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Pop Star Urges Albanians to Have More Kids

Rovena Stefa, better known for her folk-themed pop songs, is calling for Albanians to reverse the falling birth rate. But while the average family in Kosovo may be shrinking, some homes are bucking the trend. Bahrije Mustafa, 35, lives in difficult circumstances, but it hasn't stopped her from having 13 children...

See Page 5

NEWS
Prime Minister Travels with Businessman's Car
> page 3

NEWS
Balkan Countries Wilt in Fierce Heat Wave
> page 4

NEWS
Ex-PM's Jailing Watershed For Romanian Justice



> page 10

FEATURE
Prospects Darken For Roma Refugees
> page 12 and 13

INSIDE PRISHTINA
Prishtina's Glass Box



> page 19

Tribunal Vindicates UNMIK Whistleblower

UN mission in Kosovo subjected ex-official who raised suspicions about corruption in plans for a new power plant to 'humiliating and degrading' treatment, a tribunal has ruled.

By Lawrence Marzouk

The UN Dispute Tribunal ruled last week that James Wasserstrom's treatment had been "wholly unacceptable" and the UN mission had breached his legal rights during an investigation.

The American, who now works as a corruption expert at the US embassy in Kabul, had voiced suspicions about huge kickbacks in the planned construction of a new power plant in Kosovo, Kosovo C.

Following his complaint, his contract was not extended, his office was closed and an investigation was launched into "conflicts

of interest".

Despite his diplomatic immunity, he was arrested on the border with Greece in May 2007, his house searched and a poster put up at the entrance of the UNMIK building saying he was banned from the premises.

He claimed this was an act of retaliation, a view backed initially by the UN Ethics Office, which called for the UN's Investigations Division to probe further.

But the Ethics Office then reversed its initial findings based on the conclusions of Investigations Divisions.

Following Wasserstrom's complaint of ill treatment, the UN Dispute Tribunal has now uncov-

ered serious failings in that decision, and has called into question why more wasn't done to query evidence provided by senior UN officials.

Suspicious of kickbacks:

In 2007, Wasserstrom, who had an impeccable record of service, had heard reports, according to a copy of the UN judgement published on Monday, that the then minister of energy, Ethem Ceku, and UNMIK's deputy head, Steven Schook, were due to receive bribes as part of the power plant deal.

"The rumours concerned the payment of what was called a 'facilitation fee', worth hundreds

of millions of euros to a local partner, should that bidder win the tender," Wasserstrom wrote in his submission to the tribunal.

"Part of that payoff was rumoured to be going to Minister Ceku and to Mr Schook, among others," he added.

Wasserstrom, who was responsible for overseeing Publicly Owned Enterprises, including Kosovo's Energy Corporation, KEK, passed the information to the UN's Office of Internal Oversight Services, OIOS, along with concerns that the creation of a new KEK board, including Ceku and other members of the government, was illegal.

continues page 2



The Nineties Team Returns to Serbia

After 50 days of closed-doors negotiations between all key players, the party once led by Slobodan Milosevic has formed a new government with the Serbian Progressive Party as its main partner, while the former governing Democrats head into opposition.

President Tomislav...

analysis

page 6 - 7



Kosovo Metal Workers Protest Against Sackings

Ferronikel, based in the central Kosovo region of Drenas, says it needed to make cuts in order to survive a fall in the price of nickel on world markets.

But Kosovo's nationalist Vetevendosje (Self-determination) movement has accused the major exporter of showing compete indifference...

business

page 8

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Tribunal Vindicates UN Whistleblower in Kosovo

from page 1

According to his testimony, his attempts to stop politicians from being appointed to the boards of publicly owned enterprises brought him into regular conflict with Schook.

"On approximately 1 February, 2007, I was called to see Mr Schook," Wasserstrom recalled.

"He was angry. He said, 'I hear from Pillar IV [Reconstruction and Economic Development] and people I trust you've been bad-mouthing me.' I denied doing so. He said, 'I don't know what you do all day. Tell me, what do you do all day?'"

"When I started to reply, he cut me off. He then said, 'I think your office should be closed.' I replied that I had been unhappy with his lack of support on the issues that I believe are crucial to the future of Kosovo. He concluded that conversation with, 'Sorry your issues are not front burner for me.'"

According to a cable issued by the then US Ambassador to Kosovo, Tina Kaidanow in May 2007, Wasserstrom had also raised his concerns with his US embassy.

The cable, leaked to the website Wikileaks, confirms that the ambassador shared some of his concerns and noted "clear divisions" in UNMIK on the issue.

"Ceku's presence on the board [of KEK] presents conflict of interest issues regarding his ministry's involvement in the large 'Kosovo C' energy sector development tender and the internationally-recognized public policy practice of not allowing a ministry to administer a public utility," the cable said.

"Ceku is also actively involved in politics as a high-ranking member of the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) party," it noted.

No evidence of wrongdoing was found against Schook, now an advisor to former Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj, currently on trial at The Hague. He left his UN post later in 2007.

Schook told Prishtina Insight that he was "very happy" that the tribunal had found in Wasserstrom's favour. "What was

done was wrong," he said. "I hope he gets a lot of compensation."

He said he was unaware of any allegations made by Wasserstrom against him, adding that investigations against him had found no evidence of wrongdoing. Ceku, meanwhile, said the issue had been investigated earlier and he had been cleared.

'Wanted' posters put up:

Wasserstrom received a letter on May 7, 2007, telling him that his contract would not be extended. His office was closed on June 30.

"When I learned of my non-extension, I agreed to work with the Managing Directors of PTK [Post and Telecommunications of Kosovo] and Pristina International Airport, to work with them directly in corporate governance, development and accountability," he wrote, referring to two publicly owned companies.

"We signed a contract on 24 May 2007, which I disclosed formally to UNMIK on 30 May 2007."

Following the announcement, he wrote, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, SRSG, Joachim Rucker, head of UNMIK, was apparently "furious" and initiated an investigation against him for "misconduct".

He was put on "special leave" while the investigation was ongoing, his email account was stopped, and his computer and car seized.

Wasserstrom was then stopped at the Kosovo border when driving to Greece in May 2007, and told that he could not leave the country.

"The Financial Investigation Unit took me back to Prishtina on orders of a judge, where my house and car were searched without my seeing a warrant, although I asked for one," he said.

"They said they had been given one 'orally'. They also said my immunity had been waived, though I saw no evidence of that," he wrote. "They confiscated a number of items."

"Wanted" posters with his pho-



UN Head Ban Ki-Moon has been criticised by Wasserstrom for ignoring his calls for help.

tograph were then placed at the entrances of UNMIK headquarters to prevent his entry and his office was sealed off with police tape.

Rights disregarded:

Wasserstrom complained of his treatment to the Ethics Office, which initially concluded that there was evidence that his ordeal was the result of retaliation because of his compliant.

"The Ethics Office finds that the actions taken by UNMIK against [the Applicant] were disproportionate to the alleged wrongdoing and are linked to his cooperation with OIOS [Office of Internal Oversight Services]," the Ethics Office had concluded.

"Thus, the protected activity [whistle-blowing] was a contributing factor to the retaliatory actions."

The issue was passed to the UN's investigation office, which ruled that the decision to close Wasserstrom's office was made before his complaints, and therefore could not have been a motivating factor.

It also found that "the investigative steps taken during this investigation were all within the jurisdiction and under supervision of the international prosecutor and the pre-trial judge".

Following this, the Ethics Office dismissed Wasserstrom's claims.

But the UN's Dispute Tribunal has called into question the conclusions of the investigation office, and queried why the Ethics Office did not itself probe the evidence provided to it.

"The Tribunal finds that the Ethics Office should have taken note of the fact that, as the principal agency promoting the observance of human rights norms and practices and respect for the rule of law, the United Nations could not, and would not, have countenanced or condoned such humiliating and degrading treatment of a member of its own

staff," it wrote.

"Accordingly, faced with the clear finding of detrimental treatment being meted out to the Applicant and having regard to its finding of prima facie retaliation, the Ethics Office should have pursued further enquiries to ascertain the reasons for such treatment. Without having done so, their finding that the treatment was not retaliatory is fundamentally flawed."

The judgment also points out that while the investigative report made "a critical comment about the way in which the Applicant was treated" it nevertheless concluded that the treatment was not a result of retaliation.

"This begs the question as to how or for what reason could a staff member with an otherwise impeccable record of service with the organisation have been subjected to wholly unacceptable treatment in breach of his right to due process," it writes.

The judgment goes on to question the investigative reports conclusion that the SRSG could not have influenced the case against Wasserstrom.

"As the SRSG clearly maintained some supervisory responsibilities [over the judiciary], it cannot be concluded, as submitted by the Respondent [UNMIK], that the international prosecutor and the pre-trial judge were entirely independent of the UNMIK senior management," the judgment reads.

The Ethics Office, the judgment found, should have also questioned the international prosecutor and the pre-trial judge on why they had proceeded with the investigation into the "suspected administrative breaches" given its limited mandate to investigate UNMIK officials and Wasserstrom's immunity.

At the least, the judgment reads, the Ethics Office should have found out "how or why and for what reason the international prosecutor could have acted with

such callous disregard of the Applicant's right to due process".

Life in danger:

"It was a terrible time for me, my family and anyone associated with me," Wasserstrom told Reuters on Tuesday.

"I thought my life was in danger, and I knew that if I disappeared, no one in the UN would ever come to look for me."

He told the news agency that he felt vindicated by the judgment. The issue of compensation is still to be decided at a hearing in October.

Wasserstrom criticised the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, for having failed to respond to his complaints.

"I sent him (Ban) emails along the way asking him to intervene directly, to stop his representative in Kosovo from violating rules, regulations, policies and procedures, and my legal rights. He chose to ignore me," he told Reuters.

In an interview with the Guardian, last week, he described the ordeal as a "gigantic witch hunt."

"I knew there was nothing wrong with anything I had done. But they didn't even do the most basic fact-finding in their rush to find me guilty."

He added that his judgment could lead to hundreds of new claims by mistreated whistleblowers.

"I think this ruling could lead to the reopening of the claims of the other more than 200 whistleblowers who had their retaliation cases rejected, because there is a very good chance that these were turned down on the same specious grounds," Wasserstrom said. "They could be swamped by people coming forward."

In response to the judgment, Ban's spokesman, Martin Nesirky, said the Secretary General's office would not comment as proceedings were ongoing. UNMIK also declined to comment.



UNMIK has been criticised for its poor treatment of James Wasserstrom.



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Kosovo Prime Minister Travels with Businessman's Car

Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim Thaci used the BMW of businessman Milaim Cakiqi for a private trip to Macedonia, Prishtina Insight has discovered, in the latest of a series of ties between the PM's family and Cakiqi.



By Parim Olluri

The private trip, which was made three years ago, was made famous after a reporter from the now defunct Macedonian TV Station A1 pounced on PM Thaci as he left restaurant Balkanika, Skopje.

Cakiqi, who owns a string of large companies with his family, confirmed this week that Thaci had travelled to Skopje with his car.

The businessman, who hails, like Thaci, from Drenas, is building a huge apartment complex in partnership with the Prime Minister's brother, Blerim, on the outskirts of Prishtina.

He has also applied for permission to build a house next to the new home of Thaci and his brothers, currently under construction in the brand new neighborhood of Prishtina known as "New Prishtina - West".

Prishtina Insight can also reveal that Cakiqi figures as local representative of a Turkish company that works as a subcontractor on Bechtel-Enka's highway, worth 1 billion euro.

Under the Law on Declaration and Origin of Assets and Gifts of senior public officials, passed in February 2010, officials should not accept gifts "that influence or may influence" them "in the exercise of official duties."

Senior officials are supposed to refuse gifts, unless they are official state presents from foreign dignitaries.

It is not known if the Minister has declared the use of the car as the PM's office has refused to comment on the matter.

Travelling with Cakiqi's Car

Three years ago, in the parking lot of the restaurant "Balkanika" in Skopje, a BMW X5 Jeep carrying PM Hashim Thaci was filmed by a TV crew of A1.

The video, now available on Youtube, shows Thaci telling the Macedonian television station that he was on a private visit during an afternoon off.

Until this week, the owner of the car had been unknown. But Prishtina Insight has seen insurance documents confirming that the vehicle was registered under the name of Milaim Cakiqi, who was not a passenger in the car.

Cakiqi also confirmed his ownership, but refused to say why he had lent the vehicle to the PM.

Cakiqi and his family members Fazli and Viktor are owners of several large companies in Kosovo, and have been involved in a controversial privatization, which auditors suggested may have been manipulated. Although the Office of the Auditor General did not point a finger at the Cakiqi family.

Cakiqi said he had no reason to explain what he does in his private life when contacted by Prishtina Insight.

Prishtina Insight asked for a response from the Prime Minister for more than a week, but received no reply.



Cakiqi also figures as representative of "Uluova Insaat ve Makina Sanayi Ltd", according to the official register of businesses.

According to the Turkish firm's website, it is engaged in building the highway to Albania for the Turkish-US consortium Bechtel-Enka.

Bechtel-Enka spokesperson Ela Ruqi initially denied that the consortium had a role in the project.

But when asked to give an explanation about the claims made on the firm's official website of the company, Prishtina Insight received no reply. Uluova Insaat ve Makina Sanayi also declined to comment.

Cakiqi also denied he is a representative of this company, although his name and ID number appears as an "authorised person to the Business Registration Agency."

He said he was unaware why his name appears as representative of this firm. "I do not have time to deal with this," he said.

Editor's Word

Dependent Independence



By Lawrence Marzouk

The International Steering Group's decision to free Kosovo from the shackles of supervised independence is unquestionably significant.

It sends out a powerful message to the world. It's a symbol of progress and confidence in Kosovo: the international community believes that Kosovo can have the stabilisers taken off now as its time to ride free and alone, unhindered and unaided, if a little wobbly.

Actually I don't believe it. Unlike the father succeeding in teaching his son the joys of two-wheeling, I believe that both sides have reached a stage where they feel that enough "supervision" has been imparted – and most importantly enough money spent – to end this loveless relationship and save face.

But the relationship between Kosovo's government and its international overlords is unlikely to shift fundamentally as a result of the ICO's departure in September.

It's worth remembering that at no point did the ICO and its head, Pieter Feith, use his executive powers to override Kosovo's government.

Perhaps, you could argue, this is a ringing endorsement of PM Thaci's policies and an indication of the mature-beyond-its-years governance that he has instituted.

Seasoned observers know this to be poppycock. While there has been no open conflict between the ICO and Thaci, relations have been fraught at times and behind the scenes there has been the usual frenetic horse-trading and "diplomacy".

The right to override was never used because it was not seen as a useful political tool, even if it was a handy "credible threat". It would have been bad PR for the government, bad for the ICO, and delayed the ad-hoc organisation's departure, something that neither side wanted.

Post-ICO, technically the government will of course be free to pass whatever law it decides without fear of Mr Feith bulldozing the parliament.

But anyone that believes this is an end to international meddling and that Kosovo government will really have free rein will be sorely disappointed.

With EULEX still parked in its thousands on Kosovo soil, KFOR, as well as EU diplomats and, of course, the omnipotent US Embassy, post-ICO politics is unlikely to be very different to pre-ICO.

Ultimately Kosovo's international friends will hold immense power over any government because without their support the country cannot survive.

Sad but true – this is the nature of Realpolitik. Supervised independence may end, but dependent independence will continue.

Photo News:

Sick of Cafe Culture?

This startling piece of street art has appeared in a dingy doorwell in central Prishtina near the Tingell Tangell cafe.

Whether or not it is a comment on Prishtina's macchiato culture is unclear, but it is certainly likely to stir up some strong feelings. (Hat-tip to Besa Luci).



Balkan Countries Wilt in Fierce Heat Wave

Forty-degree heat blasts most former Yugoslav countries with the exception of Kosovo, where the temperature gauge is not likely to go beyond the mid-thirties Celsius.



By Prishtina Insight

Croatia's Ministry of Health and the meteorological office has again issued warnings to locals as the country braces more extreme weather.

Another heatwave is gripping the region with temperatures in central Croatia and Dalmatia reaching close to 40 degrees and experts saying people need to take care in the dangerously high temperatures.

Media also reported that there will not be much respite once the sun sets either with temperatures not expected to fall below 25 degrees all night. The Ministry of Health advises people to avoid going out from 10am to 5pm, drink plenty of fluids and avoid strenuous physical work.

It is a similar story Montenegro, where, starting from last Friday, temperatures reached 40 degrees, a record temperature for this time of year in many places.

The Ministry of Interior issued a statement last Thursday, warning that extremely hot weather was increasing the risk of fires, especially in the area of the capital, Podgorica, the nearby town of Danilovgrad and on the coast.

One road in the north was closed for traffic after a fire caused a landslide.

While doctors are advising people to stay out of the heat, beaches on the coast were crowded during the weekend - in contrast to

the scenes in inland towns where streets remained empty.

The extremely hot weather looks set to last until next week, when the Hydrometeorological Institute forecasts a slight fall in temperature.

In Bosnia, too, the heat wave has swept the country with temperatures also tipping 40 degrees in the past few days.

Visegrad was listed as the hottest town in Europe on Sunday with 42 degrees. The country's Hydrometeorological Institute issued a "red alert", which is the highest level of warning, for Banja Luka and Visegrad.

Analysis from the Institute predict a very warm month, with temperatures well above the average. Temperatures are expected to decrease on July 8.

In Serbia, maximum temperatures in many parts have reached 38 degrees. Extremely high temperatures are expected in the coming days, the Serbian



A man jumps into the Treska River near the village of Matka, just west of Macedonia's capital Skopje, to escape the heat.

Hydrometeorological Institute has stated.

Macedonia's authorities also advise people to take precautions as the temperature hit 40 degrees in some places.

To avoid fatalities, the government has urged people to avoid unnecessary exposure to the sun.

The Red Cross in Skopje started giving away bottles of fresh water to pedestrians.

The national Crisis Management Centre also warns of an increased risk of wildfires that usually sweep the country during the summer.

Kosovo is the one oasis in the

region. Syle Tahirsylaj, head of Kosovo's Hidero-Meteorological Institute, told Balkan Insight that temperatures will not go higher than 34 degree Celsius.

"This is logical, because Kosovo is rich in mountains and they protect and maintain the cool temperature," Tahirsylaj explained.

Marty Might Not Testify in the Medicus Case



By Fatmir Aliu

Dick Marty, Council of Europe rapporteur, might not testify in the Medicus case, since the Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE has not lifted his immunity.

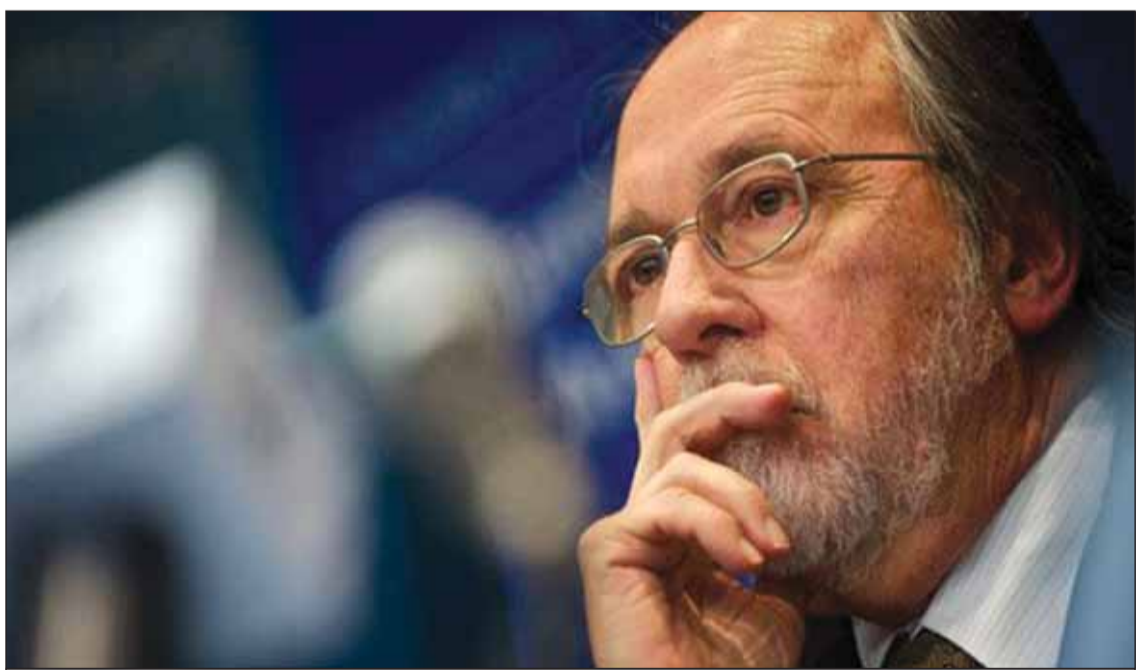
According to the reports from the Serbian state news agency Tanjug, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has unanimously declined to discuss lifting of Marty's immunity thereby preventing him to testify in front of Prishtina's court in an organ trafficking case.

The Council of Europe has declined to comment to BIRN about the media reports about Marty's possible testimony.

Article 14 of the General Agreement on Privileges and Immunities of the Council of Europe states "that representatives of the Consultative Assembly and their substitutes shall be immune from all official interrogation and from arrest and all legal proceedings in respect of words spoken or votes cast by them in the exercise of their functions."

Previously, Dick Marty, the Council of Europe's human rights rapporteur, had been expected to testify in the Kosovo court on June 18, but did not appear as scheduled.

At the time, EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, EULEX, issued



It's looking increasingly unlikely that Dick Marty will testify in the Medicus case.

a press release stating that the Council of Europe is reviewing EULEX's request to summon Dick Marty to testify in the Medicus trial.

"This process takes time, therefore the panel of judges in the Medicus case has decided to postpone Marty's testimony until the beginning of September," read the statement.

The Medicus case centres on the allegations that a group of people brought poor donors and rich recipients to the Medicus clinic, just outside Prishtina, in order to carry out the harvesting and transplant of kidneys.

Jonatan Ratel, prosecutor in the

case, initiated the procedure of calling Marty to testify believing that he can have evidence related to the case.

In December 2010 Marty presented a report to the Council of Europe, in which he alleged that some elements of the Kosovo Liberation Army, including Kosovo's Prime Minister Hasim Tachi, had traded the organs of prisoners during the 1999 conflict.

However, Juri Las, spokesperson of the Special Investigation EULEX team for the organ trafficking case, says that the Medicus case and Marty's report on organ trafficking are two different crimes committed in different

times.

"We have here two kinds of criminal activities from two different time periods. Certainly, it is something we cannot speak about in a hundred per cent accuracy, but the point is that these are two types of crimes in different periods," said Las for Radio Free Europe.

According to the indictment, 30 operations involving illegal kidney transplants were conducted at the clinic, operations which were enabled by luring people from slums in Istanbul, Moscow, Moldova and Kazakhstan with false promises of up to 15,000 euro for their organs.

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Pop Star Urges Albanians to Have More Kids

Albanian pop star pleads with her compatriots to regain their taste for babies, as evidence shows that family sizes are shrinking fast.



By Jeton Musliu

Rovena Stefa, better known for her folk-themed pop songs and saucy videos, has turned her attention to a pressing social issue in Kosovo, the country's once high, now tumbling, birth rate.

Stefa, 31, from Fier in Albania, held a press conference in the Hotel Victory in Prishtina on May 31 to her new song, Djepi, which means "Cradle".

Despite having no children herself, Stefa urges her fellow Albanians to rediscover their taste for large families which, according to official statistics, have declined in size in recent years.



Pop star Rovena Stefa is urging Albanians to have more children. Although currently childless she told Prishtina Insight she plans to have five kids.

Falling birth rate:

Data from the Statistics Agency of Kosovo shows that a sharp increase in the number of births occurred in Kosovo from 1948 until 1990. But after that, figures began to fall.

In 1948, 27,792 births were recorded while in 1990 the figure had climbed to 55,175.

But by 2002, the number of births had fallen back to 36,136, while in 2007 the number of births in Kosovo was 33,111. In 2008, the latest available statistics, there were 34,000 births.

According to a survey by the Ministry of Public Administration in 2009, published last year, the proportion of young people is also declining.

"Comparing the age structure of population of 2009 with that of 2003 reveals obvious changes of the population age structure," the report, Demographic, Social and Reproductive Health in Kosovo, reads.

It shows that the proportion of the population under the age of 15 fell during that period by 5 per cent from 33.1 per cent to 28.2 per cent.

Albania has recorded a similar fall, with official data showing that while 72,000 births were registered in 1990 there are only around 36,000

annual births these days.

"Strong nations need babies":

It was with these worrying figures in mind that Stefa launched her new song.

"A strong nation requires a strong economy, and a strong economy cannot be done without people," Stefa said.

She told Prishtina Insight that she intended to have a large number of children herself, "most probably five, and definitely not just one".

She added that she was disappointed that no one from Kosovo's Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare had contacted her about the campaign.

Sociologist Artan Muhaxhiri, from the University of Prishtina, said demographic changes had come about because of major social changes since the war in Kosovo.

"Especially since 1999, Kosovo has seen many significant socio-cultural changes, which has led to greater awareness of family planning," Muhaxhiri noted.

Old-style big families were the result of a collectivist mentality and reflected traditional values, he said.

"Today, with tremendous changes of lifestyle, family planning is more about an agreement between the couples, which is defined by individual wishes, aspirations and employment opportunities," he said.

"Because of the dominance of patriarchal mentality, in the past the power of women to determine

household size was very small.

Now this is changing for the better, because family planning is taking into account the requirements, plans and ambitions of women, too."

The sociologist added that families were shrinking also due to

have seven sons and six daughters," Bahrija, 35, told Prishtina Insight.

Her oldest, Gentiana, is 18, while the youngest, Dennis, is just five months old.

She says the whole family struggle each month with the 170 euro



Some of Bahrije and Bajram Mustafa's 13 children

more expensive material demands on modern parents.

"In the past, life was simpler, so consequently the needs of the children were lesser and this enabled [people to have] larger families," Muhaxhiri said.

Bucking the trend:

While the average family in Kosovo may be shrinking, some homes, even in the capital, are very bucking the trend.

Bahrije and Bajram Mustafa live in difficult economic circumstances, but it hasn't stopped them from having 13 children. The family live in an abandoned house in the mostly Roma Dodona neighbourhood in the capital.

"I just couldn't abort them, so I

that her husband earns as a cleaner for a private company.

"We do not get any social security payments, just some gifts from those who help us out of goodwill," says Bahria.

Tired and exhausted, with a face and body of a woman older than she is, she is nonetheless happy with her numerous brood.

"It's very hard, but I never understand people who have good living conditions and have only child or maybe two," she said.

"I often get their names confused, especially when tired and angry," she says laughing. "Don't ask me how I managed to raise them because I don't know, but I can tell you something, no bad behaviour will come from my kids"



Nineties Team Returns to Serbia

The Socialists and Progressives, who shared power in the 1990s, when the Progressives' members were Radicals, are back in office – but have they changed heart since then?



Bojana Barlovac,
Gordana Andric

After 50 days of closed-doors negotiations between all key players, the party once led by Slobodan Milosevic has formed a new government with the Serbian Progressive Party as its main partner, while the former governing Democrats head into opposition.

President Tomislav Nikolic, himself a Progressive, gave the mandate to the leader of the Socialists, Ivica Dacic, to form a government on June 28. It now remains to be seen who will take which ministry, though some names have already resurfaced.

The manifest tasks of the new government will be to defend Serbian interests, maintain the EU integration path, give ordinary people a better life, work for social equality and fight crime and corruption.

"Regarding these common goals, I accept the responsibility to lead a new government. There will be no return to the nineties; I'm not interested in a 'Greater Serbia, but rather in the present and future of the country," Dacic said on June 28, adding that he will also talk to some other parties about perhaps joining the coalition.

Dacic, Interior Minister and deputy PM in the last Democrat-led coalition, emerged as kingmaker after the May general elections, following a stronger than expected showing in the results that also

saw the Democrats weakened.

He is expected to be Prime Minister in a government composed of Progressives, Socialists and the United Regions of Serbia. He may also keep the Interior Ministry.

A source in the Democrats told BIRN that once it became obvious that Dacic was switching preference towards the Progressives as partners, Boris Tadic, the party president, proposed that the Democrats should go into opposition.

The decision emerged at a meeting of Democratic Party seniors on June 26. "Everyone agreed with his proposal," the source said.

Tadic also asked Dragan Djilas, Democrat Mayor of Belgrade, to withdraw from his municipal coalition with the Socialists that had already been formalised.

Tadic wanted Democrats to go into opposition at all levels of government except in the province of Vojvodina.

The same source said Djilas refused the request. Democrats remain strong in the capital, having won 50 of the 110 seats in the Belgrade assembly.

On June 27, before the deal between the Progressives and the Socialists became official, senior Socialist member Cedomir Antic said the City of Belgrade coalition would not be changed regardless of which parties the Socialists formed a national government with.

Democratic Party president Tadic said on June 28 that his party is yet to decide what will happen with coalition agreements in local governments.



Nikolic (left), Serbian President and PM designate Dacic (right) have chequered pasts.

The post of Belgrade mayor is seen as one of the most important and most powerful posts in the country after that of prime minister.

A potential change of arrangements in Belgrade could, thus, also affect the new future ministerial line-up, as the parties would then have to decide who to post to government and who to the City of Belgrade.

Old team has second innings:

The composition of the new government will be a case of distinct déjà vu for some. This is because

the Socialists and Progressives, when they were still part of the Radical Party, ruled Serbia together under Slobodan Milosevic back in the 1990s.

Opinion is divided over how much these parties have changed since then and on whether such a government can last.

The May elections saw the Progressives win 73 of the 250 seats in parliament, while the Democrats came second with 67 and the Socialists third with 44. The Liberals secured 19 seats and United Regions 16.

Although a coalition deal between the Democrats and Socialists was put in place after

the elections, which was to have included Cedomir Jovanovic's Liberals, talks between them faltered after Tadic lost to Nikolic in the May 20th presidential run-off.

Tadic said on June 28 that the problem with the agreement was the fact that Dacic requested the position of prime minister, which the Democrats refused. However, on the same day Dacic stated that he never asked to be prime minister and that it was not a condition for forming a coalition with the Democrats.

Another major problem with the Democrat-led government concerned the third partner that the Socialists and Democrats required

US Wants Socialists Out of Serbia Govt

State Department official arrived in Belgrade to break the deal on a nationalist-led government between the Progressives and the Socialists - but appears to have failed



By Bojana Barlovac

Philip Reeker, Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs, arrived for a three-day visit to Belgrade on Tuesday to persuade leaders of the two biggest parties, the Progressives and the Democrats, to form a new government, Prishtina Insight has learned from two independent sources within two parties.

"The US official will meet [Democrat leader Boris] Tadic to ask him enter the government with the Progressives," a source said. Last Wednesday, Tadic told the party's board that the party has decided to go into the opposition after losing the general election to its main rival.

"Progressives are likely to agree on the American proposal," the source added.

However, both the Progressives and the Democrats have rejected the option of a grand coalition on various occasions in the past.

The visit comes a few days after Serbian newly elected president Tomislav Nikolic gave Ivica

Dacic, once right hand man of the late Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic, a mandate to form a new government, which would comprise the Progressives, Socialists and United Region of Serbia.

According to both sources, the Americans oppose Dacic heading the Serbian government following his involvement in the Nineties' regime in Serbia, which is seen as primarily responsible for bloody break-up of the former Yugoslavia.

They also oppose his recent

moves on Kosovo as Interior Minister in the oast government, including the arrests of Kosovo Albanians ahead of the May general elections in Serbia.

In June, while visiting Sofia, Reeker warned that Serbia should accept reality in Kosovo, which declared its independence from Serbia in 2008.

The US has been one of the biggest supporters of Kosovo's independence.

The misgivings in the US about Dacic's appointment as prime minister were intensified after his visit last month to Russia, which recently expressed interest in the purchase of large state systems that have not been privatized such as EPS and Telekom.

Reeker is also due to meet Dacic, Prishtina Insight has learned from the Socialists.

Although this is the first US

official visit to Serbia following the general elections in May, Reeker was in Belgrade in August last year when he met Serbia's then ruling Democrats to ensure long-term stability in the Balkans, including Serbia's European integration.

Meanwhile, talks on forming the nationalist-led government are underway in Belgrade. The leaders of the Socialists and the United Regions of Serbia are meeting on Tuesday to "finalise a coalition agreement".

But the Progressives, the United Regions of Serbia and the Socialists have now excluded any possibility that a coalition between the Progressives and Democrats will be formed.

The agreement that the three parties have made on forming a new government remains in place, the party leaders said at a press conference in Belgrade on Wednesday.



Senior US official Philip Reeker

under PM Dacic

in order to gain a parliamentary majority.

Dacic would not agree to a government with the Liberals alone and insisted on a fourth party, the United Regions of Serbia, URS, joining as well.

But Mladjan Dinkic's URS became an insoluble problem for the Democrats, as personal relations between Tadic and Dinkic had long been damaged beyond repair.

The Progressives' decision to offer the Socialists the PM's post was an astute move, as Dacic felt he could not refuse.

Both the Progressives and Socialists have moved on in the last decade. After Socialists' leader Milosevic died while on trial for war crimes in 2006, Dacic began modernising the party and putting its nationalist past behind it.

The party distanced itself from the politics of the Milosevic era and backed Serbia's EU integration efforts.

The Progressives, meanwhile, were formed in October 2008 after a split in the ranks of the ultra-nationalist Serbian Radical Party.

Nikolic broke with the Radical leader Vojislav Seselj [on trial in The Hague] over Nikolic's call for the Radicals to moderate their nationalist image a little and embrace the EU.

Over time the party has become more EU-orientated and, thus, closer to the Democrats in terms of its policy profile.

An EU delegation to Belgrade told BIRN that for Brussels it is most important that a government is formed as soon as possible, so that it can start dealing with the difficult economic situation and continue working on reforms and EU integration.

"We have no doubts of the pro-European orientation of the new government. We had good coopera-

tion with Dacic while he was Interior Minister and we hope to continue it," a member of the delegation told BIRN.

However, some Serbs remember Nikolic past statements, such as that he felt no sorrow for some of the victims of the regime of Milosevic. Some also recall that Dacic, as a spokesperson of the Socialists in the Nineties, was once one of the public faces of the Milosevic regime.

Sonja Biserko, of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of Serbia, says Serbia cannot be confident of what to expect from the new-old team.

"Nikolic's win in the presidential elections surprised us, but that is our reality and this government is a natural product of that reality," she said.

"These are the same people who ruled Serbia during the Nineties and they are back now," she added.

"I expect the Socialists to dominate that government, as the Progressives don't have people capable of leading the country. But we can't know what to expect from them. We know what they did in the past, but we don't know what they want now," Biserko said.

Major changes unlikely:

Miljenko Dereta, head of NGO Civic Initiatives, believes the new government won't last long, but that it may retard Serbia's reform process and EU integration.

"This will be a short-lived government that will not deal with any important issues," Dereta predicted. "I think its main goal is just to further weaken the Democratic Party."

Bosko Jaksic, foreign policy expert, said the new government will do what its members promised during the election campaign - work on the EU integration and

lift the on-off talks with break-away Kosovo to a higher level.

Dejan Vuk Stankovic, a political analyst, doubts any dramatic changes will follow the formation of the new government.

"Recent years showed that there are no major ideological differences between the parties in Serbia," he said.

"This government will stay on the same course as the previous one. Serbia may shift bit more towards Russia in international relations, but it won't be a radical twist," he added.

"When it comes to relations with the region, we cannot expect the Progressives or the Socialists to make symbolic gestures, as Tadic did, when he visited Vukovar and Srebrenica, but they will not provoke Serbia's neighbours," Stankovic continued.

For Stankovic, the coalition between the Socialists and Progressives came as no surprise.

"It might have surprised some, but only because the media created a perception that Tadic will be the next prime minister. But this option was as realistic as any other," he said.

"The elections clearly showed the Democrats had lost support and Tadic then lost his authority over the Socialists."

Neven Cveticanin, from Belgrade's Institute of Social Sciences, says economic policy will not change under the new team either.

"The key issue for Serbia is the economy and Mladjan Dinkic will have the final say about it, as he has in almost all previous governments since 2000," he said.

"The man who led the country's economy so far will keep doing it - I don't see how anything could change," he added.

Cabinet Line-up:

Preliminary talks between Socialists and Progressives have led to speculation on who might take the ministerial posts.

However, BIRN sources say this is just a preliminary line-up and changes may happen in the following days.

So far, Dacic may be Prime Minister and Interior Minister.

Aleksandar Vucic, vice president of the Progressives, could be Deputy Prime Minister in charge of EU integration.

This would be Vucic's second term in government. In 1998 he was Minister of Information in a government of the Radicals and the Socialist Party, then led by Slobodan Milosevic.

Jorgovanka Tabakovic of the Progressives is mentioned as a potential Finance Minister. She served in government in 1998 as a Privatisation Minister.

Mladjan Dinkic of United Regions would get Economy, the same ministry his party has controlled for the past four years.

After the fall of the Milosevic regime in 2000, Dinkic headed the Yugoslav National Bank, its youngest governor in history. Dinkic has been part of every government since then as Economy or Finance Minister.

Slavica Djukic Dejanovic, of the Socialists, speaker of the parliament since 2008, may get Health, while Velimir Ilic could get Agriculture and Planning.

Ilic was Minister of Capital Investments from 2004 to 2007 and Infrastructure Minister from 2007 to 2008. He is well known for his controversial antics. In 2003 he kicked a journalist in an interview. After the riots in Belgrade that followed Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008, Ilic appeared to endorse the attacks on foreign embassies, saying that, "Breaking windows is also [part of] democracy".

Milutin Mrkonjic of the Socialists will remain Infrastructure Minister and Zarko Obradovic of the Socialists will remain in Education.

Suzana Grubjesic, vice-president of the URS, might be Foreign Minister. Grubjesic had been a party whip in parliament since 2007 and heads Serbia's delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE.

Vladimir Cvijan of the Progressives is mentioned as a new Justice Minister. He was in President Tadic's cabinet from 2005 to 2010 as legal affairs adviser.

In his resignation letter, Cvijan wrote that he was leaving cabinet because of badly conducted justice reforms and corruption in the election of judges and prosecutors.

A potential Defence Minister is Borislav Pelevic of the Progressives.

During the wars of the Nineties Pelevic was a commander of the paramilitary formation known as the Tigers. The Hague Tribunal, ICTY, charged the Tigers' chief, Zeljko Raznatovic "Arkan", with war crimes in Croatia and Bosnia. Arkan was murdered in 2000 in Belgrade.

Kosovo Given Green Light for Full Independence

Kosovo will become fully independent in September, the International Steering Group, ISG, which oversees the newborn country, announced on Monday.



By Fatmir Aliu, Bojana Barlovac

The group of 25 states, which have been overseeing Kosovo since it declared independence from Serbia in 2008, said that the country had successfully implemented the provisions of the UN Comprehensive Settlement Proposal, more commonly known as the Ahtisaari Plan, which were a precondition to its full independence.

The 15th meeting of the Steering Group, ISG, also decided to terminate the mandate of the International Civilian Representative, ICR, which will come to an end at the final meet-

ing of the ISG in Prishtina.

The Steering Group underlined the need for the principles and spirit that have governed Kosovo so far to continue into the period that follows "the ending of supervised independence."

Kosovo declared independence from Serbia on February 17, 2008. Since then 89 states, including 22 EU Member states and the US, have recognized the country.

"We commit ourselves to continue supporting Kosovo's quest for further international recognition and its aspirations toward membership of relevant international organizations," the group said.

During the meeting in Vienna, Kosovo's Prime Minister Hashim Thaci has pledged to

continue the cause of creating a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic Kosovo, for all its citizens.

"We are determined to make Kosovo a success story, and an example of peace, stability and prosperity," Thaci told the ambassadors at the ISG meeting in Vienna.

"Our institutions stand ready to move out from under the supervised umbrella, and incorporate the principles of the Ahtsaari Plan into our modern constitution and laws, so that they may continue to serve our entirely independent nation," he added.

Heinz-Christian Strache, the leader of the Austria's most influential opposition party, the far right Freedom Party, has dubbed the decision a clear provocation that would jeopard-

ize the safety of local Serbs.

"It is frightening that autonomy has not been requested for the Serbs in the north, those whom the Muslim Albanians have not expelled from Kosovo," Strache said in a statement.

Pieter Feith, International Civilian Representative, said after the meeting that there are sufficient guarantees that Prishtina will take full responsibility when it comes to respecting the rights of all people, especially the Serbian community.

Oliver Ivanovic, the outgoing State Secretary in the Serbian Ministry for Kosovo said that the office of International Civilian Representative had even failed to implement the Ahtisaari plan properly, and that they would leave Kosovo full of social tensions.



Thaci hailed Kosovo as "success"

Kosovo Metal Workers Protest Against Sackings

Around 85 workers continue protests in front of Ferronikel, Kosovo's biggest exporter, after the company refused to extend their contracts and banned them from entering the site.



By Prishtina Insight

Ferronikel, based in the central Kosovo region of Drenas, says it needed to make cuts in order to survive a fall in the price of nickel on world markets.

But Kosovo's nationalist Vetevendosje (Self-determination) movement has accused the major exporter of showing complete indifference towards the environmental and social conditions of its workforce.

On Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, workers protested against the termination of their contracts.

The company had 1,008 workers at the New Year, but around 100 have not had their contracts extended this year, mostly this month.

Fehmi Nika, head of the workers union of Ferronikel, told Pr Insight that the union of workers met on Monday.

"We have discussed with the management about retaining them [the sacked staff] and we're supporting the workers, but they have created their own protest group and started a protest," Nika said.

Nika said the union had not received a list

with the names of the workers whose contracts hadn't been extended.

Ferronikel was bought at the end of 2005 for 30 million euro by Cunico Resources N.V., which has its headquarters in Holland.

When Ferronikel was sold, the purchaser was obliged to invest 20 million euro within three years and retain 1,000 members of staff for two years.

In 2009, the Kosovo Agency for Privatization, KPA, reported that the buyer had exceeded the pledges for investment and hiring.

"The Board of the KPA decided in 2009 to release [the company] from monitoring," Ylli Kaloshi, KPA spokesman, recalled.

"KPA has no longer any competence over this company and cannot tell it how many workers it should keep in work," he added.

The company says it regrets having to terminate contracts but adds that it has no legal obligations to retain the workers.

"Ferronikel has tried to solve the problem by terminating contracts with several contractors," spokesman Ekrem Tahiri said.

"I understand that many people don't believe this, but this was a necessary measure to enable the company to continue working in the new circumstances of the global economic crisis."

Tahiri said that Ferronikel had continued



Sacked workers have been protesting outside the metal plant Ferronikel, Drenas

to produce around the same amounts of Ferronikel, despite the crisis, but that the price of the metal had fallen on the international market.

"For several months Ferronikel has been making losses of 2 million euro a month. This is not politics, its merely business," he said.

Tahiri said that the management now thinks that with 900 workers the company is safe.

But Vetevendosje says that Ferronikel is only interested in the "big profits" and "does not care about the negative social and environmental impact."

"The Vetevendosje movement in Drenas calls on all the central and local institutions, political and public, to react strongly and to oblige Ferronikel to restore the fired workers and improve their working conditions," Vetevendosje said in a statement.

The head of the movement in Drenas, Petrit Bajraktari, said that production in the company in the last month had been greater than ever before, around 650 tonnes a month.

Ferronikel was fined earlier this year for a second environmental offence after it was found to have emitted after it was found that it had removed filters from its flues.

Ford Starts Production of New Car in Romania

The first Ford B-Max rolled off the production line in Craiova on Monday, confirming Romania's position as one of the main car producers in Eastern Europe.



By Marian Chiriac

The first Ford car ever made in Romania, the B-Max model, was launched on Monday at Craiova, southern Romania, in the presence of the President, Traian Basescu.

The President bought the first vehicle, a red model, saying that the B-Max was "technically two-to-three times ahead of anything that can be produced in Romania".

Basescu also praised the American car giant for choosing to invest in Romania in a difficult economic climate.

Ford agreed to pay the Romanian government 57 million euro in 2008 for a 72 per cent stake in the Craiova plant, which was originally bought

by South Korean automaker Daewoo in the 1990s.

The company had to invest 675 million euro in technology and produce as many as 250,000 car units by March this year, according to the privatization contract.

But Ford recently reached a deal with the Romanian state to delay some of the investments and lower the initially agreed production level.

The company will manufacture 60,000 B-Max units this year at Craiova, and plans to build 105,000 more next year. Most are destined for export at prices starting from 13,500 euro.

Ford expects to sell only 15,000 to 20,000 B-Max cars annually in Romania. That figure will increase Ford's share of the Romanian car market to almost 20 per cent.

Romania is one of the main car producers in Eastern Europe. France's Renault produces the Dacia model at a plant in Mioveni, in central Romania. The plant sold around 300,000 cars last year in Romania and abroad.

On Monday Dacia production stopped for two days at Mioveni due to economic problems.

Since 2008, the company has halted production several times and laid off almost 1,000 staff. Renault has invested 1 billion euro in Dacia since buying it in 1998.



Macedonia will now feature on the route of the Russian South Stream oil project

Macedonia Signs Up to South Stream Pipeline

Macedonia has now joined the Russian-led South Stream gas pipeline project, the Vice Prime Minister Zoran Stavreski said in Russia, confirming that Russia and Gazprom, the company in charge of the project, have now given the green light.



By Sinisa Jakov Marusic

"There's no more dilemma - Macedonia is joining the international gas pipeline corridor South Stream," Stavreski said on Tuesday in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia, where a session of the Mixed Macedonian-Russian Business Commission was held.

Stavreski said that Macedonia had now received from Russia and Gazprom the draft-agreement that envisages building one leg of the pipeline in Macedonia.

Construction of the pipeline is expected to kick off in late 2012 and should be completed by late 2015. It is yet to be determined when the

Macedonian section will be built.

Macedonia hopes that in the months to harmonize details of draft with Russia. After that, following the example of the other seven countries that are part of the project, a mixed company will be formed to work on construction of the pipeline in Macedonia.

The South Stream pipeline will transport Russian natural gas through the Black Sea to Bulgaria and then further to Italy and Austria, transiting several Balkan countries on its way. The project is scheduled for completion in 2015.

The Russian pipeline is seen as rival to the Nabucco project, planned by the European Union and the United States as a way of reducing European energy dependence on Russia.

Macedonia hopes that the pipeline will solve its growing energy needs and provide cheaper power alternatives for both industry and households.

Price of Jeremic UN Post Causes Anger in Serbia

Reports that Serbia may have to find millions of dollars to cover the cost of Vuk Jeremic's presidency over the UN General Assembly are stirring controversy in the crisis-hit country.



Bojana Barlovac BIRN Belgrade

One of the tasks of Serbia's new government will be deciding how to secure funds from the state budget to finance the UN office of Vuk Jeremic during his presidency of the General Assembly. Prishtina Insight has learned from the government.

On June 8, Jeremic, Foreign Minister under the outgoing Democrat-led government, became the first Serb to preside over the General Assembly for a year.

The post is mainly of a technical nature but it still carries a certain degree of prestige and responsibility.

Last week, Serbia's outgoing government passed a regulation that envisions establishing an office for monitoring the activities of the General Assembly during Jeremic's presidency.

The problem is that under UN rules, published on the website of the world organization, the total cost of the presidency of the UN, including the chairman's salary, comes from his or her country of origin.

Media have since reported that the amount that Serbia will have to stump up could exceed 7 million US dollars.

This has stirred controversy at a time when Serbia is facing a grave economic crisis, with an unemployment rate of 24 per cent and average monthly salaries of only 350 euro.

Dragan Djilas, deputy president of the Democrats, said it would be disgraceful for the government to approve 7 million dollars for the

post at such a time.

"In a country in which there is not enough money even for the most vulnerable, and where incubators for babies have to be purchased through humanitarian actions, spending so much money for a year in New York is outrageous," Djilas told the daily newspaper Blic.

The Foreign Ministry has announced that final budget for the one-year chairmanship of the UN is yet to be defined and sent to the new government for adoption. The office would operate within General Secretariat of the Serbian Government.

During the election campaign in April, all major parties in Serbia advocated cuts in public sector and the closure of a number of government agencies.



Report Laments Albanian Civil Society's Shrinking Influence

According USAID's 2011 civil society sustainability index, Albanian NGOs are increasingly shut out of the corridors of power and have little means of influencing public policy.



By Besar Likmeta

The report by USAID makes grim reading for Albanian NGOs and civil society pressure groups.

Despite efforts by NGO's in 2011 to open up dialogue in order to resolve the tense political crisis between the centre-right ruling majority and the Socialist opposition, the report says its calls mostly fell on deaf ears.

According to the report, civil society in Albania remains structurally weak and the legal environment in which more than 1,600 organizations operate worsened in 2011. Some organizations have faced harassment from the government, mainly through fines from the tax authorities.

"When the government drafted the legal framework for civil society organization [in 2010] consultations with its actors were limited and sometimes non-existent," said Gjegji Vurmo, an expert at the Institute for Democracy and Mediation in Tirana and one of the authors.

According to Vurmo one of the key indicators that have deteriorated in 2011 in the

index has been the capacity of local NGOs for advocacy, mainly due to the tense political climate before and after the riots in January 2011, where the Republican Guard shot four opposition protesters.

Political scientist and civil society activists Blendi Kajsiu also blames the increasingly close relationship between politics, business interests and the media for the inability of civil society organization to influence public affairs.

"Today Albania's civil society is in crisis and civic reaction is almost numb," Kajsiu said. "The ever closer relationship between business, media and politics has transformed the public sphere into a space where only private interests are articulated," he added.

Kajsiu underlined that Albania's civil society sector remains dominated by the priorities of donors, which often put stability above democracy, creating an almost clinical sector.

"In Albania, civil society speaks with the voice of EU bureaucrats rather than the language of civic revolt that is absent from Albania's political scene," he said.

"In Albania there are countless reasons to feel revolted but very little encouragement to act upon them," Kajsiu concluded.

Romania Blocks Probe into King's Mysterious Roots

Culture Minister has forbidden scientists from researching into the DNA of a medieval king, apparently fearing it may reveal his Asiatic origins.



By Marian Chiriac

Romanian Culture Minister has unexpectedly halted an ongoing project aimed at sampling the DNA of old Romanian (Wallachian) princes of the 14th-15th century, saying it is disrespectful.

"For scientific purposes the project may be important, but it has to be stopped as it is necessary to have respect for what these rulers meant for our country," said Culture Minister Puiu Hasotti.

He added that the researchers' authorization does not allow them to sample DNA, but only to carry out an archaeological dig.

Researchers started the DNA sampling project last week, at Curtea de Arges, a town which holds a 700-year-old tomb of one of the first kings of Wallachia, the old name for part of southern Romania.

They wanted to settle the controversy over the prince's origin, as some historians maintain that he was of Asian Turkic descent.

That would contradict the official line, which insists that modern Romanians have Latin or Romance origins.

"The project has only scientific purposes. We want to find out only the truth and are not interested whether the old kings had or had not an Asiatic origin," Alexandru Simion, a researcher at the Romanian

Academy, said.

Researchers from various scientific institutions in Romania attended the disinterment at Curtea de Arges and took different samples, which were supposed to be analyzed in universities in Romania and abroad.

Analysts have scorned the minister's decision. "Why aren't we allowed to exhume the true story? Because all we have left is our national pride... with which we justify our current mistakes," Lucian Mandruta from Gandul daily newspaper, said.

"We don't want to live without the glamorous, falsified version of history, as it eases our consciences after every catastrophe we endure," he added.



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Ex-PM's Jailing Hailed as Watershed For Romanian Justice

As former PM Adrian Nastase becomes the first 'big fish' to be jailed for corruption in Romania, the question is whether it marks a turning point in the country's battle with high-level graft.



By Marian Chiriac

When in March 2003, Romania's then Prime Minister, Adrian Nastase, signed a law allowing the set-up of National Anti-Corruption Directorate, DNA, he could not have imagined that he would one day become the most important target of its investigations into high-level corruption.

Nine years later, following various DNA probes, Nastase became the highest public official in Romania to be sentenced to jail for corruption, a decision that then drove him to try - and fail - to take his own life.

Back in 2003, Nastase was at the zenith of his political career, enjoying considerable power and popularity as Romania experienced a period of economic growth and prepared to join the NATO military alliance.

But the popularity of Nastase's Social Democrat-led government palled as it became increasingly accused of allowing endemic graft to fester, particularly at the top level.

Nastase was Prime Minister from December 2000 to December 2004, when the Social Democrats lost power to a centrist coalition that introduced sweeping reforms, increasing judicial independence and helping Romania obtain an invitation to join the European Union three years later.

He stood as the Social Democrat candidate in the 2004 presidential election but was defeated by the centre-right candidate, Traian Basescu, who is President of Romania today.

Just months later, anti-corruption prosecutors started to launch a series of criminal investigations into Nastase's wealth and allegedly involvement in corruption.

A first investigation, about a real estate deal in which he bought land from a former lawmaker who was later convicted for fraud, was dropped in early 2006.

But other cases based on claims that he had obtained wealth using illegal means dragged on for years.

Many came to nothing. Last December, for example, he was cleared of a case concerning receipt of 300,000 euro and three houses inherited from his wife's aunt.

In April he was given a three-year suspended jail sentence for blackmail but was cleared of corruption in a case in which he was accused of accepting around 630,000 euro from the manager of a state institution, in exchange for appointing Irina Jianu, the said manager, as head



Adrian Nastase is the first big political fish to have been jailed in Romania on corruption charges.

of the Public Works Department.

Prosecutors claimed that the money he received from this kickback was spent on goods imported from China and on construction work at Nastase's two homes.

Nastase was found not guilty of these charges, too. However, he was found guilty of blackmailing Romania's former consul in Hong Kong, Ioan Paun, who had to conceal the goods in the embassy building.

In the context of the previous court rulings, it came as a general surprise that Romania's highest court on June 20 confirmed that Nastase will have to serve a two-year jail sentence for cor-

ruption.

The court found him guilty of having financed election campaigns with around 1.6 million euro collected by a state institution for a symposium for which businessmen had to pay a participation fee.

The fees went to four companies controlled by members of Nastase's entourage.

The trial lasted over three years in all and involved 900 witnesses and 48 court hearings. Five other defendants tried in the same case were sentenced to between five and six years in prison.

The court decision shocked Romania largely because most

people in the country have come to assume that senior politicians effectively remain above the law.

Almost everyone suspected that the new government, led by the Social Democrats, now under Victor Ponta, would protect Nastase, who is still a member of the party.

The most shocking fact of all was that a few hours after the court's decision, Nastase apparently tried to take his own life.

When police came to his home to take him into custody, Nastase tried to shoot himself in the neck, on which a policeman grabbed the gun and prevented him from inflicting more serious injuries to himself.

However, one bullet penetrated his neck, though it just missed a key artery, doctors said.

The failed suicide bid caused shock across the country with some people, mostly politicians, describing it as "shocking" and "a tragedy".

But others were not so sympathetic, calling the suicide attempt a cheap trick aimed at avoiding having to go to prison.

"I don't believe it was a true suicide attempt for a second," read one message posted by Simona P on a popular news portal.

"Someone so used to guns would have known how to handle one to end his life. Heck, I haven't seen a real gun in my life and I'm pretty sure I'd figure out what to do if I really wanted to blow out my brains," she added.

Nastase has a private collection of 23 expensive guns, most of them hunting rifles. He also holds a legal permit for the pistol he used during his failed suicide attempt.

Some analysts say that, whatever the emotional impact of the suicide bid, the news that a former Prime Minister is to go to jail marks a turning point in Romania's frail justice system.

"This is a significant moment for the country," says political analyst Alina Mungiu, from the Romanian Academic Society, SAR, a leading NGO.

"It is the first sentence in post-Communist Romania to strike at such a high level - a former head of government," Mungiu added. "I hope this is a sign for politicians that no one is above the law."

Mungiu dismissed suspicions linking the timing of the Nastase verdict to Romania's efforts to join the EU's passport-free "Schengen" zone and waive the EU's Co-operation and Verification Mechanism, MCV.

The safeguard measure was instituted six years ago to ensure progress in the field of justice and internal affairs.

Both Romania and neighbouring Bulgaria were originally up for inclusion in the Schengen area in 2011, but opposition from several EU states, due to their perceived high levels of corruption, as held up the process.

While agreeing on the importance of the Nastase sentence, other analysts are more cautious concerning its potential effects.

"The fight against corruption should not be limited to arrests and convictions. We need an awareness campaign along with punitive measures to have a change of mentality," journalist Liviu Avran says.

"When people are less ready to receive or give bribes, then we will see the rate of corruption drop," he added.



Former Romanian PM Adrian Nastase attempted to take his life as a police attempted to arrest him.

EU Cash May Slip Through Bosnia's Fingers

Country could miss out on a fortune in Pre-Accession cash if it fails to finalize its list of projects in the next few days.



By Elvira Jukic

Bosnia could lose up to 100 million euro in European Union funding if it misses a fast-approaching deadline to agree on projects to be carried out as part of the 2012 Instrument of Pre-Accession Assistance, IPA.

The IPA is a European Commission-financed programme of help for EU candidate and potential candidate countries.

The goal of the funds is to help possible member countries meet EU standards and harmonize their laws in line with EU legislation.

The divided Balkan country, already lagging behind most of the rest of the region in terms of EU accession prospects, has only days left to lay out its plans, have the government adopt them and then forward them to Brussels by July 13.

But, as of now, agreement on

key projects in the fields of the judiciary and transport remains uncertain, which means that Bosnia could lose out on the whole of the EU aid package.

The process for Bosnia's IPA 2012-13 started in November 2011 and since then some 20 project proposals were agreed.

The main ones for this year concern Corridor 5C, the country's main highway, currently running from Sarajevo to Kakanj, and funds to improve the workings of the money for them would be distributed between the state and the country's two autonomous entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska.

Key transport projects, such as a support to the Corridor 5C, drawn up in the phase of identification, were not considered to have met the strict EU criteria. They also need to be reformulated.

The DEI said that projects have to be in accordance with the offer and must be carefully drafted.

Angelina Pudar, from the Directorate for European Integration, DEI, told Prishtina Insight that finalization of the projects is crucial and must be done expertly.

"The projects cannot be just any old projects, they have to be concrete and meet the given standards concerning how to make a project," Pudar said.

"The

offered transport projects did not meet those standards, and have yet to be finalized at a political level among the relevant ministers," she noted.

As Saninno stated in another letter to Bosnian authorities, the EU remains keen for Bosnia to accelerate work on

have to go as part of this year's plan as those were the conditions of the whole 2012 funding.

Zeljka Cvijanovic, Minister for Economic Relations and Regional Cooperation in the Republika Srpska, told Prishtina Insight that there were problems even in the first phase of the IPA programming, the phase of identification.

This was when it became apparent that it was not clear which level of government should be in charge of implementing them.

"Equal representation by the different levels of government was not respected in terms of goals, activities and implementers of the proposed projects," Cvijanovic added.

"That all affected the working groups, which then could not define the agreed solutions," he continued.

"We are aware that Corridor 5C is a priority for the European Commission but we expect other projects to get support as well, especially ones those of direct interest to the Republika Srpska, like entity railway transport," the minister added.

The Republika Srpska is less interested in Corridor 5C because it mostly runs through the Federation entity and the upcoming works will be conducted on the parts running through the Federation entity.

Professor Adnan Huskic, a Sarajevo-based expert on EU-related subjects, said the delays and failures to agree on projects highlighted the fact that the authorities and leaders of the big political parties lacked genuine commitment to taking serious steps towards the EU.

"I believe that the EU, if only for its credibility in Bosnia, should suspend the whole IPA funding," Huskic said. "That would be the happiest solution."

But Huskic thought this was unlikely.

"Of course the situation will most likely be solved by the Bosnian authorities, under pressure from Brussels, agreeing everything at the last minute and so enabling operationalization of the cash," he concluded.



Corridor

5C, which started years ago.

When it is finished,

Corridor 5C will be some 700 kilometers long, 400km of which will run through Bosnia, linking Bosnia to eastern Croatia and Hungary, running through Sarajevo and terminating on the Adriatic coast.

Currently, however, only the 40 kilometers running from Sarajevo to Kakanj are finished in Bosnia.

Pudar said that although the deadline is getting uncomfortably close, there is still hope that Bosnia will finish its paperwork in the next few days.

"Everybody is aware of the deadlines and the situation, but the EU does not envisage extending any time," Pudar warned.

"Urgent engagement is needed on the justice and Corridor 5C projects and on a regional framework for transport. Without those projects, we will not get the whole 2012 IPA package," Pudar added.

She said that some projects, originally planned as a part of the 2012 IPA, will most likely have to go next year, but the transport and judiciary projects



Stefano Saninno, director of EC's Directorate General for Enlargement.

Band to Kick of Montenegro's 'Resistance Month'

Anti-government campaign takes on a more musical flavour with the launch of a month-long arts programme.

The NGO, the Network for Affirmation of Non-Governmental Sector, MANS, the main organiser of frequent civic protests in Montenegro, has announced the launch of a series of cultural events under the name of Resistance Month.

A live gig by the alternative

band Zoon politikon, which is supposed to take place on Thursday, at one of Podgorica's night bars, will open the programme.

"Alternative music is the music of resistance and, hence, it will be promoted by the civic front and by musicians who spread the idea of resistance over the next month in Podgorica cafes," a statement by MANS said.

Parties will be organized each Thursday as an opposition to the

"music of conformism" and to the values "promoted by those who don't care about Montenegro's interests", the statement adds.

The programme won't consist solely of music performances, but of exhibitions and other cultural events as well.

MANS, along with the Association of Free Trade Unions and Students' Union, has already organized parties, exhibitions and auctions of paintings as part

of the fund-raising campaign for their protests.

The campaign to force the government to quit took on an artistic flavour at the end of May, with an exhibition of political caricatures and book-readings in front of government building in Podgorica.

Montenegro has experienced numerous anti-government protests since January.

The protesters' demands first

included a more efficient fight against corruption and organised crime, investigation into dubious processes of privatization, better respect for students' and workers' rights and freedom of speech.

However, since they say the government has failed to meet their demands, since the beginning of May the protesters have demanded its resignation.

The last civic protest took place on June 7 in Podgorica.

Prospects Darken For Kosovo's

Thousands of Kosovo Roma are still living as refugees in neighboring Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro, where they face the prospect of permanent statelessness, poverty and social exclusion.



Many children face huge difficulties on returning to Kosovo after being refugees in neighbouring countries.



By BIRN

The 1999 war in Kosovo and the NATO bombing of Serbia is ancient history for many people – but that is not the case for thousands of Kosovo's displaced Roma.

Unable to return to Kosovo, or scared to do so, and mostly refused asylum status in neighbouring Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, where they have sought refuge, they live in dire poverty, facing the risk of permanent statelessness.

Estimates put the number of Roma, Askhali and Egyptian

refugees from Kosovo in Serbia at 22,000 to 40,000.

Their number in Montenegro is some 3,000, while in Macedonia there are some 1,200.

Life in refugee camps, illegal settlements or in rented accommodations is difficult, jobs and money are scarce, and the help they get from state governments and humanitarian organizations is scant.

Redza Pajazitaj, 41, a former resident of the Kosovo municipality of Istog, has lived in Montenegro for 13 years in the Konik refugee camp near Podgorica, a camp he shares with some 1,500 of his compatriots.

"We manage somehow here. Even if there is no job, if you go to the dumpsters you will find some piece of bread," he said.

"People here do not throw old food in the dumpsters but leave it beside them, because they know that our Roma use this bread to feed their children," Pajazitaj told Prishtina Insight.

Life may be grim in the camps, but many are too scared to return to Kosovo.

During the Kosovo conflict, Roma were seen as allies of the former Serbian regime by Kosovo's ethnic Albanian majority.

After the Serbian authorities withdrew from Kosovo, many Roma fled, and they fear reprisals if they return.

"My son was three months old when we fled from Kosovo. Now he is 13. If I took him back to Kosovo, he wouldn't know where he was, and all my other children were

born here," Pajazitaj explained.

He says he is better off in Montenegro, where he takes pride in watching his seven children go to school, thanks to the Red Cross.

He provides for his family by unloading trucks when needed, a low-paid, unsteady job, he says.

"But at least there is some work here. In Kosovo there is nothing for me," he added.

Although the authorities in Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia would like the Roma to return to Kosovo, they are bound by the Geneva Convention on refugees and cannot expel them.

In the meantime, they remain without proper papers regulating their status in the countries where they have taken refuge.

They also lack access to education and healthcare services as well as proper accommodation.

Redza is one of them. Left to the mercy of local humanitarian organizations and some state help, he is trying to obtain status of a foreigner in Montenegro so that he can continue building a new life there.

Mohammad Arif, from the UN Agency for Refugees, UNHCR, in Macedonia, explains that after 13 years, either the return home of these people, or their integration into the countries where they now live, is complicated.

"Their problems are not easy to solve. Some serious security issues need to be solved first, so these remaining cases are always tough," he says.

Least bad in Montenegro:

"Konik camp presents a poor image of Montenegro, and representatives of the international institutions are well aware of

that," says Zeljko Sofranac, director of the Montenegrin Bureau for the Care of Refugees.

"All their activities, which are conducted with our cooperation, primarily focus on this area."

At a donor conference held in April in Sarajevo, Bosnia, international donors pledged to find 300 million euro for a programme to provide homes for some 74,000 people displaced during the wars in the Balkans.

Montenegro's plan is to attract some of that money to its own proposed national housing programme for Roma refugees.

The idea is to build more than 1,000 housing units either by providing prefabricated houses or by providing construction materials to those who have bought land.

The total cost of the project is estimated at over 27 million euro, to which Montenegro would contribute approximately 4 million.

Sofranac says that the proposed voluntary return of around 500 refugees to Kosovo remains highly problematic, so most of them will probably have to be integrated into Montenegro.

"Voluntary return is the best way of solving refugees' problems. But the only cooperation we receive in Kosovo on this is with local authorities," he says.

"Kosovo's government, probably with the support of some powerful higher echelons, doesn't want to fulfill its international obligations in this regard.

"When it engages in the accession process with the EU, it will have to meet those obligations, but that's not satisfactory for us because we have to act now."

Musa Demiri, from Kosovo's Labour Ministry, says his country is ready to help returnees.



Roma women walk near the train track in Fushe Kosove.

Roma Refugees



The Roma camp known as Belville on the outskirts of Belgrade has now been cleared by the authorities.

But Demiri admits that with a very high unemployment rate in Kosovo, they cannot guarantee that returnees will find any work or a sustainable livelihood there.

"All Kosovo citizens have to be treated equally, and as a ministry we have no special programmes for refugees and returnees," Demiri says.

Segregated in Serbia:

While some Roma refugees in Montenegro at least feel hopeful, NGOs and Serbia's own Commissariat for Refugees admit that many Roma refugees in Serbia are in a worse position.

Serbia treats Roma from Kosovo as internally displaced persons, IDPs, but a problem is that many Roma cannot prove that they are from Kosovo and hence cannot access welfare services.

"Since most of the Roma who fled from Kosovo did not have IDs while they were in Kosovo, when they came to Serbia they could not gain the documents that other internally displaced people from Kosovo have got," Jadranka

Jelincic, head of the Open Society Foundation - Serbia, explains.

Regular IDPs from Kosovo receive different levels of state aid, including monthly allowances of around 80 euro. However, this kind of help is blocked to these Roma because of lack of proof that they actually come from Kosovo.

Although there are no official statistics, the Commissariat for Refugees estimates that about 22,500 Roma from Kosovo have taken refuge in Serbia. NGOs say the real number is much higher, at about 40,000. Most are situated in and around Belgrade.

Usually having no documents and living in informal settlements, they are frequent victims of forced evictions and have to move to other informal settlements, collective centres, or return to Kosovo. They are also often hindered from obtaining legal counsel.

One such eviction happened recently in Belgrade, when the city authorities decided to bulldoze "Belville", an informal Roma settlement located in the heart of the city.

Nenad Djurdjevic, head of the Directorate for Human and Minority Rights, maintains that the eviction was "an example of good practice."

Djurdjevic and other Serbian officials insist that some Roma are "abusing" the fact that the city provides accommodation to Roma who possess documents proving that they have resided in the capital for more than five years.

"We've helped many of them to find accommodation, and those who refused what we offered left their settlements voluntarily," he maintains.

The Commissariat for Refugees also believes it would be "unfair" to local Serbian Roma, who also face housing problems, if those from Kosovo obtained permanent housing in the capital.

Facing statelessness in Macedonia:

According to the Macedonian Ministry of Labour, Macedonia has some 1,200 Kosovo Roma on its territory.

Human rights activists say that only some of the refugees receive proper treatment in Macedonia, as laid down in the 1951 Geneva Convention.

A recent report by the international human rights watchdog Amnesty International says that Macedonia's Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare has "failed to provide them with the financial assistance and housing required under the 2010 local integration agreement".

That year, Macedonia took over responsibility for the Kosovo Roma from the UNHCR, promising to provide a path to local integra-

tion for those who wished to stay.

Davor Politov, spokesperson for the ministry, admits that they are helping only a portion of those people, who have obtained refugee or asylum status.

"We are providing social welfare, paying health and social insurance contributions and paying [housing] rent for some 780 people from Kosovo who wish to stay here," Politov says, adding that the country is also trying to find them jobs.

Macedonia gives 2,150 denar, (some 35 euro) a month in welfare to each Kosovan refugee, he adds.

The Luxembourg-based non-profit organization Chachipe, which tackles the human rights situation of Kosovo Roma across the Balkans, says that the situation of some 260 Roma refugees in Macedonia remains alarming.

After being rejected for asylum, they are now left without any status, stateless, and are in dire need of assistance.

"The situation of refugees in Macedonia has deteriorated considerably following the transfer of responsibility from the UNHCR to the Ministry of Labour," says Karin Waringo, from Chachipe.

"Based on our calculations, more than 20 per cent of the refugees have left Macedonia under financial pressures. Some went to Western Europe, where their chances of getting asylum on the basis of the persecution they experienced in Kosovo are slim," she told Prishtina Insight.

The local branch of UNHCR says it has limited resources to help this group of people, but they insist they at least provide them with legal help. UNHCR financial aid for these people stopped in 2010 due to lack of funds, they say.



Report Corruption



The eviction of Roma at Belville, Belgrade.

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Dokufest Docks in Prizren for Eleventh Time

Faced with a programme of more than 150 short films and document, Prishtina Insight has collected tips from the Kosovo's leading experts on the silver screen for this year's Dokufest.



By Donjeta Demolli

As the eleventh edition of the popular documentary film festival gets ready to open on Saturday in the historic town of Prizren, we asked five experts what films they won't be missing over the week-long event.



Blerta Zeqiri won first prize for the Best International Fiction Prize at the Sundance Film Festival this year. A Kosovar director, she has worked on a number of shorts and feature films that have appeared at many international festivals, including her award-winning film, *Kthimi-The Return*.

What she will be watching:

Chasing Ice [Jeff Orlowski/US, 2011]. This film follows photographer James Balog attempts to collect visual evidence of melting glaciers:

"Chasing Ice is an impressive story about global warming, with extremely beautiful and impressive photography," she says.

Kthimi - The Return [Blerta Zeqiri/Kosovo, 2011]. A man returns from prison in Serbia to his wife and son. The film will be shown at Cinema Lumbardhi on July 10 at 6pm.

"This Kosovan family story was well received in international festivals round the world. If you are curious, you can see it in the section on 'Dealing With the Past'."

1/2 Revolution [Omar Shargawi, Karim El Hakim/Denmark, 2011]. This film shows the revolution that took place, hidden from the world in people's homes and in the streets of Cairo.

"'1/2 Revolution' has been a very controversial film in festivals across the world."

Yli Citaku graduated as a film director from the Academy of Arts at the University of Prishtina. His short film *Should I Stay or Should I Go* (2001) won Best Film at the first Dokufest in Prizren.

He also directed, among others, *Tatita* (2005), *Move with Me* (2007) and *Blue Wall Red Door* (2009). *Beyond the Road* was his first feature film.



What he will be watching:

The Story of Film: An Odyssey [Mark Cousins/BM, 2011]. A 15-hour epic documentary on the complete history of world cinema, it was made over more than five years in six continents, covering 12 decades and thousands of movies.

"This year I will be watching this marathon experience," Citaku says.



Alban Muja, a visual artist and director, he participated in Dokufest in 2009 with *Blue Wall Red Door*, as well as participating in other festivals with the film *Unplay* (Play girl).

What he will be watching:

Special Flight [Fernand Melgar/Switzerland, 2011]. A filmmaker incarcerates himself in the Frambois prison in Geneva, capital of human rights.

"Melgar shows us emotive portraits of rejected asylum seekers and illegal immigrants in Frambois where he is spending time in prison in the centre of Switzerland," Muja says. "It's important to see this movie to understand how Switzerland deals with human rights. Among the protagonists in the film is also a Kosovo Albanian asylum seeker."

Marina Abramovic: The Artist is Present [Matthew Akers/US, 2011]. A film about one of the most compelling artists of our era.



"As my own background is as a visual artist I found it appropriate to propose this film, a portrayal of one of the best known contemporary artists of this region.

"Abramovic is for many synonymous with art from the Balkans, though she is also recognized globally. This film shows how she uses her body as a tool, pushing herself beyond her physical and mental limits, even putting her life in danger for her art."

Long Live The Antipodes! [Viktor Kossakovsky, Germany/ Argentina/The Netherlands/Chile, 2011] Through impressive images, this film presents a series of unexpected antipodes, places with are diametrically opposite to each other on the Earth's surface

"The director, winner of many prizes as well as being nominated for European Film Academy Documentary 2011 - Prix ARTE, takes us on a unique trip around the globe. His film contains breathtaking images and amazing editing. Kossakovsky asks what the shortest way would be to reach Balsa San Justo in Argentina from the Chinese metropolis of Shanghai. According to the director, this would simply be a straight line through the centre of the earth, as these two countries are antipodes."



Veton Nurkollari is director of programming for Dokufest, which he co-founded in 2002. He is also the curator of *DokuPhoto*, an annual showcase of documentary photography that runs alongside the festival. Veton is a member of the advisory board of the Balkan Documentary Center and also member of the selection

committee of Cinema Eye Honors, an organization that recognizes and honours exemplary craft in nonfiction filmmaking.

What he will be watching:

Broken Cameras [Emad Burnat, Guy Davidi/ Palestine/France/Israel, 2011]. Five broken cameras - and each with a powerful story to tell.

Call Me Kuchu [Katherine Fairfax Wright, Malika Zouhali-Worrall/US, 2012] Gay activist David Kato works in Uganda to free his LGBT men and women friends, or "Kuchus".

Sofia's Last Ambulance [Ilian Metev/Bulgaria/Croatia/Germany, 2012]. A film about an ordinary working day for Dr Krassi and his team working in an ambulance in Sofia.



Samir Karahoda was for five years curator of the short film programme in Dokufest. In 2008 he published a book *Train*, of photographs of Kosovo's post-war railways.

What he will be watching:

Frozen Stories [Grzegorz Jaroszek/Poland, 2011]. The two worst employees of a supermarket have to find the meaning of life in a famous television show.

Silent [L. Rezan Yesilbas/Turkey, 2012]. A Kurdish woman faces troubles visiting her Turkish husband in prison.

Einspruch VI - Protestation VI [Rolando Colla/Switzerland, 2012]. A story of exile that ends in the tragic death of an asylum seeker.

For more information visit the Dokufest website at www.Dokufest.com.

London's Olympic Tower Casts "Shadow of Shame"

The ArcelorMittal Orbit, which was built for the 2012 Summer Olympics in London, will be appropriated as a Memorial in Exile by survivors of the Omarska concentration camp.



By Denis Dzidic

Three survivors from the Omarska camp, Satko Mujagic, Rezak Hukanovic and Kemal Pervanic, together with members of the Four Faces of Omarska group from Belgrade and Goldsmiths University, organized a press conference in London on Monday to raise awareness of the fact that the Prijedor victims do not have a place to commemorate their dead.

Omarska, a former Bosnian Serb run camp where at least 3,334 Bosniaks and Croats from Prijedor were imprisoned, is an iron ore mine which is now owned and operated by ArcelorMittal.

Organizers of the press conference claim that profits extracted from Omarska have been used to manufacture the ArcelorMittal Orbit, which they see as casting a "shadow of shame on Mittal, London and the Olympic Games," which will start later this month.

Satko Mujagic, an Omarska survivor, told BIRN that the iron mine from Omarska might contain "human remains from Prijedor victims", which is why he wants an exact copy of the White House -

a prison within the former camp - to be constructed beneath the Orbit structure to commemorate those whose melted bones may have gone into its making.

"We are asking ArcelorMittal to give us full access to the site of the former Omarska camp. We expect Mittal to finally build the memorial in Omarska, as they had previously promised. Until then, we feel free to consider the London Orbit our memorial in exile", said Mujagic.

However, Tobin Postma, a Media Relations Specialist for ArcelorMittal, told BIRN that contrary to what has been suggested, no materials from Prijedor have been used in the construction of the Orbit.

"The fact that ArcelorMittal, as a sponsor of the London 2012 Olympic Games, has facilitated the Orbit in the Olympic park is in no way connected to this sensitive issue in Bosnia and Herzegovina."

"We are proud of our contribution to economic development across Bosnia. We are the largest foreign investor in the country and employ over 3,850 people at our steel plant in Zenica and our mine in Prijedor," said ArcelorMittal in a press release sent to BIRN.

Mujagic, however, maintains it

is time that the old concentration camp where "men were killed and women were raped" was turned into a museum, and a new mine complex to exploit the iron ore built, replacing the mine which was used as a concentration camp and which could be considered a mass grave.

In his statement to BIRN, Mujagic said that Prijedor victims were forced to organize press conferences, because their telephone calls and their requests to meet ArcelorMittal representatives had all been ignored.

ArcelorMittal bought the Ljubija mining complex, that includes the Omarska site, in 2004. In 2005 the company promised to finance and build a memorial on the grounds of Omarska, but seven years later, a space of public commemoration has yet to be built.

In a press release on Tuesday, ArcelorMittal says that it acknowledges the legacy of the site at Omarska, and that it is ready to fund a suitable memorial.

"Unfortunately it is not possible for ArcelorMittal to establish a memorial on its own. Under the laws of Bosnia and Herzegovina, permission for memorials can only be given by the local authorities. ArcelorMittal cannot provide



The Orbit Tower, London. Is it a monument to shame?

such permission," reads the statement.

This year representatives of ArcelorMittal denied access to the campgrounds and buildings to students from Munich, represen-

tatives of Goldsmiths University London, the Four Faces of Omarska group from Belgrade, and local NGOs who wanted to commemorate the 20th anniversary of crimes in the region.

Bands' Humble Wish Lists Won't Bust the Budget

Exit has changed and grown over the years, while maturing into one of the world's top music festivals - losing its radical political edge somewhere along the way.

From providing vegan dishes to sandwiches and local wines, the performers' special requests present few challenges to concert organisers.

In the main, this year's Exit performers don't have big or expensive requests - their wish lists mainly concern food and drink.

Guns N' Roses, one of the biggest names on the festivals, accordingly had the biggest requests, namely, 252 towels, a chiropractor and masseuse, a special room for exercise and four medical oxygen cylinders.

Their backstage, according to their wishes, will be decorated

with black curtains, black tablecloths and 18 red and 18 white roses.

Erykah Badu's special requests centre on food, as this soul diva is a vegan. She has said her favourite food is onion, beans, spinach, soybeans and ripe fruits and vegetables.

The guys from New Order also have modest demands - they just need to have a nice choice of sandwiches and homemade soup for lunch, local beer, and best local red and white wines.

The Australians from Wolfmother also wanted to try local stuff. However, besides local wine and beer, their wish list includes a local celebrity with whom they can hang out.

Gossip had a longer drinks menu - they have asked for numerous spirits, cigarettes, beers, energy drinks and vita-

min C.

One of the most interesting lists was the one requested by Hercules and Love Affair. The band asked for six limes, six lemons, fresh mint, a shaker and a handful of tokens [currency used at the festival], so that they can get a drink once they join the party.

Taking care of the organisers' limited budget, Hercules and Love Affair also asked for a "not too expensive" shampoo, conditioner and shower gel and six pairs of black socks.



Where to pick up Prishtina Insight?

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

A taste of Napoli in Prishtina.

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



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

Hotel 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.

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Hotel Prishtina,
St. Vaso Pasha nr. 20
+381 38 / 22 32 84



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 gardens. Rooms start at 45 euro for a single, and luxury rooms and apartments are available. The hotel's rooms are well appointed and comfortable.

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



Te Komiteti

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

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



Restorant Brasserie Lura

At 450-metres squared 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 of 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 won't find it difficult to select the perfect drink.

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

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

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



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

Papillon Bistro Bar

Newly reopened bar in Prishtina, Papillon, offers more than 60 types of wines from France, Italy, Spain, and Kosovo with ideal prices and delicious dishes.

They serve pasta, sandwiches, salads and different appetizers.

You can also try different types of local or international beers.

The bar, with its stunning, new design, is located in the centre of Prishtina, near ProCredit Bank headquarter, RTK radio centre, and the Mother Teresa cathedral.

Papillon
Mother Teresa Str. Nr. 51 A
info@caffepapillon.com
044 103 310





Men in Black 3

Every day at 8 pm and 10 pm

This comedy is about agents J and K who go back in time. J had seen many strange things, but nothing irritates him more than his partner. But, when K's life and the planet are in danger, J must go back in time, and put everything back in its own place.

Directed by Barry Sonnenfeld.



Prometheus

every day at 20 pm and 22 pm.

Prometheus is a 2012 science fiction film directed by Ridley Scott and written by Jon Spaihts and Damon Lindelof. The film stars Noomi Rapace, Michael Fassbender, Guy Pearce, Idris Elba, Logan Marshall-Green and Charlize Theron. Set in the late 21st century, the story centres on the crew of the spaceship Prometheus as they follow a star map discovered among the remnants of several ancient Earth civilizations. Led to a distant world and an advanced civilization, the crew seeks the origins of humanity, but instead discovers a threat that could cause the extinction of the human race.



Soon, ABC Cinema will start screening the newest ICE-AGE Movie, the "Ice Age 4 - Continental Drift". Manny, Diego, and Sid embark upon another adventure after their continent is set adrift. Using an iceberg as a ship, they encounter sea creatures and battle pirates as they explore a new world.

From July, the cinema will also screen the brand new Spider Man movie, "The Amazing Spiderman". Like most teenagers his age, Peter [played by Andrew Garfield] is trying to figure out who he is and how to be the person he is today. In his journey to put the pieces of his past together he uncovers a secret that his father [Campbell Scott] held... a secret that will ultimately shape his destiny as Spider-Man. This is the first in a series of movies that tells a different side of the Peter Parker story.

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

Dokufest

DOKUFEST, The International Documentary and Short Film Festival, the largest film event in Kosovo this year, 11th anniversary starts from July 7-15.

The Festival is organized in the picturesque and historical town of Prizren which attracts numerous international and regional artists. In this annually organized festival films are screened twice a day in three open air cinemas as well as in two regular cinemas. Except for its

films, the festival is also well-known for lively nights after the screening. Various events happen within the scope of the festival: workshops, DokuPhoto exhibitions, festival camping, concerts, which altogether turn the city into a charming place to be.

For more see page 14 of the newspaper, or visit the official festival web page: <http://www.dokufest.com/2012/>.

Stacion - Center for Contemporary Art Prishtina

Tuesday, June 26, 2012

Anri Sala
3-2-1...Long Sorrow

Opening at 8 pm.

With the 3-2-1 performance featuring free jazz musician Pierre Borel, responding on saxophone to the recording of Jemeel Moondoc.

Wednesday, June 27, 2012

Artist talk with Anri Sala at 20:00hrs.

Anri Sala was born in 1974 in Tirana. He is a contemporary artist whose primary medium is video. He studied art at the Albanian Academy of Arts from 1992 to 1996, video at the Ecole Nationale des Arts Décoratifs of Paris and film direction in Le Fresnoy-Studio National des Arts Contemporains, Tourcoing. He lives and works in Berlin. To name a few of his works: Dammi i Colori (2005), Long Sorrow (2005), Intervista (1999), Nocturnes - 1999, 1395 Days Without Red (2011). Sala has been part of the most important international events, such as the European Biennial, Manifesta - 2000, Venice Biennial - 2003, Istanbul Biennial - 2003, Tirana Biennial - 2003 - 2009, Sidney Biennial - 2006, Documenta 2012. He's also received many international awards among which, Prix Gilles Dussein - 2000, Best Young Artist, Venice Biennial - 2003, Absolut Award - 2011.

Anri Sala's works reflect a very special perspective on how we see the world, a view that mixes reflections



on history, memory and instantaneous ephemeral consciousness, with an unparalleled dedication and attention to the present. He has a unique talent for sharp and accurate realisations, as well as a special ability to create installations and spatial proposals which include sounds, images, sculptures, films or live performances.

Long Sorrow, 2005, filmed on the eponymous public housing estate in Berlin, is an enigmatic record of a performance orchestrated by the artist. Sala invited noted free jazz musician Jemeel Moondoc to perform while suspended outside the window of an empty apartment on the eighteenth floor. Through details and close ups of the musician's eyes and facial expressions we get a first-hand experience of the adrenaline rush running through his body. It's this rush that dictate his musical performance, while its sound conveys the bodily experience of the architectonic space and its dimen-

sions. Suspending him in space and denying him the possibility to express himself through words or human voice, opens up for a phenomenological relation between the body and the space, a relation in which the analytic capacity of human intellect is entirely reduced, while the brains has become merely a mechanism that responds to the spatial stimuli perceived through every extremity of the musician's body.

For the show at Stacion, Sala stages the performance 3-2-1, 2011, in which French saxophonist Pierre Borel responds live to Long Sorrow. 3-2-1 begins with Borel accompanying an audio recording of Moondoc's improvisation with his own earlier performance on film, playing in the garden area of Stacion, resulting thus in a 'trio': the film, the audio recording and the live performance. Borel then plays live with the film Long Sorrow in the inner space of Stacion, a 'duet', before finally performing a solo after the film ends. 3-2-1 punctuates the fixed cycle of the show with an improvised element, integrating the strands of film and performance that run through Sala's work.

The performance 3-2-1 was first created for Anri Sala's solo show at the Serpentine Gallery in London in 2011.

The exhibition of Anri Sala at Stacion - Center for Contemporary Art Prishtina is supported by: Ambassade de France au Kosovo, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports of the Republic of Kosovo, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kosovo, Directorate for Culture, Youth and Sports of the Municipality of Prishtina, Hotel Nartel, Arda Rei, Ujë Rugove, Technomarket, Europlakat, KTV, Klan Kosova, X-print, 3V studio and DZG.

For more: 038-222-576; E-mail: info@stacion.org www.stacion.org

Prishtina Diary

Sunday, July 15, 2012

Unikkatil, the famous rap Albanian singer, from Bronx, USA, will be strutting his stuff in Prishtina, in the city's Stadium, from 6 pm. Tickets are on sale from July 5, and can be bought in these locations (bars): Prishtine Shtandi Nena Tereze by ABC Cinema, Prishtine by NEWBORN, Peje SING-SING, Prizren Corner, Mitrovica Famous, Gjilan PAPAki, Gjakova Chronic, Ferizaj COCO, Klina Kojota, Istog OFF-ON, Vushtrri Morena, Fushe Kosove Peppermint, Lipjan Room, Kacanik Tropical, Skenderaj Metro, Viti Liburna, Bar, Podujeve Centrum, Decan Corner, Therande 501, Presheva City Bar, Skopje Zone, Tetovo Ramstore in EMPORIUM, Kumanovo CAFFE 21. For more details visit the page on facebook: Rebel a.k.a. Unikkatil Koncert në Prishtinë.

The concert is organised by Powow Entertainment.

Oda Theatre

Every Tuesday at 8 pm
Tre Gjermanët e Trashë II
(Three Fat Germans II)

Thanks to this play you will understand "What did Brigel say when he asked for a drink?"; "Why Hans didn't let him drink Mojito?"; "How did Gani experience his 21st snow?"; "Is Vukashin really Ukshin?"; "Does KFOR-ja still work for KFOR or she just loves him?"

Author: Lirak Celaj; **Producer:** Florent Mehmeti; **Roles:** Naser Rafuna, Adrian Morina, Kushtrim Sheremeti, Lirak Celaj, Fisnik Ademi, Ard Islami, Arta Selimi, Florent Mehmeti.

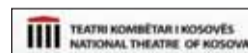
If It Was a Play - Every Thursday 8pm

Based on the drama by Almir Imshireviq. Director: Agon Myftari. On bus number 4, during wartime in Prishtina, a 26 years old, wearing jeans, is near Hotel Union, when a sniper bullet breaks the glass and shoots the youngster in the neck. A lady wearing white, who was next to him starts to scream. When she sees the blood in her shirt she faints. Starring: Rebeka Qena, Adrian Morina, Armend Ismajli, Besnik Krapci.

For more information call +381 (0)38 246 555 or write oda@teatrioda.com.



National Theatre



Thursday, July 19, 2012

"House for Sale"
[Shtëpia në Ankand]
written and directed by Fadil Hysaj.

All plays are in Albanian language, and tickets cost 3 euro; for students and pensioners tickets are only 1 euro.

For any further questions or reservations call them at 044 430 693 visit them at www.teatrikombetareu

Dodona Theatre



Every Thursday 7.30pm

Çifti i Hapur is being staged with the text of Italian authors Dario Fo and Franca Rame, directed by Kushtrim Koliqi

A man proposes to his wife of eliminating the concept of martial loyalty and creating an "open relationship" in their lives. The woman rejects this 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 is released from feelings of guilt. Cast: Edona Reshitaj and Besart Sllamniku.

For more details email: teatri-dodona@yahoo.com; besart.sll@gmail.com

Gazimestan and the Sultan Murat Turbe

“Whoever is a Serb and of Serb birth, and of Serb blood and heritage, and comes not to the Battle of Kosovo, may he never have the progeny his heart desires!” starts the 1845 nationalist adaptation of the so-called Kosovo curse, penned by Serb poet Vuk Karadzic.

And while latter-day science may question the site's birth control powers, the location of the battle of Kosovo is certainly worth a visit.

Just a short drive from Prishtina, the Gazimestan complex may be architecturally uninspiring but it remains a must-see for those interested in the history of the region.

The attractions are scattered across the spot where, in 1389, the Ottoman Empire clashed with the Serbian medieval kingdom in the Battle of Kosovo.

As you head north along the main Mitrovica road, around 10km from Prishtina, you will

spot a small stone tower on your right.

The Gazimestan tower not only marks the location of the legendary battle: In 1989, it was also the location for Slobodan Milosevic's most notorious speech, which many historians consider pivotal in the collapse of Yugoslavia.

Built to the not-so-dazzling height of 25 metres, the tower nonetheless provides excellent views across the plain of Kosovo.

The tower was erected in 1953 on a raised platform, surrounded by some bizarre concrete chimneys.

At the front is an inscription of the Kosovo curse, supposedly written by Prince Lazar, the Serbian leader killed on the battlefield on 1389, but first put to paper by the nationalist poet Vuk



Karadzic in the 20th Century.

Like all information available around the tower, it is of little use if you do not read Cyrillic, or speak Serbian.

Take the winding staircase up to the top platform to admire the view and consult an ornamental map of how the Battle of Kosovo panned out.

You can admire the mountains separating Kosovo and Serbia, the suburban edges of Prishtina and even the hulking monstrosities that are Kosovo A and B, the country's power plants spewing out toxic smoke.

It may sound a little underwhelming, but in the right light can be spectacular.

Almost every aspect of the battle - for example the date and who actually won - is contested.

While Serbs mark the clash on June 28, St Vitus Day, most believe it actually took place on June 15.

And while Serbs often describe the battle as their empire's defining defeat at the hands of the

Ottomans, it was probably more of a draw.

Less contentious is the fact that both Serbian Prince Lazar and Sultan Murat, leader of the Ottomans, died in the battle, along with thousands of others. Both men are thus commemorated at the site.

The battle, to this day, plays an essential part in Serbian nationalist narrative, reinforcing the national identity as a bastion against the orient and Islam. You will find, for example, the date 1389 scrawled across innumerable walls in Belgrade.

Sultan Murat's tomb

Across the main road to Mitrovica, you will find the Turbe, or tomb, of Sultan Murat.

Through an arched stone gate is a little complex renovated in recent years using Turkish funds.

The fine stone mausoleum houses a large tomb which doesn't actually contain the remains of Sultan Murat - they have been moved to the imperial museum in Bursa, Turkey.

The building, constructed in the 1850s, is pleasant enough, but there is little to see inside.

Perhaps the most notable sight is the 700-year-old mulberry tree, one of the few survivors from the battle.

You are likely to encounter the keepers of the tomb on your trip. A man-and-wife team has been looking after the building for

generation. The current incumbents are Sanija and Fahri Turbedari.

Practicalities

By far the easiest way to visit the site is by car from Prishtina.

Take the main road to Mitrovica and around 10-km from the city, as you climb to the crest of the first hill, you will spot the tower on your right.

Take the first available right after you spot the tower and follow the dirt track next to an unfinished warehouse until you reach the security gate, next to which you can park your car.

You will need some form of identity to show the disinterested Kosovo Police officer, who recently took over providing security from Kosovo's NATO force, KFOR.

Plans are afoot to open an information centre here and provide a multilingual guide.

The Sultan Murat Turbe is a short drive on the other side of the main road. Keep your eyes peeled for the mosque like dome to the left after about 500 metres on the main road.

You can grab a bus to Mitrovica and ask the driver to drop you at the main road close to either spot. Buses run regularly all week and can be picked up at the main bus stations. Buses run every 15 minutes and tickets should cost you 0.50 euro.

You can also get a taxi driver to take you to both spots and wait to drive you home for around 12 euro.



An inscription on the tower at Gazimestan

Border Clashes Mar Battle of Kosovo

Clashes between Kosovo police and Serbs on the border at Merdare - and pelting of Serb buses in Prishtina - overshadow Serbian celebrations of Battle of Kosovo in 1389.



By Fatmir Aliu

Over 30 Kosovo Police officers and at least 20 Serbs were injured in unrest at the Kosovo-Serbia border, after a group of Serbs entered Kosovo without the permission of the authorities to attend celebrations marking an historic Serbian battle in the 14th century.

The Minister of Interior, Bajram Rexhepi, said that 32 police officers were injured in the police operation aimed at deporting Serbs who entered Kosovo illegally. "We have had to close the border for that reason," the minister said.

Serbian media report that at least 20 Serbs were injured at the border, accusing the Kosovo Police of shooting at them after violence erupted.

Violence erupted last Thursday morning at Merdare after police stopped a group of Serbs travelling in two buses.

All were fans of the Belgrade Football Club, Partizan. The buses were spotted inside Kosovo in the municipality of Vushtrri some 15 kilometres north of the capital, Prishtina.

After Kosovo police found out they had entered the country without permits from the authorities, they decided to deport them back to Serbia via the Merdare border crossing.

Kosovo police say that after the buses crossed to the other side of the border in Serbia, the fans left the buses and started throwing stones at the Kosovo side.

Kosovo President Atifete Jahjaga said the men had attacked the Kosovo police with the intention of destabilizing the security situation.

"This attack on the Kosovo Police with heavy objects and firearms is intolerable and represents an attack on the constitutional order of Kosovo," she said.

"We shall defend with determination the country's democratic system and will prevent any attempt at destabilization," she added.

Kosovo police couldn't confirm



Kosovo Police remove a revellers T-shirt because of its offensive message.

whether its forces fired shots during the border clashes in Merdare.

Meanwhile, the Serbs said they were also attacked.

Doctors in Gracanica, a mainly Serb municipality close to the capital, Prishtina, said they had treated 17 injured people after Molotov cocktails and stones were thrown at the Serb buses.

NATO's mission in Kosovo, KFOR, also said Molotov cocktails had been thrown at the Serb convoy as it passed through Prishtina and condemned the violence.

"This shameful action is contrary to the integrity of the maintenance of a safe and secure environment for all people in Kosovo," it said in a statement.

The Serbs were coming to Kosovo to commemorate the Battle in Kosovo, a key date in Serbian history, when the medieval Serbian state confronted the might of the Ottoman Empire.

Meanwhile, as in previous years, the ceremony started with a service at the medieval Serbian

Orthodox monastery of Gracanica.

Serbian Orthodox Church Patriarch Irinej, who led the service at the Gracanica Monastery, said that Kosovo remained Serbia's Jerusalem and called on Serbs not to forget that.

"Kosovo was and is a Serbian land, the Jerusalem of Serbs... and with our presence [in Gracanica] we are proving this - that Kosovo is and will remain a land of Serbs," he said in the liturgy, which was greeted with

Prishtina through the Eyes of:

Baptiste Amieux

Intern as a Coordinator Assistant at the UNKT and also co-owner of DJ Confidential Party (Prishtina)



What surprised you most about Prishtina?

Definitely the people: the friendliest I have ever met. In addition, if they see you are trying to speak or learn Albanian, they are even more thankful and grateful. Then, I would say the amazing mix between locals and internationals.

What's your favourite hangout?

Definitely Made-KS (next to the Norwegian embassy, Pejton)

What is the best thing about Prishtina?

It's a capital but at the same time a small city, so you can walk everywhere, and it's probably one of the safest cities in Europe.

What is the most annoying thing about Prishtina?

Unfortunately, I would say the traffic and cars parking everywhere.

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

I would fix the roads adding a bicycle way (especially in Pejton and Sunny Hill) and install a serious public transport system.

How many macchiatos do you drink a day?

Before coming to Prishtina, I never drunk a coffee in my life, now, at least 2 per day, cka me bo!

What's your favourite Albanian word and why?

"Hajde!" you can say it everywhere and everyday!

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

"Minimarket Suma te lutem, A po kupton?"

Commemoration

applause by the pilgrims.

"Kosovo teaches us about unity, to be united for goodness. We may not ever forget it [Kosovo], because if we do forget, we ourselves will be forgotten," Patriarch Irinej added.

After the service, thousands of pilgrims traveled on to Gazimestan, near Prishtina, site of the Battle of Kosovo.

The battle resulted in the defeat of Serbian Tsar Lazar at the hands of the Ottoman Sultan, eventually resulting in the loss of Serbian independence for more than four centuries.

Though a defeat, the date remains halloed in the Serbian calendar, inspiring

some of the nation's most celebrated epic poems.

Even in Gazimestan the situation was tense at time, especially after Kosovo police searched the pilgrims and ordered those wearing insignia deemed to carry messages of hatred to leave them on the road.

Some Serbs who didn't obey the orders to remove T-Shirts and other material seen as "political propaganda" were briefly detained. However, to lower tensions, they were released afterwards to join the ceremony at the monument.

The Kosovo-Serbia border at Merdare was reopened some hours later at 15h00.



Photo News:



Prishtina's Glass House Promotes Local Products

Three people have been locked inside this glass box in central Prishtina for the week in a bid to prove that Kosovars can survive on local products alone. The man behind the stunt, Fisnik Vejsa, produces "Shpija e Kosoves", which is a Big Brother style show made in Kosovo.

The glass house was designet by The Maden Group, based in Prishtina. The three habitants will stay inside, in full view of pedestrians on Mother Teresa, feasting on products, such as Sempre cakes, and drinking local juices, until Tuesday, 3 July.

"We want to show to people that they can live by local products too," said Vejsa.



Art and Religious Intolerance



Harald Schenker

The organisers of a festival in Skopje destroyed a work of art already on display, claiming that it hurt religious feelings.

A festival of creative industries opening today in Skopje has started with a bang. The organisers of the festival decided to remove a billboard i.e. tear into bits a work of art that already was on display as part of an exhibition, without informing the artist group involved, because it hurt religious feelings.

Of course the public is left in the dark about the owner of those hurt feelings, as it is about the author of this catastrophic decision. What was the incriminated piece of art?

The billboard depicted a mock advert for a cleaning product, which was supposed to clean "even the most inaccessible surfaces".

The background shows a fresco from a Skopje church that featured a "miraculous" self-cleaning icon not long ago.

It seems that the Balkans are inhabited by extremely sensitive people, whose feelings get hurt at almost every moment.

+ If one criticises Greece for having a lax attitude towards tax collection, one hurts all Greeks' feelings. If one decides not to participate at the inauguration of someone like Tomislav Nikolic as President of Serbia, the entire Serbian nation's feelings are hurt.

There is no end to stories of nations' feelings being trampled upon. Except it is always people who claim to represent the entire nation who invoke this pseudo-



moral instrument.

And it is always their own personal interest they have in mind. But it seems people don't mind being abused, otherwise they would react.

A specific category of collective feelings getting hurt, whenever political players need them to be, are religious feelings. Because they felt offended, the Taleban blew up a piece of world heritage in the shape of the Bamiyan Buddha statues and drove an entire country back into the Stone Age.

Because of the hurt feelings of Islamists, an ever increasing number of people are restricted in their freedom of movement, including artists and journalists. If they survive, that is. Theo van Gogh was executed in 2004 because of hurt religious feelings.

Let us turn things around and

imagine a world without religious feelings being hurt. Martin Luther decides not to nail his theses at the entrance of the church in Wittenberg and start the end of the Middle Ages. Martin Luther King decides not to lead the protests of black Americans out of consideration for the religious feelings of the Ku Klux Klan. Women decide not to fight abuse and enslavement in order not to hurt their fathers', husbands' and brothers' religiously motivated feelings of supremacy. Archbishop Tutu and Nelson Mandela stick to their jobs in order not to hurt the religious feelings of White South Africans.

Copernicus, Galileo and Bruno don't even start to think about the universe out of respect for the religious feelings of the Catholic clergy. Isaac Newton eats his apple and goes back to sleep out of consideration for the religious feelings of his peers.

And last but not least, Charles Darwin burns his own theses about the origins of species out of consideration for religious feelings. When religious tolerance is confused with obedience, the result is stagnation and ultimately intolerance. The result is the opposite of self-reflection, the one and only engine of progress.

Now let us look at artists and respect for religious feelings. Had they been obedient, the Renaissance would have never happened. Had they been obedient, some of the world's greatest works of art would have never been cre-

ated.

It is the role of an artist to question and to provoke. And it is the role of society to take those questions and deal with them. It ultimately is the achievement of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment that democratic values have been enshrined in the foundations of our societies.

Freedom of expression, including artistic expression, belongs to these values. It is a basic prerogative for the functioning of a democracy. Seen the other way - once a society goes down the path of endangering this freedom, democracy is at stake.

There is the other way, too. The Nazis burned books and banned artists, declaring them degenerate. Zhdanov introduced Socialist Realism as the one and only dogma for art, while the Soviet regime treated deviation from it as treason.

Of course, there is always that option. But does a society like Macedonia's want to go down that path? Do artists have to start to self-censure themselves because someone might take offense? What this ultimately produces is complacent, decorative and dull craftwork so much loved by the petit-bourgeois and by the palankanians [inhabitants of provincial narrow minded communities].

If artists cannot create and exhibit free from social and political pressure, they will turn against this pressure. There is no single example of a regime that

managed to silence artists. Ai Wei Wei and Liu Xiaobo are recent prominent examples of that failure. But the list is endless. It is not possible and it is stupid, because it will ultimately turn against the censors.

I wonder if anyone in the organisation of the festival, which is held under the auspices of the City of Skopje, will have the guts to get up and say that the work of art that they destroyed was a manifestation of deviation, that it was degenerate. Of course they won't. It is so much easier to hide behind someone else's religious back.

Ultimately these kinds of actions need not be taken with the same degree of seriousness that the protagonists display. Pitiful is the right word for them. They demand to be made fun of, to be subjected to the purifying process of satire. They are unworthy of reaction on an intellectual level. Artists have their own means and will react. A small but active independent scene has arisen in Macedonia and I am confident that they have answers to this act of cultural vandalism.

Of course, the destruction of intellectual property is another issue. But that is up to lawyers to deal with.

In one of Tom Robbins' novels, a parrot is trained to say a single sentence that I would like to throw into the face of any kind of self-styled religious zealots or people acting on their behalf: "People of zee wurl, relax!"



Migration: A Working Solution



By Saska Cvetkovska

Growing up in the former Yugoslavia, my friends and I dreamt of becoming firefighters, police officers and doctors. The world seemed as vast as our ambitions. Our parents had jobs.

Though we did not know it at the time, this was the era of late socialism. Today, I live in a country where people borrow hundreds of euros from the bank to

pay for their vacations. They usually need at least two guarantors for the loan, one of whom must work in the public sector.

I cannot help them in this regard, as I never got a "secure" job with the state - much to the disappointment of my mother.

What happened to the rest of those children who were going to become firefighters and doctors? Many of them have migrated. Some are working as waitresses and labourers in Western Europe. A friend left 10 years ago for the Czech Republic. He's not ready to come back. Better to

be abroad than to be here, waiting to be hired by the administration.

As our economy is weak, employment in the public sector is in great demand. Young people who want the best jobs must prove that they have the right credentials. Some of them complain that these credentials are often political, rather than professional.

After all, our country is politically polarised - not just between Macedonians and ethnic Albanians, but also between the supporters of the major par-

ties and their opponents.

I grew up in late socialism, but I'm not sure what to call the system we have today. I'm reminded of a school photograph that was taken in 1990, when I was six years old. The old Yugoslav traditions were falling apart, and our teachers fussed over whether we should be photographed as "pioneers" - our socialist version of the boy scouts and girl guides.

In the end, they settled for a compromise: We would wear the pioneers' red scarf for the photo, but not the full outfit.

Looking at our job market today, I feel we are neither here nor there, but somewhere in between. The red scarf is still tugging at our necks.

Saska Cvetkovska is journalist from Macedonia and participant in 2012 Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence programme. Her fellowship story looks at why many young Macedonians are migrating abroad to find work. Follow this fellow and her reporting project on <http://fellowship.birn.eu.com/en/profiles/fellows-saska-cvetkovska>

"Croatia's Putin" Takes Over Tudjman's Party

Newly elected head of HDZ, Tomislav Karamarko wins the post by reviving the nationalist rhetoric of the 1990s.



By Drago Hedl

Karamarko, 53, a long-time head of Croatia's secret services and interior minister in the governments of Ivo Sanader and Jadranka Kosor, was elected president of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) on May 20, beating four rival candidates including the former party president and prime minister, Jadranka Kosor.

Karamarko is now leader of the parliamentary opposition, since the HDZ, which has been in power for 17 of the 21 years since independence, lost the December 2011 general elections.

Because of his association with the secret services – and because he clearly sees himself as the next president of the Republic – some media commentators have dubbed Karamarko "Croatia's Putin".

Karamarko re-joined the HDZ only in November last year, shortly before the parliamentary elections. He had left the party in the 1990s as he disagreed with Tudjman over the latter's policy of dividing Bosnia and Herzegovina. At that time Karamarko sided with HDZ dissidents led by future Croatian President Stjepan Mesić. After Tudjman's death, in December 1999, Karamarko managed Mesić's election campaign, and when Mesić won, he took over the National Security Office (UNS).

Karamarko has assumed the leadership of the HDZ when the party is experiencing perhaps the most difficult period since its inception. In last year's elections, the HDZ recorded its worst result ever. The party is currently facing court proceedings over slush funds allegedly generated by siphoning off huge amounts of money from major state-owned companies. Prosecutors say the money was used to finance HDZ election campaigns and some of it disappeared into the pockets of private individuals.

The party has faced a barrage of charges. Former prime minister and HDZ president Ivo Sanader is currently being tried on charges related to corruption and organised crime. Two former HDZ ministers, Damir Polanec and Berislav Rončević, have been convicted of crimes in this area and a third, Petar Cobanković, is awaiting trial.

These unpromising circum-



Tomislav Karamarko

stances may have helped Karamarko's bid for the party leadership. Analysts point out that the HDZ's decline has been so precipitate that none of its established leaders were seen among rank-and-file members as compelling candidates.

Nor was Kosor viewed as a figure who could revive the party's fortunes. Karamarko, by contrast, was viewed as a clean break – he was not part of the HDZ establishment when the country's resources were being looted through what is now widely regarded as a criminalised privatisation programme, or during the subsequent series of corruption and crime scandals.

This party legacy explains why Kosor suffered two major defeats in six months, probably ending her political career for good. In December 2011 she lost the parliamentary elections and before the 21 May poll for the HDZ presidency she was eliminated in the first round of voting.

But it is not just Kosor who will now go. The whole class of HDZ "pharaohs" who have been in power for years will leave too. Karamarko's broom has already swept aside HDZ founder, parliament speaker and close Tudjman associate Vladimir Seks, former defence and healthcare minister Andrija Hebrang, wartime interior minister Ivan Jarnjak, and veteran finance minister Ivan Suker.

During the party leadership campaign Karamarko reverted to the nationalist rhetoric that was current in the early nineties. He justified this by saying it was a way of returning to HDZ roots and Tudjman's original philosophy. He said that when he came to power he would ban

"five-pointed stars and Kozaracko kolo [collective folk dance of peoples of Yugoslavia]" in Kumrovec, the birthplace of former Yugoslav President Joseph Tito.

Tito's partisans and sympathisers customarily hold gatherings at Kumrovec. Karamarko also said he would never enter a coalition with the party of Croatia's Serb minority. Sanader and Kosor had entered such coalitions.

Tudjman, however, is not recorded as having said any of these things.

Karamarko's radical rightist rhetoric appears to have been designed to attract support from the remnants of the crushed Croatian right, and make this constituency a natural partner of the HDZ, in the hope that right-wing parties will join or at least ally themselves with the HDZ in the next parliamentary elections in three and a half years time.

But, there is at least one problem with this strategy since the nationalist right may find it hard to forgive Karamarko for his role as intelligence chief when the security services located fugitive general Ante Gotovina.

Gotovina, regarded by many on the right as a Croatian patriot, was sentenced by the Hague Tribunal to 24 years in prison for war crimes. Nor will right wingers forget that Karamarko was interior minister when police investigated Branimir Glavas, a politician who first came to prominence as a leader in the defence of Osijek in 1991, for war crimes committed in that town. Glavas was subsequently sentenced to eight years in prison.

Those close to Karamarko say his life's dream is to become president of the Republic. As head of Stjepan Mesić's successful presidential campaign he knows how to go about winning power, and he has already demonstrated this by securing the HDZ presidency.

However, President Ivo Josipović is riding a tide of popular support and still has more than three years to go before the end of his first mandate. Barring unforeseen events, if Josipović runs for a second term he will be hard to beat.

But Karamarko is relatively young. He can afford to wait. In the meantime he must consolidate his control over the HDZ and turn it into a revived political force that is capable of running a government.

A Fracking Wild Party



By Dimiter Kenarov

We were about to leave the border crossing and drive into Romania, when the woman at the counter asked, "Are you here for the protest against shale gas?"

We were stunned. It was a little past midnight on May 1. The woman was about 45, seated before a bulky computer, wearing a navy-blue blazer and henna-reddish hair: the perfect bureaucrat. Yes, we admitted, we were on our way to see the protests.

My colleague Hans and I were travelling to an annual countercultural gathering at Vama Veche, on the Black Sea Coast. The giant beach bacchanalia at this tiny fishing village traces its roots to the communist period.

Intellectuals and hippies who needed a break from Ceausescu's oppressive state would gather here and do what they usually did: talk about sex and have sex. If there was a Romanian Woodstock, it was Vama Veche.

This year, the gathering had an added sense of urgency. The American corporation Chevron was planning to exploit shale gas near Vama Veche, among other areas in Romania, through the controversial practice of hydraulic fracturing, commonly known as fracking.

Fearing pollution to the water supply, Romanian civil and environmental groups had launched a campaign to halt the company. In the preceding months, large demonstrations had been staged all over the country. Now it was Vama Veche's turn.

Hearing our answer, the woman at the counter spoke with a wide smile: "I am one of the organizers of the movement against shale gas, you know."

She held up a Romanian-tricolor ribbon and a campaign button that said "No to Shale Gas" in Bulgarian – advertising the campaign on the other side of the border.

"I'm going to wear those tomorrow," she said. "And I'll be collecting signatures at the large military tent on the beach. You can't miss it."

Vama Veche is about five kilometres from the border. We arrived at one am to find the best parking spots taken and the party in full swing. Along the road to the beach were rockers, punks, hippies, goths, bohemians: drinking, dancing, walking, standing, crawling. Bars blasted music. Empty bottles and trash littered the pavements.

Down on the beach, where the Black Sea lapped at the cold sand, bonfires were burning. People sat in sleeping bags, swigging beer and playing guitars. Several dudes, facing the sea, were urinating communally into the water. This was, indeed, Woodstock.

I was getting used to the pandemonium, when my ears caught a different sound: "Get the fuck out, Chevron! Get the fuck out, Chevron!"

A group of about 50 people, holding homemade banners and signs against shale gas exploration, was marching down the beach, led by a man with a megaphone.

I had imagined the rally would take place the next day in broad daylight – not in the middle of a party. I had not expected an environmental event in such an unhealthy environment.

Rockers and punks stood by, flabbergasted. Who the fuck was Chevron? Who were these bizarre people? Why can't they have normal fun? A few onlookers, recognizing familiar expletives, drunkenly took up the chant: "Get the fuck out, Chevron!"

TV stations had been tipped off and their cameras, hungry for ratings, were already rolling. Fifty sober people in a sea of drunkenness. Could they win?

Somewhere several kilometres under Vama Veche, there was shale gas. Somewhere in offices on the other side of the world, Chevron managers were biding their time.

Dimiter Kenarov is journalist from Bulgaria and participant in 2012 Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence programme. His fellowship story examines environmental activism in the eastern Balkans. Follow this fellow and his reporting project on <http://fellowship.birn.eu.com/en/profiles/fellows-dimiter-kenarov>



The famous counter-culture beach at Vama Veche, Bulgaria.

Ecosovo

Assault and battery? Portable power options that don't trash the environment



By Elizabeth Gowing

Click the shutter and capture a stunning image of Kosovo's summer landscape. There are rolling hills, hedgerow flowers, tranquil smallholdings...

And the cadmium starts to leach into the soil. Slowly and silently it is taken up by plant roots. It accumulates in the pears and cherries of the smallholding; the fruit is picked and swallowed by young children...

Like some dystopic blight, my photograph produces its negative – a polluted land of tainted food. What did I do? Well, my camera runs on AA batteries.

And when I've used up one set of batteries, what alternative do I have? Thrown into the trash, the heavy metals of the batteries make their certain way into the food chain; my photographs (and yours, and the battery you just changed in that clock, the torch) are killing us. Batteries rely on mercury, cadmium, nickel and lead – just the sort of soil you'd like your food to be grown in? These metals are not only polluting at the point when you throw your battery away, but also damaging in their production – the extractive industries which are heavily energy-intensive and threaten the wildlife and human habitats where the mining takes place. The fact that these portable energy cells share their name with a verb meaning 'beating or thrashing' seems depressingly appropriate.

Of course there are ways round this. When you're buying a product, look for ones with built-in batteries which can be recharged from the mains. Buy rechargeable batteries (though only if you're really sure you're going to use them – the additional manufacturing required, as well as the metals making up these batteries makes them a choice very unfriendly to the environment if

they aren't fully used) – my favourite type plug into the USB socket of your computer, meaning you can recharge on the move. There's a new Sanyo designed 'eneloop' rechargeable (not yet on sale in Kosovo) that can be recharged 1000 times, and holds its charge for 12 months, but even if you can't find this, rechargeable brands now available in Kosovo hold their charge much better than old models and, even with the cost of a recharger, work out cheaper in the long run. Such rechargeables reduce not only the manufacturing impact of 1000 new batteries, but also the transport costs to the environment of the single-use batteries you would otherwise be replacing.

Rechargeable batteries aren't suitable for everything though – they have a self-discharge rate of about 1% per day and they deplete more quickly when they are almost empty so they are not the best choice for safety equipment like smoke alarms. And whether you use single-choice or rechargeable batteries, they all ultimately need to be disposed of. What are your options?

For four years, one small company (with five employees) has been working in Kosovo offering battery recycling. Envricon (044 194 666, envricon@gmail.com) offers collection of gathered batteries (minimum 10 kg) which are taken to their centre in Fushë Kosovë. Some of what is collected – such as car batteries – are recycled by them in Kosovo. Others (such as the AA battery from my camera) are shipped to Macedonia for recycling.

Envricon has worked with KFOR and UNMIK to collect their batteries and is ready to take on other clients. Ruzhdi Thaqi, the manager, says that rates for collection depend on the contract negotiated with the client, but that for humanitarian organizations they will collect for free as part of their work to support Kosovo's development. 'The main thing is to make the environment cleaner every day,' he says. What can you do to help him?

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 on theideaspartnership@gmail.com



The First Day Of School

Two non-governmental organisations, Health for All and The Ideas Partnership, have been going door-to-door in June to raise awareness among the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo about the importance of enrolling for school.



By Mihane Mustafa

Health for All's campaign is held annually in June – the time for children to enrol for school – in Fushe Kosove, Ferizaj, Lipjan and Kline.

Volunteers go "door to door" to meet parents and children, handing out leaflets and providing information.

"The campaign of informing and awareness raising for registering children of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian community has been successful because the number of children enrolled in school each year is increasing," says Kenan Hoti, coordinator for youth work at Health For All.

The NGO The Ideas Partnership has been working in Fushe Kosove on getting children back to school.

Last year, the organisation's co-founder Elizabeth Gowing met nine-year old girl Gjelanen who was unab-

le to enroll for school.

After several failed attempts to register the young girl at primary school, and meetings with the Ministry of Education, the Ideas Partnership realised that many school pupils were unable to enter the education system because they had to pass a test, but to pass the test the children needed teaching.

The organisation then took up the challenge of teaching children so that they could pass the entrance test and enter the education system.

In March 2011, Gowing found 20 children who were not in school but who wanted to learn.

"Even if schools do not want to, even if parents do not want to, a child can finish school successfully if they want to," Gowing told Prishtina Insight.

Last year, she opened a centre with the help of foreign donors, and 50 children are being taught in mathematics, English and Albanian language, and other educational activities.

Today, Gowing has a list of 192 children and adults who do not attend school.

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