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Police Beating Complaints Pile Up

Police in Gjakova routinely beat up suspects to extract confessions, victims have told Prishtina Insight – but while this practice is illegal, no action has been taken.

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Kosovo Accused of Fixing Key Highway Contract

Construction of Kosovo's new highway to Albania was left unsupervised for more than a year and a half as the Transport Ministry attempted to rig the tender process to ensure its favoured candidate won, a failed bidder has alleged.

By Petrit Collaku

One of the world's largest consultancy groups has launched a blistering attack on Kosovo's Ministry of Infrastructure, accusing it of "manipulating" the contract to supervise work on the country's biggest infrastructure project – the 1 billion euro highway to Albania. Chris Germanacos, European Director for Louis Berger, charges the Ministry of Transport with fixing the tender to favour a rival company, Hill International.

The lengthy process to appoint a supervisor has involved two tenders, one of which was cancelled

in confusing circumstances.

The process has also led to two official complaints, the intervention of the then Minister of Infrastructure Fatmir Limaj to stop a contract being signed and one High Court hearing between warring state institutions.

As a result of the rows, there was no supervision of work on the Albania highway until September, almost a year-and-a-half after construction began. Even then there still wasn't a full-time project leader.

The first 40km section of the so-called Patriotic Highway, built by Bechtel-Enka, running from the Albanian border to Qafa e Duhles, near Suhareke, is due to open this

weekend.

The supervisors were to be brought in to ensure that the construction was being carried out to the initial design and that materials being used were laboratory tested.

The ministry said it had carried out the tests while waiting for the international experts to be appointed.

According to the tender dossier, a key element of the supervision contract is ensuring that taxpayers get "value for money" and that costs do not escalate, as they did on the Albanian side of the highway, also constructed by Bechtel-Enka.

Last September, a year before the supervision work started, the

Ministry of Infrastructure complained that cancellation of the first tender, which was under review at the time due to an appeal, would lead to "enormous losses" to the country.

As a result, Kosovo's procurement review board, OShP, allowed the deal to go ahead, only for the then Minister of Infrastructure, Fatmir Limaj, to put the process on hold again, ensuring a lengthy battle between the two institutions.

Louis Berger's claims that the whole process was slanted in Hill International's favour appear in a letter obtained by Prishtina Insight, which was lodged at OShP in June.

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'Life in Kosovo' Faces Ban on State TV

Kosovo's most watched current affairs show could be taken off the national television station, RTK, under a new law being pushed by the leading party.

The Democratic Party of Kosovo, PDK, led by Hashim Thaci, wants changes made to the draft law on RTK, currently before parliament, banning...

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Kosovo Tax Dodgers Flourish in Corridors of Power

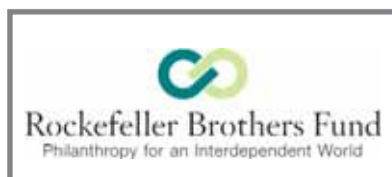
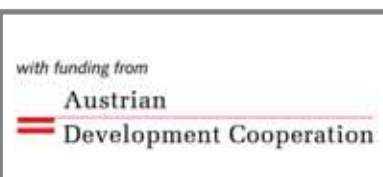
An investigation by Prishtina Insight has uncovered proof of what many Kosovars have long believed – that their assembly is full of tax-dodgers.

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Kosovo Accused of Fixing Key Highway Contract

from page 1

The firm was then engaged in an unsuccessful attempt to overturn the contract award. The move by Paris-based Louis Berger SAS, which is part of Berger Group Holdings, the third largest private sector partner to USAID, failed.

Two procurement experts urged cancellation of the tender, but the OShP board decided against this, citing the "national interest". It said the costs to the country would be far greater if a supervisor was not secured.

Tender number one:

The first attempt to secure a supervisor for the highway project was launched in spring 2010, as construction of the highway got underway.

In August that year, an Italian firm, Merlino-Progetti & Politecnica, was selected after putting in a bid for just under 7 million euro. Hill International had also bid.

Louis Berger appealed against the award, claiming it had been unfairly disqualified. OShP rejected this appeal, although its procurement experts did find a number of irregularities in the tender process.

The Ministry of Infrastructure, then called the Ministry of Transport, told the OShP that cancelling the tender would lead to "enormous losses".

The OShP agreed and gave the ministry a green light to sign the contract with Merlino.

But then Transport Minister Limaj delayed the contract. He is now under house arrest awaiting trial for war crimes. He is also under investigation for corruption involving road tenders.

In a letter seen by this newspaper, Limaj raised concerns about the authenticity of financial statements provided by Merlino in the bidding process. He said he was waiting for the company to provide more information, including its financial flows over the last three years, before allowing the deal to go ahead.

The Italian firm protested that it had supplied the necessary docu-

ments and was backed by the OShP. It ordered the Ministry to sign the deal or face a fine in February 2011.

The ministry appeared to ignore this warning and was fined 20,000 euro by OShP.

The ministry still cancelled the tender with Merlino on March 12, ensuring that a new process would have to start. The ministry then lodged an indictment in the High Court against OShP regarding the fine and the order to sign the contract with Merlino.

The High Court rejected the ministry's indictment in May. Krasniqi told the court that he had "wanted to sign the contract" with Merlino but had been told not to by the Minister.

"All the responsibility about these investigations has been taken by the minister [Limaj] himself and not me as a public procurement manager," he said, according to the official summary of the proceedings.

The second round:

A second bidding process meanwhile started in April and in June Hill International emerged as winners with a deal worth 6.95 million euro. Merlino did not bid the second time.

Louis Berger again complained. In a letter to OShP, it said that both tenders had been biased in Hill International favour.

Berger recalled that it had offered 5.9 million euro for the contract. But it had lost out after Hill International offered a lower price for laboratory testing and scored slightly better in its technical proposal.

Germanacos wrote that "Hill International was favoured with bias throughout the tendering and retendering process, including the technical scoring".

He said that the ministry's "marking down" of Louis Berger on technical issues, compared to Hill International, was typical of "corrupting practices [done] in order to favourably advantage one of the operators".

Louis Berger raised particular concern about the inclusion of a new criterion in the second tender by which firms were graded on the costs of laboratory tests.

While the tender dossier was clear that the price of laboratory tests would account for 10 per cent of the total score given to bidders, it also asked for cost estimates for more than 50 different types of tests.

In the case of Berger, the Ministry calculated the average price based on the 50 different tests.

But Berger said the method was unfair, as not all tests would be performed the same number of times. It also described Hill International's pricing for tests as abnormally low.



Kosovo's government plans to open the first 38 km of the highway on 12 November.

The average lab price offer for the three other bidders was 3,800 euro, whereas Hill International put in a figure of just 747 euro per test.

Louis Berger said this price was so low it should have led to the cancellation of the process because at that price it would be an "unperformable tender".

Germanacos said it raised questions about "Hill International's manipulative strategy and potential collaboration with regard to taking advantage of an unfair practice employed by MI [the ministry] to the disadvantage of other operators".

He added that the ministry had not specified the amount of lab testing which was to be carried out for each material, which made it impossible to provide accurate figures.

He said that had Louis Berger been aware of how the ministry was planning to calculate the lab testing points, it would have offered a price of "0 euro" for the tests, as these tests only represented a fraction of the total cost of the supervision work.

"This is precisely how Hill International manipulated the tender scoring framework, with prejudice and price levels that are not performable, as their unit prices for laboratory testing are far from market prices and standards," Germanacos said.

He added that the process had created "room for deliberate manipulation by operators at the cost of public funds, thereby eliminating most cost effective practices and competitive bidding without prejudice".

Go-ahead made in 'national interest':

The two procurement experts, Nazmi Statovci and Arsim Citaku, who reviewed the case and found irregularities, have declined to detail concerns beyond those they submitted to OShP.

The experts wrote that including the laboratory test price "set a criterion that cannot be weighed" as the ministry did not "determine objectively the amount of laboratory tests".

Statovci told Prishtina Insight: "OShP's reviewing panel decided to continue with the award of the contract because according to the law,

the public interest can [also] be taken into account."

Another procurement expert, who asked not to be named, said the lab test issue should have been "sufficient reason to cancel the tender, and indeed has been the most contentious point".

However, the expert conceded that "it is still good that supervision of the highway has started".

Counting the costs:

The Albanian government brought in Bechtel-Enka to build a key section of its Patriotic Highway in 2006, running from the port of Durres to the Kosovo border, at a cost of 418 million euro.

As with the subsequent contract for the Kosovo section, the deal was "re-measurable" in that the price was not fixed, and it changed as work went on. The final bill was more than 1 billion euro.

Concerns were raised when Kosovo entered into a similar deal in 2010, but the government batted away criticism. Eversheds', the government's own legal advisor on the highway contract, revealed in a letter to the government that it feared costs would balloon as a result of the deal negotiated.

One measure to counter potential cost overruns was the employment of an internationally renowned supervising team.

The tender dossier stipulated that the government sought a partner to ensure that the project was "completed in a timely and cost-effective manner, maximizing "value for money".

But because of delays to the appointment of a supervisory team after two lengthy tender processes, Hill International only started work in September, more than a year after the project began.

The government has meanwhile refused to reveal how much the first 40km section of the highway has cost, although the price tag for the whole motorway inside Kosovo has risen from an initial estimate of 700 million euro to 1 billion euro.

A conflict of interest?

On top of concerns about the tender process, and delays to the appointment of a supervisor, Prishtina Insight has also discovered further questions over Hill International's work so far.

After obtaining the contract this summer, Hill International began

to supervise the project without a permanent project manager, job adverts seen by Prishtina Insight indicate.

Hill International launched an international campaign to find a team leader only as it began work on the highway. It is not clear whether one is now in place as neither Hill International nor the Ministry of Transport has clarified the point.

Yet, the post of project manager is a key one, and the experience and qualifications of the candidate was one of the main areas evaluated during the tender process. It would have contributed to Hill International's top score for its technical proposal.

The Ministry said Hill intended to bring in an expert called Michael Beer, but he fell ill and the firm was forced to find a replacement.

Rame Cupeva, director of infrastructure within the ministry said: "Hill International originally proposed Michael Beer as project manager, but due to illness... Beer has not been able to take part in the project."

Hill had since replaced Beer with Peter Sockett. This replacement "was performed only with the approval of the contracting authority as proposed staff must meet all conditions set by the selection of the tender", Cupeva said.

Fidan Kalaja, of the anticorruption NGO Fol, which has been monitoring the highway issue, said the whole process, including the award of the tender to Bechtel to construct the highway, had lacked transparency.

"It turns out that two deputy presidents of this company [Hill] in the US, Robert Burnet and Mohamed El Zahabi, worked for years in Bechtel," he said, adding that this raised issues of potential conflicts of interest.

This information is confirmed by a press release on Hill International's website.

"Having this in mind, it will be a serious challenge to the government to reassure citizens that this company [Hill] will objectively monitor the construction of highway," Kalaja said.

Prishtina Insight gave Hill International, Louis Berger and the Ministry of Infrastructure more than two weeks to respond to queries regarding the case, but none provided comment.

Toll to be Charged on Highway

The Ministry of Infrastructure has confirmed that Kosovo's first highway will charge a toll, although this will not apply to the first 38 kilometres, to be opened on Sunday.

Tolls are expected to begin next year. Officials said that the money is needed for highway maintenance.

The amount to be charged has not yet been determined.



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Kosovo's "Secret Lobbyists"



By Petrit Collaku

Kosovo's ministry of foreign affairs attempted to keep its \$600,000-a-year deal with Washington lobbyists secret, Prishtina Insight has discovered.

It had attempted to avoid revealing any information to the public, arguing to the country's Public Procurement Agency that publicity could hinder the work of lobbyists Patton Boggs.

The ministry made the argument despite the fact that lobbyists in the United States are obliged to make all their dealings with foreign governments public.

In fact, details of the contract between Patton Boggs and the Ministry are published online by law in the US, and can be found out the website of the Foreign Agents Registration Act, www.fara.gov.

Prishtina Insight has also discovered that PM Hashim Thaci met Patton Boggs' foreign affairs advisor, Frank Wisner, in the US just two months before Thaci put the deal with the lobbyists to his cabinet for the first time in September 2010.

The government was then forced to cancel that decision after it emerged that they had not followed any public procurement procedures before attempting to sign the deal.

In July, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs revived the contract and asked for the green light from the former procurement agency to launch a secret single-source tender to employ Patton Boggs.

The government is required to justify to the agency why it planned to carry out a single source tender in secret.

On July 21, the ministry, on behalf of the Secretary General Nagip Skenderi, explained to procurement agency that the deal

needed to remain secret as the "nature of the work that this company will perform for Republic of Kosovo is of a confidential nature and cannot be made public".

Skenderi also explained that Patton Boggs could help Kosovo only if acts confidentially "otherwise it can perform and cannot offer results promised".

However, all details of this agreement can be found online by visiting <http://www.fara.gov/docs/2165-Exhibit-AB-20110831-33.pdf>.

MFA and Patton Boggs signed a one-year contract on 29 August worth \$600,000.

The company will be engaged in "fostering investments and trade opportunities for Kosovo, as well as gathering funds from foreign aid programs".

Patton Boggs' foreign affairs adviser is Frank Wisner. The former US Secretary of State under George Bush, Condoleezza Rice, appointed Wisner as the US's spe-

cial representative to the Kosovo Status Talks in 2005, where he played a crucial role in negotiating Kosovo's independence.

Frank Wisner, who is Patton Boggs' foreign affair advisor, met Thaci in United States in July 2010. According to a press release they discussed "current political developments in Kosovo and the achievements up to now of Kosovo's institutions".

This is the second time that Kosovo's government has launched this tender when in September 2010 the government's cabinet voted to employ Patton Boggs at a rate of 50,000 dollars a month, 38,000 euro.

The cabinet was then forced to cancel the decision at the next meeting in November. This followed revelations by the sister newspaper Prishtina Insight that the move appeared to have broken the law on public procurement as Patton Boggs had simply been selected to do this job by the cabinet.

Editor's Word

Miti



By Lawrence Marzouk

The Myth of Christmas is dead! Fear not, unclasp those hands from your child's ears, I plan not to obliterate the legend of the bearded one with his bulging sack.

I'm talking of the Daily Mail, Britain's grumpiest newspaper, and its apology this week for an "inaccuracy" which may at first glance appear to be a minor slip-up, but actually led to the creation of a myth of monstrous proportions.

For years, the myth of Birmingham City Council's 'Winterval' festival has burned bright in the minds of those in the United Kingdom who are not xenophobic, but who don't like foreigners very much, especially the ones who refuse to exchange their complex ethno-religious background for a British passport and an England football shirt.

Birmingham had a whole host of events lined up for the winter season of 1998, some religious some secular. To promote all of these shindigs, an official called Mike Chubb came up with an amalgam, a Frankenstein phrase, of winter and festival: Winterval.

The devious minds of the press then set about distorting this pretty boring tale into a travesty for Christian Britain. The bureaucrats were so fearful of upsetting the foreigners that they even banned Christmas, the story went.

And as the story went from local newspapers, to news agencies, to national newspapers and the BBC, it changed subtly, article by article, before it scarcely resembled the initial report.

According to the Guardian newspaper this week, between them, the Times and the Sunday Times managed to repeat the myth 40 times since 1998, only surpassed by the Daily Mail, with 44 mentions. But all the other newspapers also took part.

With time, the myth, or miti in Albanian, grew and grew, and media outlets and their readers started talking about how "councils" up and down the country were banning Christmas and outlawing Christianity in an affront to honest, white Brits.

This myth then became a portmanteau for a series of new, slightly different myths about how authorities and the "politically correct" brigade were dropping Christian and British customs by the bucket-load. The most recent example was how a TV series of Thomas the Tank Engine had removed all references to Christmas so Muslims would not be offended. This turned out to be false too.

Decent newspapers, which would never dream of writing anything overtly xenophobic, build these myths by stretching the truth to breaking point and thus encouraging underlying xenophobia.

Journalists should be challenging these myths, not perpetuating them, if they are genuinely to inform and not just titillate their public.

EU 'Losing Patience' on Divided North Kosovo

Europe says the blame game over Serb-run northern Kosovo must end and the two sides need to return to the negotiating table.



By Fatmir Aliu and Jeta Xharra

A European diplomat says Europe wants mutual accusations to end between Kosovo and Serbia over who is responsible for tensions in northern Kosovo - and both sides should restart their stalled EU-mediated dialogue.

A source from Brussels told Prishtina Insight that the EU Foreign Affairs Chief, Catherine Ashton, is trying to break the deadlock in the dialogue between Belgrade and Prishtina in which neither side can agree on the content and agenda of the next round of discussions.

Belgrade left the negotiating table in July after the Kosovo government sent a team of Special Police to assert its authority over its northern border with Serbia.

Since then, local Serbs in north Kosovo have erected numerous barricades on roads and Serbia has demanded that the situation in

the north be put on the agenda of the talks.

Prishtina has refused to consider this demand on the grounds that the north of Kosovo is an internal issue.

Kosovo's Albanian-led government has never controlled the far northern sliver of Kosovo, where Serbs form the majority and local authorities refuse to have any links with authorities in Prishtina.

"Both parties should demonstrate commitment to finding a compromise on the dialogue, including on the north," the same EU diplomat told Prishtina Insight.

"Both parties are right about the issue but they should move on with a plan on how to get out of this limbo, since the situation is unacceptable and unstable.

"The blame games between the two should end; they don't lead anywhere," the diplomat added.

The same source said some EU member states have started negotiating with both Kosovo and Serbia to find a solution for the north, where the EU's rule of law mission in Kosovo, EULEX, is encountering



tough opposition from local Serbs.

The EU began facilitating a technical dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia in March. According to a UN General Assembly resolution, this means normalizing relations between the parties while they both move towards European integration.

The EU Envoy, Robert Cooper, has since then brokered five deals, mainly on trade, freedom of movement, and cadastral registry.

But only one agreement was actually implemented till now by Serbia, as a result of which Kosovo says the EU should reward Prishtina for its "cooperativeness" and punish Belgrade for not respecting the deals it has agreed to.

The European official said the EU was "furious" with Serbia for

leaving the negotiating table, and will make its irritation clear in its report on the assessment of the dialogue.

"European opinion over the summer was quite anti-Kosovo because of the [Special Police] action in the north and Prishtina got the message that such unilateral operations are harmful.

"But all those Serb barricades erected later on the roads and Belgrade's failure to deal seriously with the matter have changed opinions. Now the Albanians are less blamed than the Serbs for the tensions in the north," the European diplomat said.

EU Envoy Cooper will issue to his evaluation of the implementation of the agreements reached during the talks by November 20.

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Police Beating Complaints Pile Up

Police in Gjakova routinely beat up suspects to extract confessions, victims have told Prishtina Insight – but while this practice is illegal, no action has been taken.



By Petrit Kryeziu

When police in Gjakova picked up Agim Domgjoni and accused him of stealing from a factory three years ago, officer Sejfehin Shkreli beat him so badly that he had to be sent to hospital, he told a court last month.

“Sejfehin ‘Sefa’ came to my home at 11pm,” Domgjoni told Prishtina Insight. “He took me to the police station and beat me as hard as he could with punches and kicks to my stomach and then opened a drawer and showed me three wooden and plastic canes and asked me to ‘pick one’” he added.

“He then continued to beat me until I ended up in hospital.”

Domgjoni’s complaint is standard fare in Gjakova, where Prishtina Insight has obtained similar allegations from 16 other witnesses who also said they experienced beatings at the station.

A report by the Council of Europe last month described beatings by Kosovo Police during arrests and at stations as a serious problem.

In the course of its visit, the delegation “received numerous and consistent allegations of physical ill-treatment by KP officers from persons who were or had recently been taken into custody,” the report said.

“The allegations concerned in the main punches, kicks and blows with batons at the time of

apprehension, as well as slaps, punches, kicks [including to the genital], striking the person with hard objects, or squeezing of the hand with a pencil being placed between two fingers, and beating on the soles of the feet by police officers attempting to obtain confessions during questioning,” it added.

“In some cases, the severity of the alleged ill-treatment was such that it could easily be described as torture,” it continued.

“Overall, it would appear that the situation as regards to the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty by the KP has stagnated if not deteriorated since the 2007 [Council of Europe] visit.”

The report added that in a number of cases the medical examinations of the persons concerned and medical files available “were fully consistent with the allegations of police ill-treatment”.

Agim Domgjoni was found not guilty of theft at the municipal court in Gjakova in October 2011, after which he decided to speak out on BIRN’s Justice in Kosovo show, which was aired a fortnight ago.

But instead of launching an investigation into police misconduct following the broadcast, Gjakova police last week arrested him again, accusing him of having “threatened” a police officer in one of the quotes he gave to Justice in Kosovo.

Pjeter Ndrecaj, another crime suspect who was later released, was also beaten at the police station in Gjakova, he said.

“They grabbed my hair and punched and kicked my face until my lips were cut and my nose broken,” he recalled.

“They sent me to Accident and Emergency but the doctor never released a report. The police officer told the doctor, ‘He’s fine,



The police station in Gjakova, where numerous beatings have taken place.

there’s nothing wrong with him’, and then we went back to the police station.”

Prishtina Insight visited the regional hospital of Gjakova to secure the medical reports of persons who said they had been beaten by the police.

But the search was in vain; different departments at the hospital each claimed that another had the relevant documents.

Some of those claiming to have endured violent and unprovoked police beatings in the western Kosovo town were teens.

Dede Shabani was only 15 when police picked him up three years ago and took him to the station.

“Officer ‘Sefa’ doesn’t hold back,” was how 18-year-old Shabani recollected the assault. He was later cleared of wrongdoing.

Prishtina Insight has obtained testimonies from 13 other alleged victims of recent police beatings in Gjakova.

They are Besnik Hoti, Ardenis Kamberi, Mirlind Hajra, Amir Vokshi, Enver Zeka, Shahidon Veseli, Bekim Dushku, Sylejman Meqo, Blend Cermjani, Albert Morina, Sokol Vokshi, Jozef Dushaj and Manol Deda.

In spite of the number of accu-

sations of police beatings aired in court, prosecutors in the town have yet to take action.

The Chief Prosecutor of Gjakova, Shpresa Bakija, said she had now “requested all records from courts where defendants have complained of the use of force by the police.

“I will also ask prosecutors to explain why investigations have not begun on time,” Bakija said.

Lawyer Ergjynet Barbullushi, a regular at the town’s municipal court for criminal sessions, said police often maltreated his clients in the police detention centre.

“Many of my clients have been beaten several times by the police and I have informed the prosecutors and the court, but it has fallen on deaf ears,” Barbullushi said.

“The prosecution views the defendants as devils,” he added. “They forget that defendants are only suspects and should enjoy equal rights before the law along with all other persons.”

Barbullushi also claimed that the police regularly questioned defendants without the presence of a lawyer, which is illegal.

“I had a case where I had to intervene at the level of the Chief District Prosecutor

because police should not have been allowed to be present during the interrogation of my client when I was left to stand outside,” Barbullushi continued.

The Municipal Court of Gjakova has declined to comment on allegations that they use evidence obtained under duress.

But the director of the Kosovo’s Disciplinary Office for prosecutors, Kadri Begolli, said if the claims were proven, it would be both a violation of the law and a major ethical violation as well.

“We weren’t aware of these case [in Gjakova] but now we have been informed, we will initiate investigations to find out why they [prosecutors] have not undertaken work they are obliged to do by law,” Begolli said.

The commander of the police station of Gjakova, Bekim Avdija, told Prishtina Insight that he required permission from the police spokesperson in Prishtina to comment on the claims.

The spokesperson in Prishtina then referred us to the regional police HQ in Peja, while police in Peja directed us back to Gjakova.

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Kosovo Serb Killed in Clash in Mitrovica

A fist fight that escalated into a shooting spree on Wednesday night claimed the life of a Serb man in the tense northern Kosovo town of Mitrovica, scene of frequent showdowns between Serbs and Albanians.



By Fatmir Aliu

One Kosovo Serb has died and two others were wounded following an inter-ethnic shootout in the tense northern Kosovo town of Mitrovica on Wednesday night.

Kosovo police said the shootings started in the mixed Brdjani (Vitaku) neighbourhood of northern Mitrovica where Serbs and Albanians live in close proximity.

“We were first called to intervene in stopping a fist fight and stone-throwing between the two sides,” Kosovo’s Police spokesperson, Besim Hoti, told Prishtina

Insight.

“Police went on patrol but when they got to the middle of the crowd, someone shot from an automatic weapon, injuring three persons, two civilians and a police officer. One civilian later succumbed to his wounds.”

The deceased Serb was named as Savo Mojsic. Doctors say he was brought to hospital in northern Mitrovica in a critical condition, and surgeons fought for his life but could not save him. The two other injured men are not in danger.

Kosovo Albanian and Serbian media have given different versions of which side was to blame for starting the conflict.

But local Serbs in Brdjani insist that the gun shots were fired from the Albanian side of the neighbourhood.



A view across the divided city of Mitrovica.

Police meanwhile are investigating who started the fist fight, which then escalated into a deadly showdown.

No one has yet been arrested though police raided several houses in the neighbourhood in searches for weapons overnight.

Kosovo’s government has con-

demned the incident and called for calm in the tense northern part of the country, which has been a flashpoint of tensions between Serbs and Albanians since the end of the conflict in 1999.

The Serbian government called for an international investigation into the incident.

'Life in Kosovo' Faces Ban on State TV

BIRN Kosovo's flagship current affairs show could be pulled from the RTK schedule if amendments to law pushed by ruling party succeed.



By Lawrence Marzouk

Kosovo's most watched current affairs show could be taken off the national television station, RTK, under a new law being pushed by the leading party.

The Democratic Party of Kosovo, PDK, led by Hashim Thaci, wants changes made to the draft law on RTK, currently before parliament, banning the commissioning of "current affairs" from independent producers.

Such a proposal, if adopted, would rule out Balkan Investigative Reporting Network's show, *Life in Kosovo*, the country's most watched current affairs programme, as well as its recently launched *Justice in Kosovo* programme.

It is not clear how many other productions would also be affected, but at least two others, Pa Rrotilla and the Serbian current affairs program *Slobodno Srbski*, are also believed to be under threat.

BIRN's primetime programme was launched in 2005 and quickly built up a reputation for investigative journalism and breaking taboos. It has covered many controversial topics, such as homosexuality, war crimes and freedom of speech, and is widely seen as a strong, independent voice.

But a working group commissioned by parliament to review the draft law, chaired by a member of PDK, has proposed barring all independent producers from broadcasting current affairs shows on state TV.

In late October, the PDK suggested that section 13.4 of the draft law, which prohibits the commissioning of "news programmes" by independents, should be replaced by a ban on "information programmes", which refers to current affairs shows.

The existence of the initiative is



RTK risks losing its most outspoken and independent voices if amendments to a new law are passed.

confirmed in the minutes of a meeting of the working group, held in a Kosovo mountain resort, which Prishtina Insight obtained.

The minutes say that Xhevahire Izmaku, member of parliament's Media Commission and head of the working group on the Law for the Public Broadcaster, suggested the change of wording.

The current article reads: "RTK shall commission at least 15 per cent of programmes but not more than 20 per cent from local independent producers, television broadcasters, including obligations under Article 10, but with the exception of news programmes."

Izmaku said that "news programmes" should be replaced by "current affairs programmes", according to the minutes.

In a public hearing held on this issue on November 4, Jeta Xharra, host of the *Life in Kosovo* programme and director of BIRN Kosovo, sought clarification of the proposal.

"These suggestions, which will limit critical voices broadcast on RTK, are harmful to Kosovo as they are harmful for PDK as well,

given that this is the same party that wanted us when they were in opposition and which now is trying to exclude us from RTK," she said, adding: "Why?"

Izmaku refused to explain. "I am not obliged to give any clarifications regarding my proposals," she said.

Rame Vataj, another PDK member of the commission, added: "We are obliged to account [for our actions] to our voters, not to others."

According to the rules and regulations of parliament, MPs are required to provide explanations to the public regarding proposed changes to draft laws during public hearings.

Milaim Zeka, producer and presenter of *Pa Rrotilla*, one of the threatened shows, said he was concerned by the reports.

Zeka blamed the initiative on "a group of MPs who are ignorant of television - a group that watches only the main news and does not watch our programmes because we criticise them".

Arben Ahmeti, president of the Association of Professional

Journalists of Kosovo, AGPK, told the committee: "In the end you can write the law if you want, but if you neglect the suggestions of journalists, do not expect this law to be supported by them and do not expect international reports on freedom of expression to be positive about this."

The amendment to the Law on the Public Broadcaster is being brought about to ensure independent financing for RTK, which has been funded directly from the budget since its licence fee, collected as part of electricity bills, was scrapped in November 2009.

The European Commission has demanded action on the issue from the Kosovo government. "As a matter of urgency, Kosovo needs to develop a solution for the sustainable funding of the public service broadcaster: the current budget-only funding [system] undermines RTK's independence," it wrote in this year's progress report on Kosovo, released in October.

The current draft will mean RTK remaining dependant on the state budget for the next three

years while a mechanism to collect a licence fee is devised.

The think-tank GAP Institute has published a study outlining various options for RTK's financial future, and arguing for independent funding now, not in three years' time.

GAP director Agron Demi said: "Prepayment for RTK by the citizens, not by Kosovo's budget, should start from January 2012 rather than three years later because people will be even less inclined to pay a subscription [then]."

The draft Law on Public Broadcasting allocates 0.7 per cent of the budget to RTK, which is now about 10 million euros annually.

Aferdita Kelmendi, director of another private television station, RTV21, has questioned this figure.

"We want to know why you decided that RTK will receive the amount of 0.7 per cent of the budget, no more, no less," she said at the public hearing on Nov 4. "How do you know that RTK won't need more funding?" she asked.

The government has sponsored two draft laws that are supposed to regulate the media in Kosovo; the draft law on the Independent Media Commission and the draft Law on Public Broadcasting.

Both laws have passed their first reading in the Assembly of Kosovo and are undergoing amendments at the hand of the Committee for Education, Culture, Youth, Sports, Public Administration, Local Government and Media.

The Media Commission formed the working group to work on possible changes to these laws.

The working group held a private meeting in Prevala, a mountain resort in southern Kosovo, at which various proposals emerged, amongst others, to discontinue independent current affairs news programmes.

The Media Commission later organised a public hearing to discuss the draft amendments, which were not sent beforehand to the parties invited to the public hearing.

Arrests Following Gun-Toting Video

Police have arrested three people after a video was posted online showing young men and children shooting guns, including a machine gun, in a crowded street, in broad daylight.

With hundreds of young men and boys in the street, the scene from the Youtube video of Dumnica, near Podujevo, could almost be described as carnival like, as the end of Eid, this year in September, was celebrated. That is except for the constant gun firing with a range of weapons.

The video was posted online last week, and police later arrested three persons and seized several

weapons.

The video made headlines after it was broadcast on television and covered by newspapers.

Raids were also carried out in four locations, and weapons seized. These include light machineguns and two Kalashnikovs.



A scene from the disturbing video.

Kosovo Tax Dodgers Flourish in

A café in parliament, a restaurant owned by the Deputy Prime Minister Behgjet Pacolli's family and another owned by the family of a senior figure in the governing party, Shaip Muja, are among the thousands of companies that are breaking the law by not properly declaring taxes.



By Besiana Xharra

An investigation by Prishtina Insight has uncovered proof of what many Kosovars have long believed – that their assembly is full of tax-dodgers.

Kosovo's lawmakers, we can reveal, appear relaxed about breaking the law when it comes to protecting the country's tax revenues.

Under the law on tax administration, introduced last summer, both businesses and consumers are required to tackle the black economy – all customer-focused firms were required to install fiscal cash registers, and consumers are legally obliged to ask for a receipt, or face a 20 euro fine.

But the Shqiponja restaurant in the middle of parliament has yet to install a fiscal cash register, making every assembly member who has enjoyed a coffee there a lawbreaker.

All businesses were legally obliged to install fiscal cash registers by last September or face penalties ranging from 150 euro to

1,000 euro each.

The machines record each purchase and supply data directly to the Kosovo Tax Administration, ATK. They are being introduced as part of a drive against Kosovo's black economy, estimated to be worth about 700 million euro a year.

Prishtina Insight has discovered that only one in five businesses, or 12,000 out of 60,000 firms, have heeded repeated warnings to install the equipment.

And only 1,145 businesses have been fined since the deadline of last September, according to the latest figures.

The Shqiponja has a string of contracts with government institutions and is owned by a leading trade unionist, Fehmi Nika, head of the union at the Ferronikeli metal plant.

Despite his role fighting for workers' rights and the café's position at the heart of political power, Nika's outlet is breaking the law and, as a result, the ATK is unable to know whether tax is being paid on the hundreds of macchiato and other drinks purchased every day by parliamentarians.

This newspaper also paid three visits to the restaurant of the Pacolli family, the Diamond Diplomatik Bar, on UCK Street, in central Prishtina, and two visits to Ariu, a restaurant owned by the brother of assembly member and senior PDK figure Shaip Muja.

Neither was able to issue a legal receipt on these visits. On a third visit to both, and having confronted the owners about their breaking of the law, a fiscal cash machine was in use and the correct receipt issued.

On our first trip the Diamond, it was unable to provide any sort of receipt. "Sorry, but we don't have one to give you," a waiter said.



How a fiscal receipt should look.

On the second visit, Diamond Diplomatik also could not issue a proper bill for our cake and coffee, but did issue a printed bill typed on a computer. The cash till would be "fixed soon", they said on this occasion.

On the third visit, the eatery provided a proper receipt – but the receipt also suggested that the bar had issued just six of these in total.

According to the official business register, the owner of Diamond Diplomatik is Islam Pacolli, brother of Behgjet, Kosovo's Deputy Prime Minister.

Rrahim Pacolli, Behgjet's first cousin, is also involved with the business, and Behgjet is a regular diner there.

Behgjet Pacolli is the owner of dozens of companies across the world, many of which are run or part owned by his brothers and other relatives.

Perhaps his best-known company is Mabetex, which made a fortune building palatial structures in the ex-Soviet Union and renovating the Kremlin.

He also owns a string of hotels

and restaurants under the Swiss Diamond label and formerly owned a newspaper, Lajm, which was in the same building as Diamond Diplomatik.

As well as owning Diamond Diplomatik, Islam Pacolli is a manager of Mabetex, which has also been involved in major projects in Kosovo, including work on the Rilindja government building and the Iliria Hotel.

A spokesman for Behgjet Pacolli, the former president and leader of the New Kosovo Alliance, AKR, told Prishtina Insight that he was not in any way connected to the bar.

"Diplomatik restaurant is not managed nor owned by Mr Pacolli," he said, adding that he had "nothing to do with that restaurant".

Islam Pacolli told Prishtina Insight that the failure of his staff to issue a receipt in Diplomatik was an error on the waiter's part.

"The bar does issue bills but if the waiter didn't do that, he probably wanted to get away with it [not using the register], and what can I do about that?" he asked.

"I am very interested to know if that happens and how and I'm also planning to install programs to avoid anything being done manually," he added.

"It is absolutely not a question of trying to avoid taxes as that is not how the state is built."

Similarly, Naim Muja also claimed that he had a fiscal cash



Central Bank Buys Cars From Alleged Fraudster

Kosovo's Central Bank awarded a tender to a car salesman who had been struck off for tax evasion and who had sold them defective vehicles in an earlier deal, Prishtina Insight has discovered.



By Prishtina Insight

Businessman Skender Kacandolli was awarded a deal for 80,000 euro in October 2009 to supply the Central Bank, KCB, with cars, despite having earlier sold the Bank vehicles which had to be taken off the road because of defects.

The contract should also have been cancelled based of the fact that Kacandolli's firm, Auto Color, which had sold KCB the cars, had been "deactivated" by the Tax Authority of Kosovo, ATK, as it had failed to pay its dues.

The issue was raised in the Bank's own internal auditors, seen by Prishtina Insight, who

were not convinced by the explanations of the procurement board that they had been unaware of the problems. Particularly as complaints about the initial cars were held back until the second deal was awarded and were then sent to the second firm set up by Kacandolli, as the first had been struck off for non-payment of tax.

In November 2009, the CBK procurement office awarded Auto Kacandolli, owned by Skender Kacandolli, an 80,000 euro deal to supply three 4x4 vehicles through his firm.

On October 22, 2009, the tax administration had placed Auto Color on the list of taxpayers registered prior to 31 December 2006 which had not declared any taxes since January 2007.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry's register shows that

Auto Color was registered on July 14, 2000. Although its registered name 11 years ago was "Independent Artisanal Shop – Auto-Service".

The same business registration number is held by Auto Color in the list of businesses deactivated by Kosovo Tax Administration. In accordance with deactivation rules, ATK divides businesses in two groups, one including the businesses indebted to them and the other deactivated businesses that have no debts towards ATK. Even today, Auto Color remains listed as a deactivated business that is a debtor of the Tax Administration.

Despite this, three weeks after the deactivation of Auto Color, namely on November 9, 2009, the Central Bank signed a contract with Auto Kacandolli, also owned

by Kacandolli.

The Law on Public Procurement, applicable in 2009, disqualifies people from participation in tenders in the event that their directors are late with payment of taxes in Kosovo.

But the Central Bank sees no legal violations in the way it operated. "In both procurement procedures four bidders have applied and in both cases the least expensive one was chosen," said its spokesperson Besnik Kada.

"Naturally, the notice for the award of contracts, bid opening and publication of the contract award were conducted in conformity with the procurement procedures, and none of the bidders filed any complaint regarding these two procurement processes."

Corridors of Power



Shaip Muja, Senior PDK figure

register but that it was the waiter's fault that no receipt was given, despite repeated requests.

He said: "I bought the machine two weeks after the law was adopted. It works perfectly well, so it's not true that it doesn't function.

"It is the responsibility of the client to ask for a receipt, but the waiters can also hide it from them because they tend to steal. We have had cases when we needed to dismiss waiters.

"You can come at anytime, and we can verify that we have it."

When it was pointed out that we had visited twice and on both occasions had been told be the waiter that no receipt was available, he blamed the waiters.

His brother, Shaip, a senior figure in the governing PDK and an assembly member, is not listed as an owner of the business, although he is a business partner of Naim's in other ventures.

"I have five brothers and many cousins, and they are adults, and I don't know why I should be taken as a reference for what is their business.

"It might happen that the waiters steal as well. It happened to me. What can you do about that? Go check with the waiter's school, those who issue their certificates. Deal with the origin of the problem, not its effect.

"Kosovo is growing and the implementation of law is getting better. Things cannot be done in a day."

Prishtina Insight visited dozens of other restaurants, bars and shops in Prishtina, many frequented by Kosovo's top politicians.

Most of these also appear to be



Law-maker or law-breaker? The cafe in parliament does not issue fiscal receipts and is thus breaking the law, as are all of those drinking there.

breaking the law although we have not printed their names as the practice is so widespread.

One café owned by a senior politician and - unusually - using the correct equipment is the Strip Depot, owned by Deputy Foreign Minister Petrit Selimi.

Our reporter was not immediately offered a receipt when paying, which is an offence in itself, but the waiter was able to provide a fiscal receipt when asked to.

The manager of Shqiponja, Bedri Nika, brother to Fehmi, said his firm ran two restaurants in parliament and both now had fiscal tax registers, though he admitted one was only installed recently.

He could not explain why our reporter was unable to get a proper receipt at one of the venues, despite asking for it.

Officials in parliament declined to answer Prishtina Insight's questions on this issue.

Black hole in the economy:

Strip Depot remains in the minority in its use of fiscal cash register, despite a high profile

campaign by the ATK since last year and the threat of fines.

ATK officials said they did not wish to comment on specific cases, but their inspectors were continuously checking businesses and handing out fines.

"This includes all businesses, also those that conduct activities inside the government, parliament or the municipalities," spokeswoman Hava Ademi said.

Ademi told Prishtina Insight that the results of their campaign were satisfactory, even if only one in five firms had now installed the correct equipment.

"During 2011 alone, the ATK issued 1,145 fines to businesses that are not equipped with fiscal cash, or do not issue tax receipts," she said.

"The point of the fiscal cash register is: fair competition in the market, payment of taxes, examination of the origin of goods, and so on," Ademi explained.

Three companies are licensed in Kosovo to sell the tills, which cost around 700 euro each, although many businesses have complained that the firms act as a cartel and

have artificially inflated the price of the tills. This issue is under investigation.

In a bid to increase the number of businesses equipped with fiscal cash registers, the ATK has held seminars across Kosovo in recent months, in Ferizaj, Gjilan, Gjakova, Prishtina, Peja, Mitrovica, Prizren and elsewhere.

"The seminars have gone well, and we hope they were useful for businesses which have not 'fiscalised' yet," Ademi continued.

But some economists say the take-up rate remains scandalously low.

"Not using fiscal cash boxes inside [public] institutions shows how this process has failed," economic expert Isa Mulaj said.

"I'm sure the Ministry of Economy [which has overall responsibility for taxes] is aware that this coffee bar [could be] evading taxes, yet they do nothing - for who knows what reason?"

Another economist, Musa Limani, also questioned whether the government drive was serious.

"Not using fiscal cash registers in bars that are inside [public]

institutions sets a bad example to other businesses," Limani noted.

Agim Shahini, head of the Kosovo Business Alliance, said the huge size of the black market seriously undermined Kosovo's budget.

He said research carried out by his alliance and other international organization estimated the annual value of this illicit trade at 700 million euro.

Economist Muhamet Sadiku said he believed about 40 per cent of all economic transactions in Kosovo were illegal.

Taxpayers, meanwhile, are angered by the apparent unwillingness of the private sector to pay its dues to the state.

"All strong states are built on taxes," Bedri Gola, a resident of Prishtina, said. "There is no state without taxes, but illegal businesses will continue to operate freely while Kosovo does not have functioning laws, judiciary and police."

Adrian Lima, another resident of the capital, said he doubted the wrong will be rectified any time soon. "Whenever I buy something, I never receive a proper invoice," he noted.

Skender Kacandolli did not respond to any question related to the taxes undeclared by Auto Color.

According to the CBK spokesperson, the contract with Auto Color Company was worth 32,400 euro. He added that this offer was the least expensive.

When asked whether CBK had held Auto Color accountable for the problems with the cars it had sold, Kada said that the firm "fulfilled all obligations stipulated in the provisions of their contract".

"Vehicles bought from 'Auto Color' Company were brand new, with no kilometres on the clock and without any defects," said Kada.

Kacandolli, however, said the cars were not new. "The question about vehicle defects should be made to the Bank's gasoline supplier, as the low quality gasoline damaged five vehicles belonging to the Central Bank, three of which had passed only between

2500 and 4500 kilometres," he said.

CBK did not provide an answer to the issue raised by Kacandolli.

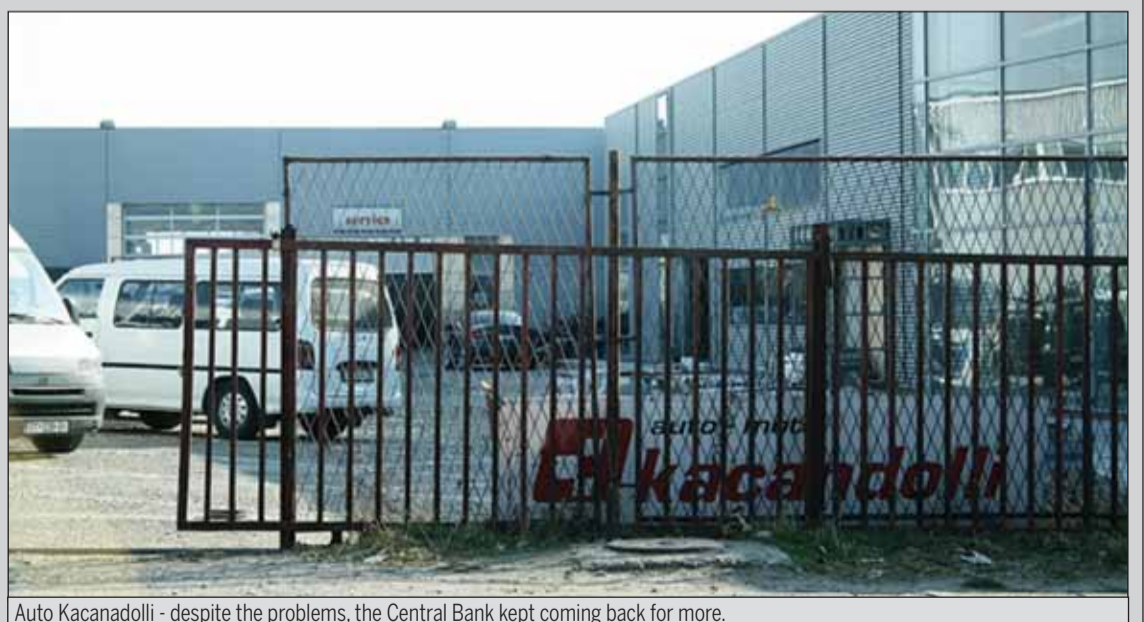
Commission Claims Ignorance

An internal report by the Central Bank's auditors in 2010, which Prishtina Insight has seen, investigated the manner in which CBK granted Kacandolli's companies two tenders.

The head and a member of the bid evaluation committee, Nezir Lokaj and Flamur Mrasori, told the auditors that they were not aware that vehicles purchased from Auto Color had broken down in October before they agreed to select Auto Kacandolli.

But the internal auditors expressed doubt that the head of the Procurement Committee, Lokaj, who was also chief administrative officer, was unaware of the problems.

It was three months later, on



Auto Kacandolli - despite the problems, the Central Bank kept coming back for more.

February 11, 2010, that the Central Bank sent a complaint about the vehicle defects. The complaint about two Mitsubishi vehicles from 'Auto Color' were sent to

'Auto Kacandolli', as the former company had been deactivated.

But the two vehicles had required repairs since October 23, 2009, one month prior to the sec-

ond tender award.

Another two Suzuki vehicles bought from Auto Color, according to the internal auditors, have not been in use since February 2010.

Albania to Protect its Banks from the Greek Crisis



By Besar Likmeta

A new bill presented in Albania's parliament aims to force foreign banks to transform their branches into local subsidiaries.

The draft law, which is expected to pass through Albania's parliament this week, is targeted at Greek banks which own a sizable share of the local market.

By transforming branches of local banks into subsidiaries, Albania is attempting to protect local depositors from a possible default of the mother financial institution.

Foreign companies currently control 95 per cent of Albania's banking market. Austria's Raiffeisen, Italy's Intesa Sanpaolo, Greece's Alpha Bank, France's Societe Generale and the National Bank of Greece, NBG, are among the largest. Only Credins bank is owned by a consortium of local investors.

Greek banks like Alpha and NBG, whose local branches in Albania currently control 23 per cent of the banking sector, are facing increase difficulties at home, as the public debt saga in Greece continues.

Macedonia Sets Record Budget for 2012

Centre-right government is confident it will be able to balance the books, managing next year's largest ever state budget.

Macedonia has set next year's budget at about 2.77 billion euro, with revenues estimated at about 2.58 billion.

This means running a deficit equivalent to 2.5 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product, the same as this year.

Compared to this year, the budget for 2012 will be some 150 million euro bigger, money that the government plans to collect through increased revenues from taxes and investments.

The draft budget "is realistic and attainable considering the present circumstances, namely the economic situation in Europe and across the globe," Finance Minister Zoran Stavreski said after the government passed the draft.

The government hopes it will achieve growth of 4.5 per cent, despite projections from various world financial institutions that it will not surpass 3 per cent.

Stavreski maintains that growth will be boosted by big increase in capital investments financed from the budget for next year. The draft foresees a 28 per cent rise in capital investments compared to this year.

This forms part of the government's strategy of compensating for expected reduced demand for Macedonian companies and products on the world market.

The government has envisaged inflation running at 2.5 per cent.

Serbian Privatisation:

Eleven years after embracing capitalism, Belgrade has cancelled almost 30 per cent of all privatisation deals because of corruption or mismanagement. Yet the system remains open to abuse.



By Stevan Doj inovi Valjevo, Belgrade, Podgorica and Warsaw

Just two years after serving a prison sentence for attempting to kill four police officers during a gun battle in Belgrade, Milan Lazarevic decided it was high time he cashed in on Serbia's privatisation programme.

Seeing no reason why his criminal record should hold him back, Lazarevic set his sights on buying a newly-privatised machine-parts factory, Masinoservis, in his home town of Valjevo.

Turns out he was right his criminal past would be no hindrance to the sale. Serbia's own Privatisation Agency signed off on the deal in November 2005.

In stark contrast to other former communist EU states such as Poland, Serbia was slow to introduce background checks on buyers to prevent criminals profiting from the sale of state companies.

This lack of state control created a perfect environment for widespread criminal activity, including illegal asset-stripping and money laundering.

The scale of corruption and mismanagement was such that Serbia has, to date, cancelled 629 out of a total of 2,281 privatisation deals because the new owners stopped production, stripped assets and failed to pay workers.

Thousands of Serbian workers have also lost their jobs as a direct result of mismanaged privatisation.

While would-be investors are now required to obtain certificates stating they do not have a criminal record and are not facing charges, there are still loopholes in the system that allow criminals to profit from sales.

Lazarevic, who secured state approval to buy Masinoservis, is now back in a prison cell on trial for allegedly running a racketeering enterprise that extorted payments and favours from Valjevo's bar and restaurant owners.

He is also accused of ordering the murder of a local underworld rival and has since been charged with tax-evasion, insurance fraud and misappropriating government funds.

'Only Fools Talk'

Twenty-five years ago, Masinoservis was a successful state-owned enterprise, employing 130 people in Valjevo, 100 km from the capital Belgrade. The factory

once had offices throughout the former Yugoslavia.

Today, the building is locked up with heavy chains but it is just possible to peer into the courtyard. The factory is derelict and abandoned; the windows broken and set in half-crumbling walls.

On paper, Masinoservis continues to employ 12 staff, all of whom say they have not worked or been paid in nine years. Locals in outlying villages who once depended on the factory for work have been forced to scrape a living doing odd jobs whenever possible.

Milivoj Savić, 60, was the only worker brave enough to speak out. His wife protested throughout the interview at their home near the centre of Valjevo, angrily saying: "Only fools talk."

Just mentioning the name Lazarevic strikes fear in the hearts of people here.

Undeterred, Savić, nicknamed Bosanac, insists that talking to a journalist is pretty much his last option. Partially-paralysed after suffering a stroke, he can neither work nor retire because Masinoservis never paid his salary or pension contributions after privatisation.

He says from the moment Lazarevic arrived at the factory, there was little evidence the new owner intended to invest and try to turn the company around. Instead, the new boss met the workers and told them to go home.

"Lazarevic said: 'I have all your phones here in the company and when I find some work, I will give you a call.' However, he sold all the machines and there's nothing left down there [at the factory]," says Savić.

Desperate, Savić finally managed to meet Lazarevic and pleaded with him to at least pay his pension contributions so he could retire.

"How do you want me to beg you, like a father, like a God, like a boss? He told me: 'Bosanac, you are the age of my father, I'll respect you for that and have no worries'... but he never paid," says Savić.

He was the only worker brave enough to seek a face-to-face meeting.

The Deal

Lazarevic bought the company in September 2004, paying the then owner, Vladan Kronic, 13,000 euro in cash. He was duly granted power of attorney, giving him full control of the company, until the sale could be officially approved by Serbia's

Privatisation Agency.

As the newly-privatised company remained subject to state supervision, only the agency could formally sign-off the sale, which it duly did on November 15, 2005.

Masinoservis was originally privatised in December 2002 with Kronic paying around 40,000 euro for the firm. He says he couldn't turn the company into a profitable enterprise and was unable to pay the workers, all of whom were on strike at the time of the resale to Lazarevic.

During Kronic's time as owner, the Privatisation Agency inspectors filed two critical reports over his management of the company; one in October 2003 and another in June 2004.

Both reports state Masinoservis workers' had not been paid since privatisation and that production had ceased, warning the company might have to be taken back under state control.

Extraordinarily, just five months later, inspectors revisited the factory that had been under Lazarevic's ownership for just a few weeks to find the workers unwilling to complain about anything at all, despite still not having been paid.

Asset Stripping

According to former owner Kronic and employees, Lazarevic immediately set about stripping Masinoservis' assets.

Kronic claims Lazarevic sold key machinery worth 10,000 euro within the first few months of taking control of the factory.

Lazarevic also allegedly sold one of the factory buildings for 41,000 euro in cash, according to charges brought by Serbia's tax office. They claim he sold the structure without declaring the sale, so evading paying tax.

BIRN has obtained records that show Lazarevic mortgaged the factory site, although it has so far been impossible to establish exactly when he took the mortgage or the sum borrowed against the land.

Lazarevic has not directly commented on any of the allegations or on his ownership of Masinoservis, but his lawyer, Miodrag Duricic, told BIRN that there is "no evidence against him".

Regarding Lazarevic's management of Masinoservis, Duricic said that production and administration problems predated his client's ownership of the firm.

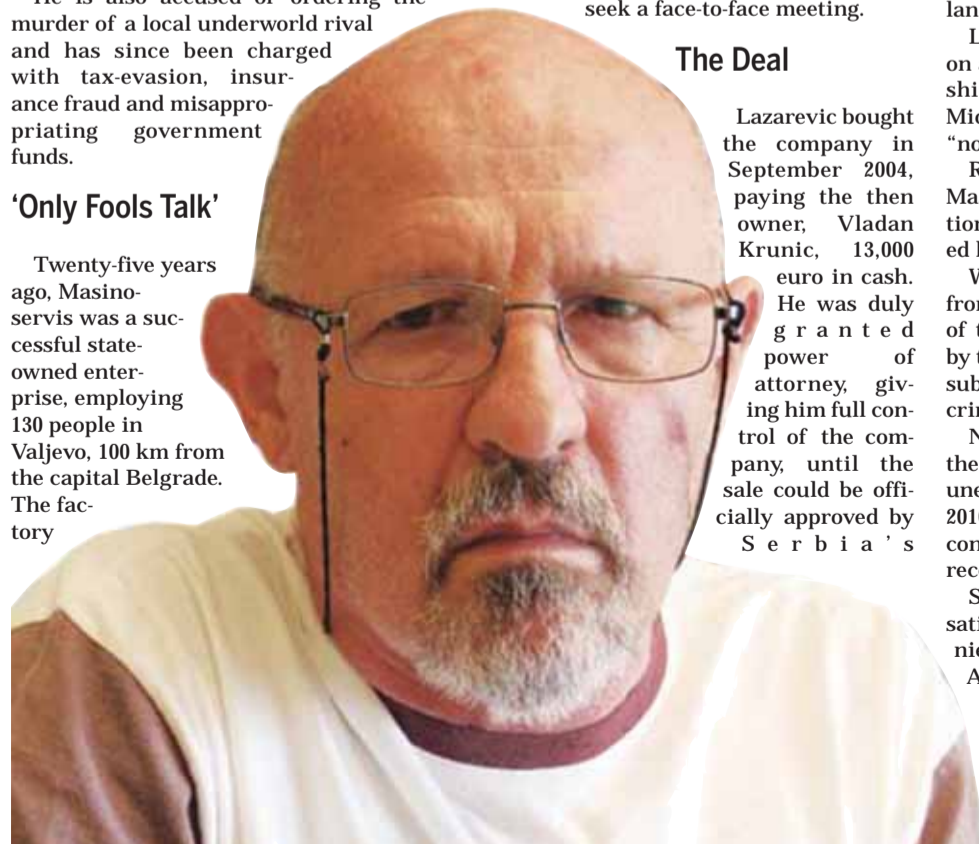
While extreme, the Lazarevic sale is far from unique in Serbia. This was just one of thousands of small enterprises sold off by the state, many of which will have been subject to illegal asset stripping and other criminal activities.

Not to mention the many Serbs who lost their livelihoods in a country where the unemployment rate stood at 20 per cent in 2010. The number of jobless is expected to continue to rise in Serbia, as the global recession bites further.

Serbia has not yet completed the privatisation process and has another 435 companies to sell, according to Privatisation Agency records.

Fake Buyer Background Certificates

Despite introducing tougher measures to prevent criminals using the



Milivoj Savić has lost his pension as a result of privatisation.

Criminals Still Cashing In

privatisation process to launder money or for other illegal purposes, the system remains open to abuse.

Although buyers have been required since 2008 to present certificates from the police or the courts stating they do not have a record, criminals can still circumvent the system.

Some bidders use proxy buyers who do not have any criminal past, many place bids via offshore companies and others even forge the certificates.

"If someone comes with a forged certificate, how could I know that it is counterfeit? These are criminal acts; it must be for someone else to investigate," says Dusan Belanovic, director of the Privatisation Agency's communications centre.

Asked why they don't send the certificates to the police for checks, Belanovic says the agency doesn't have enough staff to conduct these types of checks.

In addition, Serbia is unable to ascertain the origin of money used to buy businesses through offshore companies.

Fugitive Darko Saric was charged in 2010 by the Serbian authorities on suspicion of running an international drugs ring, thought to have smuggled around 3.5 tonnes of cocaine into Europe, and of laundering as much as 30 million euro through Serbia's privatisation process.

Documents obtained through the state prosecution service and business registers in the US and Serbia, show Saric managed to buy Serbian firms through offshore companies registered in the US state of Delaware.

Because the Privatisation Agency did not attempt to establish the origins of the offshore company funds, the authorities claim Saric could have freely laundered millions of euros earned by illicit means.

The importance of robust buyer background checks has been demonstrated time and time again in Serbia. This failure enabled Zoran Copic to buy more than 15 companies in Serbia and Bosnia since 2005, despite being tried for cigarette smuggling at the time of the purchases.

The trial opened in 2004 and is yet to be concluded. He was arrested in Bosnia this April and charged with money laundering offences and is expected to stand trial soon.

Copic was also charged by the Serbian police in late 2010 with illegally mortgaging and stripping assets from some companies.

Law 'Riddled with Weaknesses'

"The Privatisation Agency is a government body without any accountability," says Verica Barac, president of Serbia's corruption council.

At the heart of the problem lies badly drafted and poorly enforced privatisation laws.

"Privatisation is riddled with incomplete regulations, weakness-

es, gaps and holes," says Vladimir Goati, a politics and economics expert who is also director of Transparency Serbia.

"Dozens of companies were sold... without established conditions that the owner is obliged to act responsibly toward the company and its employees."

Verica Barac, president of Serbia's corruption council, agrees: "It enabled tycoons and criminals to formally, by buying companies, actually come into vast estates."

But Barac says the biggest problem with the current system is that there is still no real external control over the privatisation process.

"The Privatisation Agency is a government body without any accountability. They create, implement and control the privatisation process, but they are not controlled by any one," she says.

Branko Pavlovic, a former director of the Privatisation Agency, says the law is also flawed because it allows buyers to pay for companies in up to six separate instalments, giving the new owner time to sell off assets before completing the purchase.

"After they get the money [from asset stripping] it does not occur to them to pay the rest of the purchase price," he says. The state is then forced to take back a virtually worthless shell of a firm.

Barac and Pavlovic say that the laws were effectively approved by the World Bank and both claim the bank put Serbia under pressure to get the privatisation process rolling quickly.

"[The law] is the concept of the World Bank, based on liberal economics. It was important just to privatise, which meant institutions were not important, the property was not important, the processes were not important, the origin of money was not important," says Barac.

The man who drafted the privatisation legislation in 2001, Aleksandar Vlahovic, failed to respond to numerous requests for an interview placed via his assistant at his private consulting company Eki Investment.

Privatisation Chief 'Forced Out'

"I had pressure from all sides," says Branko Pavlovic, former head of Serbia's Privatisation Agency.

Pavlovic was director of the Privatization Agency for just four months between April and July 2004.

Initially appointed by Dragan Marsicanin, the then minister for the economy, he claims he was sacked because he tried to reform how the privatisation agency was run and to confront crime in privatisation.

Pavlovic says that from the moment he was appointed director at the agency, he was immediately being pressured from all sides, "politicians, international organisations and domestic tycoons".

According to Pavlovic, shady businessmen would attempt to



approach him through a front person.

"Tycoons do that, they find someone who you know and then that person tells you 'hey Branko, this businessman just asked me, do you want to go to dinner with us' and I would say not dinner but he can come to the agency and we can schedule a meeting," says Pavlovic.

But Pavlovic claims that as soon as he tried to terminate a suspicious privatisation deal that he was certain involved corruption, he was immediately fired along with the economy minister who appointed him.

Today he works as a lawyer and adviser to minority shareholders of companies in the process of being privatised.

The situation is not much different in other Balkan states, where privatisation has offered a perfect opportunity for shady deals, as witnessed in Bosnia, Macedonia and Montenegro.

In Montenegro, it is almost impossible to gauge the level of corruption because the details of sales are shrouded in secrecy, since the state hasn't made the records public.

Podgorica began its privatisation process back in 1997 and around 85 per cent of companies are now privately-owned. NGOs have claimed many of these deals have been subject to high-level, serious corruption.

Slow but Sure Sales in Poland

"If we have any doubts about whether it is a legitimate investor, we disqualify them," says Krzysztof Walenczak, Poland's deputy treasury minister.

It couldn't be more different in Poland, where the state has taken its time over privatisation. Warsaw has developed a system focused on rooting out corruption and organised crime over the two decades since its transition from communism to capitalism.

Twenty years after beginning its privatisation programme, five per cent of Polish companies are yet to be sold, says Ireneusz Jablonski, an economics expert and member of the Adam Smith Institute in Warsaw.

Krzysztof Walenczak, deputy minister at the Polish Treasury

which oversees the privatisation process, acknowledges progress has been slow but underlines they put a great deal of effort into finding solid investors.

"When we are selling a company we go to 15 different countries. We go to every financial centre... we have our own internal services that track potential investors. If we have any doubts about whether it is a legitimate investor, we disqualify them," he says.

Walenczak says that off-shore companies have been excluded from the privatisation process for some time in Poland, because they cannot track the origin of the funds.

Unlike in Serbia and many Balkan states, the work of the ministry is subject to constant review by various agencies, including the powerful Central Anti-Corruption Bureau (CBA).

The CBA targets high-level corruption and reports directly to the prime minister.

"We are a unique agency in the EU because only our bureau has such powers," says Pawel Wojtunik, director of the CBA. "We can work like the police... and use all 'special measures' as the secret service does. We can check the highest officials in Poland."

The CBA also investigates sales that seem suspiciously low priced, ensuring the state gets the best return possible and rooting out corruption. Offshore companies give Poland a wide berth as they often don't want to attract the attention of the CBA.

"We had one such case involving the privatisation of shipyards," says Wojtunik. "A firm from a 'risky' country was interested in the sale until the media published information that the CBA was looking into the case. The firm withdrew its offer."

EU Demands Serbia Investigation

"Three to five per cent of GDP is from money laundering activities [in Serbia]" says Vincent Deger, EU ambassador to Serbia.

While it seems clear that the Poles see crime-free privatisation as essential for the state and the economy, looming EU membership appears to be more of an incentive for Belgrade to revisit its privatisation process.

In June last year, the EU demanded Serbia re-examine 20 deals suspected of either involving high-level corruption or of failing to comply to privatisation rules.

To sweeten the pill, however, the Serbian government also received in July a 2.2m euro EU grant to help the state more effectively combat money laundering.

Vincent Deger, the EU ambassador to Serbia, notes that countries in transition to capitalist economies are at greater risk of money laundering because of the privatisation process, but warned the situation was of particular concern in the Balkans.

"Three to five per cent of the gross domestic product is from money laundering activities [in Serbia]. It's a high risk... it threatens the smooth functionality of the economy and affects the whole of society," he says.

Despite making much noise over Serbia's willingness to confront the criminalisation of its privatisation process, not everyone's convinced.

Barac, the anti-corruption council chief, is particularly unimpressed and doubts that even pressure from the EU will make much difference.

"The council has shown a number of privatisation cases and delivered documentation to the prosecution, but so far there haven't been any investigations," she says.

As Lazarevic sits in prison, facing numerous charges of continued criminal behaviour, he remains the official owner of the now devastated machine-parts factory.

While the man the state granted ownership made thousands out of the Masinoservis by selling assets and mortgaging land, many workers have been reduced to scraping a living and surviving day to day.

Serbs are wondering when their leaders will finally ensure companies, and their livelihoods, are not placed in the hands of ruthless criminals out to make a quick buck.

Stevan Dojčinović is a Belgrade-based journalist. This article was produced as part of the Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence, an initiative of the Robert Bosch Stiftung and ERSTE Foundation, in cooperation with the Balkan Investigative Reporting

Bosnia Terror Attack Pushes

Young Serb-born Muslim's shootout in Sarajevo raises fresh questions over the extent of Islamist extremism in Bosnia and Serbia's mainly Muslim Sandzak region.



By Eldin Hadzovic and Zoran Maksimovic in Sarajevo, Novi Pazar

In the courtyard of a house of the outskirts of Novi Pazar in southwest Serbia, an old man sits visibly shaken.

Sahin Jasarevic, a respected man in this overwhelmingly Muslim community, is not used to police searches.

But on October 29 Novi Pazar police combed both his homes in Novopazarska Banja, searching every corner.

He does not hold it against them, but he is appalled about the reason for the search – the recent actions of 23-year-old grandson, Mevlid.

"I couldn't believe it when I saw on television what Mevlid had done," he recalled. "The news of his attack on the US embassy in Sarajevo caught us all by surprise."

Mevlid Jasarevic is now famous for all the wrong reasons in Novi Pazar.

Two weeks ago he held centre of Sarajevo under siege for almost an hour, firing 105 shots at the US embassy and seriously wounding a policeman.

A sniper took him out with a well-aimed bullet in his thigh. Video footage showed Jasarevic wearing a long dark coat, firing a Kalashnikov.

Sahin recalled that Mevlid had been born in his house, was taken to Austria as a small child and had lived in recent years in Bosnia.

"The last time we saw him was in June when he came to visit us," the elder Jasarevic says.

He believes Mevlid first got into contact with radical Islamic groups in Austria, because it was



Mevlid Jasarevic has been linked with Wahhabi groups in Novi Pazar.

from there that he came back with a beard, talking about Islam and urging his family to take up religion.

A source from Bosnia's Ministry of Security echoed this line to Pristina Insight: Jasarevic allegedly met Wahhabi extremists in Austria and his radical Islamic groups from Vienna probably financed his subsequent activities.

The same source said uncovering the precise links in the chain would be the most difficult part of the investigation, Bosnia's level of cooperation with the Austrian authorities was poor.

Sahin Jasarevic reiterates that he tried to "set his grandson straight" on several occasions but failed to do so.

"That Wahhabi path I did not support," he maintains. "We fought to get him over here but then he left for Bosnia and for a long time I did not know where he was or what he was doing."

Not such 'isolated' cases:

On the streets of Novi Pazar, the largest town in Serbia's remote Sandzak region, locals are worried

these days and reluctant to talk to journalists.

Members of the Wahhabi movement, in their trademark beards and short trousers, have been less in evidence since recently.

Semiha Kacar, head of the Sandzak Committee for Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms, emphasises that most people are appalled by news of the shootout.

"This act is harmful for all Bosniaks [Muslims], not only in Bosnia and Herzegovina but in Sandzak as well," she says.

Aida Corovic, director of Urban In, a local non-government organisation, agrees.

"Radicalisation is not good. Because of everything that has happened, people see us [Novi Pazar Muslims] in a very bad light," she says.

"This is a poor region, and no one wants to invest here because of stories like this. Everyone heard that he [Jasarevic] is from Novi Pazar and from Sandzak," she adds.

She does not believe that the number of Wahhabis in Novi Pazar has actually increased in recent years but agrees with Kacar

that most are young people.

While Serbia's minority Muslims glumly ponder the consequences of Jasarevic's actions for their community, over the border in Bosnia a lively debate continues on whether the authorities could have done more to prevent the rise of radical Islam in general.

Sources in Bosnia's state security structures say Mevlid spent the last two months in Gornja Maoca, a notorious hamlet in southeast Bosnia where locals follow radical Wahhabi or Salafi version of Islam.

"I am certain that he [Mevlid] acted as an individual but that does not mean that we see this case as an isolated one in relation to earlier recorded terrorist actions in Bosnia," Sadik Ahmetovic, Minister for Security, told Pristina Insight.

Ahmetovic said the ministry has repeatedly proposed changes to the Law on Money Laundry and Financing of Terrorist Activities.

But he blamed opposition MPs from the smaller of Bosnia's two entities, the Republika Srpska, for not supporting the law and the failure to get it through the State

Parliament.

Bosnia's politicians, Serb and Muslim, are well known for ritualistically blaming the country's political logjam on each other.

Whether Bosnian Serbs are really to blame for failures to upgrade security legislation or not, terrorist attacks are on the rise in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Haris Causevic "Ox" and his accessories are currently on trial before the country's state court for a bomb attack on the police station in central town of Bugojno, which killed a policeman, Tarik Ljubuskic, and wounded his female colleague, Edina Hindic.

Another trial is ongoing against the group of Rijad Rustempasic, charged with preparing a terrorist attack where?

Nusret Imamovic, an informal Wahhabi leader in Gornja Maoca, immediately after Jasarevic's rampage in Sarajevo condemned his act.

But Imamovic's lectures, which can be found on the Internet, at Putvjernika.com, support radical Wahhabi action in Bosnia and even suicide attacks.

The official Islamic Community

Macedonia Plans to Better its Battered Railways

Government plans to buy new rolling stock and repair lines as part of a bid to upgrade its decayed network that has been starved of investment for the past 30 years.

Macedonia plans to purchase five new locomotives and about 20 passenger cars after more than 30 years of practically no investment in the railways. In addition, the government says it will buy some 160 new cargo wagons.

The new rolling stock is costed at some 45 million euro, money that the government hopes to secure through loans and grants from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, EBRD, and other banks.

If all goes well, the new trains

will be operational by 2013, the head of the state-owned Macedonian Railways-Transport company, Oliver Derkoski, said.

"For a small country like Macedonia, this would significantly improve the existing situation," Derkoski said.

The company currently has some 30 locomotives but many are out of service or are used only for cargo transport. This leaves only a few locomotives available for commuters travelling in and out of the capital, Skopje.

The last new trains to enter service were purchased back in 1979.

"The old trains brake far too often and we have no appropriate replacements", says Derkoski,

explaining the sometimes absurd several-hour delays on the short network of less than 300 kilometres.

The only branch of the railway system that has continued to make a profit over the years is the cargo service, which supplies industry with raw materials and transports the country's goods abroad.

The last attempt to buy new trains was in 2009, when the government set aside money from the budget for that purpose. However the government soon dumped the plan, faced with the challenges of the global financial crisis that started that year.

In addition to poor trains, the rail infrastructure has also decayed over time. Next year the



An aging locomotive in Macedonia.

government plans to start a major project to reconstruct the lines as part of the country's north-south pan-European transport corridor 10. It also plans to start constructing a new railway spur, running

towards Bulgaria in the east.

Last year several trains in Macedonia came off the rails, causing minor injuries to passengers. The incidents were blamed on old infrastructure.

Wahhabi Threat to Fore

of Bosnia and Herzegovina has also come under scrutiny.

The community condemned Jasarevic's actions in Sarajevo, but some experts criticise its perceived failure to rein in the Wahhabis and other extremists.

Partly this is because the community is reluctant to lose generous financial aid from Saudi Arabia, home to the Wahhabi movement.

When quizzed on size of the donations from Saudi Arabia, Mustafa Ceric, head of the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina, replied: "One should not cut off the branch on which one sits".

Since the end of the 1992-5 war in Bosnia, Saudi Arabia has poured in money for the construction of mosques and Islamic centres, some of which have spread the Wahhabi ideology.

The Wahhabi movement began penetrating Bosnia and Serbia's Sandzak region in the early 1990s, as civil war engulfed Yugoslavia.

As Bosnia's hard-pressed Muslim-led government appealed to the Arab world for aid against the militarily superior Serbs, so-called Mujahedin fighters from Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Syria



Sahin Jasarevic, grandfather of the 'terrorist'.

began arriving, joining the Muslim-led Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Numbers were small. It is estimated that no more than 400 came to Bosnia, and most left after the war. But their fellow-thinkers resumed their spread of a highly intolerant version of Islam.

According to the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina, between 3,000 and

4,000 members of Wahhabi movement are active in the country today.

Ahmet Alibasic, lecturer at the Faculty of Islamic Sciences and director of the Centre for Progressive Studies, says the Islamic Community reacted tardily in dealing with the threat of Islamic extremists.

Professor Alibasic recalled the failure of his own attempt to organise a discussion on the Wahhabi at an institutional level in the Islamic Community. That remains the only attempt to open up a debate on the topic within the Islamic Community in Bosnia, he says.

Vlado Azinovic, professor at the Sarajevo Faculty of Political Sciences and an expert on terrorism, believes that "isolated incidents" simply are now too frequent to be seen as "isolated" any longer.

"Our problem is that our imams are not prepared to debate with these radicals. When we studied, we prepared for discussions with atheists, not with militants," he recalled.

"We were too late in realising the role of Mujahedin in the ranks of the Army of Bosnia and



The Jasarevic's compound in Novi Pazar

Herzegovina in war," the professor added.

A former Wahhabi and member of the El Mujahidin squad in the Bosnian Army, Adnan Mesanovic, says Jasarevic's terrorist act will certainly draw fresh attention to "the boys in long beards and short trousers.

"Not every Wahhabi is a terrorist," he cautioned, "but while

there are Wahhabis, you will get the latter, because their ideology is so violently intolerant," he says.

"In the long term, the big problem is the Wahhabi installed in high positions within the Islamic community, as well as in state institutions."

Valerie Hopkins in Sarajevo also contributed to this article.

Suspect Refuses to Recognise Court:

In his interrogation before the country's state court, the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, on October 31, Jasarevic was defiant. "Beside Allah's court, I don't recognise any other, all this does not exist for me," he said.

Asked for his name, he replied that he did not differentiate between his "official" name and "Abdurahman", as he now called himself.

Prosecutor Dubravko Campara told Prishtina Insight that Jasarevic's statement, given in hospital, where he was recovering from being shot in the thigh, was confusing.

"For now we cannot say this incident has any political background or that it is related to a concrete event," prosecutor Campara said.

Senad Dupovac, Jasarevic's court-appointed lawyer, said his client had not wanted to hurt anybody - only to become a martyr.

Dupovac said his defendant had no known accessory to the crime, and no one had known about his plan when he drove in a grey Opel Kadet from the Bosnian village of Gornja Maoca with Dino Pecenkovic and certain Ahmetspahic to Sarajevo last month.

Both men have admitted driving Jasarevic to Sarajevo for money, but maintain they knew nothing about his intentions.

State prosecutor Campara declined to talk about the involvement of possible accessories, or about potential networks that Jasarevic might have belonged to, citing "the interests of the investigation".

Crackdown on Sandzak Wahhabis:

Serbian police shot dead Ismail Prentic, suspected of being a Wahhabi leader in Sandzak, in spring 2007 in Novi Pazar.

A month before the shootout, on the Ninaja mountain, close to Novi Pazar, police discovered what they called a Wahhabi camp containing quantities of weapons, ammunition, explosive devices, military equipment, medical material and food.

In September 2007, Serbia's Special Prosecution for organised crime indicted 15 suspected Wahhabis from Novi Pazar with terrorism.

The jail terms were drastic. The special department of the Belgrade District Court sentenced 12 members of the group to 64 years in prison total for "planning terrorist actions and unauthorised carrying of weaponry."

The leader of the group Senad Ramovic was sentenced to 13 years in prison, while the other 11 members of the group were given sentences that range from six months to eight years in prison. The other three members were released.

Who is Mevlid Jasarevic?

Mevlid Jasarevic, son of Izet Jasarevic, was born on December 20, 1988, in Novi Pazar in southwest Serbia, where his residence is registered, according to police.

On several occasions in the last two years he visited Salafi gatherings in the village of Gornja Maoca. The director of the Serbian government's media office, Milivoje Mihajlovic, described Jasarevic as an extreme member of the Wahhabi movement, closely linked to the community in Gornja Maoca, Bosnia, where he owns a house.

Six years ago while living in Vienna, Jasarevic was sentenced to three years of imprisonment after stealing 100,000 euros. Later, he was expelled from Austria.

"After that, Jasarevic lived in Sarajevo and Tuzla, and last year he stayed in Novi Pazar, where the police apprehended him on November 29 because he was carrying a knife in the vicinity of a group of diplomats and the US ambassador to Serbia," Mihajlovic said.

Over the past year Jasarevic spent most of his time outside Serbia, he added.

Serbian Extremists Join Neo-Nazis in Poland

Serbian rightists are traveling to the annual Neo-Nazi gathering in Warsaw after which they will hold a rally entitled "Kosovo is Serbia".

Members of the far-right group 1389 are packing brochures on Kosovo and posters titled "Kosovo is Serbia" for their Warsaw trip on November 11 and 12.

The group of 10 is due to join extreme right-wing organisations from Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary at a far-right conference on November 11.

Every year on the Independence Day of Poland, November 11, extremists organise a march in the streets of Warsaw carrying such slogans as "All of Poland will be white" or "Enough of Jewish occupation." Anti-fascists, anarchists and other human rights activists also gather in large numbers to prevent them.

Last year the police had to intervene as more than 2,000 extremists clashed with about 3,000 leftist opponents.

This year the organisers will hold a special meeting to sup-

port Serbia's bid to regain its former province of Kosovo, which declared independence in February 2008.

"As part of Serbia, Kosovo will be presented in the proper way at a meeting on November 12," Misa Vacic of 1389 told Prishtina Insight.

According to Vacic, 1389 has developed lasting cooperation with extremists from the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland.

"No 1389 action has been carried out without the support of Czechs, Slovaks and Poles," Vacic said.

Meanwhile, Serbian Police are monitoring the Serbian rightists' movements after receiving a tip from Polish Interpol that they should check to see whether extremists from Serbia plan to attend the Neo-Nazi rally.

"If we find that there is a security threat, then we will react, which may mean the ban on leaving the country," Serbian police said in a statement.

Serbia's constitutional court has started collecting information on 1389 to see if its activities are unconstitutional.



Nationalist graffiti in Serbia.



Kosovo Struggles with Spike in Drug Addiction

Lying at the crossroads of smuggling routes to Western Europe, Kosovo is seeing a rise in addictions that health services are failing to address.



By Jeton Musliu

The pleasure from his first heroin hit, injected directly into a vein, has never left him, even though it was 33 years ago.

But the constant search to reawaken that feeling has destroyed his life, says SH, now a 48-year-old addict from a town near Prishtina. "I have no words to describe that moment of happiness," he said.

SH, who has asked to remain anonymous, got his first heroin dose in Split, Croatia, at the age of only 15.

But Kosovars no longer need to travel that far to experiment with drugs. Their country now lies on the crossroads of a number of trafficking routes, bringing cannabis and heroin through Kosovo on the way to the lucrative markets of Western Europe.

But while experts fear there are up to 20,000 drug addicts in Kosovo, the state-run addiction clinic says it has treated just 40 people so far this year.

As this miss-match makes clear, the sudden increase in the availability of drugs, creating many new addicts, has not been matched by adequate changes to the services on offer.

For example, Kosovo still has no comprehensive methadone treatment programme, the replacement drug used across the world to wean people off heroin. And as drug addiction remains taboo, too many people feel inhibited from seeking help.

A growing trend:

Ten years ago talk of Kosovo as a drugs hub was widely dismissed as propaganda emanating from Serbia.

"There is no drug problem in Kosovo because no drugs have been seized since the [UN] mission was established," Bernard

Kouchner, then head of the UN Mission in Kosovo, said in 2000.

In 2001, authorities seized just 0.8kg of heroin in Kosovo. But by 2007 that figure had increased sevenfold to 6.9 kg, and last year it stood at 55kg.

It is unclear how much of this huge increase can be explained through improved policing, or whether the increase also indicates Kosovo's growing role as a stopping point on various smuggling routes to western Europe. Different agencies, international and local, see the situation differently.

What is clear is that the number of people in Kosovo struggling with addiction is on the rise.

Earlier this year, Kosovo Police and the EU rule-of-law mission, EULEX, launched a campaign, "Don't close your eyes", to tackle drugs in society.

In his opening remarks at the launch, Reshat Maliqi, then Director General of the police, said the number of drug users in Kosovo was increasing, and the problem needed to be treated more seriously.

"We are cooperating with both schools and parents to increase awareness of the danger of drugs in society," he said.

The Europe Union's Progress Report for 2011, released in October, also notes the growing problem. "The domestic market [for drugs] has also grown, notably for cocaine," it reads.

The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction reported this year that "increasing amounts of heroin smuggled are retained in Kosovo for use by local clients".

But reliable statistics on the number of addicts in the country are hard to come by.

Kosovo Police puts the figure at roughly 10,000 while Labyrinth, one of the few NGOs working in this field in Kosovo, alongside UNICEF, put the figure at 20,000.

Safet Blakaj, a founder of Labyrinth, established in 2002, says the number of people addicted to heroin is on the rise. Drug users seeking help from Labyrinth have increased from 500 in 2009 to 800 this year.

"Of these 800 persons dependent

on drugs of various kinds, from cannabis to heroin, the youngest is only 13 and the oldest is 57," he said. "Their average age is 24 to 26."

According to him, the most prevalent drug in Kosovo is cannabis, which causes psychological dependence, unlike heroin and cocaine.

"But most of those seeking help, more than 95 per cent, are dependent on heroin and those are the more serious cases," he said.

"In the last three years the number of users of this type of drug has increased, as has the number of addicts using needles," he added.

Addicts going without help:

Labyrinth offers psychiatric counselling, therapeutic services and substitution treatment, as well as psychotherapy for an individual, family and group basis. But it's not a clinic and the NGO is virtually alone in Kosovo in offering services to addicts.

SH is among those using Labyrinth's services. His friend,

he says, died a few weeks ago after a heroin overdose, and SH was recently diagnosed with Hepatitis C, which causes liver inflammation and can lead to death.

It is likely that SH became infected from a dirty needle.

"Now I'm just glad I'm alive. A close friend of mine died from an overdose," he said, shaking his fist in distress.

"No one helps us," he said. "When you don't have money, you need to use other people's syringes," he said, showing his left hand, which is scarred from repeated injections.

"The authorities don't help us," he added. Drug users have two choices, according to SH: to steal, or to beg. SH admits that his friends steal, but says he does not. As for begging, he does not deny it. "I take what people give me," he says.

Six years ago, a new unit was set up to help addicts within the Department of Psychiatry at University Clinical Centre in Prishtina

But the unit's own head complains that it still does not function properly today and that infectious diseases such as HIV and Hepatitis among addicts are on the rise.

"This department is more like an improvisation because we don't have a specific institute," Dr Shaban Mecinaj complained.

"After patients leave, we don't even have methadone to offer them," he said.

"So far this year we have had 40 people in the department, most of whom were addicted to heroin, alcohol, as well as other soft drugs," Dr Mecinaj added.

"Infectious diseases such as Hepatitis B and C are on the rise."

Faik Hoti, chief spokesman at the Ministry of Health, says that by law doctors can prescribe methadone.

He added that the Ministry of Health is also participating in implementing a government strategy, the Drugs and Action Plan, which started in 2009.

"Treatment with methadone



Derelict homes sometimes used by drug addicts in Prishtina



"Of these 800 persons dependent on drugs of various kinds, from cannabis to heroin, the youngest is only 13 and the oldest is 57. Their average age is 24 to 26."

Safet Blakaj



The addiction clinic, which is poorly resourced, according to its head.

The taboo surrounding drug taking is also keeping many people away.

"There is shame and a stigma about visiting a psychiatric clinic," he continued. "People associate it with insanity, so they do not come."

Blakaj, of Labyrinth, agrees that the taboo surrounding drug addiction is a major obstacle to treatment.

"Drug users are often thrown out by their families," he says. "The families try to hide it at first, then for a few years they are supportive, but ultimately they give up."

Is Kosovo a drug haven?

While Kosovo is facing an increase in drug abuse, it remains far from the picture some have attempted to portray as a country awash with heroin.

Even if the high-end figure of 20,000 addicts in Kosovo is accepted, that is still only 1 per cent of the population.

Kosovo Police also beg to differ with the view of Kosovo as a problem area.

Gazmend Hoxha, head of the police's Department of Organized Crime, says the increase in seizures is down to better policing and does not necessarily reflect an increase in trafficking.

However, he does accept that Kosovo lies on the so-called Balkan route along which heroin passes from Afghanistan to Western Europe.

"In 2009 we caught 36kg of heroin and in 2010 56kg of heroin, but that doesn't mean that drug trafficking has increased," said Hoxha. "We are just working better."

He says that no police force in the region focuses more on narcotics than the Kosovo Police.

"Why would drugs come through Kosovo when they can just as easily enter through Bulgaria and Macedonia?" he asked.

"With visa liberalisation, there are almost no limits [on drugs] heading towards Central Europe," continued Hoxha, referring to the relaxation of visa controls on citizens of most Balkan states, bar Kosovo, seeking to enter the EU's so-called Schengen zone.

But international reports suggest that while a great deal of heroin goes to Europe via Bulgaria and Serbia, Kosovo plays a role.

It is mentioned as a base for storage and repackaging, and also lies on a separate route to Western Europe via Albania and Italy.

A July 2011 report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reads: "Kosovo appears to act as a storage site for heroin smuggled from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia or Albania.

"Heroin is often stretched and cut with adulterants and then re-packaged [there] and sent westward through Serbia or Montenegro."

Kosovo also lies on the main route running through Bulgaria to Italy, it says.

"Albanian criminal groups use family or

clan links in Kosovo to facilitate heroin trafficking to Albania," it continued.

An April 2011 report by Europol, the European Union's criminal intelligence agency, also emphasises that the "Kosovo region, in particular, are [sic] important locations for storage and repackaging.

"Cannabis grown in Albania and the Kosovo region is distributed in Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Hungary, and also trafficked to Turkey, where it is exchanged for heroin," it adds.

Hoxha, however, does not believe that criminal groups in Kosovo are as powerful as some international reports suggest.

"As we are not part of Europol or Interpol, we still have no opportunity to show our facts, so these reports are more political than real. Others speak for us," he said.

SH also believes that the availability of drugs in Kosovo is exaggerated. He says he has travelled to France, Germany, Hungary

and the Czech Republic, where he feels drugs are more readily available than they are in Kosovo.

SH lost his wife six years ago because of his addiction but still holds out hope that he will be able to rebuild his life one day.

"Of course I believe I can build a family," he said. "I do not think I'm too late."

Drug routes:

Heroin: From Afghanistan to Europe via Turkey, then Bulgaria and Macedonia/Serbia or Kosovo.

Cocaine: Often reaches Kosovo by post or through couriers from Serbia and South American countries. (Source: European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction.)

Cannabis: Five to ten per cent is cultivated in Kosovo while the rest comes from Albania. (Source: Kosovo Police)



"After patients leave, we don't even have methadone to offer them,"

Shaban Mecinaj



"In 2009 we caught 36kg of heroin and in 2010 56kg of heroin, but that doesn't mean that drug trafficking has increased,"

Gazmend Hoxha

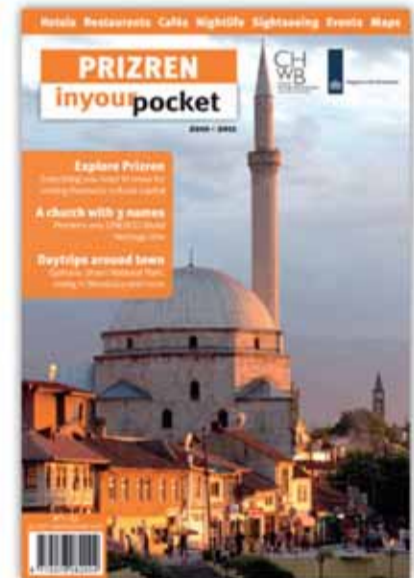
also takes place in secondary health care institutions such as regional hospitals, and there is psychiatric care from mental health professionals" he insisted.

But the EU is critical of the services on offer in Kosovo. "There are serious shortcomings in addressing the challenges of local drug demand, including inappropriate in-treatment capacities in hospital," it found in its latest Progress Report. "The methadone maintenance programme remains unavailable."

Dr Mecinaj says he is particularly concerned that people repatriated to Kosovo aren't being prescribed methadone on arrival. This includes a sizable number of people being repatriated after a stretch in jail, during which time they may well have become addicts.

"Repatriated people cause problems; we have cases of people coming from the airport and seeking methadone, as they did in Western countries, where it is free, but we don't have it," Dr Mecinaj said.

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Croats Hold Roma and Muslims

At least 40 per cent of Croats wouldn't want to share a home with a Muslim or a Roma, our survey reveals, highlighting the extent to which racial and religious prejudice remain alive in Croatia.



By Barbara Matejic

Mersiha stands in front of a modernist apartment block in the centre of downtown Zagreb in Varsavska street and nervously rings the bell at the entrance for the umpteenth time while calling the same mobile number over and over.

She sees the light on the fourth floor where her potential home should be. The curtains on the windows seem to be moving, and someone up there is looking down, but no one opens the door or answers the phone.

It's 9.30pm and half an hour has passed since the arranged time to view the apartment for rent. Mersiha finally gives up. "He must have seen me, which is why he does not want to open up," she tells me angrily later, meaning her headscarf, not her personally.

When Mersiha gets hold of the owner the next day, he apologises that the apartment has unfortunately already gone. But when I call him several minutes after the apartment is still free. I can come and see it now. "Excellent", I tell him in a resigned voice.

That mild-mannered, middle-aged man from old part of Zagreb is one of many who during a two-month undercover investigation refused to rent an apartment or office, accept a roommate, or hire for work, people on account of their racial or religious background.

Mersiha, a Muslim, and Dilfa, a Roma, posed on my behalf as would-be tenants, roommates and co-workers in order for me to be able to monitor the kind of discrimination that minorities experience routinely in Croatia and see how it manifests itself.

I chose Muslim and Roma "testers" as their differences from the mainstream community are instantly visible and because discrimination based on ethnicity and religious background are the most widespread forms of prejudice in Croatia. The number of Roma and Muslims in Croatia is also quite similar.

The two women did not know each other before and neither had taken part in such an investigation. Dilfa was born in Zagreb while Mersiha has been living in Croatian capital for the last 17 years.

The plan was for three of us to answer a number of adverts placed mainly in the largest newspaper for printed advertisements, Plavi oglasnik. We were looking mostly for offers to rent rooms and apartments but also for jobs.

Our goal was to check levels of discrimination in arenas where private life and business intersect, such as looking for a roommate and renting real estate.

Previous surveys have shown that discrimination in Croatia is most common in the area of labour



Croatian Muslims queue for food aid during the conflict in Croatia.

and employment, followed by the judiciary system, the police and healthcare.

But how ready are mainstream Croats citizens to interact with members of other groups, in this case Muslims and Roma? To find it out, we answered one hundred ads.

Dilfa Orsus's name was a pseudonym, as was Mersiha Alihodza's. I worked under my own name. All three of us answered the same adverts and introduced ourselves in the same manner: as unmarried, working women in our late twenties with secondary school diplomas.

As Roma names are not necessarily recognizable as such in Croatia, we ensured that Dilfa always mentioned having worked for an association called Roma For Roma, which she had done in the past.

Mersiha's name was clearly Muslim and she also wore a headscarf for interviews. Both women told prospective landlords, roommates or employers that if there was a problem, they wanted to be told what it was. I called and went to interviews last, to avoid being chosen for the room or job first.

Worst for Roma:

Most people we contacted seemed more prejudiced towards Dilfa than Mersiha, probably because Muslims are not as stigmatised in Croatia as Roma.

But Mersiha still received more direct rejections than Dilfa, although most of those who rejected one rejected the other, too. In many cases they were rejected point blank over the phone after saying their names.

Croatia is a fairly homogeneous country. Of its 4.4 million citizens, about 89 per cent are both Croat and Catholic, according to the 2001 census.

Roma officially number only 9,463 but many do not declare their real ethnicity. It is widely believed that a more accurate number would resemble that of Bosniaks or Muslims, who numbered 43,469 in 2001.

Bosniaks and Muslims are generally well integrated into society and do not differ significantly from

other citizens of Zagreb in terms of social characteristics, according to a survey published this year by the Council of the Bosniak National Minority of Zagreb. Few Muslim women in Croatia wear religious insignia such as headscarves.

The office of Ombudsman, an umbrella body set up to combat discrimination, says most of the complaints it received last year for discrimination concerned race or ethnic background.

An EU-wide survey of discrimination and victimisation in everyday life confirms that the main grounds for discrimination in the EU are ethnic and immigrant origin (93 per cent) and religion or belief (64 per cent), according to the European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey, EU-MDIS, from 2010.

Although Croatia adopted an Anti-Discrimination Law in 2008, research carried out last year by the government's Human rights office, the Ombudsman's office and the Centre for Peace Studies showed that around half of all Croats do not know that discrimination in Croatia is illegal.

One in five respondents couldn't describe what discrimination was and one in four would not want their child to marry someone of another religion, nationality or skin colour.

The passage of the Anti-Discrimination Law was a result of the pre-accession negotiations with EU.

40 per cent said, 'No'

The sharpest discrimination in our survey appeared among those seeking roommates. Around 40 per cent of our respondents rejected either a Muslim and Roma woman as a potential roommate. They all accepted me.

One young woman seeking a flatmate in Zagreb's Vukovarska street rejected both Mersiha and Dilfa on the grounds that she had someone else in mind already.

But when I called again some weeks later she told me she was moving on after five years because she could not find a new roommate. "It's a shame you did not call earli-

er, as you sound normal," she told me.

She, like many of the others, appeared keen to hide what seemed to be the real but unspoken reason for rejecting the "wrong" candidate.

Common answers were that apartment was already rented, that the landlord would not want a Roma or Muslim tenant or that they were seeking students or men.

But when I called, those same "occupied" rooms were still free and they had no objections or additional questions for me. The only thing that interested them was when I could come and see the apartment.

There was an obvious shortage of interested people seeking to rent, but that did not make them want to rent out to just "anyone".

Of those renting apartments, 30 per cent rejected both Mersiha and Dilfa and none rejected me. On no occasion was one of them accepted while I was not.

One middle-aged lady offering a two-room apartment for 400 euros a month to "one or two females", as she specified in Plavi oglasnik, offered me cookies after a short interview.

"All kinds of people have been calling these days but I can't rent it to anyone, which is why I'd like you to accept - someone from around here, ours," she said.

When I asked what kind of people had called, she answered: "You won't believe it but on the same day a Roma woman called and then a Muslim. I thought, 'I'm out of luck', and then you called the next day. I have nothing against them but I don't know them and I certainly don't want any trouble," she added.

When I pointed out that she didn't know me either, she continued: "You are something else, I see you are decent, we'll get along fine."

Formerly it was easy to rent out rooms and flats in the upmarket west side of the city, but demand is dropping because of the economic crisis and falling incomes.

Even so, people are still selective about who they want to take on. This woman didn't know that I knew that Dilfa's interview with her had gone well until she found out that she worked for Roma For

Roma. Then she insisted she was seeking a student.

She told Mersiha that the apartment was already rented as soon as she heard her name. She did not set any conditions for me, was not interested in additional details and the apartment was, naturally, free. She tried to persuade me to take it.

Another woman, an older woman renting rooms in Bukovacka road, with a special annotation, "Urgent, pets allowed", went silent when Dilfa told her she worked for the Roma association, adding that she had already made other arrangements. Six weeks later the apartment was still empty.

When Dilfa tried to rent an office space in Berislaviceva street for the Roma For Roma association, she was told it wasn't suitable for associations, "only for companies."

But when I called and said I needed the space for the association for fight against discrimination, I was told we could move in immediately.

While most people who rejected Dilfa and Mersiha and accepted me concealed their reasons for rejecting them, a smaller number openly admitted they had a problem with Roma and Muslim tenants.

Some students seeking roommates told Dilfa, who was born and raised in Zagreb, that they wanted "someone from Croatia."

One young woman in the Siget area, looking for an "employed, quiet roommate of 25 to 35", said she had no problem with Mersiha being a Muslim but objected to the headscarf, saying she wanted "someone more like herself".

Some of those who claimed they did not care about nationality or religion asked Dilfa leading questions, such as how many people she intended to share the apartment with, although she had already emphasised that she would live there alone.

Others repeatedly tried to check whether she had a job and a steady salary, emphasising that she had to pay on time. Some made comments such as, "I don't want any whorehouse in there", "You must be tidy", "You don't sound like a Roma", or "Are you too dark?"

Staff at a café near Selska road, seeking a waitress, asked Dilfa to come over so they could see how dark her skin was.

The most positive reactions came from people who had had some experience with Roma and Muslims.

"I am interested in what you wear in your heart and not on your head," the owner of an apartment in Tresnjevka said, seeing Mersiha's headscarf.

She said she too was a "believer and respected everyone who cared about their religion". She liked Muslims especially "because her sister was married to a Muslim."

No work for you:

Discrimination in the jobs sector on the grounds of race and faith was harder to quantify in the investigation because the economic crisis had cut the number of

at Arm's Length

vacancies.

We applied for jobs that did not require special qualifications such as sales posts in boutiques, bakeries, babysitters and cleaning positions.

Many jobs were already taken. Thus, "only" 15 per cent of employers we contacted could be said to have rejected a Muslim and Roma on those grounds.

But, not surprisingly, discrimination in employment is the most frequent complaint voiced by members of minorities.

I talked to several educated Roma women who have been vainly seeking jobs for years.

Usnia Garip, aged 30, lives in Zagreb, where she finished secondary school in agriculture with good grades. Garip is proud to be a Roma but says potential employers invariably lose interest when they realise "who she is" in ethnic terms. "They don't see a potential worker in me, only a Roma," she said.

In ten years of seeking work she had worked for only two months, as a cleaner. Her husband had qualified as a waiter but after

being told that he would never get a job because he is a Roma, he gave up.

Instead, they recycle waste, while in the meantime Garip attends a course at the Employment Bureau as a part of the project to stimulate Roma employment.

"They teach us how to behave, dress and talk, as if I don't know!" she said. "Despite all the requests I sent, I did not get a single job interview."

Croatia's state Employment Bureau registered a total of 4,553 Roma as unemployed in late 2010, which is almost half all the Roma in Croatia numbered in the 2001 census.

Surprisingly, the Employment Bureau said they had received no complaints from unemployed Roma about any form of discrimination.

In spite of the 2008 law outlawing discrimination in Croatia on the grounds of faith or ethnicity,

many people either appear unaware of it or ignore it.

This became clear when I contacted five real estate agencies, asking them to advertise renting an office space on condition that they sent me

ethnic Croats clients alone, not just "citizens of Croatia".

Four agencies agreed to select candidates according to these criteria without expressing surprise or protest. I had the right to choose who I wanted to lease my office space to, they said.

Only one of the five contacted agencies, Rost, rejected my request, saying the law forbade discrimination in that way.

Dating your own people:

Because of the large percentage of people who have told other surveys that they would not want a non-Croat in the family, I tried testing attitudes towards the idea of having a Muslim or Roma partner on a well-known dating site.

Iskrice has 371,021 members and the number is rapidly growing. Thousands of messages are exchanged on the site daily.

I opened profiles for three women, named Dilfa, Mersiha and Barbara. For Dilfa and Mersiha I entered that they were Roma and Muslim. Both of them, especially Mersiha, received far fewer requests from interested parties than did Barbara, although the three profiles were similar, except for that one aspect.

While men mostly did not contact Mersiha at all, Dilfa received sexually explicit messages that reflected a stereotypical view of Roma women as generically wild and passionate.

"Roma women are hot fire", "Pleasure with Roma woman would surely be something special", "Isn't a relationship between Roma women and men less conditioned by civilisation's chains and more natural?" were three responses.

"Call me, I like Roma women, and you won't find that too often," was another patronising message.

Missing culture of dialogue:

Anti-Roma or anti-Muslim prejudice is not unique to Croatia. Indeed, hostility to Roma may be

Women behind the story:

Dilfa Orsus's real name is Brigita Bajric (29). She was born in Zagreb where she finished trade school and hairdressing school. She used to work for Croatian NGO "Roma for Roma" but she is currently unemployed. Although she says she personally didn't face discrimination, she wasn't surprised with negative attitudes towards her in this investigation. "I have heard many similar stories from Roma people I know. So I was aware of the fact that Croatian society is not very tolerant. But what did surprise me was some people's readiness to express discrimination so openly," says Brigita.

Mersiha Alihodza is Djurdjica Cilic Skiljo (36), a professor of Polish literature at Faculty of humanities and social sciences in Zagreb. Djurdjica is not a Muslim actually but she identify herself strongly with her role from the moment she was for the first time refused while looking for a flat to rent. "It's hard to accept that people can be so nice to you on the phone and then not even want to talk to you when you meet in person. A headscarf, that tiny piece of textile on my head, changed their perception completely."

relatively mild in Croatia compared to the ugly scenes of anti-Roma violence across central Europe.

Attitudes in Croatia appears comparable to those in Poland and Hungary, where over 40 per cent of Roma respondents have also reported experiencing discrimination in relation to private services.

But according to an EU-MIDIS 2009 Report, Roma experienced significantly less discrimination in those countries, compared to Croatia, when looking for an apartment to rent or buy.

In Slovakia, Poland and Czech Republic 10 to 13 percent of Roma reported discrimination while looking for a place to live in, the survey reported.

The highest level of discrimination against Muslims in EU countries occurred in employment, according to the same report. The figures were 18 per cent when looking for work; 13 per cent at work and 14 per cent in private services - at a bar, restaurant, shop or bank and by a landlord.

Goran Selanec a legal expert on discrimination in Croatia, says, discrimination against minorities remains widespread in Croatia, "regardless of us wanting to convince ourselves of the opposite".

Selanec says he is in no doubt that many of the people referred to in this article broke the law. For example, real estate agencies that agreed to select clients on the basis of ethnic background were guilty of "classic direct discrimination based on ethnicity", he

noted.

"These agents would claim they did not discriminate because they had to respect their client's wishes [but] such a defence is based on a very narrow understanding of discrimination," he added.

Croatia's legal system, as well as the EU system from which Croatia inherited these guarantees, protects persons from discrimination within a much wider scope.

"What is important is the result of unfavourable treatment, not whether there is intent, or prejudice, and whether the person is aware of it or not," he explained.

Turning to the question of awareness, Zagreb psychologist Dinka Corkalo Biruski notes that in Croatia, "People are less prepared to rent an apartment or share with a person of other religion or nationality when that difference is clearly pronounced, as in this research."

"Tolerance develops in relations to others, and [Croatia's] national and religious homogeneity certainly contributes to the closeness of society," she added.

Corkalo Biruski believes that only some of this "closeness", and rejection of otherness, is down to the country's recent traumatic war. She also believes that it reflects deeper and more historic cultural values. "We do not cherish a culture of dialogue which is necessary in communication with differences," she says. "After that dialogue, differences wouldn't be perceived as differences that much any more".



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Where to pick up Prishtina Insight?

Pristina 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
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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 napoletanas. 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.



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afa.com*

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

Te Komiteti

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



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

Restorant Brasserie Lura

At 450-square-metres Restaurant Lura is as spacious as you get in Prishtina. It's also surrounded by the towering trees of Germia and offers a pleasant garden where, in the summer, this eatery prepares food al fresco. It's large meeting room is also ideal for that private lunch or dinner.

The combined style classical and modern interior leaves you with an impression of refined taste.

The newly opened restaurant is already famous for its Mediterranean specialties, exquisite seafood and fine selections of Italian, French and Local wines. But that's not all, for music lovers, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday night dinners are accompanied by jazz, whereas on Saturdays local patriots can enjoy live traditional Albanian music.

Lura Restaurant
Str. Nazmi Gaffuri • 10 000 Prishtina • +381 (0)38 763 763 ; +386 (0)49 763 763 • www.lurarestaurant.com
info@lurarestaurant.com



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

November 11 & 14; from 8 pm

"Njohja" from Albana Muja; Directors: Kreshnike Osmani & Albana Muja (Small stage)

Saturday, November 12, from 8 pm

"Përgjuesi", stand-up comedy with Adem Mikullovc (Small stage)

November 15 & 16; from 6 pm

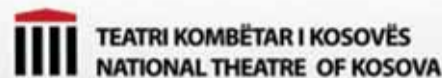
"Majmuni i Diellit" - kids' play from Sofia Fredén; Director: Olle Tornqvist (Small stage)

Sofia Fredén was born in 1968 in Göteborg, Sweden's second largest city. She studied writing for film and theatre at Dramatiska Institutet, graduating in 1995. Since graduation she has written prolifically for the theatre and also managed to write for film and radio. Her plays have been produced in most of the city and regional theatres in Sweden, as well as at the Royal Dramatic Theatre. In 2005, Sofia received the critics prize for Children and Youth Theatre, for three plays that played simultaneously at three different theatres; Bara Barnet (Only a Child), Ruttet: a princess liv (Rotten: The Life of a Princess) and Solapan (The Sun Monkey).

November 18, 19 and 21 from 8 pm

"Nata e dymbëdhjetë" - William Sheakespeare play; Director: Ilir Bokshi

Like many of Sheakespeare's comedies, this one centres on mistaken identity. The leading character, Viola, is shipwrecked on the shores of Illyria during the opening scenes. She loses contact with her twin brother, Sebastian, whom she believes to be dead. Masquerading as a young page under the name Cesario, she enters the service of Duke Orsino through the help of the sea captain who rescues her. Orsino has convinced himself that he is in love with the bereaved Lady Olivia, whose father and brother have recently died, and who will have nothing to do with any suitors, the Duke included. Orsino decides to use "Cesario" as an intermediary to tell Olivia



about his love for her. Olivia, believing Viola to be a man, falls in love with this handsome and eloquent messenger. Viola, in turn, has fallen in love with the Duke, who also believes Viola is a man, and who regards her as his confidant.

November 20, from 8 pm

Solo concert: **Ditë Hysaj** - piano

November 22, from 8 pm

"Çifti Martin"

November 23 & 24 from 8 pm

"Fizikantët" from Friedrich Durrenmatt, Director: Isa Qosja

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 use of the drawing room, where they are periodically monitored by the female nurses that are charged with their care. The first patient is Herbert Georg Beutler, and he believes that he is Sir Isaac Newton. The second patient is Ernst Heinrich, who believes himself to be Albert Einstein. The third patient is Johann Wilhelm Mobius, and he believes that he is regularly visited by the biblical King Solomon. When the play begins, "Einstein" has just killed one of his nurses, and the police are examining the scene. It is revealed through their discussion that this is the second slaying of a nurse by one of these three patients in just three months, the first having been committed by "Newton".

All plays are in Albanian language, and for ticket reservations call at Tel: 044 430 693, or info@teatrikombetar.eu



ABC Cinema has started screening the movie "In Time" produced by Andrew Niccol.

Welcome to a world where time has become the ultimate currency. You stop aging at 25, but there's a catch: you're genetically engineered to live only one more year, unless you can buy your way out of it. The rich "earn" decades at a time (remaining at age 25), becoming essentially immortal, while the rest beg, borrow or steal enough hours to make it through the day. When a man from the wrong side of the tracks is falsely accused of murder, he is forced to go on the run with a beautiful hostage. Living minute to minute, the duo's love becomes a powerful tool in their war against the system.

Justin Timberlake, Amanda Seyfried, Cillian Murphy, Vincent Kartheiser, Olivia Wilde, etj. Directed by: Andrew Niccol

The movie will be screened every day at 6pm, 8pm and 10pm.

For any questions or reservations call at 038 243 238 or visit them at www.kinoabc.com



Theatre ODA

Every Thursday, at theatre Dodona, 7.30pm, "Çifti I Hapur" is being played with the text of Italian authors Dario Fo and Franca Rame, directed by Kushtrim Koliqi.

"What would you do if your partner suddenly opened his/her mind to have intercourse with another person?" A man proposes to his wife eliminating the concept of martial loyalty and creating an "open relationship" in their lives. The woman, of course, rejects and after several attempts of suicide, she decides to accept her husband's offer because in fact it's the only way to remain "married". The man is happy. He, no longer needs to hide his girlfriends and in a way he's released from feelings of guilt. Now everything is



democratic and open. Everything goes well until the day when the woman finds the love of her life, which is what her "modern" husband cannot accept.

Actors are Edona Reshitaj and Besart Sllamniku, while the costumes and the scene are made by Njomza Luci. Composer: Trimor Dhomi; Choreographer: Bruno Saqipi; Light designer: Skender Latifi; Stage manager: Bedri Maloku, Albert Bekteshi & Fadil Gashi, Photographer: Arton Humolli.

For more details check: teatridodona@yahoo.com; besart.sll@gmail.com

Prishtina Diary

Friday, November 11, 2011 Hammam Jazz Bar,

The Bottleman (Zoran Madzirov) is a Macedonian percussionist and the inventor of the Bottlephone. Zoran performed with and has been honoured by musical giants like Sting, Tito Puente, Tina Turner, Harry Belafonte, Scorpions, Tommy Emmanuel and others. He is also the founder of the group Les Barons Karamazoff in 1987 with Edin Karamazov - guitar & lute - and Sasa Dejanovic on Guitar. For more details visit www.zoranmadzirov.com

Gennci's Caffe,

Leadership in cooperation with Gennci's Caffe will organize Movie Night #1, which will continue as a regular activity. This time you can catch the movie "In Time". There will be only 40 seats in total, reservation is free and runs from Monday to Friday.

Filikaqa, Sports Bar

Every Friday, Filikaqa gets its Karaoke songs going for all music lovers. For reservations call 044 788 748.

Saturday, November 12, 2011 Hamam Jazz Bar,

"Offchestra" is a musical line-up/orchestra formed by professional instrumentalists, which performs Albanian and Balkan music through the rhythms of blues, jazz and many other music elements of different musical genres from all around the world.

The orchestra contains an elite of professional musicians. The main characteristic of our orchestra is the strong Balkan rhythm backed by beautiful Albanian melodies and enriched with jazz harmonies which deliver a unique sound. Such synthesis of instruments is another quality which is going to preserve the uniqueness of the

orchestra. The orchestra plans to launch its first album on the market, and will soon have its first music video.

Offchestra has played in many concerts and festivals in Kosovo, Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, Italy, England and Turkey.

For more details see: www.facebook.com/Offchestra; www.myspace.com/offchestra; www.youtube.com/Offchestra; www.twitter.com/Offchestra; <http://soundcloud.com/offchestra>

Secret Lounge

Luke Fair, DJ from Toronto will perform in Prishtina on Saturday from 10 pm. Chosen by DJ Magazine as one of their "faces to watch for in 2003," Fair has begun his assault on the international dance music scene with an eclectic style that includes twisted vocal house, funky progressive and trippy electro-tech.

Thursday, November 17th, from 7p.m

Hacienda Bar (Pejton) - Beaujolais Party
Tickets on sale from November 7th at the French Alliance for this celebration of the inimitable French wine.

Friday 18, November 2011 Theatre Oda, 10pm

Trock Caffe presents: Elisa Bee from Milano
Promoter, radio producer, but first and foremost a DJ, Elisa has experienced club culture from pretty much every angle. She first got into DJing in 2007 after getting her architecture degree and her first set of decks. At the time she was still living in her native Sardinia, which - apart from beach parties and boring winters - provided a fertile ground for her to experiment with electro house, UK garage and hip hop, as well as reggae and dub.

After moving to Milan in 2009, it wasn't long before she started making her mark on the city's flourishing club scene. A collaboration with Giant Bass - a big party and promotion - quickly led to her sharing the decks with big names such as Drop the Lime and Dj Riot from BurakaSomSistema and playing huge parties such as the Magnolia Parade and the 1st of May fest in Milan, as well as DJing all over Italy.

At the end of 2010 she started her own party Beelicious with a view to promote up and coming international producers, such as Highbloo and Tom Staar - both playing in Italy for the first time. She has kick-started 2011 being appointed as producer of Babylon, a radio show on Radio2 Rai, a breath of fresh air for Saturday night Italian radio.



Shop Review:

+ Afrodzia

African souvenirs are unsurprisingly rare in Prishtina, which put Afrodzia in a bit of a niche.

So if its African accessories or flowers you are looking for, there's no better place to look

With over fifteen types of roses, exotic flowers and selected hand-made crafts from Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Congo, Afrodzia is a good spot for present-hunting if you are looking for something original.

Afrodzia is located in downtown Prishtina, in front of Maroon Club, behind Hamam Jazz Club, and close to Kada Book Store and Hajdar Dushi Street.

You can pick up hand-made post cards, jewellery, home decorations, summer accessories and fresh flowers, all imported from Africa, with prices ranging from 2 euro for a key chain, to 35 for a beautiful painted wall frame.

Afrodzia offers to deliver your

flowers within 15 minutes. Roses go for 2 euro a piece, while a bouquet of flowers costs 20 euro.

Make you order at 049/045 888 080 or at order@afrodizia.com or visit their Facebook profile Afrodzia local business.

*Flowers and Gifts from Africa
Afrodizia
Close to Maroon Club
049/045 888 080
order@afrodizia.com*



Thaci "Assasination" Was Burglary

The break-in to Hashim Thaci's former house in Dragodan in June 2008 was a burglary, not an assassination attempt, an EULEX prosecutor has ruled.

Prosecutor Pascal Person said he had found no evidence to accuse Fazli Sejdiu of attempted aggravated murder of Prime Minister Hashim Thaci.

Person filed a new indictment late last month saying that Sejdiu had entered the house to steal.

During the break-in, Sejdiu was wounded by police officers who guard the home of Prime Minister Hashim Thaci.



Counterfeit Money Ring Arrested

Police arrested on Thursday in Prishtina three people suspected of organised crime and money forgery and found 5,000 euro of counterfeit bills.



By Prishtina Insight

Officials of the Police Department for Serious Crimes arrested the three suspects during three raids. Counterfeit money, a gun and bullets were also found.

"The directorate for investigations on serious crimes, while investigating the case, on 9th and 10th of November, carried out a police operation in the Regional Department of Prishtina," police said in a press release on Thursday.

"Three persons were arrested for undertaking, in cooperation with each-other, criminal activities of 'organised crime' and 'money forgery'".

I.S. (1952), I. D. (1987) and F. B. (1969), all Kosovo inhabitants, were arrested.

Two other locations were raided in the Prishtina region where a firearm and more counterfeit money was found.

Police said it confiscated more than 50 100-euro notes and a gun with 66 bullets.

The accused will be held in jail for 48 hour while investigations continue.

Inside Prishtina

Qerimi – Burek King



By Gingerbread Man

The highest step on Prishtina's burek podium is admittedly fiercely contested in a town with dozens of neighbourhood bakeries, but, for me, there is only one rightful owner for that spot.

I would like to introduce you to Qerimi, high on Sunny Hill. Many of you will know it, but if you don't, or have yet to sample it's burek, you have yet to love.

Here, overlooking some Communist tower blocks, and, on a clear day, the mountains to the south, you will find the purveyor of Kosovo's capital's warmest, greasiest, most delicious burek.

Despite its simplicity, it is after all just layers of puff pastry stuffed with meat or cheese, the burek is a difficult dish to deliver.

It is repulsive when cold and



the subtle flavours of the stuffing need to be just so if they are to hit the right spot. It's also, unusually, a feast where greasy is good.

I've heard some lauding the burek of Furra Lumi, which is also a fine bakery, providing a more interesting and sophisticated range of goods.

It is, however, a poor second when it comes to the food of

the lumberjack – the stodgy burek.

At Qerimi, this heart-clogging meal is delivered in mighty quarters, rather than the long-and-thin variety provided by Lumi. The slightly spicy meat stuffing, and sour cheese, are peerless.

But it is the warm consistency which is most appealing, like a comforting cuddle from a

heavy-bosomed friend.

Sit in and enjoy the buzz of a busy bakery and some yoghurt for the full experience. You will not regret it.

*Furra Qerimi
Enver Maloku, Sunny Hill,
Prishtina
Open seven days a week, 6
am until midnight.
044 500 407*

Prishtina through the Eyes of:

Teresa Reiter

blogger at Kosovo 2.0



What surprised you most about Prishtina?

That I immediately fell for the city although it treated me really ungraciously on the first day. It's like being in love with a bad boy.

What's your favourite hangout?

Dit e nat of course because it unites three of the most important things for my peace of mind: music, books and cake.

What is the best thing about Prishtina?

It's dubious charm and the improvised beauty of its buildings that only some of us can see.

What is the most annoying thing about Prishtina?

Everybody knows you before you know anybody. It's like a small village. I get loads of friend requests on Facebook from people I've never even seen before. Curiously enough some people I "met" this way are my best friends in Kosovo today.

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

I would build a youth center for the kids to hang and play music.

How many macchiatos do you drink a day?

None. I'm probably the only journalist in the world who doesn't drink coffee.

What's your favourite Albanian word and why?

My favorite and first Albanian word was "lopa". Once I got lost on my way to a meeting and ended up somewhere in the middle of intense road building. There were a lot of cows grazing in the middle of the chaotic construction works and they couldn't care less for the ear-shattering noise and all the people running around there. One of them went a little way with me. So the first thing I asked at the meeting when I finally got there was what is the Albanian word for cow.

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

Maybe the government building but to my advantage many taxi drivers in Prishtina speak German fluently because they worked in Germany or my home country Austria during the war. So I don't need to juggle with complicated descriptions.

Fire at Popular Bar



The popular bar, Papillon, in central Prishtina was badly damaged in a fire on Saturday night. The blaze was close to engulfing the surrounding buildings but was eventually quelled by firefighters. Police said the cause remained unknown.

Can a Kosovo-Serbia Deal Cheer up the Balkans?



By Denis MacShane

Unlike most of the world's economic powers, Serbia still does not recognise Kosovo as a state. It will need to, though, before it can start down the road to EU accession.

From the Alps to Aegean the Balkans are Europe's unhappy region. Twenty five years ago Slobodan Milosevic unleashed the nationalist rhetoric that plunged the peoples of the former Yugoslavia into a decade of conflict. Twelve years ago Nato swerved round the UN to launch its 'humanitarian intervention' assault on Serbia.

Today there is no war but nationalist, clerical and ethnicist populisms still bedevil the region. Although Croatia has won its prized entry into the EU, Albanian politics generate violent hate which should have no place in European democratic politics. Macedonia cannot agree on a census lest the Albanian minority's place in bi-partite governance comes into question. Bosnia-Herzegovina's three communities refuse to cooperate. Some Bosnian Croats are now talking of attaching themselves to Croatia. Belgrade insists that Serb rights are upheld in both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro.

Serbia would like to start travelling down the road of EU accession as would the many friends of Serbia's popular president Boris Tadic in different EU capitals. But Serbia first has to come to terms with the existence of Kosovo. In 2008 Kosovo declared its independence. Serbia with the backing of Russia and some EU capitals brushed away Kosovo's claim to be a new nation-state as irrelevant – on a par with the claims of a South Ossetia, Transnistria or northern Cyprus.

But last year the International Court of Justice issued a landmark ruling that upheld Kosovo's right to declare its independence. In one of the longest most detailed judgments to come from The Hague, the ICJ dismissed one by one Serbia's international legal arguments.

As a result 85 nations, including most of the world's major democracies and economic powers now recognise Kosovo and have embassies in Kosovo. All the main European airlines fly to Prishtina. At the UN, Russia and China maintain their veto on Kosovo joining the UN. Greece refuses to vote for Kosovo to join the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development. But increasingly diplomats, and in private, politicians in Spain and Greece – the

two major EU non-recognising states – realise that following the ICJ ruling, denying Kosovo its status as an independent nation-state is pointless.

In fact, Kosovo has a better record than many of its neighbours. Its political quarrels do not lead to people being killed in demonstrations as in Albania. Kosovan politicians have voluntarily gone to The Hague's International War Crimes tribunal in contrast to the Serb army's decade-long protection of its General Ratko Mladic. Kosovo's Prime Minister, Hashim Thaci, is cooperating fully with an investigation into allegations – so far without evidence or a single witness – made by the now retired Swiss politician, Dick Marty. Kosovan public finances are in order – not the least because the government cannot spend its budget – in contrast to Serbia's mammoth public debt. Unlike Skopje where handsome Ottoman squares are being filled with kitsch statues of Alexander the Great to whip up nationalist identity passion, Prishtina is multicultural with orthodox churches being rebuilt, a handsome Catholic cathedral and the most secular Muslims anywhere in the world. The population is the youngest in Europe with English-language universities in Prishtina turning out smart young men and women for whom the Milosevic years are not even a memory.

By any logic, Kosovo and Serbia should have the kind of relationship that say Britain and Ireland, or more recently, the Czech Republic and Slovakia fashioned after the respective communities went their separate ways. Instead the most pressing Balkan problem remains the Kosovo-Serbia imbroglio.

Belgrade accepts Kosovo as a nation but resists recognition of Kosovo as a state. This earned Serbia's President Tadic a public dressing down from Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel when she insisted that Serbia had to dismantle the parallel structures it maintains in northern Kosovo. Serbia spends 200 million euro in subsidising north Kosovo. Serbs elsewhere in Kosovo live at peace if apart from their Kosovan neighbours such as Catholic and Protestant communities are separate in Northern Ireland but under a common law and administration.

The one area where there is close Serb-Kosovan Albanian cooperation is in crime. Serb and Albanian criminals in the north run an oil-smuggling racket that brings in 100 million dollars annually. This money is used to pay for rent-a-mob gangs that throw stones and worse at officials of EULEX, the EU law and justice operation which is meant to

uphold EU-shaped law across Kosovo.

Belgrade is comforted in its refusal to cut a deal with Kosovo by Russian and Chinese anti-Kosovo politics at the UN. Five EU member states also refuse to recognise Kosovo. Each had different, and in their own eyes, justified reasons for so doing. But the five non-recognising states undermine EU claims to run an effective foreign or enlargement policy. When the EU cannot speak as one on the relatively minor issue of Kosovo it is unlikely that the BRICS – Brazil, Russia, India and China – or even Washington, will pay any attention to Europe.

Having been victims of Serb oppression for decades in the twentieth century, Kosovans are now seen as oppressors by the minority Serb communities living inside Kosovo. Under the supervision of the Nobel Peace Laureate Martti Ahtisaari, there is a balanced plan allowing Serbs considerable autonomy and rights within Kosovo. The EU is unanimous that there will be no more partitions or population transfers. But both Tadic and Thaci face political pressure from nationalist radicals and, in Belgrade, a populist media which whips up anti-Kosovo passions.

In Prishtina intellectuals play with language of "Greater Albania" or ridding Kosovo of its internationals, little realising that they echo and mirror the Milosevic nationalist-ethnicist populism that caused such tragedy in the region.

Kosovo's energetic young



Serbia and Kosovo have reached an impasse.

Foreign Ministry team, peopled by smart LSE graduates, are criticised, as is Hashim Thaci himself, if they suggest reconciliation and compromise with Serbia rather than outright confrontation.

Now both Belgrade and Prishtina are at an impasse. Serbia's intransigence on Kosovo means it will make no progress in its legitimate desire to follow Croatia in the EU. A breakthrough could happen if the EU could unite around recognising Kosovo which would allow President Tadic to tell his people it was time to move on from the post-Milosevic era Serbia is trapped in. The incoming Spanish government could play a constructive role as recognising Kosovo has no implications for

separatist forces in the Iberian peninsula.

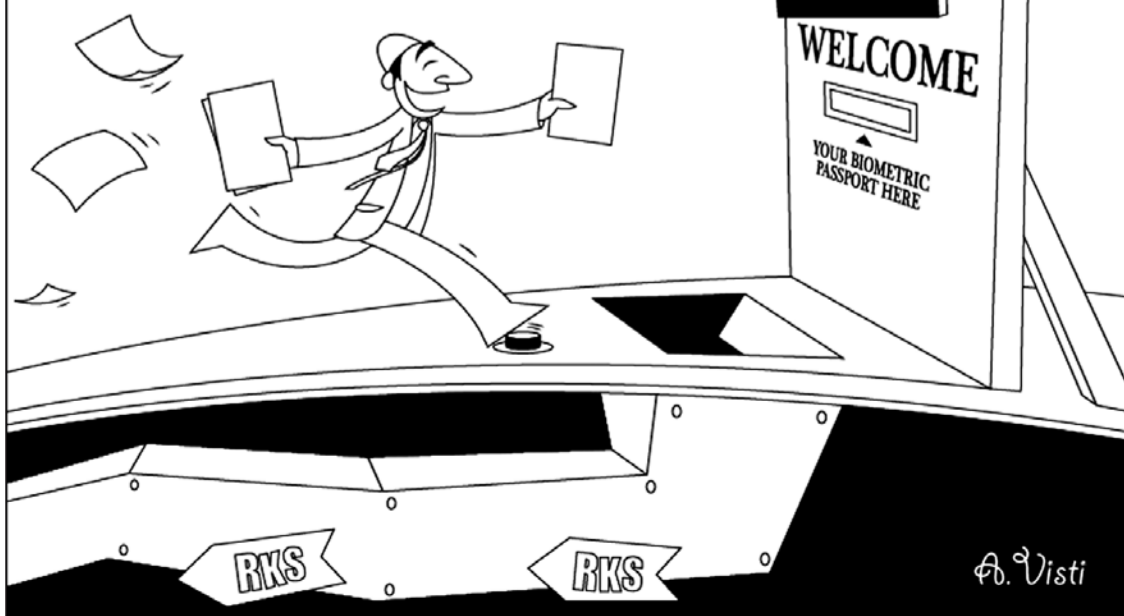
Churchill noted that the Balkans produces more history than it can consume. A move to let Kosovo be Kosovo and, as William Hague told the Commons, to allow both Serbia and Kosovo to start the journey to EU accession, could transform the region for the better.

Denis MacShane was a Minister at the UK Foreign Office and a Council of Europe delegate 1997-2010 and travels extensively in the Balkans. His book Why Kosovo Still Matters is published by Haus Publishing, £8.95

This article was originally published in the independent online magazine www.opendemocracy.net

Citizens of Kosovo, now also with biometric passports.

**QYTETARËT E KOSOVËS
TANI EDHE ME PASAPORTA
BIOMETRIKE... !**



Ad. Visti



Jolie in Bosnia, which is experiencing a surge in popularity for movie makers.

In Film at Least, Bosnia is Striding Ahead

Recently published statistics about the nascent movie industry show that in one arena, Bosnia has a story it can take pride in.



By Elma Tataragic

It has been a year since film star Angelina Jolie and her producers first planned, then gave up, and then partially shot her debut feature film in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Have we learned anything from this story? It is too early to say. But what's different about the film scene in Bosnia this year is that the Association of Filmmakers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in collaboration with USAID/SIDA and Firma Project, have published a first guide promoting Bosnia as a location for filmmaking.

Shooting Location Guide of Bosnia and Herzegovina was published on the eve of the 17th Sarajevo Film Festival, where it was promoted.

Apart from the fact that this is the first time that Bosnia's filmmaking potential has been presented in this way, it is also the first time that the results of cinema in Bosnia over the past ten years have been presented analytically.

The guide sets the basis for the beginning of a vision that could become reality over the next 10 years in terms of the development of Bosnia's film industry.

This guide consists of two parts: one presenting shooting locations and the second dealing with Bosnian cinematic data.

Four geographical regions are presented in the first part. These are the regions that have most often been used as film sets for local and international film productions. Apart from Sarajevo, the capital, the other three are Banja Luka, Mostar and Gorazde.

The second part contains various

items of information about film festivals in the country, the institutions financing and supporting film production and statistics about the growth of film production on the territory of Bosnia and co-productions between Bosnia and other countries.

There is also an extensive list of international films shot on location in Bosnia in the past 15 years.

One of the key segments of this part of the guide is a comprehensive list of all feature fiction films produced in Bosnia and Herzegovina, from *No Man's Land* in 2001 until today, with a detailed list of awards received.

The figure is impressive: Bosnia has received 125 awards for films made over the past decade.

Why is all this relevant? In a country whose population was last measured in 1991, and which has change dramatically since then - and in a country where it is all too common to hear statements without supporting arguments, this is the first time - in film - that we have a publication based on hard facts and statistics.

It comes from professionals who have a lot to be proud of and who clearly fear that everything, including the successes, is in danger of being forgotten.

In fact, it is comforting to read this guide. Going through this publication Bosnians should feel privileged to live in such a beautiful and diverse country.

It should remind people also that everything is not painted black, especially if placed in concrete statistics. It is a fact that back in 1997 no films were produced in the country at all, while in 2003 that number was up to six (three feature and three short films), while in the past year 60 films have been completed, including feature, documentary, animated, student and short films.

Film production has therefore increased ten times in just eight years, which is convincing proof that matters are moving forward.

This is not a signal to stop and be proud of our cinema, but, on the contrary, should be a signal to start developing a lasting vision. What's happened in the past eight years is a production boom that has formed a basis for the future film industry.

For this industry to become partially self sustainable and profitable as well as attractive for foreign productions, we all need to travel a long path, which leads through a law on film, tax incentives, and other legislative changes.

This should be done in parallel with the development of film production. The issue of collaboration in production between the country's two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska, should also be opened up. The role of each entity should be defined in the future development plan.

For example, while the Republika Srpska has a law on film, the Federation still uses the law inherited from the former Yugoslavia, while the Canton of Sarajevo, one of the cantons of the Federation, adopted its own law on film about ten years ago, but adopted it without prior consultation with film professionals.

It is also necessary to increase the funds available for film production, and open up possibilities to provide funds for the development of an audiovisual development plan, work that only begins with such a guide.

Only when we pass this second stage can we hope that people of Angelina Jolie's status will see Bosnia and Herzegovina as a country that is commercially attractive for film production

Outside In Taking the Province out of Provincialism



By Kreshnik Hoxha

Ever since 1999, Kosovo has commemorated those who died during the war. This is no different to many other countries worldwide, who express their appreciation and gratitude to their fallen.

Some, like in the UK, mark this event with a poppy, while in Kosovo we mark it with provincialism.

In Kosovo, these memorial events are scattered across the year and across the country, in a series of regional ceremonies which fails to send a strong and unified national message.

Politics has been closely intertwined with these events too. An example is *Nata e Zjarreve*, *The Night of Flames*, held every year in March in Prekaz, glorifying the Jasharri family, who were killed by the Yugoslav forces. This rather important event is attended by leading politicians of Kosovo from PM Hashim Thaci to Assembly Speaker Jakup Krasniqi, and many more members of their political party.

Although the event is also attended by figures from Ramush Haradinaj's AAK party, it is associated with Thaci's PDK and their electorate. Another example is *Epopeja e Dukagjinit* (*The Dukagjini Epopee*), a similar kind of commemorative ceremony, which stresses the importance of this region to Kosovo's overall cause and is popular among AAK members and their electorate as it is in their heartland.

Marking these days is undoubtedly an important element in remembering our fight for freedom. However, this partisan approach perpetuates the regionalisation of the national cause and reinforces divisions between citizens of different areas and political persuasions.

It has also become evident that the regional misappropriation of the KLA's victory is part of a political game. The events are basically used as quasi-electioneering and are peppered with lengthy and often boring patriotic speeches aimed at garnering some extra votes. When the events end, however, politicians return to their lavish homes, leaving the affected families in poverty until the following anniversary.

In the United Kingdom, a completely different dynamic has developed, albeit it over a century.

A fascinating and inspiring tradition of commemoration has been in practice for more than ninety years in the UK and Commonwealth countries. The memorial event is known as the Remembrance Day and takes places at the passing of the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month since 1919, as instructed by the then monarch King George V.

Every year a campaign known as the Poppy Appeal is held and imitation red flowers are sold across the country until to Remembrance Day, to raise money. All public figures are expected to display their poppy with pride or face the revulsion of the public.

On Remembrance Day, national parades are held to remember the fallen of the country.

The Poppy Appeal was initiated on November 11, 1921 and it is a charitable campaign. The money from the poppy purchases is collected by the Royal British Legion and is used for providing financial, social and emotional support to those have served in the British Armed Forces or those affected by the two World Wars.

Every year throughout the first two weeks of November, one can sense the community spirit among Britons and their pride of contributing to a humane cause, remembering the fallen and supporting the affected and their families.

Our country is smaller than Yorkshire - the biggest county in the United Kingdom, but we have so far failed to organise ourselves a national event and adopt such a strong unifying model of commemoration, which would allow people to mark the sacrifices and help the families of those who have suffered.

Kosovo too has seen its battlefields replaced by seas of poppies, just like the fighting grounds of northern France, but we've yet to grasp the unifying force behind the flower to raise money for the needy and mark the fallen.

Ecosovo

Duaje tënden –
love what's yours

By Elizabeth Gowing

Refiqe smiles as she signs her name on the receipt. She takes the euros that she's given and tells me that this is the first money she has ever earned.

The English woman who's bought from her is smiling too because she's just sorted her Christmas shopping. Meanwhile, I'm feeling good because our 'buy local' soap-making project is officially underway. We've always been passionate about local products, and the environmental as well as economic benefit they have for Kosovo. With the recent high profile 'Duajë tënden' ('love what's yours') campaign promoting local production (you'll have seen the slogan on the heart-shaped stickers on products in the shops), we're hoping that Refiqe's achievement can be part of a new achievement for Kosovo: fewer imports so less transport pollution, lower carbon footprints and more self-sufficiency and investment in the place we live in.

Rrefiqe is one of five Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian women in Fushë Kosovë who have been trained in soap-making and have started up this micro-finance business. With start-up funding from the Austrian Development Agency, the women learned the extraordinary process of combining special soda and olive oil together with fragrances to make soap of just the right consistency.

'We learned from our mistakes during the training. We also learned about how to be safe while you are making the soap, heating the oil and keeping the ingredients away from children. We also tried out some different ideas for colouring and fragrances. And we had a lot of fun,' the women say.

'It's like a kanaxheq' they laughed at the first training session we held, referring to the women-only party at a traditional Kosovan wedding, and I realized that there weren't many other opportunities for these women to get out of their houses.

It's clear to see their enjoyment of the project. There is the satisfaction of a nice product, but also the pride in earning money for their families. All the women had children aged nine years or more who had not registered at school before September. The Ideas Partnership NGO helped them to register their children and we're hoping that the soap-making project is a way of supporting the families financially without them relying on their children to work, and therefore miss out on school.

The brand name for their essential-oil-fragranced, all-natural soap is 'Sa-punë', a pun on the Albanian words for 'soap' and 'what a lot of work'. The soap costs 2 euros for a neat hand made drawstring bag containing one bar or three guest soaps. Individual soaps are available from theideaspartnership@gmail.com and customized bulk buys are also available.

"We had one customer who ordered 100 bags of soap. She wanted a label that said 'Happy New Year' with her name on it, and she's going to give them as gifts to her friends. We think there will be international organizations and companies, as well as hotels who will be interested in customizing the soap like that, so we're hoping for some bulk orders," said The Ideas Partnership's Aurélie Viard who has been involved with the project from the beginning.

The Ideas Partnership is particularly happy that the soap-making initiative has been able to partner with another micro-finance initiative in the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian community of Srbobran, near Istog. There, women were given sewing machines by The Ideas Partnership with the help of a grant from the British Embassy. With the sewing training they have received they are now able to make the sweet drawstring pouches in which the Fushë Kosovë women's soap is packaged.

So a purchase of one gift bag of soap makes a difference in two communities where women are working hard to support their families for a better future. Love it.

Elizabeth Gowing is a founder of The Ideas Partnership, a Kosovan NGO working on educational, cultural and environmental projects. She is also the author of the recently-published, Travels in Blood and Honey; becoming a beekeeper in Kosovo. She can be reached at theideaspartnership@gmail.com

Belgrade Insight
celebrates 100th Issue

With more than 100 friends and partners, Belgrade Insight, the only English-language newspaper in Serbia, celebrated its 100 issue on Tuesday.

Numerous diplomats, representatives of NGOs, local media and businessmen among many others attended the celebration at the Museum of National Theatre, including representatives of Norwegian, British, Slovakian, Slovenian and French embassies, Air France, Atrium Consulting, Societe Generale Banka, Adria Media, and the Fonet and Beta new agencies.

Since the first issue was published in May 2008, Belgrade Insight, Prishtina Insight's sister publication, has covered news, sports, travel, and culture and has also provided a day-by-day listing of events going on around Belgrade for the two weeks following publication.

Although several English-lan-

Belgrade Insight
*Think you know Belgrade?
Think again!*

guage newspapers were printed in Belgrade, Belgrade Insight has the distinction of being the longest running.

"When we started in 2008, Belgrade hosted Eurovision contest, the city was crowded and economic situation looked promising. However, the economic crises hit the world later that year, and media felt its consequences among the first.

"However, with continuous struggle and determination, we managed to survive, and I trust that we will manage to print newspaper for years to come," says Gordana Igric, regional director of Balkan Investigative

Reporting Network, publisher of Belgrade Insight.

The newspaper comes out twice a month and is distributed at more than 350 locations. According to research conducted in July this year by the agency Intelligence, Belgrade Insight has a regular readership of around 15,000 people.

Belgrade Insight is read by the growing population of foreigners residing in Belgrade and Serbia, but also by tourists and a large percentage of Serbs, making up a full 41 per cent of the readership.

The newspaper is considered a staple source of information by 86.7 per cent of readers.

Residents Petition over
Uncollected Rubbish

Residents of Neighbourhood 29 of Fushe-Kosove are petitioning the town hall over years of uncollected rubbish near their homes.



By Mihane Mustafa

Some 50 signatures have been collected in this neighbourhood, which is largely inhabited by the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian community, calling on the municipality to begin regular refuse collections.

Residents say that despite two years of complaints and empty promises, nothing has been done.

Jashar Gashi, who lives in the area, told Prishtina Insight that this time they expect the municipality to deal with their appeals.

"The trash ruins the look of

our neighbourhood," he said. "It's more than enough. We always face the risk of getting a disease from the trash."

Some inhabitants complain that because of the rubbish they cannot even get out of their gardens.

Maliq Berisha, the head of the public service for Fushe Kosove municipality, says that the town hall does not have a refuse collection service based on "minorities or majorities".

He added that they had recently picked up rubbish from the neighbourhood.

"In cooperation with the office [company] for rubbish collection we have started collecting that rubbish. Only in the last week we have picked up 10 or 15 trucks of

rubbish," added Berisha.

But residents denied the claims that ten trucks-worth had been collected, saying that the situation was still bad.

Jakup Rama, manager of the cleaning company, backed the director of the municipal public services saying that the cleaning, as he says, 'was necessary' and this project is a long term project.

"The cleaning company took the initiative to help the [municipal] workers who have been cleaning the neighbourhood with tractors in order to remove the trash from neighbourhood 29," said Rama.

He added that the residents did not pay their bills for rubbish collection.



Caption for this: Flora, age 10, took this photo of rubbish in her neighbourhood as part of the www.neighbourhood29.com project.

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Belgian

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

Medium

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

Hard

2	1							
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