I do not deny that the Prime Minister is a good friend of mine," said Asanaj, adding that he is a friend even of the former Prime Minister, Agim Ceku.

Naim Rrustemi, former MP, says that Asanaj is not honest in his public statements.

"The Prime Minister brought him into PAK, otherwise a man like Dino Asanaj would never have been put in charge of PAK," said Rrustemi.

According to Rrustemi, Asanaj does not have even the necessary education to lead PAK, which is responsible for privatisation of all



Dinon Asanaj, former head of the Privatisation Agency of Kosovo

social enterprises in the country.

"In his CV he brought to the Parliament during the selection of PAK Board election, he had only three lines written on it. It stated that he had completed the military school and nothing more than that," said Rrustemi, adding that MPs had found the lack of effort offensive.

However, Asanaj denies the statements of the former deputy Rrustemi, explaining that in 1983 he graduated from the Faculty of Defence in Belgrade. This answer did not convince Rrustemi.

"At that time when he was elected as a board chairman, Dino had finished only infantry high school, now, if he paid for a degree, that's another story," adds former deputy Rrustemi.

According to Astrit Gashi, editor of the daily Zeri, the appointment of Dino Asanaj as head of the Privatization Agency in 2008, was one of the worst acts of

Thaci's first Government.

"This appointment, which was among the first promised reforms by the government, was totally corrupt and criminal," Gashi wrote in an editorial.

Dino Asanaj has invested millions in Kosovo, where he built the Prishtina International Village, which is otherwise known as the "American Village".

He not only sold dozens of social enterprise for PAK, but also sold all the 110 houses built in this village, which were bought by high-ranking officials, various businessmen, famous artists and more.

This project cost 25 million. "The idea was to show that even here you can build America in miniature," says Asanaj.

It was believed that Dino's village would become a hub for diplomats. Instead, it became a powerful centre for the elite of the current government.

## Kosovo Has No Plan B for Euro Crisis

Kosovo's has not yet drawn up alternative proposals for a currency if the Euro collapses



By Lulzim Ahmeti

**K**osovo Central Bank does not believe the financial crisis hitting the Eurozone will lead to the failure of the common currency.

Its governor Gani Gerguri said that it had not drawn up

plans for an alternative currency in case of the zone's collapse.

The "euro remains one of the strongest [currencies] in the world," he said.

The governor told the newspaper that he is following developments in financial markets and that despite the problems it is still early to talk about the possibility of its failure.

"But if the debt crisis degen-

erates into the deepest economic crisis in Europe, it is likely that Kosovo will be affected through reduction of remittances, Kosovo exports and reducing foreign direct investment," he said.

Deputy Minister of Finance, Avdiu Ramadan, said: "We currently do not think that the euro will fail, but if this happens, Kosovo will consider us issuing another currency."

# New Tide of Redundancies Threatens Serbia

Worse lies ahead for the stricken economy if cash-strapped firms start laying off staff.



By Gordana Andric

Tens of thousands of Serbs are set to lose their jobs before the end of the year in a fresh wave of private-sector layoffs, according to union officials.

An estimated 30,000 people could be driven out of work because companies have difficulty paying their bills or go out of business altogether.

If the warnings prove to be true, the latest redundancies would create a significant addition to Serbia's jobless total, which is currently estimated to be at nearly 23 per cent of the population. Some 250,000 people have been swept out of work in the last three years alone.

The government has described the growing ranks of the unemployed as the biggest problem facing the domestic economy, and says it has launched several schemes that aim to create jobs.

However, analysts believe that Belgrade has limited means to aid the jobless at a point when its coffers are nearly empty and recession

is looming over much of Europe.

Serbia currently has the highest unemployment in southern and eastern Europe, after Bosnia and Macedonia. Unions say the jobless total is about to rise further.

The direst prediction comes from the Association of Free and Independent Unions, an umbrella body for workers in small industries. It says some 110,000 people are set to lose work in the next few months as a result of the bankruptcy of around 20,000 firms.

The figure is based on an estimate of five employees for each firm. Many Serbian firms are on the brink of bankruptcy and a new law says firms whose accounts have been frozen for the last two years must automatically be declared insolvent.

However, the figure of 110,000 is disputed by several bodies who say it is based on an exaggeration of the number of firms facing insolvency. They argue that fewer firms will be declared bankrupt as the most vulnerable have already gone out of business.

Ljubisav Orbovic, the president of one of Serbia's largest union groups, the Association of Independent Unions, says some 10,000 small and medium enter-

prises are likely to go bankrupt, causing 30,000 job losses. "Even this figure is huge," he says.

The more modest figure of 30,000 fresh unemployed by the end of 2011 was also confirmed by an international official who monitors the Serbian economy, and who asked to remain anonymous.

Dragoljub Rajic, a spokesman for the Association of Employers, refused to comment on these figures, saying only that the labour market would suffer further if the state failed to stimulate it.

Meanwhile, economy minister Nebojsa Ciric has said he is "worried" by the rise in redundancies, and has pointed to government job creation schemes as a partial solution.

Jurij Bajec, economic advisor to Prime Minister Mirko Cvetkovic, said the government had managed to boost employment through a programme that encouraged investment in deprived parts of the country, and another that had given firms fiscal incentives for hiring new staff.

However, he conceded that such schemes had limited impact on crises of the current scale. "These are only fire-fighting measures which do not resolve the problem systematically," he said.



A worker's protest in Novi Sad, Serbia

Over the next year, the government was hoping to ease the crisis by extending low-interest loans to businesses, he added. The state is also planning to start repaying debts to private contractors on time, increasing the amount of cash available to them.

Bajec cautioned however that serious structural reforms to the economy would have to wait until after the election next year.

According to analysts, Serbia's job market will only eventually recover through reform and sustained growth.

"Creating sustainable jobs is not easy," said Bogdan Lissovolik, a representative of the IMF in Belgrade. He argued that Serbia should try to transform itself into an export-oriented economy, rather than relying so heavily on imports.

Vladimir Grigorov, an economist of the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies, meanwhile said Serbia could only create more jobs if the economy grew at four to five per cent every year - roughly double the current rate.

# Nokia Shocks Romania by Closing Plant

Finnish company's decision to close its unit in Romania only a few years after it opened has stunned officials.



By Marian Chiriac

The telecommunications giant last Thursday announced plans to close down its unit in Jucu, near Cluj in central Transylvania, by the end of the year.

The planned closure will leave out of work the company's approximately 2,200 employees in the Cluj area, Nokia said in a press release, but they will be offered "comprehensive support programs" to make the transition less painful.

Nokia's decision took Romania by surprise. An extraordinary meeting of local officials from the Cluj area took place on Thursday in order to evaluate the social and economic impact of the move.

"We are extremely disappointed. First, the local budget will be affected, as the company was paying around 4 million lei [1 million euro] per year in different taxes. Furthermore, many people will lose their jobs," Dorel Pojar, the mayor of Jucu, said.

Romania's centre-right government tried to calm nerves following Nokia's announcement, saying it was based on strictly economic reasons.

"We're talking about globalization here. We're happy when foreign investors come, we're upset when they go," Communications Minister Valerian Vreme said.

He added that Nokia was likely to move production from Romania to neighbouring Moldova, where the price of labour is cheaper.

Ironically enough, Romania benefited from the same remorseless economic logic only a few years ago.

In January 2008 Nokia announced it was closing its plant at Bochum, in Germany, with 2,300 employees, and moving production to Romania, where costs were lower. The plant in Jucu, where the 1200 series of mobile phone was produced, opened in September that year.

The move created anger in Germany, while the European Union asked Romania to provide details of any subsidies it had granted to Nokia as part of the deal to open a plant in the Balkan country.

Now Romania is facing the same risk of multinational companies withdrawing their investments from the country as the crisis increases global competition.

"We have to be ready to face this risk, we must be prepared to attract new investments to the country," the Prime Minister, Emil Boc, said on



Nokia on its way out of Romania.

Wednesday, just one day before Nokia announced its closure plans.

In this regard, Boc said he would assume direct control of

the Romanian Centre for the Promotion of Trade and Foreign Investments, a governmental body tasked with wooing foreign investors.

# Albania Banks Register Spike in Bad Loans



By Besar Likmeta

Data published on Tuesday by Albania's Association of Banks say bad loans reached 18 per cent of the total credit portfolio in August, the highest level to date.

Compared with same period in 2010, non-performing loans increased by 33.5 per cent, from 13.5 per cent to 18 per cent of the total loan portfolio.

Meanwhile total bank assets increased by 12.9 per cent, from 961 billion lek (6.8 billion euro) in August 2010, to 1.078 trillion lek (7.64 billion euro) in August 2011.

Albanian banks weathered the global financial crisis in 2009 well, due to their low exposure to international markets. However, the aftershocks of the crisis in the local economy have slowed GDP growth rates, creating difficulties for local companies in repaying their loans.

From August 2010 until August 2011, retail deposit in Albanian banks grew by 16.62 per cent while corporate deposits grew by only 2.69 per cent, indicating a propensity among consumers to save, and accounting for weak demand for products and services in the local market.

Albania enjoyed strong economic growth averaging at close to 6 per cent per year in the past decade, before the global economic downturn hit the local economy in 2009.

The IMF downgraded Albania's GDP growth forecast for 2011 last Wednesday from 3.4 per cent to 2.5 per cent, amid concerns about the impact of the euro debt crisis and sluggish demand for goods and services.

# Macedonia Scraps 'Failed' Census

Authorities are postponing a new head count for at least six months after the ethnically-split commission in charge collectively quit on Tuesday.



By Sinisa Jakov Marusic

The nationwide operation had already begun on October 1 and was scheduled to wrap up on October 15.

The government of Nikola Gruevski declared the census annulled on late Wednesday proposing to the parliament to do the same.

"On the ground we have seen technical flaws and a lack of readiness to conduct a census within 15 days," Vice-prime minister Musa Xhaferi said, maintaining that a postponement "should not be seen as a catastrophic failure".

The commission resigned citing disagreements on basic rules for collecting data. Ethnic Albanian members of the commission wanted to count people who had been living abroad for more than a year and accept photocopies of ID cards as a basis for data.

The others were against this, citing the rules of the European Statistical Agency, EUROSTAT. These say that people who have lived abroad for more than a year should not be included in a national census but should be accounted for in the countries where they now live.

The process was marred by ethnic rows from the start. Ethnic Albanian parties and NGO's claimed the Macedonian majority on the commission had arranged



Inter-ethnic spats led to the census being scrapped

the criteria with a view to lowering the true number of Albanians in the country.

Ethnic Macedonian organizations and parties responded by claiming that Albanians wanted to artificially increase the size of their community by including people who had long since left the country.

"This was the best way to relax the situation on the ground," said Artan Grubi, one of the members of the commission. "The entire process was highly politicized," he added.

Grubi said muddles inside the commission confused the census takers who did not know what rules to follow.

Four days before the census was due to end, "a large number of the census-taking teams was not yet formed and in several large towns like Prilep, Bitola and Tetovo only about ten per cent of the census was carried out", Grubi added.

Speaking to Germany's Deutsche Welle on Wednesday, the head of the now defunct commission, Slobodanka Gievska, agreed that postponement of the census was the only option. She said collective resigna-

tion was a way to demonstrate collective responsibility for the failed process.

The statistical operation has already cost some 14 million euros. The government did not say how much of this money was already spent but estimates are that most of it was already used up.

The opposition Social Democrats accused the government of recklessness and of spending public money in vain.

EUROSTAT, which monitors the census, on Wednesday told Deutsche Welle that it will prepare a report and hand its recommendations to the government regarding the next head count.

Meanwhile, observers say all participants in the census are to blame for the fiasco.

"The parliament is to blame for passing a law on census that was susceptible to different readings, and the government is responsible for organizing the entire operation. But we must not forget all the other political factors that formed the [census] commission" says local political science professor and analyst Albert Musliu.

News in brief

## Grenades worth €25 million Fished Out of Adriatic Sea

Thousands of former Yugoslav army (JNA) grenades and several dozens air bombs have been "fished out" from the seas surrounding the Croatian Istrian peninsula dating back to the early 1990s.

Around 20 members of the Independent Squad for Underwater Action in Pula spent the early 90s diving for weapons that lined the bottom of the Adriatic Sea.

Miodrag Buzurovic was one of the sports divers who were part of the unit under the Maritime Command of the Northern Adriatic.

"No one knew whether the disposed grenades were linked together or whether they would explode when we moved them. Within four years, we pulled out more than 25 million worth of devices," Buzurovic said.

The grenades - thrown into the sea by the former Yugoslav Army (JNA) as soldiers left the army barracks in Istria at the beginning of the 1990s - were later restored for use.

Buzurovic warns that there are still unexploded devices from World War II at the bottom of the sea in Kvarner bay that sometimes end up in fishermen's nets.

## Dozens of Criminal Gangs Active in Montenegro

A leaked Montenegrin police document reportedly confirms the existence of 35 organised crime groups in Montenegro, most of which are allegedly actively involved in narcotics trafficking.

The police document includes an evaluation and mapping of the threat of organised crime, in accordance with EU standards, according to Tanjug.

According to Podgorica-based daily Vijesti, the police document - reportedly compiled together with Austrian experts - identifies narcotics trafficking, money laundering and arms trafficking as key threats and notes that Montenegro is a popular transit area for illegal trade due to its access to the sea and proximity to the so-called 'Balkan route'.

Police believe that money earned from the narcotics trade is later channelled through legal banking transactions and used by crime bosses and gang members to buy valuable real estate, like hotels and nightclubs, or to build luxurious buildings.

The document reportedly identifies the country's main centres of organised crime as the northern town of Rozaje, the capital Podgorica and the popular southern seaside resorts of Bar and Kotor.

## Bulgarian Minister Vows to End Public Sector Xmas Bonuses

Bulgaria's Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister, Simeon Djankov, has voiced his opposition to the practice of doling out end of the year bonuses for State servants, known as "the 13th salary."

Djankov spoke on Tuesday for the morning show of the TV channel bTV, where he vowed that while he is at the post, the employees of the State administration would not get the bonus.

"Even if there is money in the budget, there would not be a 13th salary - they work 12 months; they get 12-month pay," he declared.

Djankov reiterated what he said several days ago - no Christmas bonuses, but a possibility to give something to the retirees with the lowest pensions. He explained that it would all depend on how the recession of European economies is going to affect Bulgaria in October and November.

# Pride Organisers take Govt' Ban to Strasbourg

The legal basis for cancelling this year's Pride Parade will be put under the microscope by organizers as they seek to prove their case in the European Court of Human Rights.



By Siri Sollie

Goran Miletic, one of the organizers of Pride Parade, told Prishtina Insight on Monday that the organizing committee is preparing a case for the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

"Now we are gathering all the necessary documents and material for the application" said Miletic on Monday.

Before a case can be submitted to the European Court of Human Rights, proceedings before the national court must take place.

The organizers have therefore submitted an application to the Constitutional Court of Serbia to make a constitutional complaint.

In this way the Republic of Serbia is first given an opportunity to provide redress for the alleged violation at the national level.

Miletic doubts however that the Court will answer to their complaint as he explained that it has too many cases to deal with and will probably not have the capacity.

"Then we will insist on legal remedy in



Religious protesters at last year's Pride in Belgrade

Strasbourg", stated Miletic.

Serbia became the 45th Member State of the Council of Europe on 3 April 2003. As a consequence Serbia committed itself to adopt the Charter on Human Rights and Minorities at state and union level.

The rights and freedoms secured by the Convention include the right to life, the right to a fair hearing, the right to respect

for private and family life, freedom of expression, freedom of thought, conscience and religion and the protection of property.

The European Court of Justice applies the European Convention on Human Rights and its task is to ensure that States respect the rights and guarantees set out in the Convention.

# Census Boycott Falls Flat in Serbia's Muslim Heartland

Most people in the southwest Sandzak region seem to be giving the local imam's call to ignore the national head count a wide berth.



By Zoran Maksimovic,  
Novi Pazar

“What they failed to do with genocide, they're trying to do by falsifying the number of Bosniaks. The response is to boycott of census.”

This is the stark message broadcast on local privately owned TV stations in Serbia's mainly Bosniak [Muslim] Sandzak region, calling on locals to boycott the national census.

For days, local TV in the southwest region on the border of Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia has been dominated by arguments on whether to participate in the census, which started on October 1.

On Sandzak and Jedinstvo TV, stations under the direct control of a charismatic local mufti, Muamer Zukorlic, the message is: don't take part.

The opinions are the exact opposite on the regional TV run by the city of Novi Pazar, the largest town in the area.

In Novi Pazar and other Sandzak towns, graffiti plastering the walls and posters calling for a boycott make it look as if the country is heading into a general election.

Local clergy have added to the furore. A day before the census started, many imams told their flocks at Sunday prayers not to take part in the count.

Census takers are worried. Rahim Dzankovic, one of 360 local census staff, said he initially felt anxious about his reception, not knowing how he would be received on the doorstep.

In the event, everything went smoothly when he started off in Novi Pazar's Boska Buhe street where he met the Lukic (Bosniaks) and Stupljanin (Serbs) families.

Both families told Prishtina Insight they saw it was their civic duty to take part.

In his first two days, when Dzankovic processed the forms of about a dozen families, not

one had refused to take part.

“They all greeted me in the kindest possible way and I did my job as planned,” he said. “But this is only the beginning, and we have two more weeks to go”.

His colleague, Mirza Kalic, had a similar experience and said people in Novi Pazar treated the census takers as their guests.

“The people we've processed so far were fine and answered all the questions,” Kalic said. “We didn't have any problems.”

Sefo Plojovic, a Bosniak, told Prishtina Insight that his family was going to take part in the head count.

“The census takers don't take much time, although there are many questions, and it's my duty [to take part] and it should be the duty of all of us,” he said.

According to the local census commission in Novi Pazar, very few people in the area had heeded the boycott call so far.

Turning to figures, the deputy president of the census commission in Novi Pazar, Sulejman Nicevic, said only 55 of the 7,500 persons who took part on day one had refused

to answer the questions.

“And half of those [the 55] did not refuse to take part categorically, they just sought more time to think about it or consult someone,” Nicevic added.

Nicevic said this showed that no one could manipulate the community, going to describe Zukorlic's boycott as a fiasco.

Government minister Rasim Ljajic, a Bosniak from Sandzak, made a similar optimistic assessment.

Based on the first four hours' work on the census, during which only one boycott was registered, it appeared that the overwhelming majority of Bosniaks intended to take part in the census, he said. “Citizens have showed their political maturity,” he added.

But Sandzak's pro-boycott camp has not hoisted the white flag of surrender just yet.

The Bosniak National Council, a local community body that is close to Zukorlic, insists that many people have in fact refused to take part in the census.

S e a d



Mufti Muamer Zukorlic, who has called on Bosniaks not to take part in the census.

Sacirovic, one of Zukorlic's associates, said that all “true Bosniak patriots” were boycotting the census.

Sacirovic said the true scale of the boycott would become clear in a few days. He predicted that in accordance with the call of the Bosniak National Council, which Belgrade does not recognise, a large number of Sandzak residents had boycotted the count.

“The census won't have any legitimacy regardless of the response,” Sacirovic predicted.

The Bosniak National Council said it was against the census mainly because the forms were written exclusively in Cyrillic, a script that Bosniaks do not use

and with which they are not all

familiar. Bosniaks, like Croats and Albanians, use the Latin alphabet.

Sacirovic said the exclusive use of Cyrillic showed that the authorities in Belgrade wanted to downplay the number of Bosniaks in Serbia.

They wanted to “rig the number of Bosniaks and Muslims, reducing their numbers”, he said. The census aimed to “confuse them about their national, religious and linguistic identity”.

Local NGOs have described the boycott call as counterproductive, saying it could provide an alibi for Belgrade to marginalise their community.

“Those who call on Bosniaks not to take part in the census are working against the community,” the president of the Sandzak Committee for Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms, Semiha Kacar, said.

“The smaller the number of minorities, the more it suits the state, because that way it will have less obligations to them,” Kacar added.

The number of local schools, hospitals, homes, and roads that the government is obliged to supply the region depends on establishing the exact size of the population, she continued.

Officials in Brussels have made similar warnings. The head of the EU delegation in Serbia, Vincent Deger, said that “without precise data, the European Union cannot help underdeveloped areas”.



A strange hotel in Novi Pazar, the 'capital' of the Sandzak region, home to most of Serbia's Muslims, who have been urged not to take part in the census by clerics.

# Albania Struggles To Curb Sex-Selective Abortions

Doctors say they can do little to stop women from aborting baby girls while the dominant culture still places such a premium on having male heirs.



By Elira Çanga

**R**ajmonda a 34-year-old mother of two young girls, is expecting another child. Anxious to know the sex of her baby she waits in line in a corridor of the maternity ward of Tirana's Koço Glozheni hospital.

"My husband and I are desperately hoping for a boy because we have two girls already," Rajmonda says. If the baby is a girl she has already made up her mind to have an abortion. "I wish we could find a solution, but we can't keep her [a girl]," Rajmonda says.

Since Albania legalized abortion two decades ago, aborting female fetuses has become commonplace, distorting the natural sex ratio at birth.

Boys now outnumber girls by 112 to 100, a gap that was not present before abortions became lawful in 1991.

According to a 2005 UNDP National Human Development report, some Albanian gynecological clinics estimated that up to 60 per cent of abortions were gender-selective.

"Albanian families traditionally have favoured boys over girls for two main reasons: the inheritance of the family name and the prospect of boys growing up to become breadwinners," the report notes.

Highlighting a concern that prenatal sex selection had reached "worrying proportions", the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, PACE, on Monday asked the Tirana authorities to "investi-

gate the causes and reasons behind skewed sex ratios at birth".

With a resolution adopted based on a report by Swiss MP Doris Stump, the CoE calls on Albania to "support training for medical staff on prenatal sex selection and its harmful consequences" and "step up their efforts to raise the status of women in society".

The resolution calls for the collection of reliable data about sex ratios at birth, including in different areas the country.

The Assembly called on Tirana to outlaw sex selection in the context of assisted reproduction technologies and legal abortion, except when it is justified to avoid a serious hereditary disease.

But the resolution stopped short of adopting a directive that would have called for a ban on the disclosure by doctors of the baby's sex during pregnancy, as a previous draft had suggested.

According to Albania's 2002 law on for reproductive health, the use of reproductive technology to provide for sex-selective abortions is not permitted.

However, despite the law, doctors say gender selective abortions are commonplace in Albanian hospitals, and the number of such abortions performed in private clinics could be even larger.

Feodor Kallajxhi, a gynecologist and deputy director of the Koço Glozheni maternity hospital in Tirana, said two sex-selective abortions are performed in his ward every month on average.

Kallajxhi underlines that the number of sex-selective abortions in Tirana could be much larger because the bulk of these procedures take place in private clinics.

"In a conservative society like ours, peo-



A scan of a 21-week-old baby

ple want male heirs," Dr Kallajxhi said. "For us it's a problem because the sex of the baby is only known after 16 or 17 weeks of the pregnancy, after which abortion is illegal," he added.

According to Dr Kallajxhi, even if hospital doctors refuse to disclose the sex of fetuses to parents during pregnancy it won't make a difference because it won't stop them from finding out the results in one of the many private clinics in Tirana and elsewhere.

"It's very difficult to hide the sex of the baby when the parents are keen to know it," Dr Kallajxhi said. "At the same time it's equally difficult to change the mind of mothers who want an abortion because of the baby's sex," he added.

Aida Kryekurti, a clinical psychologist at

the same hospital, agrees, arguing that doctors can do little to convince women, particularly from rural areas where patriarchal structures are the rule, to opt against sex-selective abortions.

"We advise mothers to think hard about their decision, and some change their mind," Kryekurti said. "But others are under such pressure from their families to have a baby boy that their decisions are forced," Kryekurti added.

According to Kryekurti, abortion itself, for whatever reason, is a traumatic experience for mothers – and is even worse in the case of sex-selective abortions.

But, she continued, "Women often arrive with their minds made up, and surrounded by relatives who do not allow a psychologist to be present."



# Old Yugoslavia Rediscovered

Yugoslavia may be dead and gone as a political construct - but as a cultural space it has never been more alive.



By Andrej Klemencic

Only a decade ago the theatre ensembles of the former Yugoslavia were scarcely on speaking terms - the legacy of grim years of warfare between Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo.

Fast forward to today and actors and directors from once war-strangled countries not only talk to one another but hug and cry at theatre festivals.

There is a newfound confidence about tackling the issue of the region's wars - together.

In the 1990s, the conflict was not ignored. But it was either addressed in highly brutal terms in films such as Srdjan Dragojevic's *Pretty Village*, *Pretty Flame* or *Wounds*, or addressed

with excessive delicacy, examples of this being the plays of Dusan Jovanovic.

In his trilogy from mid 1990's, the then still ongoing war merely sneaked into Greek tragedy, reminding only the most sensitive audience members of what was going on just miles away.

This year's Bitef theatre festival in Belgrade brought together hundreds of actors, directors, writers and producers from throughout the former Yugoslavia, raising hopes of a renaissance of a common Yugoslav cultural space and of a marked rise in joint, cross-border productions. Many say it is the only way theatre and film can hope to survive.

Kokan Mladenovic, director of Belgrade's Atelje 212 theatre, believes productions made within a single country have no future.

"I'm convinced that in years to come there won't be a single significant theatre production that

won't be a co-production between at least two former Yugoslav republics," he says.

"Music, films and TV series have taught us that a common market makes sense. Today you can't make a film or series counting only on viewers from one country."

Mladenovic's own theatre has been in the forefront of the new wave of productions tackling Yugoslav themes head-on.

Its 2010/2011 programme features a season provocatively entitled "NEXT YU".

"Everyone can say 'Ex-Yu', but very few dare say 'Next-Yu'," Mladenovic jests.

"But the feedback we got from the season shows that the idea of Yugoslavia is very much alive," he continues.

"People in the theatre world feel claustrophobic, stuck in these cultural provinces created by the break-apart [of the old state]," he

explains.

"In these mini-markets everyone is big and everyone can easily get awards. That's not quality."

Theatre scholar and Bitef programme manager Jovan Cirilov agrees heartily.

"Right-wingers will always oppose such friendships and creativity ... [but] such opponents care little about culture as such," he maintains. "What they don't want to do is relinquish their feuds."

Cirilov believes passionately in the continued necessity of a shared theatre "space" between the nations of former Yugoslavia, noting that a "continuity of theatre expression has survived in these countries despite the harshest conditions imaginable."

He takes pride in the fact that seven of the nine regional shows at this year's Bitef were co-productions between at least two former Yugoslav republics.

"Yugoslavia exists, not as a nostalgic term, but in terms of cultural cooperation between the South Slavic nations," Cirilov adds.

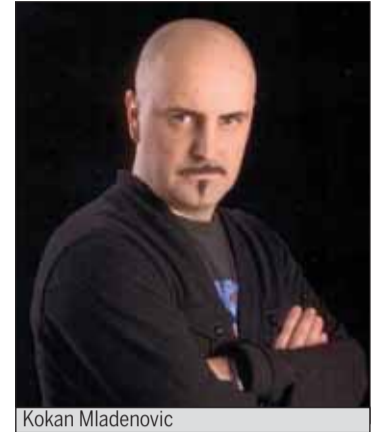
Dramatist Borka Pavicevic of the Belgrade Centre for Cultural Decontamination, which has held many events on Yugoslav topics, says these issues need to be addressed openly.

"First, there is no such thing as Ex-Yugoslavia, just as there is no Ex-Austria-Hungary," she opines.

Pavicevic says theatre must mirror reality and work hand in hand with democratic processes in the region.

"Critical thought is something that can bring democracy to these lands," she maintains. "First to each country individually, then to all of us together."

But not everyone is ready to hear the new message, according to Boris Lijesevic, director of Bitef's Grand Prix winner, the Sarajevo-Belgrade co-production *Elijahova stolica* ["Elijah's



Kokan Mladenovic

Chair"].

Prior to Bitef the show received "not a single written review in Serbia," the director notes. "Until Bitef, our production was not invited to a single festival in Serbia. This was the first time."

*Elijah's Chair* is about a man from Vienna who on his 50th birthday discovers that his father was not a Nazi officer, as he had thought, but a Jew from Sarajevo.

He goes to Sarajevo at the height of the siege in 1992, looking for his father. The show features a monologue by female lead Alma, played by Maja Izetbegovic, who speaks directly to the audience about the city's suffering under the Bosnian Serb siege.

"When we see how people in Serbia react to this, it is clear that this piece is addressing a topic that hasn't been tackled in the country for 20 years," Lijesevic says. "But one of the key conditions for regional re-integration to happen is to speak about these things."

A 2006 Bosnian film, *Grbavica*, about raped women from the Serb-held sector of Sarajevo, saw no regular theatre distribution in Serbia, he continues.

"Some people don't want other people to see it. That kind of thing just makes me want to deal even more with regional, Yugoslav topics," Lijesevic concludes.

Serbia is not alone in stopping its ears to uncomfortable, disturbing reminders of the recent past.



Inside the Bitef theatre.

## 'Yugoslavia still exists as a common culture'

Jovan Cirilov, the director of Bitef, on how talk of Yugoslavia is not mere nostalgia for a former political entity but recognition of a vibrant cultural reality.



By Andrej Klemencic

**Q:** A lot of the shows at this year's Bitef involved artists from two or more former Yugoslav republics. What made you focus on Yugoslav issues?

A: We did not want to focus on the region just to show that that such a focus is necessary but to present quality shows to the audience.

Of nine regional shows at this year's Bitef, only two are made within only one former Yugoslav republic.

All the others are co-operations between two or more republics. Those seven productions show that Yugoslavia exists, not as

nostalgia but as need for cultural cooperation between the Southern Slavic nations.

**Q:** Is this merely a trend or is it some kind of generic need among people that theatre builds on?

A: It is the latter. This need goes very deep indeed. Many things took place in the recent history of the region but this need for common culture remained and is currently running very strong.

**Q:** Bitef in the 1960s and 1970s always had to balance carefully between a desire to be open and the reality of Yugoslavia. The current political climate does not favour re-integration tendencies, even in culture. Might the general climate in future negatively affect these processes, as it did during the Balkan wars?

A: Right-wingers will always oppose friendships and creativity between the nations of the region. Such opponents care

little about culture as such. What they do not want to do is to relinquish their feuds.

If we look at things from an outsider's perspective, I would say that the top EU politicians would want all the Balkan countries in the EU and with good cooperation between them. Europe is based on integration.

Everyone loses part of their sovereignty, but they gain enormously. The most significant gain is the guarantee that there will be no more wars. What we had until now is that every generation in Yugoslavia experienced at least two wars. I believe this generation will not experience war.

**Q:** You observed Yugoslav theatre when it was taking place within one country and now, when it is represented by several countries. What do you see when you compare the two?

A: I would like to say something optimistic. Culture and art are stronger and



Jovan Cirilov

deeper than material benefits and needs. There is a continuity of theatre expression that has survived in these countries despite the harshest of conditions imaginable. That is its strength.

People will defend culture, and fight for it from prisons. We have strength and we can make an impact. We should not be ashamed to show that.

This article is funded under the BICCED project, supported by the Swiss Cultural Programme.

# Itself on Stage

According to Atelje 212's Mladenovic, the Croatian embassy in Belgrade first said it would help with - but then pulled out of - a production of *Gospoda Glembajevi* ["The Glembays[Family]"] by the famous Croatian writer Miroslav Krleza.

"That production was the highlight of the NEXT YU season. The embassy initially said it would contribute but then dropped the project once they learned that it was going to be part of a season with a title like that," he says.

In the old Yugoslavia, there was an unspoken arrangement between the theatres of Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana whereby the capital dealt with avant-garde and large productions, Zagreb handled more classical topics and Ljubljana staged experimental theatre.

Today those dividing lines have gone, as each country has had to develop these parallels within its own theatre space.

While most of the region's significant actors and directors still come from those three cities, writers from Bosnia have come to the fore because of their direct experience of the war - that being the most relevant topic that Yugoslav theatre can offer to a foreign viewer.

Igor Stiks, Sarajevo-born author of *Elijah's Chair*, on which the play is based, says regional authors sometimes face a challenge of being locked into writing about war themes alone.

"Some authors have chosen to deal with that single topic," he notes, "but I hope it will be possible for me to include topics from my ten years of life spent abroad."

"Elijah's Chair is not just a novel about



Novelist Igor Stiks

the war in Sarajevo and not just a novel about the consequences of the Yugoslav wars," he explains.

"What I wanted to achieve is for a German or a French reader to understand that this war happened to them, too, not just to some exotic tribes of the Balkans."

Sarajevo actor Maja Izetbegovic, the lead in *Elijah's Chair*, is aware of the risk of being typecast in war-related pieces but believes such plays are still needed for healing processes to take place.

"I'm emotionally drained after playing these shows. I often say to myself: 'Enough,'" she says.

"When will we stop talking about the war, the break-up and the transition?" she asks. "But such are the times we still live in, and we have to address the issues of our time."

While Sarajevo stood on the margins of the Yugoslav theatre world, lacking an established tradition of its own, Slovenia was on another kind of margin, culturally at a distance from the rest of Yugoslavia.

This was not only because of its Austro-Hungarian heritage - shared with Croatia - but because Slovenes played little part in the

Balkan conflicts of the past centuries.

Slovene director Dusan Jovanovic, one of the key theatre figures of former Yugoslavia, agrees that Slovenia's culture scene sees Yugoslav matters through different lenses, and so sees renewed cultural cooperation outside of any political context.

"Slovenia's story was somewhat different to that of [the rest of] Yugoslavia," he recalls. "That's why it was perhaps easier for Slovenia to break ties to the other former republics."

"But things have changed now. I do not see this as some kind of re-Yugoslav-ization, because that expression would have political connotations and such connotations are absurd now."

"From the wreckage of the former country we have now many new countries, each of which has its own perspective."

"For a long time Slovenia refused to make tight cultural bonds to the rest of the region but in the last ten years, this has changed."

He dates the beginning of this new era of cooperation back to the 2000 visit to Belgrade of the Drama Ljubljana, which then continued in a series of exchanges.

"Intellectual and theatre bonds have become very vibrant, which stimulates Slovenian theatre," he concludes.

Actor Dragica Potocnjak, from the Slovensko mladinsko gledališče [Slovene Youth theatre] of Ljubljana, which presented "Damned Be the Traitor of his Homeland" [a verse from the old Yugoslav national anthem] at this year's Bitef, says she contemplated leaving the stage for good when the country fell apart.



The Bitef theatre, home to the festival.

"It felt wrong that someone was narrowing down our creative and living space. At that time I lost my faith in theatre and I wanted to end my career," she recalls.

She is not the only Slovene actor yearning for a broader stage. Primoz Bežjak, who acts in the same play, says he wishes he could emulate colleagues from days of Yugoslavia "who've shot films and had an opportunity to perform on a regular basis on stage in all the republics of Yugoslavia".

*This article is funded under the BICCED project, supported by the Swiss Cultural Programme.*

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# Kosovo at Heart of Growing Chinese-Serbia Ties

Fears of breakaway "provinces" and harsh "lessons learned" from the Kosovo conflict are two areas that have brought Beijing and Belgrade closer together, and led to growing military cooperation.



By Milena Miletic

A Chinese army delegation led by General Xu Caihou visited Belgrade on September 8, 9 and 10, donating 2.4 million US dollars' worth of equipment for military hospitals.

China's latest donation to the Serbian military, the fourth in recent years, has highlighted Beijing's strategic interest in a country that it sees as a future EU member state.

Dragan Sutanovac, Serbia's defence minister, and the Chinese general, signed a protocol indicating their interest in future long-term cooperation. The donation, meanwhile, makes China one of Serbia's top military donors, head to head with the US and Norway.

Serbian diplomats and military officials hope closer ties with the Far Eastern giant can bring about a revival of the kind of joint initiatives in weapons and military equipment that halted in the Nineties, when Yugoslavia collapsed.

Closer ties will also enable Serbia to get hold of new technology and know how, train its military staff in China and improve its capacities for peacekeeping operations.

Serbia knows it cannot offer much to China in return and accepts that China's interests in increasing its access to Europe lies in the background of the ongoing cooperation.

China is casting ambitious eyes at the EU market to which it has had difficulties entering. It hopes that if and when Serbia joins the EU, it will have a new portal into the continent.

Serbia, which has unsolved issues with Kosovo over its unilat-

eral declaration of independence in 2008, meanwhile, finds in China a loyal diplomatic partner, which regularly votes in favour of Serbia at UN Security Council meetings.

China restarted military donations to Serbia in 2005 when the first agreement was signed between the defence ministries of the two countries.

Since then training and education of the officers has been ongoing - mostly Serbs going to Chinese military schools, although recently a few Chinese officers started attending Serbian highest military schools.

Colonel Predrag Kraljevic, of the Defence Ministry's Department for International Military Cooperation, says 24 Serbian officers have now attended courses in China's highest military schools.

One Chinese officer has completed his army education in Serbia and two are currently being educated there. Another five Serbian officers went to China for schooling last month, he explained.

Turning to earlier Chinese military donations, Col Kraljevic said there had been three in recent years, worth around half a million euros each.

"Finally, there is this last one, amounting to 1.8 million euros for medical equipment," he said.

In another sign of warming relations, a strategic partnership agreement was signed in 2009 by the Serbian and Chinese Presidents, Boris Tadic and Hu Jintao, making Serbia one of only five strategic country-partners of China in the world.

Last August, a Serbian defence delegation, led by Sutanovac, visited China for further talks on military economic cooperation. During the visit he described China as a country with "huge experience in training and educating", adding: "But our military hospitals are among the best in the world and we

sincerely believe we can share that experience with China."

Chinese officials showed off their J-10 fighter jets, voicing interest in becoming a possible supplier to Serbia once it was ready to buy new planes.

Military expert Aleksandar Radic believes the Chinese would rather sell Serbia an alternative, the JF-17, their improved, version of the Russian MiG 21, which is cheaper than the J-10.

Serbia had planned to open a tender for the purchase of new fighter jets this year, but the economic crisis has delayed the plan.

What concerns Serbia is how little it can offer in return. Referring to China, "Their economic progress is such that it's a big question what we can sell to them," Predrag Simic, political science professor and specialist, says.

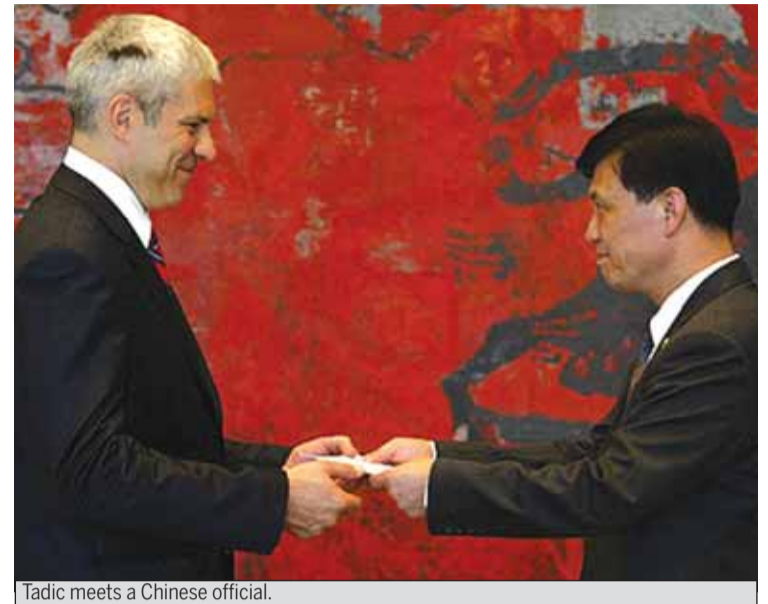
Philip Ejodus, from Belgrade's School for Security Studies, says there is always a nagging concern in relations between small countries that don't have much to offer and big powers: what strings are attached?

Politics and economics are what are pushing the two countries towards each other, Simic says, mainly concerning questions about territorial integrity and the EU.

Both China and Serbia have territorial "issues", Serbia with its breakaway former province of Kosovo and China with its own restive provinces. "Tibet and Xinjiang are their words for 'Kosovo'," Simic says.

Since NATO forced Serbia out of Kosovo in 1999, and since most EU countries then recognized its independence, China has been more alert to potential threats to its own provinces.

The Kosovo issue "threatens to set a precedent for China's 56 recognised national minorities that occupy more than half of the coun-



Tadic meets a Chinese official.

try's territory," Antoaneta Bezlova, a political analyst, wrote several years ago.

The conflict in Kosovo was yet another reason for China to be interested in Serbian war experience and speed up development of new defence strategies and invest more in military capacities.

According to the January 18th, 2011 issue of Stratfor, the Geopolitical Institute, in its special report on China's military power: "The Chinese fear a potential US blockade of their coast. While this may not seem a likely scenario, the Chinese look at their strategic vulnerability, at their rising power and at the US history of thwarting regional powers, and they see themselves as clearly at risk."

Aleksandar Radic says such perceived threats have prompted the Chinese to make huge changes and increase the capacity of their army.

"Although China always had a strong force to respond to internal threats, the war in Kosovo, in 1999 pushed them toward further improvements," he said.

"The experience of using air power in conflicts such as Kosovo, and the way it was used, made them develop their airforce and build new fighter aircrafts much faster."

Meanwhile, Predrag Simic says Chinese want to open up the European market, and, because they see Serbia as a future part of EU, "we have certain importance, but only in political way."

"They believe that the EU doesn't want them [the Chinese] close, even more, that they want them totally out," he added.

Building ties to China dovetails with Serbia's chosen foreign policy of relying on four so-called "pillars", namely Russia, China, the EU and the US, rather than relying exclusively on an alliance with the EU and NATO.

Ognjen Pribicevic, a diplomat and political analyst, defends the four-pillar policy.

"Each small country needs and searches for as many strong partners as it can get," he says. "Building partnerships with powers like China and Russia while maintaining as good relations as possible with the US and heading toward the EU, is a good idea."

Pribicevic prefers a more realistic approach to foreign policy. "It is very hard for any small country to

maintain such a policy in the long term," he warns.

"Our limits should be the EU and neighbouring countries, and special relations with the regions of countries like Italy, Austria, Germany," he added.

But Pribicevic says a strategic partnership with China does not conflict with Serbia's EU goals: "Our accession to the EU and building partnership with China are not in opposition to one another."

Philip Ejodus sees potential problems in burgeoning military ties. "Some are speaking about exports of guns and military equipment but we should remember that the EU put an embargo on the export of weapons to China after the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre," he said.

"Although there are reports that this policy is being reconsidered, it is still official EU policy," Ejodus added.

## A history of ups and downs

Serbia's relations with China have fluctuated over the decades, reflecting wider changes in relations between the then Yugoslavia and Beijing.

Following Yugoslavia's break with the Soviet Union in 1948, the Chinese leader, Zhou Enlai, proposed that the two countries form a new Communist block without Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact.

But warming ties in the 1950s plummeted in the turbulence of the mid-1960s, when China underwent the so-called Cultural Revolution. Yugoslav embassy staff were physically abused by Maoist demonstrators at the time.

By the Seventies, matters had improved once again and Yugoslavia's military industry was producing parts for China's T-50 tanks.

In the 1980s the two countries established a joint company in China to develop to produce weapons and equipment, selling them on to third countries. The dissolution of Yugoslavia terminated this cooperation.

In the Nineties Serbia opened two branches of the state companies Jugoimport and Hemofarm in China. These failed, however, Predrag Simic said, because the Chinese learned quickly and took over Serbian technology, making the companies redundant.



# Toxic Toys on Sale in Kosovo

Toys banned by the European Union because they are a danger to children are widely on sale in Kosovo, an investigation by Prishtina Insight can reveal.



By Trinka Kurti

Importers and shop owners in Kosovo are mostly ignorant of the EU's warning system for dangerous products and some are even undisturbed that they are selling dangerous toys to children.

Prishtina Insight tested a number of children's toys bought from stores in Kosovo against the EU's online warning system.

In a short survey of shops, the newspaper discovered four toys which were banned from entering the European Union but on sale in Kosovo.

While Kosovo is not part of the EU, its law on the protection of consumers stipulates that goods should comply with all European Union directives and obliges the seller to cooperate with associations abroad to protect the consumers.

But interviews with importers and major retailers have revealed that they are unaware of the European Commission's Rapid Alert System for Non-Food Products, RAPEX, and sometimes disinterested in the safety of their products.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry admitted that their inspectors were too stretched to ensure proper checks, but said they did regularly consult RAPEX.

"Beautiful Girl", made in China, which comes with a doll and a toy mobile phone, is banned in the EU because the toy makes sounds which exceed the legal limit of 80 decibels and also contains the chemical dactyl hexyls, DHHP, which affects hormone production.

The bookstore "Sara" in Prishtina sells figurines from the 'Gormiti' series, although they are banned in the EU due to their harmful content.

Pens that are sold under the name "Ben 10" are capable of



A scan of a 21-week-old baby



burning the child because a faulty battery heats the handle to a temperature of 99.3 degrees within 4 minutes. They are sold in the shop "Idea-A" in the Lesna shopping centre, Prishtina.

The president of Kosovo Consumer Association, Konsumator, Selatin Kacaniku, said there were inadequate controls on products. "In Kosovo not even baby dummies are controlled. Toys should be subject to extra checks as they could have long-lasting effects," he said.

"Customs controls on these products are carried out only on the basis of the documents that the manufacturers show," Kacaniku added.

One of Kosovo's largest

importers of toys, the owner of the company 'Vardem' agrees that more controls are needed. "It's simple - checks are done based on the declarations of the producers," owner Eroll Jusufi added.

In Vardem company's warehouses there are products from companies which have produced harmful toys according to the RAPEX list, but Jusufi insists that all his products fulfil EU standards.

"I have never heard of RAPEX, but all the products I import meet European standards," he said, pointing to the imported documents.

Other importers contacted by Prishtina Insight were dismissive of concerns raised on the dangers

posed by their products.

Ibrahim Sekiraqa, director of MAXI supermarkets, one of the country's biggest chains, said he had never heard of the RAPEX system.

"I can tell you that we are very far away from Europe in many ways, so I do not expect to begin applying the laws that are not ours, especially regarding toys," said Sekiraqa.

He added that no one from the authorities had stopped him from importing products, therefore he does not see why he should remove dangerous products from the market.

"Even so, I think that none of the products that can be bought in MAXI supermarkets are harmful," he said.

Gafurr Blakqori from Batex importing company says that customs are doing enough to prevent hazardous goods entering.

"All goods are controlled by customs," he said. "If they were banned or contained poisons they

would not have gone through easily."

Despite the fact that the importers do not feel obliged to respect the principles of the European Union, Kosovo law should still protect the consumer.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry reject the idea that they are not doing enough to inspect the quality of products.

Izer Arifi, the chairman of the Council for Consumer Protection, admits that harmful products can be found on the market. "This office regularly consults with RAPEX, the European Commission's warning system for non-food products; therefore to a large extent the protection of harmful products is covered," he said.

But they do admit that their resources are limited. "These resources are currently quite limited, but we have prioritised to progress with the service and equipments for inspection," he said.

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# Where to pick up Prishtina Insight?

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

## 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-vict-  
ory.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 dinners 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 wont 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*



## Olive Tapas Bar

After many tears running tapas bars in England and Germany, as well as opening the first of its kind in Prishtina, these guys no their trade. Try to delicious tapas and while away on afternoon on the moorish sangria. Tapas and main courses include rocket salad, mixed cheese, Spanish tortilla, omelet with vegetables and potatoes and deep fried calamari.

*Open Monday to Saturday  
7 am until 12 pm  
Olive Tapas Bar  
St.Fehmi Agani 48/1  
Tel. +381 38 321 132  
Cell +377 44 620 414  
olivetapasbar@gmail.com*



## National Theatre of Kosovo

**Friday, October 14, 2011 8 pm**

"Zjarri Miqësor" [Friendly Fire]

A Balley play, with a choreography from Arthur Kiggeleyn, composer Christian Meyer.

The same play will be repeated on Thursday, October 20, 2011 8 pm

**Saturday, October 15, 2011 8 pm**

"Përgjuesi" [The Listener]

Stand-up Comedy with Adem Mikullovc, Skena e Vogël [Small Scene]

The same Play will be repeated on Saturday, October 22, 2011 8 pm

**Monday, October 17, 2011 8 pm**

"Duke pritur Godonë" [Waiting For Godot]

Drama, writer- Samuel Beckett, director- Drita Begolli

The same play will be repeated on Tuesday, October 18, 2011 8 pm

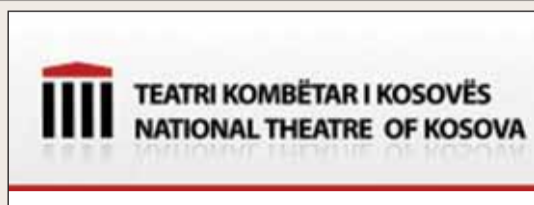
Two tramps are waiting by a sickly looking tree for the arrival of Godot. They quarrel, make up, contemplate suicide, try to sleep, eat a carrot and gnaw on some chicken bones. Two other characters appear, a master and a slave, who perform a grotesque scene in the middle of the play. A young boy arrives to say that Godot will not come today, but that he will come tomorrow. But will he?

**Friday, October 21, 2011 8 pm**

"Nata e Helverit" [Helver's Night]

Play, writer- Ingmar Villqist, director- Altin Basha

Ingmar Villqist's play starts with the sounds of jackboots marching, windows are being broken, a mob is baying. Although details are left deliberately imprecise, we are clearly deep in the nightmare of the twentieth century. When young Helver bursts in at dinnertime, Carla - the mother who is not a mother - is disturbed to see that he has entered into the hysteria of the streets. He describes with boyish enthusiasm what they did to 'that little shop' and the 'filthy scum' who worked in it. He proudly shows off his banner, his beret and badge. Villqist, one of Poland's leading playwrights, must know that this is familiar territory, and he leads us on an ingenious route through his themes of brutality, intolerance and despair. What



starts of general and historical, and diverts into absurdist power games between the elder woman and the young boy, eventually narrowing down its focus to give us an individual end to two stories. It is a tight, dark play with no room for wooliness or emotional bulldozing.

**Sunday, October 23, 2011 8 pm**

"Zhurma Show Awards 2011"

Traditional musical spectacle, 7th Edition

**Monday, October 24, 2011 8 pm**

"Fizikanët" [Physicists]

From Fruederich Durrenmatt, director- Isë Qosja  
The same Play will be repeated on Tuesday, October 25, 2011 8 pm

**The Physicists**, is a satirical drama often recognised as the most impressive yet most easily understood work of the Swiss writer Friedrich Dürrenmatt. Informed by the Second World War and the many recent advances in science and nuclear technology, the play deals with questions of scientific ethics and mankind's ability to handle its intellectual responsibilities.

The story is set in the drawing room of the oldest building in the Les Cerisiers sanatorium, an idyllic home for the mentally ill, run by famed psychiatrist Mathilde von Zahnd. This drawing room connects to three sick rooms each of which is inhabited by a single mentally ill patient. These three men, all physicists by trade, are permitted the use of the drawing room, where they are periodically monitored by the female nurses that are charged with their care.

**Wednesday, October 26, 2011 8 pm**

"Harmonia" exhibition to be held at the American University in Kosovo

[Harmony]  
Exhibition on cultural heritage, AUK

**Thursday, October 27, 2011 8 pm**

"Balloja e Diplomes" [the Degree Ball]

Ballet, choreograph- Ilir Kerni, composer- Johann Strauss

## Theatre ODA

**Friday October 28, 2011**

Have you heard about "Jam per [me ble] Lopen" ("Jam for the cow")? It is the story of a bunch of young people who wanted to help a family in need, and they succeeded. One night of varied artists performing free of charge gathered more than enough money to buy a cow and make a one family in Kosovo very happy. Since then, it became a tradition, and it will also take place this year, October 30, 2010 in Theater Oda.

**From Sunday, October 15, 2011**

Ethnological museum - Photography exhibition

The British Embassy, in conjunction with The Ideas Partnership and the Ethnological Museum in Prishtina, is pleased to host an exhibition of photographs taken by a British student visiting Kosovo in 1956.

King's College Cambridge student Neil Robinson visited Kosovo on a study trip more than half a century ago and the photographs he took are stunning glimpses of life in Kosovo as it then was. They represent an extraordinary story of British-Kosovo connections.

The 35 photographs found their way back to Kosovo when Neil's widow, Judith, heard about the Ethnological Museum in Pristina through a BBC



Radio 4 interview with Elizabeth Gowing of the Kosovo NGO The Ideas Partnership. She has offered to donate her late husband's photographs to the Ethnological Museum.

The exhibition will be opened by Judith Robinson and H.E. Ian Cliff, British Ambassador to Kosovo, on Saturday 15 October at 7pm.

The photographer, Neil Arthur Robinson was born in the north-east of England and studied science at Cambridge University, specialising in botany. He visited Kosovo in 1956, spending a month with five other botany students camping in the Decanska Valley and studying vegetation on Mount Kurvala, close to the Albanian border.

Neil mostly used his own camera to take monochrome photographs but also used an early colour camera, which he had been leant by Kodak. In addition to the plants, he photographed scenes of local people, farming, limeburning and woodcutting. On his return, he wrote a short account of the Albanian people, illustrated with his photographs. A transcript of this account has now been given to the Prishtina Ethnological Museum, together with copies of the photographs.



Every day at 6, 8 and 10 pm, ABC Cinema screens the Albania movie "Fjala e gjakut" produced by the American producer Joshua Marston.

Nick is a 17-year-old boy in his last year of high school in northern Albania. He begins his first romance with a girl from his class and plans to open an Internet cafe after school. His sister, Rudina, a smart girl, 15-year-old wants to go to college. When a local dispute over a piece of land resulting in them charging Mark's father for murder, the family reached a lethal blood feud. Canon laws, legal codes of ancient Balkan, forcing Nick, his brother and 7-year-old male other members of the family, to close at home almost as if under house arrest. Mark hiding in the mountains and forced Nick to stay at home, the family should be supported to Rudina, which should leave school and take over the business of Mark in order to ensure family.

While Rudina flourishes in her new responsibilities, frustration and anger of Nick from the isolation of forcing him to try to finish bloody hostility, although the cost may be.

Soon ABC Cinema will start screening the movie "What's your number?" directed by Mark Mylod.

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



## Prishtina Diary

**Friday, October 14, 2011**

Filikaqa Sports Bar

Karaoke night from 9 pm, for all singing lovers.

For reservations call at 044 788 748

**Friday, October 14, 2011**

Hamam Jazz Bar, starting from 10 pm

Oscar Sales and Tony Kitanovski

**Saturday, October 15, 2011**

Hamam Jazz Bar, starting from 10pm, free entry

No Name- Electro Acoustic Night

With Avni Krasniqi-Keyboards  
Electro Astrit Stafai-Etno

Instrument Meriton Ferizi-  
Accordion-Harmonic Xhemil

Gjini-Percussion

**Saturday, October 15, 2011**

Creme de la Creme, from 9 pm

Blur discography together with 'Lasko' beer for only 1 euro

For reservations call: +386 (0)49 220 008, +386 (0)49 201 100

<http://www.cremeprishtina.com>

**Wednesday, October 19, 2011**

Hamam Jazz Bar, from 10 pm

Bei the Fish

Bei the Fish has been making contemporary steps since 2001.

The musical expression of the group represents a unique fusion of acoustic instruments, electronics and modern, with a pop music flavour.

All that is combined in their four released studio albums ("Listen", 2004; "Look Up", 2007; "Time to Make Things Right", double album, 2009; "Just an Idea?", double album, 2011), and two released theatre soundtracks ("Marat/Sade", 2009; "The Boat for Dolls", 2010) as well as a great deal of unreleased material.

The band launched a brand new single in February "Ideal Woman" as a second single from the new Album "Just an Idea?!"

The first part of the album is released on May 21 2011 as a free download through MTV sites (<http://www.mtv.rs/>)

**Friday, October 21, 2011**

Hamam Jazz Bar, from 10 pm

Ilhan Ersahin's Istanbul Sessions

Istanbul Sessions is a unit consisting of four versatile musicians - Ilhan Ersahin, Alp Ersonmez, Turgut Bekoglu and Izzet Kizil. Ilhan was born and

raised in Sweden, his motherland, but has been living and working in NYC for some time. He has a Turkish father and has always had strong ties to Istanbul and Turkey as a whole.

The concept of the band is a combination of Ilhan's NYC/Nublu sound mixed with the sounds and spirits of young Istanbul.

It's a band that mixes Turkish scales, clubby beats and jazz improvisations.

For reservations call Hamam Jazz Bar at 044 222 289 or 038 222 289

**Saturday, October 15, 2011**

Theatre ODA, **Dave Seaman concert**

Starting from 11 pm

For the first time in Prishtina, the famous ex member of the DMC Publishing is appearing.

Dave Seaman has performed in festivals and in large clubs in more than 70 countries during his career, creating the beat's for pop singers like Kylie Minogue, Take That, the Pet Shop Boys, U2, Michael Jackson, Alanis Morissette, David Bowie etc.

<http://www.dj-dave-seaman.com/>

**Friday, October 14, 2011**

"Qemal Stafa" Stadium in Tirana, **Armin Van Buuren Concert**

Starting from 10 pm

For the first time in Albania, the number 1 DJ in the world, Armin Van Buuren will performing.

Tickets info: Standard Tickets - available at Digitalb and Adidas stores

In Kosovo at Western Union and Union net stores.

For VIP Tickets reservations call at +355 67 4041985

Armin van Buuren has been named number one in the prestigious DJ MAG Top 100 poll four times in a row, as the first DJ in the history of the DJ Magazine and an indication of his prolific output over the more than 14 years he's been dj-ing and producing. Being the official world's most popular DJ is just one of his many achievements, but the driving force behind his success is an overriding passion for dance music.

<http://www.arminvanbuuren.com>

# Institute of History HQ Has History of its Own

Nine years after the ground was first broken for the construction of the Institute of History, the building remains unfinished.



By Petrit Çollaku

The director of the Institute of history, Jusuf Bajraktari said that work started on the bizarre building in central Prishtina in 2002.

"I want to show you all letters because this building has its own

history," Bajraktari told Prishtina Insight.

At that time, Kosovo's government had allocated funds for construction and work led by the then Ministry of Education. The first tender totaled 1.2 million euro.

But with the arrival of a new government in 2007, plans change.

In June 2008, Kosovo's government decided to transform the ownership from the institute to the University Library of Kosovo.

Bajraktari notes that this was "an arbitrary decision because the government had no plan in its agenda" to do this.

"We were not consulted before hand at all," said Bajraktari. At the time, Minister Enver Hoxhaj was running education in Kosovo.

The government of Kosovo, in its meeting dated July 31, 2008, took a decision to pass the ownership of the building to the

National Library.

"Those who have taken such changes have political power," Bajraktari told Prishtina Insight.

He added that a compromise has been found with the National Library. It is proposed that 33 percent of the space of 2,700 m<sup>2</sup> is given to the institute.

"The space is great for the institute," said Ragip Gjoshi, political advisor to the Minister of Education, Rame Buja. "The

Institute has too few staff for this building and in 2008 it was proposed that the building be shared between the institute and library."

Bajraktari, who leads a staff of 28 people, said that they will not give up on the whole property but noted that, if they must, the institute should have another roommate.

He says that he has asked the government for it to be shared with the Institute of Genocide, which was recently created.

"We need to share the building with a similar institution," says Bajraktari.

Gjoshi states that the proposed share between the institute and library is the most reasonable way forward.

"As I said, knowing the capacity of the institute and how much space they need, this is the right solution," Gjoshi told Prishtina Insight.



## Endless Work Continues

Tosi Company, from Peja, signed the contract in December 2009 to start the structural work, to the value of nearly 1.5 million euro.

During 2010, the company finished external works and continued with the inside the building.

Head of infrastructure department, within the ministry of education, Besim Sofija said that the

company is carrying out the constructions based on the money allocated by the ministry's budget.

In 2010, Tosi was paid more than 300,000 euro while for 2011, the ministry gave more than 421,000 euro.

"We expect the works to be finished in the coming year," Sofija told Prishtina Insight.

## Prishtina's Traffic Chaos



Prishtina's usual traffic chaos was cranked up a gear on October 7 when the lights at this key junction failed.

Our team has been out taking photos of Kosovo's capital this week for our new website gazetajn.com. We would you love to share some of your best snaps of the city with us.

Please email them in to [info@prishtinainsight.com](mailto:info@prishtinainsight.com).

# Inside Prishtina

## Food Review:

# Yummy to your doorstep



By Gravlax

Innovation is not exactly something you see a lot of as an eater in Prishtina. Consequently, skepticism ensued when I learned about Yummy Food. It's exclusively delivery, free of charge to the city centre with a 5 euro per order minimum. It offers a litany of grub from Albanian pite to Thai curry, all in slickly designed packaging.

Not only is it convenient and reasonably priced, the food is quite good. The website, <http://www.yummy-food.info>, is slightly confusing. The categories are essentially in Albanian, but the online menu is in English. Sandwiches, pastas, salads, etc. Order is sim-

ple enough. Just ring them up and voila.

There are dozens of options. I'm a fan of the Yummy box, which range in price from 3.8 to 5.70 euro. You get a main dish, with a mixed green salad, bread, and a mysterious chocolate pudding, all delivered in a customized vessel akin to a bento box.

Having tried their "Traditional Dish of the Day," which happened to be beef with green beans over rice on that day, as well as the Thai fish curry, also over rice, I'm quite impressed. Tasty, fresh healthy food delivered in about 25 minutes. That's called a winner.

*Yummy Food*  
9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.  
045-703-702  
049-494-888  
<http://www.yummy-food.info>



## Restaurant Review

# Curry's inferno: Indian, the restaurant, tortures to perfection



By Gravlax

Fire. Lots and lots of fire. It's the best way to describe, Indian, which happens to be both the name and genre of a new restaurant in Dragodan. Some hapless American diner at another table couldn't handle the spice and sent his food back. I, however, couldn't get enough of my fish curry's inferno. It was that perfect kind of spicy that makes you beg for mercy — and more. And best of all, it didn't mask the white fish's delicate flavour.

Depending on how you slice it, the name Indian is either brilliant or brilliantly lazy for a restaurant name. Or perhaps there's a sinister air to it. It's perhaps 100 or 200 metres from Mumtaz Mahal, on the road to Mitrovica. I can just imagine someone who hasn't been to either being instructed to go to Mumtaz, and seeing Indian's giant sign with a chili-pepper smiley face and assuming it's the intended destination. In any case, Indian is the correct destination. It's simply better, cheaper and hotter than Mumtaz, which has a delicious but suspiciously identical menu to Qafa's Himalayan Gorka.

Indian isn't without its growing pains, having just opened in September. On my

first visit to the rather anonymous space, the waiter presented an enormous hardcover menu, much of which was devoted to essays about the subcontinent's cuisine. Many of the items weren't available. After some back and forth, I settled on chicken tikka (2.90 euro) as a starter to be followed by dal makhanni (3.50 euro).

The bitesized pieces of chicken arrived piping hot from the tandoor oven, with some lemon and raw onion. They also were aggressively rubbed and marinated, a slightly charred on the outside but juicy on the inside. The waiter did a spice check before the dal arrived. "Was the chicken too spicy," he asked. I told him it was perfect, but in all honesty could use more heat. "Are you sure?" he asked. Very sure. The kitchen listened, and the dal came brimming with chilies. I went through most of a large bottle of water and nearly two orders of roti (1 euro) — beautifully baked but sadly not whole wheat — in order to finish the dal. I left a very happy man.

When I returned the next week, a much more manageable brochure had replaced the hardcover menu. Its 32 items include many of the stalwarts of Indian cuisine, with plenty of mutton. It also has some offerings I haven't seen elsewhere in Prishtina like hara bhara kabab (2.90 euro) — which are grilled vegetarian



patties — the aforementioned fish curry (4.50 euro) and spinach-stuffed roti (1.90 euro).

Great things are happening in the kitchen at Indian. But they're still struggling with efficiency. Dealing without about 15 diners on my second visit, the kitchen had trouble keeping up. The waiter apologized and suggested I call before coming next time, basically to give the cooks a head

start. That struck me as rather amateurish, but I'll give Indian the benefit of the doubt as it gets its house in order.



*Indian*  
Ahmet Krasniqi Street no. 25  
Dragodan, Prishtina

044 69 46 15  
044 69 46 11  
Free delivery

Prishtina through the Eyes of:

## Zarrin Munusamy

Regional Strategic Sales Manager for Europe and Africa, for Air Charter International, based in Dubai



### What surprised you most about Prishtina?

Plenty of delightful surprises, but the one thing that continues to surprise me is to see the growing number of pharmacies, vegetable shops and hair dressers right next to each other. When one shop opens, the competitors chose to open right across the other or next to it and they all keep going somehow. This ongoing scenario surprised me the day I arrived and still does.

### What's your favourite hangout?

In the homes of our friends especially the Albanian friends and their warm hospitality with nice hot sweet tea served with lemon in turkish cups and little sweets to go with it.

### What is the best thing about Prishtina?

Every time I go out for a walk I bump into at least four or five friends. This does not happen in any other city I know. Also the Kosovar hospitality is on the top of my list.

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

The brown muddy snow and the slippery roads during winter.

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

I would review the current city plan and make amendments to it, for e.g to create urban parks or a man-made lake somewhere in the heart of the city. I would create more footpaths and bike lanes. I would stop every development, low-rise or high-rise that does not meet building standards especially when they do not respect reasonable space for common areas between buildings.

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

None, but I take at least two cups of latte every day

### What's your favourite Albanian word and why?

"E rendeshime" which means "important". It took me so long to say it properly and now that got it right I don't stop using it.

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

Te Mensa Studenteve.

+

Y  
M  
C  
K

# Europe is to Blame For Balkan Asylum Crisis

It would be hypocritical to punish Balkan countries for the spike in numbers of asylum seekers by rescinding visa liberalisation because responsibility for this unwelcome phenomenon rests in Europe.



By Gerald Knaus and  
Alexandra Stiglismayer

During the first half of this year, an average of 25 Bosnian citizens requested asylum in Belgium every month. In August, their number increased to 81. The number for September is likely to be even a bit higher. This is still a small share of the more than 2,000 asylum requests that Belgium receives every month. However, it led the Belgian embassy in Sarajevo to warn about a “sharp” and “alarming” increase, which is a “worrying and a serious issue.”

Ahead of a meeting with the interior ministers of all Western Balkan countries this week in Ohrid, EU Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom echoed Belgian anxieties when she mentioned in a letter to them “a tangible increase in the overall number of asylum applications” and demanded that they undertake “additional measures to address the situation promptly and effectively”.

There is now talk among some member states that unless Balkan leaders find ways to “solve” the asylum problem, the EU might reverse its decision to allow Balkan citizens visa-free travel to the Schengen zone.

Reversing the most significant decision taken in the past decade to further the Balkans’ European integration would be a disastrous blow to the EU’s credibility in the region. Such a move, founded on a profound misreading of the asylum issue, would also be unfair. European member states are all too willing to blame Balkan countries, it appears, even when the responsibility for a crisis rests with themselves.

But how did we get here? Between December 2009 and December 2010, the EU lifted the Schengen visa requirement for Albania, Bosnia, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro. This followed a rigorous visa-liberalisation process during which the five countries had to implement far-reaching reforms in the areas of passport security, border control, the fight against illegal migration, organised crime and corruption, and human rights. It was a win-win situation in terms of increased security for everyone and a perfect illustration of the power of strict and fair EU conditionality.

Following the removal of the visa barrier, thousands of Serbians and Macedonians - but not Bosnians, Montenegrins or Albanians - travelled to the EU to submit asylum claims. With 17,715 applications, Serbia became the country with the third-largest number of claims in the EU in 2010; Macedonians filed 7,550 claims. EU member states, their

asylum systems under strain, had every reason to be concerned.

Three things are important about this development. First, the asylum seekers are almost exclusively Roma. Second, almost none of their applications has been successful. Although the situation of the Roma in the Balkans is a cause for concern due to their poverty and discrimination [as it is in EU member states such as Slovakia, Hungary or Romania], this is not a sufficient condition for asylum.

Only 2.2 per cent of all claimants from Serbia and Macedonia received protection in the EU in 2010, and this was in many cases on humanitarian grounds, usually to receive specialised medical treatment unavailable in their home countries.

Third, 85 per cent of the asylum claims were submitted in just three EU countries, Germany, Sweden and Belgium. This was understandable: they have advanced asylum systems, are relatively wealthy and host sizeable Balkan communities. However, Austria, France and the Netherlands, which have exactly the same characteristics, recorded no significant increase in asylum requests.

There is an explanation. The asylum procedure for Balkan nationals in the first three countries lasts two to five months. In Austria, France or the Netherlands, it lasts only up to two weeks.

While they await the decision of the asylum authorities, claimants receive accommodation, food, clothes, medical care and free schooling of their kids. For some Roma, this is an attractive prospect. Even if their asylum claim is rejected in the end, the costs - a bus ticket to northern Europe for 60-80 euro - might well be worth it.

“It is a paid holiday in the EU,” one asylum worker told us. The length of stay can also be extended. An appeals procedure in Germany added as many as six months to the process last year.

This is not what the asylum system was created for and it crowds out genuine asylum seekers - but it is not illegal to try.

Initially, there were even more benefits to applying in Germany and Belgium. Until October 2010, the two countries offered assistance to rejected asylum seekers from the Balkans who returned home voluntarily. In addition to having their return trip paid for, a family of four could receive 1,800 euro in Germany and 750 euro in Belgium.

From the beginning, the EU has placed the blame on Serbia and Macedonia, demanding that their governments fix the problem and prescribing a series of measures. Serbia and Macedonia have been asked to let all their citizens know that their asylum claims would



The EU should not pull up the drawbridge on the Balkans.

have little chance of success. Although they have run extensive information campaigns, such campaigns have missed the point. If the real motivation is not to obtain asylum [although one can always hope] but to enjoy the benefits during the procedure, people will continue to file claims.

The ever-convenient culprit of “Balkan organised crime” also entered the picture. Serbia and Macedonia were asked to investigate whether bus companies, travel agents or “organised networks” peddled false promises of asylum, luring ignorant Balkan citizens into going to the EU. However, where are the lucrative profits that would make this a matter of interest to bus companies or “organised networks”? Bus tickets to Brussels or Berlin are cheap, and the information about asylum systems is available through the diasporas. Not surprisingly, Serbia and Macedonia did not find evidence of any criminal conspiracies.

Serbia and Macedonia have also been asked to improve conditions for Roma. Although this is a sensible request, it is a long-term objective that will not solve the problem at hand.

More insidiously, Serbia and Macedonia have been asked to control people at the border. As almost all the asylum seekers are Roma, it is hard to avoid ethnic profiling and open discrimination. The EU has found a bureaucratic disguise for this, requesting that Serbia and Macedonia help implement the Schengen Convention. Under the Convention, EU border police are obliged to prevent persons lacking “documents justifying the purpose and conditions of the intended stay” or “sufficient means of subsistence” from entering the Schengen zone. However, this is a duty upon entry, not upon exit, and Serbians and Macedonians are not EU border guards. Why do Hungarian and Slovenian border

guards not do what they are supposed to do anyway?

What the EU has demanded amounts to profound hypocrisy. After all, one of the conditions for lifting the visa barrier was for the Balkan countries to provide access to travel and identity documents for all citizens, and another one to implement Roma policies.

The solution to the crisis is obvious. The length of the asylum procedure must be radically reduced - not only for claimants from the Western Balkans, but from all countries that receive visa-free travel after a visa liberalisation process based on conditionality. If the procedure and the benefits remain attractive, every visa-free travel agreement risks breeding a wave of asylum claims.

Even today, every EU member state can prioritise claims or channel them through an accelerated procedure. Since last year, Germany and Belgium have done so for claims from Balkan nationals. [They have also cut return assistance for them last autumn.] Sweden has been trying to reduce the waiting period for all claimants including Balkan nationals. Since June of this year, the number of Serbian and Macedonian asylum claims has dropped significantly in all three member states. The problem is not intractable, it seems.

Simultaneously, the EU should declare all countries benefiting from visa-free travel following a formal liberalisation process “safe countries of origin.” Under EU asylum legislation, claims from citizens from safe countries of origin can be prioritised and dealt with under an accelerated procedure. There are precedents. In 1997, EU member states negotiated a protocol to the Amsterdam Treaty under which they agreed to treat each other as safe countries of origin. The Asylum Procedures Directive, which was adopted in late 2005, mentioned Romania and Bulgaria - not yet

EU members at the time - as safe countries of origin. The same directive also allowed member states to compose their own lists of safe countries.

Austria and France have done just that. By including all the Balkan countries on their lists, they have been able to expedite the procedure for the region’s citizens. While not all member states using the concept provide the necessary procedural safeguards, it is possible to do so, and some do. It is also possible to receive protection even though one is from a safe country: Austria’s recognition rate of Serbian and Macedonian claims was 5.8 per cent last year, and France’s 6.2 per cent.

The Asylum Procedures Directive is currently being amended. It would make sense if the Parliament or the Council put forward an amendment declaring countries that have undergone a visa liberalisation process “safe countries of origin.”

If adopted, this would go a long way towards preventing a new influx of claimants following every visa liberalisation agreement. Just as importantly, it would restore the credibility of a very successful policy. The visa liberalisation process turns neighbouring countries into partners that help protect the EU from external threats. The removal of visa barriers improves the EU’s image, fosters economic development and leads to more commerce and people-to-people contacts. It would be a great mistake to replace strict and fair conditionality with a populist appeal to countries to violate the very principles that the EU had asked them to respect.

*Gerald Knaus and Alexandra Stiglismayer founded and run the European Stability Initiative, a think-tank that has closely followed the visa liberalisation process for the Western Balkans. [www.esiweb.org/whitelistproject](http://www.esiweb.org/whitelistproject).*



## Yellow - Their skin was yellow

"They laid in a tangle of limbs under a blue tarp in a trailer that, only weeks before probably carried peppers and corn to the market in Malisevo."



By Ronn Capps

**Y**ellow. Their skin was yellow. They had dirt under their fingernails and their feet were dirty. There were six of them, all women, under the tarpaulin. Some of them lived long enough to have their wounds bandaged before they died. Some died more or less instantly as shrapnel or 7.62-mm rounds entered their bodies.

They had been dead for about 24 hours. We came to witness their funeral, to witness and to stand a type of guard. If we were present, the Serb snipers would not shoot at the family members as they buried their dead.

It was the first time I had ever seen war dead. I remember being surprised that their skin was yellow. My experiences with death before that day were limited to a few funerals: a friend's older brother, my grandmother. None of them had been yellow. So I was surprised at the color. It was the first time I ever saw dead people without embalming, without make-up and a nice suit of clothes. They laid in a tangle of limbs under a blue tarp in a trailer that, only weeks before probably carried peppers and corn to the market in Malisevo.

I could only see parts of their bodies under the tarp. I couldn't see all of their faces. One had an arm resting across her brow. One had a bandage covering most of her head. One of the dead, an 18-month-old child, was missing. We had seen some dogs on the way up the trail.

The British UN officer who led me to the scene said what all of us thought, "The dogs probably got the body." She was right, of course, but nobody wanted to say it. The child's mother rested in a house in the village a couple kilometers away with a bullet lodged in her upper arm. The bullet had passed through her baby, then through her breast before lodging in her arm. The father said the baby had been killed instantly. "The bullet tore the child in half," he said. He had dragged the mother away to safety. A doctor from the

Red Cross treated her wounds in a small house in the village. Eleven women and a 72-year-old man, all wounded from the attack, all patiently waiting for the doctor, sat on the floor leaning against the walls in same room.

In Kosovo, my teammates and I were supposed to provide a sense of security to the Serbian and Albanian civilians and to keep the two military forces from shooting at each other as much as possible. Unsaid in our brief was the implied mission to stop the killing.

I was seven people too late in Senik. Standing in that house on the day after the attack, with the sticky smell of sweat and blood and wounds mingling with the cotton-mouthed smell of fear in the air, I knew I was in the middle of something I didn't—and maybe couldn't—understand, and that people's lives depended on my doing the right thing. But I had no idea what that was. I knew little of the regional history, spoke none of the languages, and at that moment found myself standing in small house surrounded by wounded civilians and with Serbian infantry a couple kilometers away.

I looked at the wounded 72-year-old man. His eyes filled with something between hate and incomprehension: hatred for the Serbs and incomprehension that an American and a Brit were standing in his living room doing nothing about the Serbian infantry who killed six women and an infant, and wounded him and all these others.

Senik was a village of 500 or so people. Not more than a few houses at a three-way intersection on a dirt road, really. With only one small store, everyone shopped at the big market in Malisevo. The elementary school sat at the base of the hill a couple kilometers away; the kids could walk that far, even in the winter. The farmers used to grow grapes, but the vines were bare from the drought and a fire. The gravel road was dusty and rutted from the daily flow of tractors up and down the hill, out to the paved road and the fields and markets beyond the isolated clutch of houses.

The trouble with Senik, in the eyes of the Serbian police, was that

it was on the edge of Berisha Mountain, a Kosovo Liberation Army stronghold. Serbian policy was to attack villages that supported the KLA. We never really knew if the villagers supported the KLA before the attack, but afterwards they certainly did, after they buried six of their women and watched Red Cross doctors treat eleven more.

We stood at the edge of a trail a couple kilometers up the road from the house where the doctors tended the wounded. Fifteen or so men and women from the village walked slowly behind a tractor pulling the bodies on a trailer into the valley. As the tractor reached the floor of the valley, we could still see Serbian snipers atop the ridgeline. We glanced at each other; nervously on my part.

The dead women had lived and died in this valley. They had spent their lives raising crops in its fields and giving birth to their children in the small houses that made up the spare little town. Their families wanted to bury them at the center of the valley, in plain sight of the ridgeline.

We parked our vehicles in full view of the ridgeline as a deterrent to further shooting. Certainly, we believed, the Serbs wouldn't shoot at EU and U.S. observers or the white and blue UN vehicle. The ground was hard and it took some time to bury the dead. The men worked with shovels and picks for about an hour to dig the graves. We stood around watching, glancing back and forth between the ridgeline and the grave diggers.

Finally, the graves were finished. One by one the dead women were wrapped in cloth and gently lowered into the ground. Someone said a few words over each of them and the men began covering their bodies with the rocky soil. Once the shoveling stopped, the valley was quiet. There was no wind to speak of. No cars or planes off in the distance. We stood there for a moment unsure of what to do. The men decided for us. The clatter of their picks and shovels dropping onto the trailer broke the silence and we said our good-byes.

*continues page 22*

## Outside In

# Kosovo's Mickey Mouse Universities



By Kreshnik Hoxha

**K**osovo's Prime Minister's, Hashim Thaci, admiration for Tony Blair appears to go beyond rounding up some amusingly named urchins who share the same name as the former British PM. Thaci also seems to have stolen Blair's best known manifesto pledge: "Education, Education, Education."

Many will remember that a few months back he insisted on increasing salaries for teachers with non-existent funds from Kosovo's budget. And nowadays, he seems to have got into the habit of opening state-run Universities for every hamlet in Kosovo.

As a result, the state-run University of Peja has followed in Prizren's footsteps to become the latest taxpayer-funded centre for higher education. The Education Minister Rame Buja showed the government's commitment to education by proudly announcing that next year Gjakova would also be blessed with a university too.

But would Kosovo be better off if Thaci and his government concentrated time and resources to improving the current education facilities, quality of tuition and the spread of graduates in terms of subjects? I think you probably don't need a degree from the University of Mamusha to guess the answer to that one.

A quick glance through the Yugoslav era graduates would suggest that Kosovo has faced a drastic change in its graduate composition since the end of the war. Many will recall that the 1970s and 1980s brought a glut in science-based degrees such as engineering, medicine, and metallurgy, while the then-province suffered from a lack of politicians, and to a certain extent economists and lawyers.

However, the end of the war in Kosovo resulted in a complete change in graduate trends. Political sciences, international relations, economics and law became the popular subjects, while faculties such as Faculty of Sciences in the University of Prishtina (UP) started to become desperate for undergraduates. Such change in the composition of graduates is understandable in countries that go through transitional phases. But, nevertheless, these trends should be tackled if they are replicated over subsequent years.

It is evident that the emergence of qualified and competent graduates in humanities is paramount to Kosovo's consolidation; however, the data from the 2010 education statistics of the Kosovo Statistical Office points towards some worrying conclusions.

According to the data collected in the state-run University of Prishtina, the Faculty of Economics had 2,427 students enrolled in Year 1, whereas this number for Faculty of Sciences (physics, chemistry, mathematics and biology) was 880. Similarly, while the 2010 enrolment in Year 1 for law was 1,866, there were 384 students enrolled in mechanical engineering.

The decline in enrolment to science degrees can be also rationalised with the government's continuous focus in funding degrees in humanities – including generous scholarships for pursuing studies in universities abroad. Affiliation with Western universities has been associated with better educational values [due to the respect these universities have in Kosovo, regardless of the grade classification of the graduate], and granting scholarships to study abroad should definitely remain a key focus of the government.

However, the issue becomes problematic when funds that could be utilised for scientific research and science degrees within Kosovo are allocated to the opening of new universities with questionable credibility, across the country. Instead, the utilisation of these funds in science could serve as a brilliant source for revitalising scientific research by modernising and reforming the whole concept of doing science in Kosovo. Implementation of such radical changes would be an incentive for undergraduates to pursue these degrees and would resolve Kosovo's deficit of scientists.

Focusing on producing well-rounded and analytical scientists would also be pivotal for Kosovo in addressing its environmental problems ranging from waste disposal to seeking alternative eco-friendly sources of energy. The benefits of investing in the advancement of science in Kosovo evidently outweigh the costs incurred with the opening of new universities in the country.

This is why the government should concentrate its efforts in the creation of a National Science Endowment within the University of Prishtina, such as the one created by the British government in 1998 which aims at fostering innovation and deliver radical new ideas.

Such endowment would certainly be more useful than opening another Mickey Mouse university in Suhareka, Jarinjje, Mamusha or Barileva.

# NGO Focus: "Rrezet e Arta të Ashkalive"



By Egzon Avdullahi

"It was the first time I had stood before an audience, and I enjoyed acting during The Forest Hut play," says Merjeme Qyqalla, a seventeen-year-old girl from Fushe Kosove.

Merjeme is just one of many Ashkali children to have benefited from the work of Rrezet e Arta të Ashkalive, Golden Rays of Ashkalis, since it was established in 2004.

It is a small local nongovernmental organisation from Fushe Kosove, operating with limited funds, and supported by two big international organizations, Terres des Hommes and Save the Children, which is slowly but surely improving educational and social activities of young Ashkali

children in this municipality.

Halil Qerimi, the founder of the organization, told Prishtina Insight that they concentrate limited resources into making the educational system more attractive and interesting to a certain group of Ashkali children from Fushe Kosove.

Through interactive, after school lessons, and learning workshops, more than 70 Ashkali children for a year have been given a different slant on education.

"All children have been very satisfied with the progress they made with their grades in school, thanks to the interactive programme," added Halil.

By targeting children from age 9 to 16, the organisation provided lessons on reading and writing skills, arts and sports, as well as Albanian and English language courses. Moreover, the lessons were held in interactive way, through games, and creative meth-

ods, ensuring that the pupils were motivated to learn more and secure good grades at school.

"We have many children who have shown great results in school after joining these interactive lessons by our organisation, using games to serious lessons," said Qerimi. On top of the interactive lessons, the organisation, in cooperation with "Iniciativa e Prizrenit", another NGO, has been working on a pre-school programme for children to socialize and become familiar with the schooling system since 2007, preparing them for regular classes.

"The Forest Hut," a theatre play, directed by Qerimi, organised back in 2008, was another great, extra-curricular experience for young Ashkali and Albanian children from Fushe Kosove.

"I was the sly fox in the play, and I still recall the great feeling of being on stage, and having the



A trip to Gadime caves organised by the NGO.

audience listening to me," explained Merjeme.

Mirsad Qerimi, a fifteen-year-old Ashkali boy from Fushe Kosove, added that the summer camps, organized by 'Rrezet e Arta të Ashkalive,' during July, each summer, where 200 children, from mixed ethnical background get together for 5 days, allowed them to share great experiences and learn a lot from each other.

"I am glad I had the opportunity,

for one year, twice a week to attend the classes organised in our school, thanks to this organisation. I wish we can continue having these classes as we enjoy being there," said Egzon Lahu, a fifteen-year-old boy from Fushe Kosove.

If you are a donor or volunteer, please contact Halil Qerimi at 049 634 193, 049 840 401 or at halilqerimi@gmail.com for more information.

## Yellow - Their skin was yellow

from page 21

Afterwards, we stopped on the way out of the draw and used our satellite telephone to call Washington and tell the State Department's Operations Center what we had seen. They seemed very far away from that hillside.

My side of the conversation went like this: "Eleven wounded: ten women and one 72-year-old man. Seven dead: six women and one child. Yes, I counted myself. Yes, we're sure they were dead. I verified it personally."

I left out the part about the dogs and the missing child. No histrionics, no personal opinion. Nothing about the smell or the dust or the look on the old man's face. Nothing about being scared to stand about at the base of the draw. Nothing about the color of their skin or how their families tenderly wrapped their bodies, the women crying as they slowly and gently lowered the dead women to the dirt.

We made one more stop on the way off of the hill. An old man flagged us down as we were leaving the draw for the village. He told our interpreter he wanted to show us something the Serbs had done. I glanced through the window of the house and saw seven or eight women sitting on the floor and rocking slowly, comforting each other. They surrounded the body of another woman. She was laid out on her back and wrapped in a blanket. Her face and most of her head were missing. The man said a mortar round had exploded within a foot of her head. He held his hands out in front of his body to demonstrate the distance. He was the dead woman's father and he looked, justifiably, like part of him had died. As he spoke, the women wailed, their voices a declaration of mourning and exhausted resignation.

Amid the crying and the smell and the flies, we listened to the story. Her father said she had wanted to take food to her friends, to talk with them, to drink coffee with them. She reached the small valley just as the attack had started.

The mortar shells probably came in groups of three. Poonk, poonk, poonk as they left the tubes, then the breathless, agonizing five- or six-second wait while they flew, and finally then the brittle kuhrump, kuhrump, kuhrump barking and echoing off of the walls of the canyon as they exploded. The gunners probably set the fuses to go off about one and a half or two meters above the ground—about head high.

It was an awful story. I couldn't wait to get out of there, away from the smell and the

crying and the death. I felt outraged and horrified that soldiers would fire mortars at women and children. I couldn't make myself look at her. I looked at the other women slowly rocking, their bright headscarves a stark and awful reminder that their sister or daughter or friend's head was blown off as she tried to bring some succor to others. I made notes about what her father said as my partner photographed her corpse. I learned the smell and the sound. Eight dead.

We drove down to the intersection marking Senik proper, where a small crowd swarmed our vehicle. I pushed open the door and stood, pinned against the side of my truck by the crowd, as my translator echoed staccato pleas for help at me.

"She wants you to take her child out of here so the Serbs won't kill him," Mimi said. I looked at the woman, she held her infant son out to me in entreaty.

I said to Mimi: "Tell her that we are observers, we can't relocate her or the government in Belgrade will order us out of the country," I felt impotent and feckless as the words spilled out, thinking of the sheer folly of being in this war zone only to observe, a tourist among these victims.

It was hot and, with the sun bearing down on me, I felt cowardly, yellow, hiding behind my sunglasses. I waved my notebook at the Red Cross panel truck and said that was the vehicle that would take them away, hoping they would swarm that vehicle and leave me alone. I thought the Red Cross would probably say no, but I was unable to marshal the strength to tell the woman that there was little hope that she would get out that day with an International. I learned later that I had been wrong. Several UN officers came to Senik late in the day, and one of them took it upon herself to evacuate some of the children to a safer village.

"We're observers," our bosses told us. "We can't take sides or the whole team will be thrown out of the country; we are no good then," they said. I said it, too. I said it a lot. Every morning I went to the field, and most days I came home with reports of houses burned, or police stations attacked, or people killed. Every afternoon I wrote reports about what we saw. I wrote crisp, dry accounts of messy, horrible acts of cruelty.

That day, fighting the urge to flee, the smells and the sounds became part of my memory. But I have lost the faces of the grieving father, of the 72-year-old man, of the woman pushing her child at me. I wonder today if, having pushed away so much of what I felt back then—confusion, fear, revul-

sion, anger—I cannot remember the faces because I have subconsciously suppressed the images.

Or maybe they have become spectral, symbols representing events that are, in my mind, larger than life. Like actors in a play seen but only remembered in fits and starts, they come back to remind me of my failures and of my weakness and of my cowardice. They are the central characters in these acts of war.

Ron Capps served as a member of the Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission and in the U.S. Office Prishtina between 1998 and 2000. He is a writer and researcher whose works focus on human rights, genocide and crimes against humanity, and U.S. foreign and defense policy. Contact: roncapps@gmail.com  
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|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|   |   |   | 6 |   |   | 5 | 8 |
|   |   |   |   | 3 |   | 7 | 6 |
|   |   |   |   | 4 |   |   | 1 |
|   | 5 |   |   | 9 | 4 | 8 |   |
|   |   | 3 | 7 |   | 6 | 5 |   |
|   |   | 4 | 3 | 2 |   |   | 9 |
| 2 |   |   |   | 7 |   |   |   |
| 4 | 6 |   | 9 |   |   |   |   |
| 9 | 3 |   |   |   | 2 |   |   |

**Medium**

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

**Hard**

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