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Kosovo Gang Stole Millions from Kurdish VIP in Spain

Four Kosovo Albanians are accused of stealing almost 2 million euro of jewels and goods from the Barcelona hotel room of a Kurdish general, the son of the Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani.

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Albright Phone Buyout Stirs Competition Concerns in Kosovo

Competition commission says it will want to investigate concerns about a mobile phone monopoly if a company chaired by Madeleine Albright buys 75 per cent of the state telecom firm, PTK.

By Parim Olluri

Concerns about competition in Kosovo's mobile phone market are growing since it emerged that Albright Capital Management, chaired by Madeleine Albright, is bidding alongside Portugal Telecom to buy a 75 per cent of Post and Telecoms of Kosovo, PTK.

PTK is the only rival in the market to IPKO, Kosovo's sole private mobile phone operator, in which the former US secretary of state and her colleagues owns shares, although their stake now stands at

less 1 per cent. Five senior members of Albright Stonebridge Group are shareholders in IPKO: Madeleine Albright, James O'Brien, Suzanne George, Carol Browner and Wendy Sherman.

Albright Stonebridge Groups holds 25 per cent of the shares in Albright Capital Management.

There are concerns, therefore, that the country's two mobile phone operators will be at least partly controlled by the same group.

Kosovo's Competition Commission, an independent body tasked with preventing monop-

lies, says the government must consult it before signing any deal with Albright Capital Management for PTK, the country's most profitable public firm.

"The government should ask us for an interpretation about whether a monopoly will be created in such a case," Ahmet Krasniqi, head of the Competition Commission, said.

"After analysis, the Commission will decide whether this will be permitted or should be stopped.

"But we need to be consulted before the contract is signed since that contract is not valid without our approval," he concluded.

Mystery over shareholders:

IPKO has refused to confirm whether Albright Stonebridge Group members remain shareholders.

But, according to the country's Business Registration Agency, ARBK, Albright and colleagues continue to hold shares in the firm.

Eight years ago, Albright, a heroine in Kosovo for her support of Kosovo's independence, became advisor to the chairman of the board of IPKO Net, Arkan Ismaili, now Kosovo's US ambassador.

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Elite Prostitutes in Balkans Reap Rich Rewards

She is neither a Moldavian nor a Ukrainian whose personal documents were seized by human traffickers, forcing her into prostitution in some nightclub in the Balkans - as was often the case in the nineties.

She lives in a Vojvodina town in the north. Her parents are...

feature

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Thaci Lobbyists Push for McDonald's in Kosovo

The fast-food company McDonald's is the only named business to have been the subject of lobbying by Patton Boggs in its meetings promoting Kosovo.

According to documents that the firm has submitted to the US Justice Department, Patton Boggs emailed, phoned and a held...

business

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Albright Phone Buyout Stirs Competition Concerns in Kosovo

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At the time, IPKO Net was an internet service provider, though it was already drawing up plans to enter the mobile phone market.

Four years later, in 2008, IPKO Telecommunications won a licence to become the country's first private mobile phone operator.

Ismaili and Albright were among the shareholders. Telekom Slovenije owned around 60 per cent of the shares and the Slovenian state retains a controlling stake in the firm.

In its latest financial report, dated November 2011, Telekom Slovenije says it today it holds 93.11 per cent of the shares of IPKO Telecommunications, after buying out a number of other shareholders.

It does not list who owns the remaining stake.

"The structure of ownership, the number of shares per shareholder, as well as ownership transactions ... are not available to the public, including the

media," Darinka Pavlic Kamien, head of communications for the Slovenian company, said.

"The issue of whether to reveal [the owners of] the shares remains under the company's discretion," she added.

Albright Stonebridge Group and ambassador Ismaili failed to reply to queries sent by email and phone about their shares in IPKO.

Mehdi Pllashniku, head of the business registry, said his agency made changes to share ownership information as soon it received such information.

"This is usually done in two to three minutes," he explained, adding that the details now online are up to date.

Pllashniku added that the information regarding shareholders should be made public.

"There is no reason to hide names. A company might not share what percentage of shares a shareholder has, but it should make the names public," he said.

Using Kosovo's Access to Official Documents Law,



PM Thaci meeting former secretary of state Albright in Washington earlier this year

Pristina Insight has, however, obtained the latest breakdown of share distribution in IPKO, dated in December 2009.

This confirms that Telekom Slovenia holds 93 per cent of shares, while Factor Banka has 2.85 per cent and Ismaili 1.3 per cent.

It also shows that five Albright Stonebridge Group members retain shares in IPKO - each holding between 0.06 and 0.02 per cent of shares.

Thaci's US meetings:

The office of the Prime Minister announced earlier this year that Hashim Thaci had held an unofficial meeting with the former Secretary of State

Albright in April while visiting the US to hold talks with current US leaders.

Thaci "expressed his gratitude for the continual engagement that former secretary Albright has shown and is showing in supporting democratic developments in the Republic of Kosovo", the Prime Minister's website said.

Albright reportedly congratulated the Prime Minister on the deals reached with Serbia in the EU-led dialogue in Brussels and on the announced end in September to the era of Kosovo's "supervised" [internationally mentored] independence.

According to the calendar of US official meetings, Robert Hormats, vice-secretary for Economy, Energy and

Environment, and the last White House Chief of Staff under President Bill Clinton, John Podesta, were also at the meeting.

Podesta, together with his brother Tony, founded a lobbying company, Podesta Associates. He now chairs the Center for American Development, a liberal think-tank in Washington.

Tony is now chair of Podesta Group, which has a lobbying contract with Kosovo's Ministry for Economic Development.

This is the government department managing the sale of shares in PTK.

Pristina Insight previously revealed that Kosovo signed a contract in March with Podesta Group for a fee of 50,000-dollars a month.



IPKO has attempted to keep its shareholdings secret

Serbia's Dacic to Discuss New Kosovo Talks With Ashton

EU foreign policy chief is to meet Serbia's leader in September, when a new round of Serbia-Kosovo talks will be high on the agenda.



By Gordana Andric

Ivica Dacic, Serbia's Prime Minister, will travel to Brussels on September 4 to meet the EU's High Representative, Catherine Ashton, to discuss resuming Kosovo-Serbia talks, Balkan Insight has learned.

Ashton met Kosovo's Prime Minister, Hashim Thaci, in late July, when she stated that the dialogue would resume once a new government in Serbia was in place.

"After the Ashton-Dacic meeting we will know more about who Serbia's representatives in the dialogue will be and what

topics will be discussed," a diplomatic source in Brussels said.

"As she already talked with Thaci, we expect the dialogue to reopen soon after the meeting with the Serbian Prime Minister," the source added.

Aleksandar Vulin, director of the Serbian government's Office for Kosovo, has already announced one change, which is that Kosovo Serbs will in future be directly represented in the Serbian negotiating team.

"No matter on what level the dialogue is led, the Serbs [from Kosovo] will have their representative on the negotiating team and their requirements and wishes will be respected," Vulin said on Wednesday.

The EU launched the dialogue

in March 2011 with the aim of normalising tense relations between Serbia and its former province, whose independence, declared in 2008, it does not recognise.

So far the two sides have reached deals on freedom of movement, mutual recognition of university diplomas and on the representation of Kosovo at regional meetings attended by Serbia.

Talks were put on hold following the May general elections in Serbia, which resulted in the Democrats, led by Boris Tadic, losing power.

A new government, led by the more nationalistic Progressive Party and the Socialists, has since announced that it intends to upgrade the process to the level of



Serbian PM Dacic is set to meet EU foreign affairs head Ashton

Prime Ministers or Presidents, rather than keeping the talks at the level of envoys, as has been the case so far.

Belgrade has also stated that all arrangements reached by the previous Democrat-led government will be fully implemented.



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Kosovo Asylum Seekers Put Visa Liberalisation at Risk

Hope of a speedy entry into the EU's visa-free zone for Kosovars could be dashed by the government's failure to cut asylum rates to Western Europe fast enough.



By Besiana Xharra

The number of Kosovars seeking asylum in the EU is falling year on year, but figures remain stubbornly high and a worry to bureaucrats in Brussels.

Just under 10,000 Kosovars sought asylum in 2011 – down from 14,000 in 2009 – with most looking to build a new life in France, Germany and Belgium.

Belgium has become so concerned about the flow of asylum seekers that it has funded a campaign including a pop video and music concert to encourage Kosovars to stay at home.

Tove Ernst, spokesperson for the EU Home Affairs Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom, told Prishtina Insight that Brussels is monitoring Kosovo's asylum claims closely as it will play a major part in deciding whether the country will be granted membership of the "White Schengen" list.

"As the visa liberalisation roadmap indicates, the Commission will continue to monitor the total number of asylum applications lodged by Kosovo citizens," she said.

"A substantial decrease in this and their performance indicators will be used as an indicative reference in the Commission's assessments of the expected migratory and security impacts of liberalising the visa regime for Kosovo citizens."

Kosovo's Prime Minister, Hashim Thaci, made securing visa liberalisation a key pledge of his successful electoral campaign of 2010.

He suggested in a pre-poll interview with the BBC that the country would be "very close" to joining the so-called White Schengen list by the end of 2011.

But the timetable appears optimistic following a series of delays to the process, including as a result of growing concerns among Western European countries about the impact of visa liberalisation.

Following the lifting of restrictions on Macedonian and Serbian citizens, EU countries saw a surge of illegal migration from both countries, leading some to rethink



Eliza Hoxha has released a song calling on Kosovars not to seek asylum

the whole programme.

In late 2010, Albania, Montenegro and Bosnia also joined the list, leaving Kosovo isolated and leading to talk of Kosovo becoming a "black hole" or "ghetto".

But in January this year, a "road map" for Kosovo's progress towards visa liberalisation was finally handed to Prishtina and the government received its list of conditions to be met this summer.

Vlora Citaku, Minister of European Integration in Kosovo, says that the government plans an awareness raising campaign in September to combat "the biggest obstacle" to visa liberalisation.

"The biggest obstacles in the liberalisation process are asylum seekers," she said. "Therefore our appeal to Kosovo citizens is to not take illegal routes to get into Europe because they will only damage their country and they will not benefit."

Kosovo exodus:

Kosovo remains one of the main sources of asylum seekers to industrialised countries, official statistics reveal.

According to the latest United Nations report, published in March, Serbia and Kosovo, which are still classed together by the UN, was ranked fourth in the world in terms of asylum seekers.

Some 21,000 people from the two countries applied from Serbia and Kosovo, of whom 41 per cent came from Kosovo, or 8,600.

This places Kosovo in 11th place globally as a source of asylum seekers.

The numbers, however, are falling. According to figures for the EU in 2009, there were 14,275 asylum seekers from Kosovo, in 2010 the number was 14,310, while in 2011 there were 9,870 applications.

It is not clear why these statistics differ from those offered by the UN, although both sets of figures place Kosovars among the most common asylum seekers in the world.

The latest EU figures for 2012 reveal that in the first three months of 2012, some 1,970 Kosovars applied for asylum. Of those, 29 per cent applied in France, 24 per cent in Germany, 22 per cent in Belgium, 12 per cent in Sweden, 3 per cent in Luxembourg and 9 per cent elsewhere.

Of these, an increasing number have been accepted, with 335 in 2009, 450 in 2010 and 920 in 2011.

France is the only country that

Editor's Word

What's wrong with Copyright?



By Lawrence Marzouk

Intellectual property doesn't mean much in Kosovo. From ramshackle shacks to swanky department stores, major newspapers to the purveyors of fast food, no one really seems troubled by using and abusing other people's work or name for commercial gain.

I am not a fan of the often heavy-handed tactics taken by record companies and Hollywood when attempting to protect their huge profits. They are fighting a losing battle as Internet 2.0 makes it impossible to properly police intellectual property.

What we need is a new model which will protect artists and innovation, while exploiting the huge potential of opening up information to the world, rather than putting it behind a pay wall.

I don't know what this model will look like, but I do know that it doesn't resemble what goes on at the Minimax market, near KFOR's film city base.

The shop is a temple to mimicry, and is always rammed full of NATO troops in uniform picking up bootleg products. It is also frequented by many other internationals, happy to buy cheap, fake goods which are not easily available back home because they are illegal.

It's excellent news that the first cases involving copyright infringement are reaching court – as reported in Prishtina Insight on page 6 today. Kosovo needs to crackdown on the black market if it is to attract foreign investment.

Kosovo will find it difficult to attract the real McDonald's – as reported on page 7 – while it has another five fake ones operating.

Much more remains to be done by Kosovo authorities, but us foreigners, many supposedly here to show how we do it better back home, can also help.

We need a concerted effort by the international organisations sending their people to Kosovo to stop their employees blatantly bankrolling businesses which thrive on the theft of intellectual property.

officially accepts asylum from Kosovars and it has consistently received the highest number of applicants in recent years. In 2009, 190 of the 335 were granted asylum in France, in 2010, 350 out of the 450 and in 2011, 720 out of the 910.

The French embassy in Kosovo declined to comment on why it had a different stance to the rest of Europe on Kosovo asylum seekers.

Belgium recently launched a campaign aimed at encouraging Kosovars not to apply for asylum.

The Minister of Asylum and Migration, Maggie De Block, visited Prishtina in June to pass on the message.

She said that Kosovars were among the top ten asylum seekers in Belgium.

De Block visited Kosovo as part of her country's campaign against illegal migration, which included a music festival in Prizren and a pop song by Eliza Hoxha.

She told the crowd at the festival: "I am here today with you, because I believe that all Kosovars should be proud to live in Kosovo. Proud to work in Kosovo... above all, proud to be in Kosovo."

"Did you know that there last year, 625 Kosovars sought asylum in Belgium and had to return home?" she added.

"Some were forced to leave Belgium because they did not possess appropriate visa or passport. They tried to get into Belgium with false papers. But it does not work."

Hoxha's pop song, "The future is

us", tells young people: "Here life flourishes, there nothing is yours, your homeland calls."

It adds that "to escape is not an option, to be here is a mission" and calls on youngsters not to believe the "stories" about abroad.

Government should do more:

Analysts and opposition politicians argue that the Kosovo government should create better conditions for its citizens, rather than wasting money on raising awareness about the difficulties of seeking asylum abroad.

"We should not blame Kosovo citizens who want to escape from Kosovo," said Behxhet Shala, head of the NGO Council for Human Rights. "A poor citizen cannot think straight, the only think on his mind is to live better, therefore the fault is with our government, which has failed to tackle the 60 per cent unemployment rate."

Ahmet Isufi, vice-president of the Alliance for the future of Kosovo, AAK, said: "While the government fails to create new working places and will not fight the corruption and crime, the asylum seekers will not be stopped."

A better life for Kosovo citizens in Kosovo is the only way to stop people from leaving their country, added Naser Osmani, from the Democratic League of Kosovo, LDK.



Kosovars are among the most common asylum seekers to developed countries

Kosovo Gang Stole Millions

Four Kosovo Albanians are accused of stealing almost 2 million euro of jewels and goods from the Barcelona hotel room of a Kurdish general, the son of the Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani.



By Lawrence Marzouk

It reads like the script of an action movie – a casino-loving Kosovo Albanian crime gang performs an audacious sting on the wealthy son of a controversial Middle Eastern leader in one of the world's most luxurious hotels.

But the story is not the work of fiction, but a case currently on trial at Prishtina District Court, led by the EU rule-of-law mission in Kosovo, EULEX.

Frequented by the likes of Mick Jagger, Eric Clapton and Cindy Crawford, Barcelona's Hotel Arts has been voted one of the top places in the world to spot stars.

But on July 20, 2009, the architectural wonder of glass and steel, which is part of the part of the Ritz-Carlton chain, hosted a more unusual set of visitors: four Kosovo Albanians thieves targeting the son of the president of Iraq's Kurdish region, General Mansour Barzani, Prishtina Insight has discovered.

Haki Januzi and Artan Jelliqi are accused of breaking into the locked hotel room and making off with bracelets, rings, earrings, necklaces, watches and expensive mobile phones worth between 1.3 million and 1.9 million euro.

Sami Makolli and Shemsidin Benarba allegedly guarded access to the corridor and distracted the reception staff.

Makolli and Benarba travelled to Barcelona with fake passports, and all – apart from Januzi who says he was not in Spain at the



The Barzani family -including Mansour (far left) - with President George W Bush at the White House.

time – said they had been in the city to gamble in casinos.

Afrim Ymeri, Abedin Beka – owner of the Kalaja Hotel in Vushtrri – and Saim Januzi, a member of the elite Kosovo Police unit ROSU and brother to Haki, – are charged with helping the perpetrators after the heist.

At a hearing at Prishtina District Court in July, a judge found that the evidence supported the charges in the indictment. A trial is expected in the autumn.

The charges against Makolli have been separated from those of the co-accused because he was not present at the hearing.

Erhan Brnicanin, Dusan Kadijevic and Nebojsa Bojovic, all from Serbia, also face charges of attempting to receive stolen goods.

Audacious heist:

On July 15, 2009, Ymeri contacted Jelliqi to say he was in Barcelona with "Sami", "Shemi" and "Haki", adding that Shemi had been just been released from prison, according to the indictment.

Ymeri added that he would be at Prishtina airport the next day. Airport logs show that Ymeri had been in Barcelona from July 6 but

returned to Kosovo on 16 July.

According to phone conversations between Ymeri and Jelliqi the following day, intercepted as part of another investigation, the latter was still in Barcelona.

Jelliqi meanwhile complained to Ymeri that it was very difficult to steal in Barcelona because there were already so many thieves in the city, according to the indictment.

He explained that various groups were waiting to steal bags from "stupid people".

"Afrim Ymeri counselled Artan Xhaferi-Jelliqi, 'Exactly when you do not expect it, it shows up' and

stated, 'Hopefully we are good,'" the indictment reads.

Later in the conversation Ymeri told Jelliqi that he would call him the following day and tell him "everything". He further advised Jelliqi "not to worry, all will be ok".

According to Spanish police reports, on July 18 Mansour Barzani went to the Police Investigative Unit in the Eixample district of Barcelona to complain that a bag containing jewellery and objects worth 150,000 euro had been stolen from him while he was in a taxi. The room card of his suite at the Hotel Arts was also stolen.

Prishtina Insight has confirmed that the Barzani listed in the indictment is the son of Massoud Barzani, president of Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan Region, and leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party.

Two days later, Barzani submitted a second complaint to police in Ciutat Vella district of Barcelona, stating that "unknown persons had broken into his room at the Hotel Arts, Barcelona, and robbed jewellery and objects which he valued at approximately 1.9 million euro."

Surveillance footage from the security cameras of the Hotel Arts revealed that five people had been involved in the break-in into room 3009.

Jelliqi and Januzi were in the corridor outside 3009 and forced the door open while Makolli and Benarba and another unidentified person controlled access to the corridor via the elevator and distracted the hotel staff at the reception.

Jelliqi, Makolli and Benarba

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NATO: No Request to Help Kosovo Douse Fires

There is some confusion over whether the Kosovo authorities have asked KFOR to help put out the fires that have been rampaging in the south and west.



By Fatmir Aliu

NATO's peacekeeping force in Kosovo, KFOR, says that it has not received any request from the government to help fight the blazes that have erupted in western and southern areas.

A source in KFOR told Prishtina Insight on Tuesday that no official request for help had been sent by the authorities in Prishtina.

"For security reasons [KFOR commander] General Drews discussed the fire issue with his staff this morning and what it means for overall security. But as far as I remember, there was no mention that the government had sent any

SOS requesting assistance," the source said.

According to the media, the Kosovo Ministry of Interior asked NATO to help extinguish the wildfires several days ago, citing the lack of specialized machinery for such operations.

KFOR's spokesperson, Colonel Uve Nowitzki confirmed to Prishtina Insight that by late afternoon, no such call by the central government has been sent to the peacekeeping force.

"We have not received any request from the government," Nowitzki said on Tuesday.

In a press statement, the government said that the Agency for Emergency Management had recorded fires in the Prizren, Malisheva, Dragash and Decani regions, and that hundreds of fire fighters, Kosovo Security Forces

and volunteers had been engaged.

"Lacking necessary specialized tools to fight the blazes, the Ministry of Internal Affairs has requested the assistance of KFOR and of the neighbouring countries," it said.

"Because of the landscape, managing the fires in certain zones remains a challenge," the statement on Monday added.

The mountainous area of Decani bordering Montenegro and Albania in the west has been burning for a week, mostly owing to strong winds that have carried blazes deep into the forests.

Mayor Rasim Selmanaj has called on the government to help, saying local fire fighters cannot handle the blazes. His municipality was first hit three weeks ago by fire, which reduced to ashes hundreds of hectares of forest.

The Kosovo Security Forces, KSF, have been fighting the blazes for a week now, but owing to a lack of capacities, they have had to pull back in the forests round Dragash in southern Kosovo.

On Monday, opposition parties criticized the government for not calling an emergency meeting of the National Security Council, or sending a formal request for help to NATO.

Civil society groups have also reacted, criticizing the authorities for their slow response, which they say has led to huge amounts of damage.

An NGO that monitors the performance of the central and municipal authorities, the Initiative for Progress, on Tuesday said that the authorities had failed to cope with the situation on the ground.

from Kurdish VIP in Spain

have admitted to being in Barcelona at the time of the burglary but deny involvement in the crime. Benarba and Makolli had been travelling on fake passports.

Prior to the theft, Ymeri had already been in contact with a potential buyer of stolen goods in Serbia.

According to the indictment, between July 5 and August 16 2009, he liaised with various contacts in Serbia and Albania to arrange for Erhan Brnicanin, Dusan Kadujevic and Nebojsa Bojovic to value and buy stolen goods, namely jewellery and watches, for an unnamed boss in Serbia.

The hotel meeting:

A meeting with potential buyers from Serbia was finally set up for August 16, 2009, just under one month after the theft, at the Hotel Kalaja in Vushtrri, belonging to Abedin Beka and another unnamed person, according to the indictment.

According to the witness statement of Remzi Januzi, a hotel receptionist and nephew of suspects Haki and Saim, Haki and Beka arrived together at the hotel between 8pm and 9pm.

The same witness said that a number of "special guests" turned up soon after and were escorted to one of the hotel rooms.

Brnicanin, Kadujevic and Bojovic were allegedly the special guests, arriving to value the stolen goods for their boss.

ROSU officer Saim Januzi was present in the Hotel Kalaja for "private" reasons, he said,

explaining that he came just for a coffee. He was dressed in civilian clothes but when police arrived as part of the operation, Saim presented himself as an investigator in the case and used his police ID.

When the police tried to prevent people, including the suspects, from leaving the

hotel, Saim allegedly intervened, allowing the suspects to leave.

Call lists shows that Saim was in contact with his brother, Haki, at 9.14pm that night, at the time of the police intervention.

Hotel owner Beka was arrested about 200 metres from Kalaja, which he had fled on foot.

He was found with a bag containing all of the stolen jewellery and watches. Haki Januzi was arrested carrying two highly-priced Vertu mobile phones. Jelliqi was carrying one.

Wrongdoing denied:

Jelliqi insists that he acquired the expensive items playing poker in Barcelona with an unnamed Arab in July 2009.

Haki Januzi denies ever going to Spain. He maintains that he was in Kosovo throughout July 2009. He says that on August 16 he was with Abedin Beka and went to Hotel Kalaja to meet Jelliqi.

In the hotel room, Jelliqi opened a bag containing jewellery, he said. Haki states that he took one Vertu phone from the bag but had bought the other one that

was found on him, earlier, in the Czech Republic. According to the log at Prishtina airport, Januzi had left Kosovo on July 4 and returned on July 20.

Saim Januzi admits being in Barcelona at the time to gamble at casinos

but says he did not see Haki Januzi or Jelliqi and indeed does not know them. He used a Serbian passport under the name of Bastri Makolli to enter Spain.

Benarba admits having been in Barcelona in June and July 2009. He says he stayed in the Hotel Arts in Barcelona with his girl-



The famous, five-star Arts Hotel, where the audacious crime took place in July 2009

friend.

He says he met Haki Januzi and Jelliqi in the hotel casino and saw Sami Makolli there also. He used a Bulgarian passport under the name of Mehmet Hasanov to enter Spain.

Ymeri says that, following a request from Jelliqi, he contacted Brnicanin, Bojovic and Kadujevic to evaluate the items. He claims that he thought the items had been obtained legally.

Bojovic and Kadujevic said that a friend of theirs, known as "Jupi", had asked them to go to Kosovo to evaluate some gold. Bojovic said that he was a goldsmith and that his job was to evaluate jewellery. He did not know the items were stolen, he says.

Brnicanin said that he joined the trip only to help a friend of his, without knowing the purpose of the meeting. The latter had asked him to accompany Bojovic and Kadujevic to Kosovo because it was safer for them to travel around Kosovo with a Muslim.

Saim Januzi denies any criminal behaviour, saying that on the evening of August 16, he went for a coffee to Hotel Kalaja alone.

He says he didn't know that his brother, Haki, was in the hotel and didn't communicate with him that evening.

When he saw the police, he tried to help them and never attempted to help the defendants escape, he added.

The Barzani empire:

Massoud Barzani, President of Iraq's Kurdistan Region and the leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, KDP, has five sons - including Masrour, head of the region's intelligence agency - Mansour, a general with the KDP's special forces, and three daughters.

According to US diplomatic cables, leaked to WikiLeaks, the KDP "consists of family clans, operating very much like a mafia organization."

"For example, his [Massoud Barzani's] uncle is Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari, his nephew/son-in-law is KRG [Kurdish regional Government] Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani and his son Masrur [sic] is Head of KRG's Intelligence Directorate," a cable said.

EULEX Accused of Breaking Kosovo's Legal Procedure

Illir Tolaj's defence lawyer has accused the EULEX prosecution of violating the Procedural Code of Kosovo while gathering evidence against his client.



By Fatmir Aliu

The defence at the trial of Illir Tolaj and ten other former senior government officials charged with corruption, have accused the EU's rule of law mission to Kosovo, EULEX, prosecutors of unlawfully obtaining evidence and asked the court to rule it inadmissible.

Prishtina's District Court confirmed the indictment last Tuesday against the former Deputy Prime Minister, Bujar Bukoshi, the Health Ministry Secretary General Illir Tolaj and nine other defendants charged with abusing their official positions and accepting bribes to award health contracts, in a case known as "Illir Tolaj et al."

Tolaj's lawyer, Bajram Tmava,

said during Wednesday's session that the prosecutor of the case had breached the laws of Kosovo, during the investigation and evidence gathering stage.

"For instance, the prosecutor ordered a raid on my client's prison cell in Dubrava. There was no court warrant for it, this was just a verbal order," he said.

"Second, my client's text messages were intercepted, and some of them were private and had nothing to do with the charges against Mr. Tolaj...this represents a serious violation of the Procedural Penal Code of Kosovo," Tmava added.

Over 25,000 documents relating to the case have been gathered by the prosecution team.

In the previous hearing all eleven defendants pleaded not guilty to the charges against them.

Tolaj, the former permanent secretary at the Ministry of Health, was arrested in 2010 by EULEX

police and the Kosovo Police Anti-Corruption Task Force in the context of a criminal investigation into tax evasion.

He was later charged, together with the other nine defendants, all former Ministry of Health officials, on 10 counts, ranging from abuse of his official position to taking bribes from private companies.

Bukoshi is suspected of abusing his public position when he was Minister of Health in 2008. He resigned last month, after the EU rule of law mission, EULEX, announced that he was being investigated in connection with the charges against Illir Tolaj.

The government said Bukoshi stepped down as Deputy Prime Minister out of respect for the legal process and to give the judicial institutions room to do their work.

Bukoshi has pleaded not guilty to all charges.



Illir Tolaj is facing corruption charges

Kosovo Launches Crack Down on Brand Name Fraudsters

Court verdict fining a trader for selling fake Caterpillar shoes is legal landmark – but much to be done before intellectual copyright is secure in Kosovo.



By Liridona Hyseni

Kosovo is awash with counterfeit goods, from ramshackle shops piled high with bootleg DVDs to large shopping centres offering fake high-end brand phones.

But courts and police are beginning to crack down on the criminals importing and selling such goods.

Customs claim to have seized 1 million euro of fake goods in the past two years.

Meanwhile Prishtina Insight has obtained a court verdict from October 14 last year, which appears to be one of the first judgments in the country issued against a shop for selling fake goods.

The District Court of Ferizaj fined 41-year-old Januz Lamallari 1,000 euro for “unauthorized use of a foreign brand or model”. It also confiscated 1,281 pairs of shoes.

Lamari, owner of the company NTP Mania, attempted to deceive buyers and illegally use the brand Caterpillar, often known as “CAT”, the court ruled.

The owner refused to speak to Prishtina Insight about the case but workers at the store said they no longer sold “CAT” shoes.

According to the court records, which this newspaper obtained, Lamallari said he bought the shoes from China through a Kosovo distributor.

The cost of the Chinese shoes was only around 9 euro, whereas the real shoes normally retail for 70 to 100 euro per pair.

The fake footwear travelled to Malta and then Italy before entering Kosovo across the Albanian border at Lake Vermice.

Kosovo Police found the shoes in a warehouse in Ferizaj and issued a notice prohibiting a sale until the courts reached a decision.

CAT, which is headquartered in the US, was informed of the seizure and then submitted a complaint to the Kosovar courts.

CAT registered its trademark in Kosovo back in November 2008, providing it protection until October 2017.

The court ruled that the case held wider implications for the country.

“Lack of respect for obligations to protect commercial brands is damaging the credibility of the country,” it said.

However, the judge limited the fine to 1,000 euro, taking in account that Lamallari had no previous offences, and that counterfeiting “acts of this nature are widespread in our country”.

The court asked the Ministry of Trade and Industry to publish its decision on its newsletter and website, though this has not happened.

Brands go unprotected:

Isa Dukaj, head of the Office for Intellectual Property under the ministry, says that 21,000 commercial brands have submitted requests for registration in Kosovo.



Mania NTP in Ferizaj has been fined for selling fake CAT shoes

Dukaj said more than 7,000 of these requests are still being reviewed.

Luljeta Plakolli, a lawyer specializing in intellectual property, said that one problem was low public awareness of the issue.

“The owners of commercial brands are not informed of their rights, nor are users of commercial brands informed of their obligations,” she said.

One example of the problem occurred early in May 2011, when 180 fake Apple iPhones 5 arrived at Prishtina airport.

As Apple had not yet registered its brand in Kosovo, no offence had been committed. Customs were obliged to treat the fake goods as genuine Apple products and allow their import.

Apple registered its brand, or trademark, in Kosovo on May 20, 2011.

Meanwhile, as Kosovo awaits its first true McDonald’s burger bar, the country already has a number of unofficial outlets borrowing the famous name.

The Agency for Registration of Businesses in Kosovo lists no less than six firms called “McDonald’s” serving burgers, although none attempts to emulate the menu of the original.

One small unit of only 15 square metres has been serving food since 1990 under name “McDonald’s”, on the corner of the Kemajl Hetemi street in Ferizaj.

“Our intention has never been to copy the ‘McDonald’s menu,’ the owner, Zubini Shefiti, said. “This name hasn’t helped in bringing in more customers,” he remarked.

“Our fast food is well known in Ferizaj on the basis of its own commercial activity.”

Plakolli said that such actions would only break of the law if the McDonald’s brand was registered in Kosovo.

“The reproduction for commercial benefits of the name and reputation of a company that is the owner of a commercial brand without the permission of the owner of the brand is considered a violation,” she noted.

Meanwhile some bigger retail outlets are already bearing down on fraudsters to safeguard relations with top brand name clients.

The large “Albi” shopping mall on the outskirts of Prishtina collaborates with around 25 major international brands and acts

aggressively to protect their products against fake imports.

One of these brands is the Italian shoe brand GEOX, with which Albi has had a contract since 2006.

Owing to Kosovo’s tax system, the price of these shoes can be up to 10 per cent higher in Kosovo than in the European Union, providing an even greater incentive for fraudsters to import and sell fake versions.

But, significantly, an attempt to bring fake GEOX products into the country was thwarted in 2011.

“Kosovo Customs notified the representatives of GEOX and the review of the case immediately started,” Albi’s fashion manager, Ardian Canhasi, recalled.

“We consulted our agreement with this brand and realized that the goods weren’t ours and that somebody had attempted to bring these goods into Kosovo illegally,” he said.

Customs then destroyed the goods.

Kosovo Customs say they seized more than 230,000 suspected fake items in 2011, worth over a million euro. They confiscated almost all of them and destroyed some 130,000 items.

“Most of the goods that are confiscated are foodstuffs, textiles and underwear,” Adriatik Stavileci, customs spokesperson, noted.

But Plakolli says the success of the fledgling crackdown on counterfeit goods depends on much greater investment in specialized courts.

“The Economic Court, for example, works with only three judges,” she remarked.

“They have all been trained in intellectual property legislation in Kosovo, but the volume of cases they receive exceeds their capacity to handle the indictments in an appropriate manner,” she added.



Ferizaj’s answer to McDonald’s demonstrates the lack of awareness about copyright in Kosovo

Thaci Lobbyists Push for McDonald's in Kosovo

PM's office is paying Washington-based Patton Boggs \$50,000 a month by PM's office to lobby for Kosovo – including for the first McDonald's restaurant to open.



By Lawrence Marzouk

The fast-food company McDonald's is the only named business to have been the subject of lobbying by Patton Boggs in its meetings promoting Kosovo.

According to documents that the firm has submitted to the US Justice Department, Patton Boggs emailed, phoned and held a meeting with State Department officials about the chain opening in Kosovo.

It is not clear what, if any influence, the state department holds over McDonald's commercial decisions on where to place its restaurants but US embassies, which fall under the State Department, are responsible for facilitating American investment in their respective countries.

Both Kosovo's government and McDonald's refused to comment on the nature of lobbying.

The Office of the Prime Minister is paying Patton Boggs for "advisory services on legal and advocacy issues to be used for expansion of bilateral and multi-lateral relations".

The company is also paid to "foster investments and trade opportunities for Kosovo, as well as gathering funds from foreign aid programs".

McDonald's: We're not Loving it

The world's largest fast food chain, serving around 68 million customers daily in 119 countries, has yet to open an outlet in Kosovo. Skopje, Macedonia, is the nearest outlet for those in need of a Big Mac.

But according to the report of Patton Boggs activities, published under the Foreign Agents Registration Act, the firm is attempting to ensure that Chicken McNuggets go on offer soon in the world's second youngest state.

In February, the firm contacted State Department employees seven times "Regarding McDonald's in Kosovo".

This included discussion with David Berger, the deputy director of the Office of South Central European Affairs, and Wendy Brafman, Kosovo Desk Officer, both



Lobbyists employed by PM Hashim Thaci are pushing for McDonald's to open a restaurant in Kosovo

at the State Department.

Prishtina Insight asked McDonald's whether it had any plans to open an outlet, but received no reply.

The Office of the Prime Minister also declined to say why McDonald's was seen as a commercial priority for the country.

Patton Boggs lists almost 70 different approaches to US officials in the first six months of the year.

Seven relate to McDonald's, three to general "business" and one connected to a "Refinery in Kosovo". McDonald's is the only named business in the list.

Other contacts related mostly to new recognitions and pushing Kosovo government's line on the need to improve security in the troubled Serb-run north of the country.

Countries targeted for lobbying for recognition of Kosovo's independence include Jamaica, Mexico, Libya and Tunisia. Since the lobbying, none has established diplomatic ties.

According to Patton Boggs' summary of its activities, the firm "contacted Congressional officials to detail the political and security situation in northern Kosovo and advocate for continued U.S. and NATO support".

It also "called on Administration and Congressional officials to support the independence and territorial integrity of the foreign principal, particularly relating to diplomatic recognition by other nations and its full sovereignty over ethnic Serb areas in the northern part of the country".

The firm also "corresponded with Administration officials to discuss opportunities for US investment in Kosovo," it said.

Employed without tender:

Kosovo's government discretely engaged the services of Patton Boggs last August, having been forced to cancel an identical agreement with the firm in the previous year as it had broken public procurement laws.

Although the deal with the company was apparently signed on August 31, 2011, it has never been published by the government.

Frank Wisner, Patton Boggs foreign affairs advisor, had met Thaci in the US shortly before the first deal was signed.

According to a press release issued by the PM's office, they discussed "current political developments in Kosovo and the achievements up to now of Kosovo's insti-

tutions".

Wisner is an old Kosovo hand. The former US Secretary of State under George Bush, Condoleezza Rice, appointed him as the US's special representative to the Kosovo Status Talks in 2005. Wisner played a crucial role in negotiating Kosovo's independence.

In September 2010 the government then voted to employ Patton Boggs for 50,000 dollars a month [38,000 euro].

The cabinet was forced to cancel the decision in November after BIRN revealed that the move appeared to break Kosovo's law on public procurement.

This was because the cabinet had simply selected Patton Boggs rather than allowing a competitive bidding process to take place. The cabinet had also not justified itself to the Public Procurement Agency as to why it went ahead with a single-source tender.

Government officials later said they annulled the deal on legal advice but denied having broken procurement rules.

The Foreign Ministry said it had awarded the second contract without tender in coordination with the Procurement Agency but had asked for the deal to be kept secret.

Second lobbying firm:

Thaci's government signed up its second Washington-based lobbyist in less than a year also at a cost of 50,000 dollars a month in March this year.

According to the agreement, which has been published by the US Justice Department, Podesta Group was brought in to "Research and analyze issues of concern to the principal [Kosovo]".

The contract also outlines how Podesta will "counsel the principal on US policies of concern, activities in Congress and the Executive branch and developments on the US political scene generally; and maintain contact, as necessary, with Members of Congress and their staff, Executive branch officials, members of the press, and nongovernmental organizations".

Podesta Group's head, Tony Podesta, is the brother of John Podesta, who was Bill Clinton's Chief of Staff at the time of the Kosovo conflict.

The Podesta brothers originally set up the firm, then called Podesta Associates. John now chairs the Center for American Progress, a liberal think tank in Washington.

Albania to Auction Two 3G Licenses

Albania's Electronic and Postal Communications Authority, AKEP, has launched a tender for two 3G mobile licenses with a starting bid of 4 million euro.



By Erjona Rusi

3G, the third-generation standard for mobile phones, enables simultaneous use of speech and data services on a cell

network, while also providing mobile broadband access to laptops and smart phones.

Vodafone was the first mobile operator in Albania to offer 3G data services, after it won a tender issued by AKEP in November 2010 for 31.4 million.

The second 3G license was awarded in 2011 to Albania's

Mobile Communication, AMC.

Apart from AMC and Vodafone, two other mobile operators, Eagle Mobile and Plus operate in Albania.

Eagle Mobile is owned by the Turkish group Calik Holding, while Plus Mobile is owned by consortium of local businesses and Kosovo Telecom.



London FT Fuels Speculation About Serbian Bankruptcy

Newspaper's dire predictions about the Serbian economy prompt speculation at home about Belgrade's ability to repay its growing debts.



By Marija Ristic

Recent warnings by the London-based Financial Times concerning the economic situation in Serbia have fuelled speculation at home about the country's possible bankruptcy.

The Financial Times warns that Serbia faces troubled economic times, with a large budget deficit, the national currency at an historic low, and growing debts.

Vladimir Gligorov, a researcher at the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies, agrees that Serbia risks going bankrupt, as it appears increasingly unable to repay its domestic and international loans.

The country has already requested a fresh standby arrangement with the International Monetary Fund.

According to the IMF representative for Serbia, Bogdan Lisovlik, the Fund will visit Belgrade in September to evaluate the economic situation and negotiations about a loan will start later this year.

Aleksandar Stevanovic, another economist, agrees that bankruptcy is a realistic danger if the state continues to spend money and take out more loans irresponsibly.



Fears are growing about the state of Serbia's economy and the strength of the Dinar

However, the authorities in Belgrade dismiss speculation about bankruptcy as nonsense, maintaining that Serbia is well able to continue repaying interest on its internal and international debts.

The Finance Ministry say that compared to most Western European countries, Serbia is relatively lightly indebted.

According to the National Bank of Serbia the external debt of the country is worth 54.7 per cent of GDP. The inflation rate is expected to reach 10 per cent by the end of the year.

As a part of its plan to ease the economic crisis, the government plans to change tax policy, increasing taxes on the rich and raising VAT.

Macedonia Quashes Talk of Currency Devaluation

Macedonia's denar is not about to be devalued, the Finance Minister Zoran Stavreski said, addressing recent speculation on the subject.



By Sinisa Jakov Marusic

Macedonia's Finance Minister has appealed to people "to maintain faith in the domestic currency and keep their savings in denars", denying reports that the currency was about to be devalued.

The Central Bank and the government have maintained a steady exchange rate for the denar throughout the past decade, selling 61 for one euro, and minister Stavreski said this was not about to change.

He said that the biggest guarantee of the denar's stability were the state reserves in foreign currency, which are currently "at an historic high", amounting to 2.96 billion euro.

This was 820 million euro more compared to July 2006, when the centre-right VMRO DPMNE party came to power, Stavreski said.

Besides this, Stavreski maintained that the deficit as well as the debt were relatively low, which further strengthens the denar as "the most reliable currency for keeping savings".

Speculation that the government was



Reports the Macedonian Denar could be devalued have been dismissed by Finance Minister Stavreski

preparing for a devaluation of the denar appeared in local media during the weekend.

But, according to VMRO DPMNE, the reports were "plain lies", spread by the main opposition Social Democrats. The opposition has dismissed such claims.

"It is not the first time that the Social Democrats use schemes to induce panic among people, misusing the media that

are close to them," the ruling party said in a press release.

Meanwhile, local banks contacted by Prishtina Insight say no massive sale of denars for other currencies is taking place.

"But people are uncertain and are increasingly seeking advice about what to do with their Denars," one senior manager at Uni Banka said.

News in brief

Macedonia Takes Pioneering Step in Wind Energy Project

Construction of the first wind farm in Macedonia should begin in the spring 2013 with the first electricity planned to be produced in the second half of the year.

Macedonia's state-owned ELEM power company has signed a 41 million euro deal with the Danish and Greek branches of Siemens to construction the country's first wind farm.

Sixteen windmills will be built with a capacity of 2 to 3 megawatts on the wind farm, which will cover 29 hectares. The total production power of the park will be 100 gigawatts with a capacity of 37 megawatts.

The farm will be located in the southeastern town of Bogdanci and will be built with financial support from the German development bank KfW.

The total cost of the project is estimated at 55.5 million euro. KfW will provide 33 million while the rest of the money will come from ELEM.

ELEM has plans for further enlargement of the wind park.

In the recent years there have been several announcements by foreign and domestic investors about building wind farms.

But nothing has been built so far, leading some parties to blame the country's red tape.

Macedonia currently meets the bulk of its electricity needs from coal power plants with some power coming from water power plants.

Albania Treasury Bills Auction Attracting New Investors

The auction early this week of 20.7 million euro of short-term debt, known as treasury bills, saw record participation by individuals alongside financial institutions.

This was the second auction of euro treasury bills organised by the Ministry of Finance this year. The first was on July 24.

In the latest auction on Monday, 15 million euro of treasury bills were auctioned, while the market demand was for about 20.7 million euro, of which 9.85 million euro were purchased by individuals and the rest by different investors such as banks and financial institutions.

The Bank of Albania said the average yield on the 12-month bills was 5.26 per cent.

This auction saw the highest level of individual participation of all six treasury bill auctions in euros organized by the Finance Ministry, reflecting growing interest by individual investors.

The Ministry earlier this year launched a campaign to attract more individual investors in the bond market.

The share of individual investors in Monday's auction was twice as large as it was in the treasury bill auction in July, jumping from 4.8 million euro to 9.85 million euro.

Croatia Pushes Forward with Troubled Property Tax Plans

Croatia has not given up on plans to introduce a new property tax, Finance Minister Slavko Linic says.

Slavko Linic told daily Jutarnji list that the new tax, which will bring Croatia into line with the majority of European countries, will be introduced in three phases and will replace local rates.

"We need a year to determine the values of construction and agricultural land, and then we will introduce the new tax in three phases," Linic explained.

The finance minister said that the property tax plan is not a 'money collection' scheme, but something that is needed for Croatia's development as the country readies to join the EU.

Minister Linic pointed out that the new tax will be based on the "value of the real estate" and not "per square meter." Linic also stressed that those with unused property would be most affected.

Sarajevo Gunman Claims Civilians Were Not His Target

At his trial on August 23, Mevlid Jasarevic, who shot at the US embassy in Sarajevo last year, said his aim was to shoot US special police 'who were killing Iraqis', not local passers-by.



By Elvira M. Jukic

At the continuation of the trial of Mevlid Jasarevic, 23, and two of his helpers, three men recalled events on October 28, 2011, when Jasarevic shot at the US embassy in Sarajevo and wounded a police officer.

One witness, Mirsad Velic, the policeman who was injured by Jasarevic during the shooting, said he was still recovering.

He said he had not felt sure he could shoot at Jasarevic to stop him because he was too far away, and if he had missed, the bullet could have hit one of the many citizens around at the time.

Another policeman who witnessed the events, Miralem Muslic, said he helped the wounded Velic and also helped locals find shelter in the nearby shopping centre.

Muslic added that according to the way Jasarevic handled his weapon, he looked well trained.

Dalibor Cato, the police officer who was guarding the US embassy, said he tried to shoot back at Jasarevic three times, but due to the distance and the type of gun he held, he missed.

The witnesses explained in detail their various positions to prosecutor Dubravko Campara who provided them with photographs of the site.

The suspect himself on Thursday told the court that his target was not civilians but, as he said, US special policemen who kill people in Iraq.

Jasarevic also complained to the court about conditions in his cell in Sarajevo, saying he could not watch television and adding that he wanted a transfer.



Mevlid Jasarevic (above) has given evidence about his shooting spree, at the US Embassy to Sarajevo

He is charged with attacking the US embassy to Bosnia, shooting 105 bullets in 50 minutes from an auto rifle and wounding a policeman.

Enrah Fojnica and Munib Ahmetpahic, the two alleged helpers, are charged with assisting Jasarevic.

More precisely they allegedly hid the DVD message that Jasarevic had recorded before coming to Sarajevo on the day, and destroyed ammunition and military equipment that had been obtained for terrorist purposes.

The trial started on June 15 at Bosnia's State Court, when the indictment was read out.

The defence admits the suspect's action but insists he was not part of an organized ter-

rorist group. The prosecution maintains that Jasarevic, Ahmetpahic and Fojnica were all members of an organised terrorist group that was active in the village of Gornja Maoca in northeast Bosnia.

The indictment says the three men intended to express dissatisfaction with the position in Bosnia of the extreme Wahhabi community, to which they belonged, and avenge that by violence.

All three have pleaded not guilty to the charges. Jasarevic is also indicted by the US Justice Department.

In April it charged him, among other matters, with attempted murder alongside nine other counts in connection with the shootings.

Romania Launches Digital Library For Metro Commuters

People who want to read while commuting can now download extracts from a 'digital library' in a Bucharest metro station.



By Marian Chiriac

A Romanian private company on Wednesday launched the first digital library in an underground station, with the aim of encouraging more reading among young people.

The new project will be available for free until the end of October.

The digital library contains 49 books and 10 audiobooks for downloading on tablets or on mobile phones in Romanian.

Once they are in the digital library, booklovers need only scan the QR code of the book, which is one of the library's "shelves", after which they will be directed to a website from where they can download part of

the book.

"This is cool. I'm interested mainly in history and if I find something interesting for sure I will read it," Madalin Antonescu, 19, said, while on Piata Victoriei subway station in downtown Bucharest.

The Digital Library's broader aim is to encourage reading generally, as most specialists are pessimistic about the future of reading in Romania.

In recent years, the number of people enjoying literature has constantly fallen.

The average number of books bought per inhabitant in Romania is just one a year, while in countries like Poland and Hungary the average is 8 to 10.

The average price of a book in Romania is of 19 lei, or around 4.4 euro.

A recent study by the research centre CURS showed that as many as 52 per cent of



Romanians do not read books at all.

Another 28 per cent read only "from time to time" while only 5 per cent read "for at least an hour a day," the survey showed.

During the Communist era, Romania invested heavily in lit-

eracy campaigns and books were available in large numbers at cheap prices.

But over the past 20 years the situation has changed radically, with television and Internet replacing reading as most people's daily habit.

News in brief

Albania Slashes Waste Import List to 25

Following pressure from environmentalists seeking a total ban, Albania on Thursday reduced the range of wastes that can be imported for recycling.

The decision to cut waste imports was "a result of wide consultation with civil society groups", Prime Minister Sali Berisha said, adding that banning all imports of waste was impossible while Albania gets closer to EU accession.

Thursday's decision by the government reduces the list of wastes that can be imported from 56 materials to 25.

Arguing that Albania's nascent recycling industry could not survive on the proceeds of domestic waste alone, in November 2011 the government approved a bill allowing for some waste imports that conform to a so-called "green list" of 56 materials.

A group of intellectuals and environmental activists then joined forces to condemn the change to the law and demanded a referendum on the issue, arguing that by allowing in such imports Albania was turning itself into the garbage can of Europe.

The umbrella group, the Alliance Against Waste Imports, AKIP, filed a request for a referendum after collecting nearly 64,000 signatures.

New Bridge Over Sarajevo's Troubled Waters Opens

Citizens of Sarajevo gathered on Wednesday night to cross the newly opened Festina Lente Bridge over the river Miljacka.

Locals in the Bosnian capital celebrated the opening of another bridge over the city's tiny Miljacka river on Wednesday.

Hundreds came to the opening ceremony on August 22 and stayed to try out the pedestrian bridge right away.

The new bridge, named Festina Lente, connects Obala Maka Dizdara, more precisely the Academy of Fine Arts, to Radiceva street, which runs to the main Marshal Tito street.

The bridge was designed by three young artists, Amila Hrustic, Bojan Kanlic and Adnan Alagic, who are students of the Fine Arts Academy while it was financed by the municipality.

Construction of the pedestrian bridge cost around 1 million euro with another 250,000 euro going on reconstruction of the Obala Maka Dizdara walking area.

The mayor of Sarajevo's Center municipality, Dzevad Becirevic, said at the opening that bridges were very important to the city, not only because they were practically useful.

"Bridges are not just objects. They are more than that. They are pieces of art," he said. "Sarajevo's bridges are ornaments to the city and they give it charm."

Festina Lente Bridge is made of steel, with a glass fence, and is paved with aluminium plates. It is 38 metres long and four to seven metres wide.

Whistleblower on UN Trafficking

Eleven years after Kathy Bolkovac was fired for exposing UN involvement in human trafficking in Bosnia, she is still campaigning for private contractors operating globally to be held accountable for their misdeeds.



By Valerie Hopkins in Sarajevo

The mass killings were over in Bosnia in 1999 - but violence and crime were still endemic when US police officer Kathy Bolkovac joined the International Police Task Force, IPTF, tasked with reconstructing the country and training personnel to establish the rule of law.

But when she uncovered wide-scale human trafficking in her job, she was fired for falsifying time sheets.

Her claims that young women were being brought from Moldova, Romania and Ukraine and sold for sex in brothels with the knowledge and sometimes assistance of UN employees were ignored and stifled.

One exception was Madeleine Rees, then the representative for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Bosnia.

She has since told her story in a book *The Whistleblower*, which was then turned into a film, starring Rachel Weisz.

Bolkovac felt drawn to Bosnia by family roots as her grandfather came from Croatia. She also felt a desire to help rebuild the shattered Balkan country as an employee of DynCorp, an international contracting firm.

"In 1998 and 1999, DynCorp was heavily recruiting police officers and I decided to go ahead and apply, thinking this would be a fantastic mission to be a part of," she told Prishtina Insight.

"I'd never been to Europe, I wanted to see what my roots were, and participate in what I thought was a dynamic and important democracy-building project."

Bolkovac said the first clue that something was wrong came before she even set foot in Bosnia.

At the training course in Fort Worth, Texas, she said most of her peers did not seem up to the task, and they received minimal preparation.

"We basically had a five-minute psychological exam and a ten-minute physical assessment - a run downhill. It was just a bunch of garbage that anybody who wasn't an active alcoholic or drug addict could pass. It was a really sad process," she said.

When she arrived in the capital, Sarajevo, although she praises the work of some of her colleagues, she adds: "It was kind of embarrassing because I realized that most of them were there to do nothing more than collect a paycheck.

"They were more interested in what party they were going to go to or what party they were going to throw after they got off duty that night."

Many colleagues from all over the world had not arrived with any obvious skills.

"You look at the police from Africa or India, some of those people have never driven a car in their lives, and they are given car keys and told 'Here you go boys,' so the Americans and some of the other contingents were actually tasked with teaching the other members how to drive...it was really just ridiculous," she says.

To make an impact, she began getting involved in human rights investigations, and was assigned to Zenica, Bosnia's fifth largest town, an hour's drive north of Sarajevo.

Although she was there to teach local police how to deal with domestic violence cases, Bolkovac said 70 per cent of the cases she handled turned out to involve human trafficking.

Police started bringing her girls as young as 15 who had been trafficked and found in raids on local nightclubs. "They didn't know what to do with them, so they brought them to me," Bolkovac recalls.

She said women would describe how they were treated in bars by their employers and clients.

"One woman described her abuse in a bar where she was forced to dance naked. One of the patrons was referred to as 'The Doctor,' because his habit was inserting Deutschmark coins into girls' vaginas as they danced," she said.

As she investigated further, she realized that some of her colleagues from DynCorp and the UN were not only aware of what was going on but were active participants, either as clients of prostitutes or as providers of protection for smugglers.

After a year in Zenica, Bolkovac was rewarded for her hard work and named head of the UN Gender Affairs office in Sarajevo headquarters.

That's when she became the contact point for investigators across the country who had unearthed similar information implicating IPTF employees.

But when she tried to raise the issue through her chain of command said she was told to stop.

"The problem was that once they started to do a proper investigation and once an international element was indicated, the brakes were put on by the higher-ups and those papers were trashed," she said.

"The majority of cases at that time involved internationals," she added, saying that "both DynCorp and UN employees were shutting down the investigations".

She said she would submit information about international employees to the dysfunctional UN internal affairs bureau, which went for months without

leadership, but soon realized that no one in the chain of command wanted to "touch these cases with a ten-foot pole."

Bolkovac then wrote an email to senior UN and DynCorp staff, openly discussing the problem.

Shortly after, she began receiving veiled threats, such as "Accidents happen frequently here" and her colleagues became worried for her safety.

DynCorp then terminated her contract on the grounds that she had falsified her timesheets. She left Bosnia, taking with her a hefty suitcase full of documents describing what she had seen.

"What I brought out from Bosnia were case numbers, names, synopses of reports that I had turned over to [UN] internal affairs and Jacques Paul Klein himself," Bolkovac said, referring to one of the top UN

officials in Bosnia at the time.

"I also had evidence in my files of other reports that had been done, emails, a lot of incriminating evidence of files that had been turned over, ongoing investigations, wires to the embassies, names of people. It was a big suitcase full of things."

She says that the US embassy was aware of the situation, had read her reports and knew about her sacking.

As Bolkovac tried to expose her former employers' wrongdoing, DynCorp was being contracted to work for the UN in Kosovo.

Her friend, Tanya Domi, then spokesperson at the OSCE Mission to Bosnia, took some of the files to the Sarajevo newspaper *Oslobodjenje* in June 2001 and broke the story, which came out subsequently in interna-

tional press.

Prishtina Insight contacted Bolkovac through Domi, now a professor at Columbia University in New York who continues to research on the Balkans.

The situation in Bosnia has since improved and sex trafficking is no longer a pressing issue.

But since its engagement in Bosnia, DynCorp has won US government contracts worth billions of dollars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In 2003, Bolkovac won £170,000 in a suit against DynCorp for wrongful dismissal, a pittance, she says, and not even a slap on the wrist for the company.

DynCorp planned to appeal the decision but dropped the appeal shortly after winning a contract from the US State Department in May 2003 worth



Rachel Weisz in the film *The Whistleblower*

in Bosnia Fights on

tens of millions of dollars.

Bolkovac now lives in The Netherlands after meeting her husband in Bosnia. Although she works full time for an international auction firm, she still dedicates time to campaigning against contractors like her former employer and to advocating for laws in the US that would hold contractors to account as government employees for misconduct abroad.

She speaks to students and non-governmental organizations all over the world and contacts the US State Department and Congress.

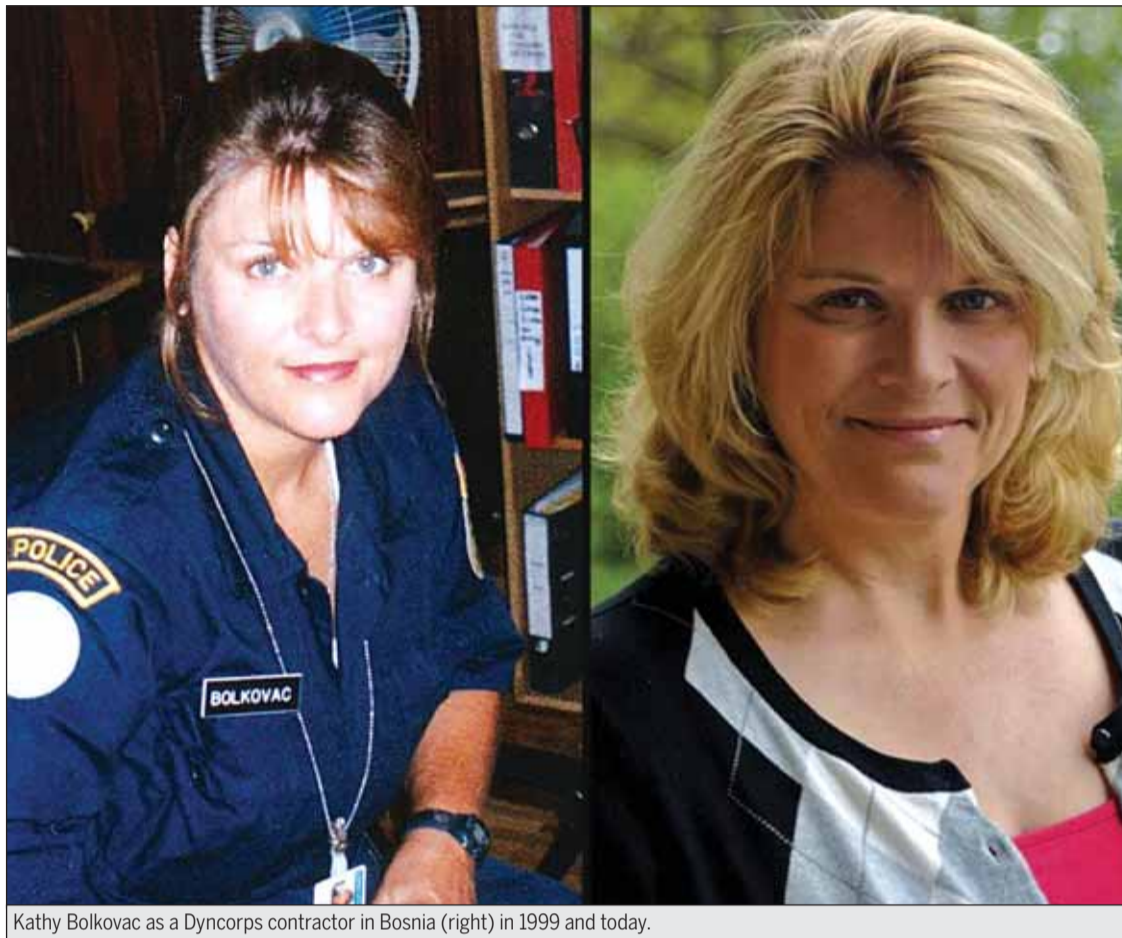
She wants them to include such contractors in the Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act and the Human Trafficking in Persons Act, which currently only apply to US Defense Department employees.

"There is all kinds of evidence in cases that have been brought out since I left Bosnia that Dyncorp and other contractors have been doing the same thing over and over again," she says.

She argues that although contractors may be necessary for construction and infrastructure, they cannot replace trained military personnel.

Moreover, she notes that the US thinktank Project on Government Oversight has determined that contractors are more expensive than military personnel.

Recent reports indicate that DynCorp receives more than 96 per cent of its more than \$3 billion in annual revenues from the US government.



Kathy Bolkovac as a Dyncorps contractor in Bosnia (right) in 1999 and today.

The problem in Bosnia, she says, is that was that no one wanted to prosecute.

"The UN refused to waive immunity but also the UN could have prosecuted the perpetrators themselves, but it chose to send them to their home countries, and even if the home countries wanted to prosecute, it was too late. The evidence was gone, victims were gone, documents lost, so what's the point?"

She argues that a special

agency should be established within the UN to conduct such investigations.

DynCorp meanwhile has issued a statement calling "The Whistleblower" a work of fiction and maintaining that the company's new owners have adopted a zero-tolerance policy towards trafficking.

However, the company was named in cables released by WikiLeaks in December 2010, which cited them as hosting parties at which young Afghan

boys danced for local police personnel.

Bolkovac is also in communication with several other Dyncorp whistleblowers like Ben Johnston, who said he saw a sex ring of middle-aged men having sex with 12 to 15 year old girls in Bosnia.

He worked for the company as an aircraft mechanic but was fired after he said he accused Dyncorp employees of having sex with minors and of buying girls.

The suit he filed was settled out of court after Bolkovac won her case and was scheduled to testify.

She says she hears from several people a year who have left Dyncorp or who were dismissed after they came forward to expose wrongdoing.

She also says her former employer has been using new countries to sign contracts in, making it much harder for whistleblowers to come forward.

She said she was recently contacted by a woman whose contract had been written in Dubai, for example, which was thus governed by the laws of the United Arab Emirates.

Bolkovac tries to stay abreast of what is happening in the war crimes trials in The Hague and spoke at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, ICTY, on International Women's Day in March.

Meanwhile, she says that the recent push to include more women in UN peacekeeping operations may not necessarily be the best way forward.

"It doesn't matter who the peacekeepers are, what we need are well-trained peacekeepers, gender shouldn't make a difference," she says.

"I worked in a police station where the gender balance was similar to what is was in Bosnia... I think it is a mistake that managers make, taking the easy way out...I say they have to try to recruit well-trained people, not necessarily women or men."

Serbia to Attend Non-Aligned Meeting in Iran

Serbia's Foreign Minister will participate as an observer in the upcoming Non-Aligned summit in September in Teheran, officials said.



By Prishtina Insight

Serbia's delegation will be led by the Foreign Minister, Ivan Mrkic, but it is still uncertain whether President Tomislav Nikolic will join the delegation.

Nikolic received an invitation in July from the special envoy of the Iranian President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Seska Stanojlovic, a foreign affairs expert, says attending the meeting in Teheran marks a continuation of the foreign policy of the previous minister, Vuk Jeremic, which centred on blocking international recognition of the independence of the former province of Kosovo.

"To stop further the recognition of Kosovo, Jermic renewed the relationship that former Yugoslavia had with

the Non-Aligned Movement.

"We should wait and see the orientation of the new minister, but as far as I see he will continue a policy in which the Non-Aligned Movement is closer to us than the EU," Stanojlovic said.

Ban Ki Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations, also announced his presence at the meeting, where he aims "to express the concern of the international community over Iran's nuclear programme, about terrorism and the crisis in Syria".

"If the UN Secretary General confirmed his presence at the meeting, it is also important for Serbia to be present. But it should be also seen if the European Union will be present," Ognjen Pribicevic, a political analyst, said.

However, he also believes that Brussels will not hold it

against Serbia if it participates in the Iran meeting.

According to Teheran, 100 countries already confirmed their presence at the meeting. It is expected that Russian President Vladimir Putin will be present, as well as Turkish President Abdullah Gul.

The Non-Aligned Movement was founded after the Second World War as a group of states who declined to align themselves with either the Soviet or the US-led blocs. As of 2012, the movement had 120 members and 21 observer countries.

The organization was founded in Belgrade in 1961, and was largely the brainchild of Yugoslavia's president, Josip Broz Tito, India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, Egypt's second president, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Ghana's first president Kwame Nkrumah and Indonesia's first president, Sukarno.



Iranian President Ahmadinejad has invited Serbia to September's Non-Alliance Meeting

Elite Prostitutes Reap Rewards

She just turned 30. She is pretty, well-groomed and well paid. Nothing about her fits the image of a typical prostitute pushed into the streets by poverty to sell her body for peanuts.

By Sase Dimovski in Skopje, Elvira Jukic in Sarajevo, Milena Milosevic in Podgorica, Evelin Pesevski in Subotica and Barbara Matejic in Zagreb

She is neither a Moldavian nor a Ukrainian whose personal documents were seized by human traffickers, forcing her into prostitution in some nightclub in the Balkans - as was often the case in the nineties.

She lives in a Vojvodina town in the north. Her parents are not divorced or poor. She receives clients in a luxurious apartment in the town centre.

"Most of them are regular clients. Prices are much higher than those of street prostitutes, users of my services are mainly businessmen, sometimes even foreigners," B.V. says.

"One such meeting with me costs 500 euro, half of which I give to an acquaintance of mine who helps me set up the meetings. The client comes to the place where I provide my services solely based on a recommendation and is previously carefully checked."

She has never wanted children, is not interested in marriage. She believes that this business will make her enough money for a comfortable old age.

"If I could turn back the time I wouldn't pick a different kind of life. I'm not dumb. I began studies and I could have finished them but with an average occupation I would never have been able to earn this kind of money," she says.

B.V. may not be a typical example of a prostitute in the Balkans but she is representative of a new phenomenon - elite prostitution. Organised in five-star hotels in Skopje, exclusive summer resorts in Greece, on yachts in Montenegro and in pricey Sarajevo apartments.

Hunger for perfumes, designer clothing and expensive summer resorts are the guiding stars of elite prostitutes which include a growing number of men. Connections with businessmen and politicians are a guarantee that the police won't come knocking on their door.

Members of the police - if not corrupt or pimping - are more interested in filing misdemeanour charges against street prostitutes, many of whom are minors.

BIRN research in Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia and Montenegro shows the slumped economy has driven many girls and single mothers onto city streets, cheap motels or motorways to await tourists.

They charge from 10 to 50 euro per hour, and sometime as little as five euro as in Macedonia. This army of oppressed women controlled by pimps are often physically abused.

No so B.V. "I know I'm in a much better position than the street prostitutes. They work under incredibly bad circumstances and they are constantly exposed to all kinds of danger. No one has ever tried to hurt me nor has any client ever insulted me," she says.

Dr. Zlatko Nikolic, an associate of the Belgrade Institute of Criminological and Sociological Research says: "The most important difference between street and elite prostitution stems from the

social and intellectual status of sexual workers. It is only natural that more valuable 'goods' are far less abused, they are protected, cared for and provided with comfort."

Elite women and select clientele

The Bosnia and Herzegovina Federal Police Administration says it hasn't dealt with a case of prostitution of a woman who is not a Bosnian citizen for years.

Until about ten years ago Moldavian, Ukrainian and Romanian women were extremely popular in these parts and most had procurers.

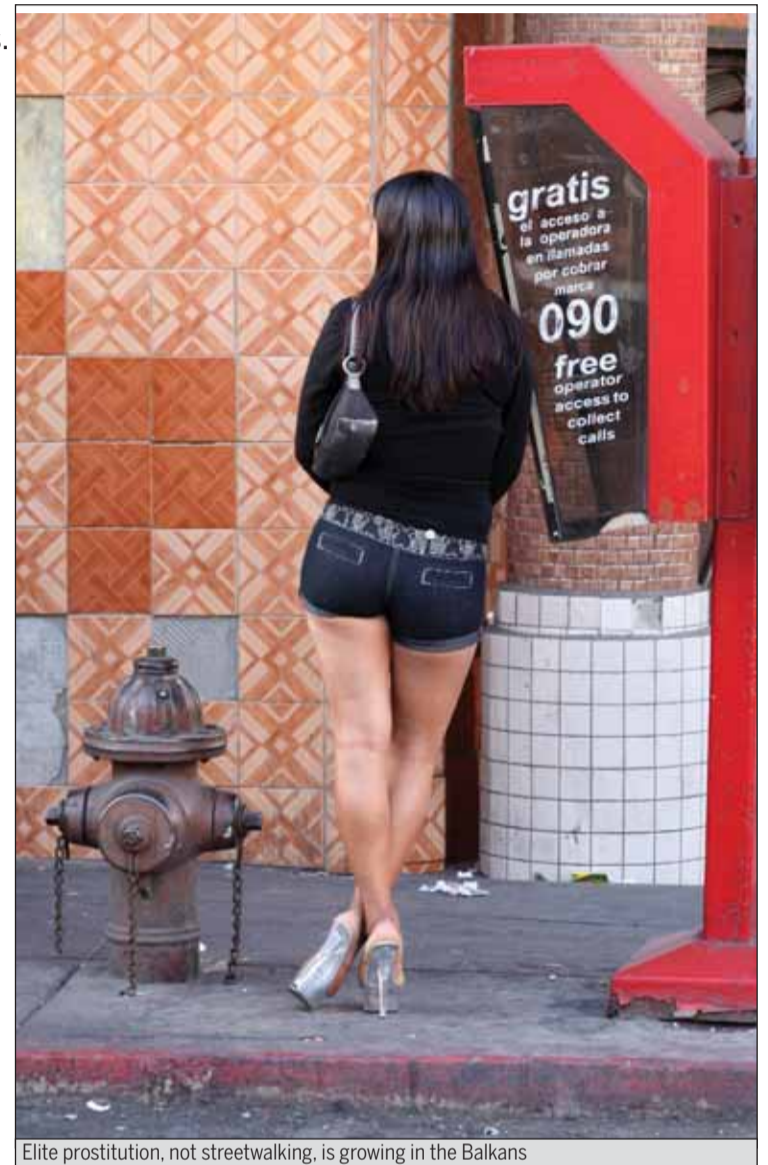
Procurers still exist, but they no longer do their job outdoors in the sea of nightclubs that have mostly been shut down.

Prostitution now happens in apartments for a select clientele. Police claim it is difficult to arrest people suspected of organising or engaging in prostitution because it is disguised and hard to prove.

Although some places are known for street prostitution - like the Lasva loop near Zenica and the Stup loop in Sarajevo - Belma Lepir-Cviko of the PROI Association where sex workers get medical assistance and counselling says prostitution is rife in massage parlours or private apartments where the girls work on call.

"Elite ladies in Sarajevo make 100 euro per hour, up to 500 euro per night," Lepir-Cviko says.

"There is a large number of girls, so-called gold-diggers. We can freely label this elite prostitution. They do exactly this in



Elite prostitution, not streetwalking, is growing in the Balkans

exchange for some luxury, for a night out on the town, smart clothes, perfumes."

Lepir-Cviko says clientele of escort agencies are usually upper class people, often politicians.

"There are people of different

profiles, even members of the state leadership, quite a lot of politicians. We get information of this kind from our girls," Lepir-Cviko claims.

"These are mostly young ladies, even students, looking for a good

Kosovo Opposition Urge Campaign Against Privatisation Plans

The Vetevendosje Movement on Monday urged people to mobilise against the government's planned sale of 75 per cent of its shares in the Post-Telecom company, PTK, and Trepca mines

By Fatmir Aliu

Kosovo's opposition Self-Determination movement has urged people to mobilise against the planned sale of the Post and Telecom Company and the Trepca mines.

Vetevendosje says that the privatisation of the two state-owned firms, planned for this September, is designed only to fill the pockets of the government officials, instead of generating new jobs and welfare for citizens.

"If citizens mobilize and if unions, the opposition, civil society and the media join forces, then...

we can stop the robbery that is being hidden behind the name of privatization," Dardan Sejdiu, from the movement, said in Prishtina.

The government is planning to sell 75 per cent of the shares it holds in the Post and Telecommunications of Kosovo, four years after it made the announcement public.

Five companies have prequalified for the race: Albright Capital Management LLC, in cooperation with Portugal Telecom; Columbia Capital in consortium with ACP Axos Capital GmbH, which cooperate with British Telecom - Poland; M1 International Limited; Turkcell and; Twelve Hornbeams in consortium with Avicenna Capital LLC, which cooperate with

Sofrecom (part of France Telecom).

On Saturday, activists put up hundreds of posters in the capital Prishtina, allegedly issued by the Kosovo Police, calling on officers to arrest Prime Minister Hashim Thaci, his deputy Mimoza Kusari-Lila and the Minister of Economical Development, Besim Beqaj.

Police later arrested three suspects, believed to be activists of the Self-Determination Movement, for falsifying "the arrest warrant" since the poster had the logo of the Kosovo Police.

On Sunday, media reported that senior ministers, including the Prime Minister, received hundreds of SMS messages calling them not to privatise the Post-Telecom firm.



The messages read that the activists of Self-Determination will use all means to stop the privatisation of state assets by going out on the streets "together with our families".

The vice-president of Vetevendosje, Visar Ymeri, on Monday said that instead of privatizing the Post-Telecom, ministers should start selling their own private property.

"One such meeting with me costs 500 euro, half of which I give to an acquaintance of mine who helps me set up the meetings. The client comes to the place where I provide my services solely based on a recommendation and is previously carefully checked."

nightlife, luxury and glamour, while single mothers and women in difficult situations do this discreetly because they have children."

Coordinator of the Belgrade Counselling Against Family Violence, Vesna Stanojevic says it is unbelievable how many women in Belgrade are prostitutes despite having technical school diplomas, university degrees, speaking foreign languages and sometimes with other work. They mainly received their clients in luxury hotel rooms or in rented apartments, she said.

She blames Serbia's disastrous financial situation for this phenomenon: "Let's be objective here: how can she support herself, her child or children if she is a single mother with an average monthly salary of 30 to 40 thousand dinars? If a person has the stomach for it they will seize every chance and opportunity they get to make some extra money."

But she also believes some women sell their bodies for perfumes and expensive clothing rather than survival and blames a "deformed" and moral free Serbian society.

Almost 2,500 Belgrade men and women are prostitutes according to unofficial data. Half of them ply their services on the streets and the remainder find clients in clubs or through ads. Between five and 10,000 are believed to work in Serbia.

"Invisible" yachting prostitution

Images of scantily dressed girls on the decks of expensive



Porto Montenegro is attracting big yachts, but also high-class hookers, it is claimed

yachts arouse suspicion that a sophisticated kind of prostitution is behind the trend.

Porto Montenegro, a new marina for mega yachts which opened in Tivat last year, with affordable mooring prices, has not only become an attraction for foreign millionaires but also for beauties in search of deep pockets.

Local media and public speculate that the girls are often engaged through certain fashion agencies charging about 500 Euro for their services.

It has been claimed that this form of prostitution takes place on yachts anchored in Porto Montenegro, in the Budva marina or in private booths of the popular Top Hill Budva disco club.

A student from Serbia said she made 25,000 euro in the five days she spent on a yacht owned by a Russian during evidence at a trial last year of a group charged with procurement of prostitutions, human trafficking and criminal enterprise. Most of the girls were from Serbia.

The Podgorica police department still maintains that there is no elite prostitution, so we can only speculate about its extent.

According to Juventas, a non-governmental organisation with

a centre for female sexual workers, there were several hundred prostitutes in Montenegro last December.

Half of them from Montenegro were Roma women. The remainder were mostly from countries in the region - Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania.

Their number and their profile drastically changes in summer-time.

Non-governmental organisations in Macedonia assess that there are about three thousand prostitutes in the country, half of whom work in Skopje, while hundreds of them are minors.

At night they congregate in the city centre near the state television building, offering their services for 15 to 50 euro, and sometimes five.

Police raids usually target them, but they avoid five-star hotels and the VIP parties organised by businessmen where sexual services are contracted at much higher prices with celebrities.

BIRN sources from several five-star hotels in Skopje claim to have lists of elite prostitutes ready for their clients. Names are secret, but sources say that they are sometimes famous models or television presenters.

The elite ladies' prices range

from 500 to 1000 euro per night, or two thousand euro for a weekend in Greece.

For example, Dragan, a football player from Macedonia, holidaying in his country, wanted to spend a weekend with a famous Macedonian TV presenter.

"I got her phone number, we made a deal and went to Thessaloniki for a weekend. I gave her two thousand euro, which is how much she asked for, I paid the travel and accommodation expenses and I got her a perfume in the free shop at the border," Dragan says.

The Balkan gigolo

Male prostitution, rarely spoken about in Balkans traditional society, is growing and increasingly expensive - services that usually hide behind escort agencies' Internet offers.

"It's not just the women who are in this business. It seems to me that the trend now is for men to do this as well. Regardless of whether they are offered as escort services for rich women or men, they are very popular," a Skopje source says.

In Croatia a gigolo's services cost 200 euro per hour, or 1,000 euro per day. Half of the money goes to the agency.

A BIRN journalist from Zagreb a year ago researched male prostitution by posting an ad on two web sites in Croatia. In two days 50 men offered her sexual services, and new offers continued for weeks.

The offers included lists of rates, photos, physical descriptions, phone numbers and detailed descriptions of the services.

This business included students from small cities and towns, married men, both employed and unemployed people, and tour guides.

One of 10 men who agreed to an interview, "Mario", began his gigolo career in 2007 after being left money by a Slovene woman he had spent two days with, instead of a farewell note. He was surprised but not insulted and began his second job. His live-in girlfriend knows nothing of his regular clients.

In Croatia non-governmental organisations estimate that the sex industry has an annual turnover of about 40 million euro.

But men aren't the ones bringing in the money. In spite of male prostitution increasing, police estimates show that 99 per cent of sexual workers in the Balkans are still women.

ICTY: Haradinaj's Verdict Due in November

The Hague Tribunal, ICTY, is expected to deliver its final verdict in the retrial of the former KLA commander, Ramush Haradinaj, in November.



By Fatmir Aliu

The Hague Tribunal charged Haradinaj, who briefly served as prime minister of Kosovo, and his two KLA comrades, Lahi Brahimaj and Idriz Balaj, in 2005 with participating in a joint criminal enterprise, the purpose of which was to take control of Kosovo, and with inhumane acts against Serb civilians in the Jablanica detention camp.

"The exact date of the judgment has not been announced yet but...it was expected to be ren-

dered by November 2012," the ICTY's press office told Prishtina Insight.

The former Kosovo Liberation Army, KLA, commander for the Dukagjini zone, Haradinaj has been released provisionally in mid-July pending the final verdict in his retrial at the Hague Tribunal, after the court finished hearings in Haradinaj et al, case on June 27.

In 2008, Haradinaj and Balaj were acquitted of all charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity following a three-year trial at the ICTY. Brahimaj was sentenced to six years of imprisonment for cruel treatment and torture.

Haradinaj, Brahimaj and Balaj

were returned to the ICTY for a partial retrial after the prosecution convinced an appeals judge that it had not been given sufficient time to hear the evidence from two key witnesses.

The trio in the case, known as Haradinaj et al, were previously indicted on charges related to the murder, kidnap, torture and rape of Serbs, Roma and Albanians between March and September 1998.

Haradinaj, 43, was indicted in 2004 while serving as Kosovo's Prime Minister and voluntarily surrendered to the Tribunal. The leader of the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, AAK, enjoys widespread political support in Kosovo.



A verdict on the Ramush Haradinaj case at the ICTY is expected soon

Albania's Last Stone Villages Still Await New Lease of Life

Two projects financed by the World Bank aim to preserve the vernacular architecture of the villages of Albania's Riviera - though locals doubt that such projects can rebuild a long-lost sense of community.



By Besar Likmeta

The village of Vuno was built in the form of an amphitheater on the slopes of the Cika Mountain on the highway that connects Dhermi with the town of Himara, standing as a natural belvedere on hills filled with olive groves overlooking the Ionian Sea.

Set up 176 meters above sea level the village is a collection of stone houses, and narrow cobble stone streets that resemble a labyrinth on the slope of the mountain.

The cobblestoned alleys extend under crafty stone vaults that connect the two or three-storey houses, which the 19th century British poet and traveler Edward Lear described as having the "feeling of Venetian palazzi"

The houses in the village are nearly 200 years old, with some dating back to 1783.

Arqile Varfi, the local postman until a few months ago, before the office closed, says legends hold that the village was built after the death of Albania's national hero Skenderbeg, who fought the invading Ottomans Turks in the 15th century and remains the pillar of the country's national mythology.

Varfi, whose family moved to Vuno in the early Sixties, during Albania's own version of the Maoist Cultural Revolution, takes pride in underlining that from the early 20th century the village had an intricate sewer system that is still used to this day.

"The village was built through communal work often organized with extended families and only the master masons got paid," he says.

Vuno's houses of thick stone walls and tall windows are some of the finest examples of the vernacular style of the villages of the Albanian Riviera.

Burned by the Nazi occupying forces during World War Two, good parts of the houses in the village lie abandoned and have not been occupied for more than a half-century.

Because most of village's youth fought with the Partisan resistance, when the war ended they were schooled in the Eastern bloc and the village produced a large number of writers, poets, journalists and high level Communist bureaucrats, who relocated and did not return to their homes.

Varfi recalls that before the war the village had more than 2,000 souls, but now less than 200

remain. Most of those who remained after the war, or were relocated to the village during the Communist era, migrated to neighbouring Greece after the fall of the Enver Hoxha's Stalinist regime in search of work.

Ironically, because of the scars that war, migration and politics left on Vuno as a community, a good part of its vernacular architectural legacy remains intact, as little has been built in the village for decades.

Similar stone houses are also found in the villages of Dhermi, Qeparo, Piqeras, Ilias and the old part of the town of Himara.

Now two projects from Albania's Ministry of Public Works, financed by the World Bank, aim to invest in reconstructing these houses in order to preserve their architectural legacy and transform a part of them into Bed & Breakfasts, which would give an authentic feel to the local tourism sector.

The Roofs and Façades project is expected to finance part of the exterior construction cost of 75 houses, while 25 others will also be renovated internally through the Bed & Breakfast project.

Specialized architectural firms contracted by the Ministry of Public Works will draw up the projects, in order to assist in the

roof repair works and preservation of the façades.

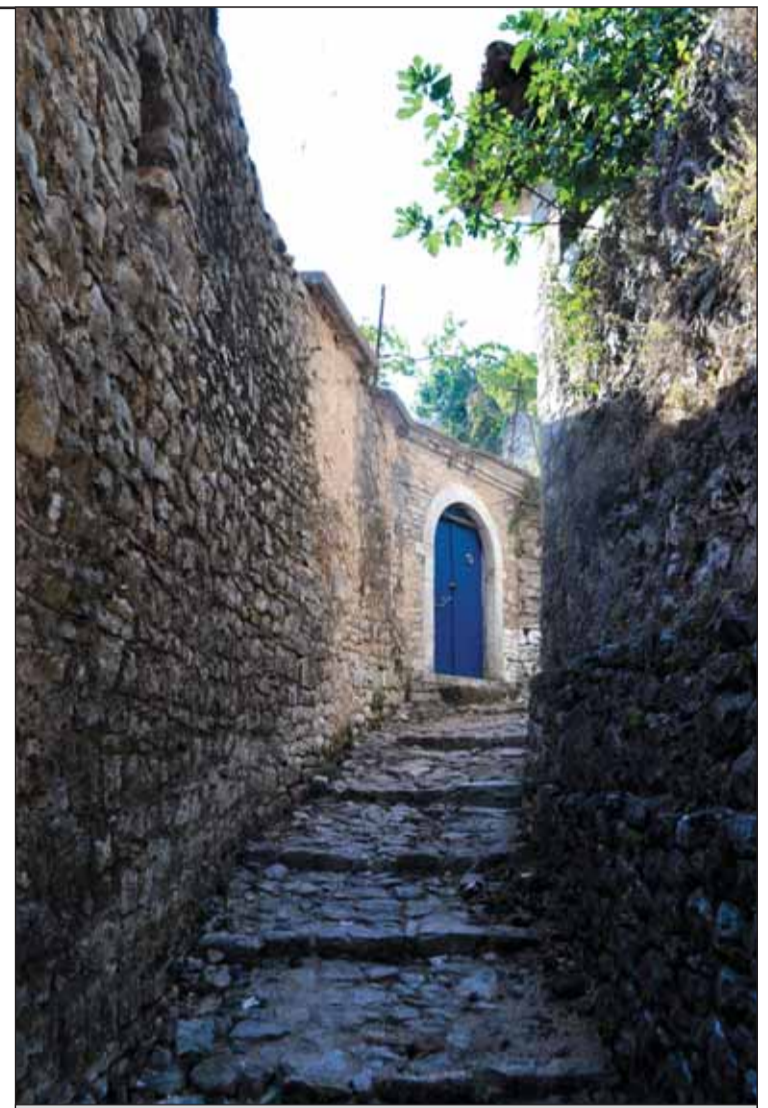
"Organically integrated in the landscape, the traditional villages of the region form a unique expression of vernacular architecture, distinctive for their locations and the use of local building materials," the project's presentation says.

"The visual features of these villages are an essential part of the attractive landscape of the area, but they are in danger of being ruined if local building traditions and materials are abandoned in favor of universal styles and modern construction materials," it warns.

Not all the houses in Vuno remain as they once were. Some houses have been rebuilt using modern construction materials, which are far cheaper to use than the traditional stonework used to erect them.

Viro Andoni, whose family has had its roots in Vuno for hundreds of years, says that if he could afford to, he would have renovated his house in the old way, but could not master it alone.

"If I'd received help from the state I would have rebuilt using stone work," says the 63-year-old, who spent 15 years as a political prisoner in the notorious Spac prison in the northern region of



The village of Vuno is a labyrinth of cobble stone streets | Photo by Besar Likmeta

Mirdita.

Imprisoned in 1972 for treason after he tried to escape to Greece, he was released in 1987 and returned home to start a family.

Andoni, who lost a leg due to his backbreaking work in the Spac copper mines, says it pains him to see his village crumbling away.

"This village has the best infrastructure on the [southern] coast, but it's deteriorating because no one is left to maintain it," he laments.

He recalls that in the olden days, building a house was not an

individual act but a communal endeavor that involved everyone in the village, who would help with anything from putting in free labour to transporting construction materials.

"One day you work in your home and the next day on the house of your neighbour," Andoni said, adding that "what pains him most is that this sense of community has been lost forever."

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



Most of Vuno's houses lay abandoned awaiting restoration | Photo by Besar Likmeta

Serbia's 'Rebuilt' Library Needs Makeover Already

Fate of landmark book collection hangs in balance after botched reconstruction failed to address key problems of storage and environmental conditions.



By Nemanja Cabric

Reconstruction work on Serbia's National Library, which lasted for four years, finished a year ago at a cost of 4.3 million euro.

But not everyone is impressed with the results – mainly because only part of the library, the area used mostly for users – has actually been renovated.

The rest of the Serbia's largest and oldest national institution remains untouched, looking much as it did 40 years ago, when the building was erected.

Meanwhile more than 6 million books, newspapers, and other publications, tightly packed on some 80 kilometres of shelves in underground storage areas, remain in poor conditions, with no space left for new additions.

There is neither acclimatization nor equipment to measure and regulate moisture, and the fire-protection system is outdated, posing further dangers to the collection.

Experts say it is unlikely that the state will come up with any more money to finance permanent solutions to the problems, which would involve complete reconstruction of the vault and new underground storage areas as well as new external warehouses.

Because of this, the library has set up its own foundation to raise funds from donors and sponsors.

Their goal is to at least obtain

funding for new compact bookshelves, which could double the library's capacity for coming years.

The National library of Serbia receives each year about 20,000 mandatory copies of books from publishers, which then need to be stored in the underground warehouses.

Space runs out:

The National Library was built in 1973, when it was assessed that its underground storage capacity would last for the next 30 or 40 years.

Even then its equipment was not a technical wonder for the time, though it served its purpose.

Problems with insufficient storage space emerged in 2005 when the plan was to solve the problem by writing off some books.

However, in a badly managed procedure, some 15,000 books ended up in a trash container in front of the library, among which were valuable tomes that once belonged to the royal library.

When the authorities then allocated 4.3 million euro to reconstruct the library, expansion of storage capacity was somehow left off the library's must-do list.

Instead, the money went on reconstructing the infrastructure of the reading room, including buying costly chairs and carpets.

Work also lasted four years, instead of the planned nine months. When the reconstruction finished last year, the library was officially reopened, billed as a modern cultural institution.

In the meantime, last year, the library manager, Sreten Ugicic,

was sacked.

His offence was to have publicly supported a Montenegrin writer, Andrej Nikolaidis, accused of insulting senior Serbian state officials by claiming that they run hegemonistic politics towards Montenegro.

After historian Dejan Ristic was named acting manager, the fact that had been previously hidden from the public – that only 6,000 square metres (one quarter of the library) had been reconstructed – emerged into the spotlight.

Old books in danger:

Today the space for storing new books is fast running out and the equipment for preserving the existing collection is outdated.

Employees have to improvise to keep moisture and temperature levels acceptable in the storage areas, with no real control over conditions.

Because of this, parameters in the storage areas vary vastly, endangering the collection.

The head of the library's protection and conservation department, Zeljko Mladicevic, says that only a crude ventilation system is in use in the underground storage.

"But that is not enough," said Mladicevic. "We need a constant temperature of 16 to 18 degrees celsius, especially for rare books and old manuscripts."

Olivera Stefanovic, head of the special funds department, said she felt ashamed because of the state of the storage areas.

"Our storage is the worst place in the library," she said.



Serbia's national library

She said that the ventilation system in some places pumped grime back into the building, so that the staff had to move some valuable manuscripts, such as those by Vuk Karadzic and Laza Lazarevic, to the middle of the room to prevent damage.

Milislav Vulovic, in charge of security and technical tasks, said the storage area needed to be divided into smaller, fire-protected sectors.

"We've received this suggestion from the police," he noted, adding that the installation of a modern ventilation and acclimatization system was equally urgent.

"However, this would mean moving out all of the books, which would pose huge problems," Vulovic said.

The most endangered items of national heritage are stored in the vault, which is home to 12,000 books defined as cultural heritage and protected by law and 300 manuscripts.

Atmospheric conditions in this part of the library are regulated solely by the equipment used to preserve the "Miroslavljevo jevandjelje" – Miroslav's Gospel – one of the oldest surviving documents in Old Church Slavonic, listed on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register.

The head of the department for old manuscripts, Tatjana Subotin Golubovic, said the conditions on the vault are highly unsatisfactory.

"The equipment that preserves the Miroslavljevo jevandjelje keeps the parameters constant in one corner of the vault but only a single meter away the conditions vary from Sahara desert to tropical jungle, depending on the outside conditions," she said.

Foundation may help:

The staff mostly agree with the manager that the best solution for the library's many problems is new compact shelves, as well as obtaining state and other funds for new equipment.

Acting manager Dejan Ristic recalls that the library has established a foundation since June to attract sponsors and donors.

"We've already secured two donations, from a commercial bank and the US embassy, from which we will get the equipment to conserve and restore old manu-

scripts," Ristic said.

He believes that the library will collect enough money to buy at least a part of the new equipment they need.

"We have around 80 kilometres of bookshelves and one set of compact shelves, about 500 metres long, costs about 25-30,000 euro, and we need about 160 of them," Ristic explained.

New compact shelves would increase the library's storage space by about 50 per cent, and buy up to 10 or even 20 years' extra storage time.

However, Ristic accepts that this is only a temporary solution.

"A possible permanent solution would be to build new external warehouses, but those are expensive, so cannot even consider this idea in the current crisis," he said.

Wrong priorities:

Former manager Sreten Ugicic denies responsibility for the current woes of the library, although he participated in drafting the reconstruction project.

"Ask the employees why no one insisted that storage became a part of the project; I don't work there anymore," Ugicic said.

Employees say one problem was that the reconstruction priorities were wrongly set.

Experts from the library weren't consulted, according to the head of the department for development of the library system, Vladimir Sekularac.

The decision to focus on reconstructing the users' area was made without them, he added.

"The board of the library has the jurisdiction over decisions. We can suggest and give advice, but it's up to them what the priorities are," Sekularac continued.

Meanwhile, Serbia's national book heritage seeks a permanent solution.

Asked for worst possible outcome, Tatjana Subotin Golubovic replies succinctly: "If these unique items get destroyed, that's it, that is the end."

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



Serbia's new national library already needs renovation work - despite reopening in late 2011

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 with only love to blame, Fatmir, the head chef, returned to Prishtina. His pizzas, made in a woodburn stove, are definitely genuine napolitanas. Fatmir also has several delicious pastas on offer, 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.

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

*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

This newly reopened bar in Prishtina, Papillon, offers more than 60 types of wines from France, Italy, Spain, and Kosovo with great 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*



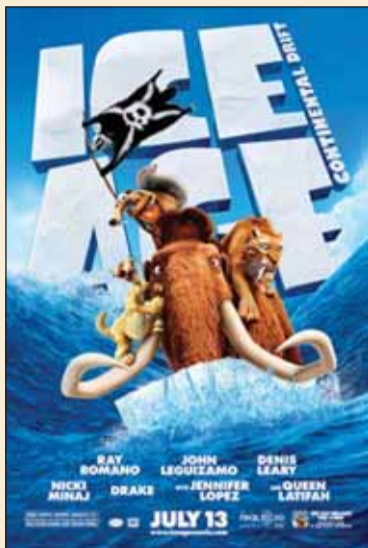


Ice Age Continental Drift

The film will be screened everyday at 11am and 2pm.

Kino ABC is continuing to screen this movie. The beloved trio - Meni, Diego and Sid - experience the greatest adventure of their life. On their way they meet exotic sea creatures and face a new world.

Starring: Ray Romano, John Leguizamo, Denis Leary, Alan Tudyk, Wanda Sykes, Jeremy Renner, Jennifer Lopez, Queen Latifa etc.



Total Recall

Everyday at 10.30pm

Total Recall is a 2012 American science fiction action film remake of the 1990 film of the same name, in turn loosely based on the 1966 short story "We Can Remember It for You Wholesale" by Philip K. Dick. Unlike the original film and short story, the plot does not include a trip to Mars and exhibits more political overtones. The film blends Western and Eastern influences, most notably in the settings and dominant populations of the two nation states in the story: the United Federation of Britain, and the Colony.



On Thursday, September 6 - the film premiere "The Watch"

at Kino ABC will be screened.

Four friends, once a week, organise a meeting to escape the city life. They randomly realize that their city is in danger of being invaded by aliens, who look like ordinary citizens. They decide to save their city and the entire world from extinction.



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



Music Festival 'Bunker Fest Tirana' 8-9 September 2012

This festival will take place in the Albanian capital city - Tirana. Buses will leave Prishtina on Saturday, at 10am from Youth Sport Center and we will be back on Sunday at 2pm. Tickets are on sale at Gegë bar, costing 30 euro per person. It includes the transport from Prishtina to Tirana and one night in a hostel.

The performers for Saturday: Ansambli i Tiranes, Papa Marriti, Blla Blla Blla, Jericho, Alien155, Undo&Redo, DJ Nino, Dj Inspektra, Iron Van der Maiden, Dj Indripident FX, Roots Raid.

9/11 Dedication Festival

The film festival that commemorates the 9/11 attacks takes place around September 11 at Prishtina's National Theatre. It features short films (5-30 minutes) by locals directors, all with English subtitles. For more information contact at +381 38 50 07 23, info@911fest.com

PriFilm Fest

Prishtina International Film Festival will kick off a new year of great films from September 24 to September 29. It seeks to bring the best



of world cinema to Prishtina and to promote the best of Kosovar film to an international audience. For more information, see the next edition of Prishtina Insight.

Exhibition of painter Altin Etemi

The opening ceremony will be held on September 3, at 7pm, at the Gallery of the Ministry of Culture, "Qafa" complex, Prishtina. The exhibition will be open until September 15, 2012.

Red Hot Chili Pepper - Concert in Bulgaria, Sofia

What better reason to visit Bulgaria's capital than to see one of the world's best bands? Saturday, September 1, 2012, venue Georgi Asparuhov Stadium, Sofia

Comedy festival 'Komedia Fest' -

Gjakova September 17 to 23, 2012
The festival will include music, performances and exhibitions.

Oda Theatre

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

They are back, not in Kosovo but in the north of the country. Not as UNMIK but as the EU.

During the 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 21 snow?", "Is Vukashin really Ukshin?", "How does Hekuran cooked eggs in the middle of the North Pole?"

Author: Lirak Celaj; Producer: Florent Merhmeti; Cast: Naser Rafuna, Adrian Morina, Kushtrim Sheremeti, Lirak Celaj, Fisnik Ademi, Ard Islami, Arta Selmi, Florent Mehmeti

If It Was a Play - Every Thursday 8pm

The play is based on the drama by Almir Imshireviq. Director: Agon Myftari. During the war time, on bus number 4 in Prishtina, near Hotel Union there was a 26 year-old guy wearing jeans and a black T-shirt. Sniper bullets break the window and shoot the youngster in the neck. A lady 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.



Prishtina Diary

Sokoli e Mirusha -

Monday, September 3, 2012 Live Music with Fatos Hoxha dhe Vedat Maxhuni
Zone Club - Next level presents its Sixth anniversary. Thursday, September 6 2012, 10pm, and Friday, September 7, 2012, 5pm.

Paddy O'Brien's Irish Pub -

Every Thursday at 7.30pm there is Paddy's Pub Trivia/Quiz Night - Info: 038 221 070 & 038 221 077 or write to paddy@PaddyOBriens.com

Albania's Greens Rediscover Joy of Volunteering

A small group of activists using social networks is reviving a long-lost enthusiasm for voluntarism to tackle the growing environmental crisis on Albania's once idyllic coast.



By Besar Likmeta

Rodon is a rocky cape on Albania's Adriatic coast north of the city of Durres that sinks like a dagger into the sea, dividing the Lazit bay to the south from the bay of Rodon to the north.

On the northern slope of the cape sits the Franciscan church of Saint Anthony, revered by local pilgrims for its powers of fertility, while on its stern lie the remains of a medieval fort built by Albania's national hero, Skanderbeg.

During the Communist regime of the dictator Enver Hoxha, the cape was declared a military area and a small pier, several tunnels and pillbox bunkers were added to guard against a Western invasion that Albanians were often told was eminent.

The attack never came. Instead, two decades after the fall of the regime, the cape has been invaded by piles of trash washed ashore by the rivers Mat and Ishem.

The Albanian army has long abandoned the cape. However, last weekend, a group calling itself the Cape Guards returned to reclaim it.

Nearly two dozen activists who organized and fundraised through Facebook camped out there and, braving the summer heat, collected nearly 1.2 tons of waste, which were then safely trucked away to a recycling facility in Tirana.

The idea of voluntarism in

Albania has still a negative connotation, because during the Communist era it was associated with the forced labour used to build infrastructure in the country, from bridges, railroads and factories to tunnels, prisons and bunkers.

However, two decades after the regime collapsed, and with the growing impact of the consumer society on the environment, a new generation of Albanians is taking action, finding a new sense of community while discovering that change is possible.

According to a study from the United Nations Development Program in 2009, a good portion of young people in Albania remain burdened by the stereotypes that volunteer activities had in the past and remain hesitant to engage.

In a survey conducted for the study, called Voluntarism in Albania, 69 per cent of respondents mentioned among various reasons for being embarrassed when approaching the subject of being a volunteer.

The survey found that impeding factors that prevented them from volunteering include lack of information on volunteer opportunities and a lack of organization of suitable volunteer activities.

Aranita Brahaj, executive director of Albania's Science Institute and one of the organizers of the clean-up camp in Rodon, says the cape is an area that has received little attention, despite its natural and cultural heritage value.

"Although the area is unspoiled by construction, pollution comes



Rubbish being collected during the clean-up operation

from the rivers, which collect urban waste from the regions of Mat and Tirana and flow them downstream," Brahaj explained.

"All of this waste is then washed in by the tide and both shores of the cape are dotted by plastic or even clinical waste that is very dangerous," she added.

Brahaj said that the idea to set up the clean-up camp came after a series of reports on its waste problem were sent to her institute through a project that uses social media and crowd sourcing to collect citizens' reports on coastal pollution during the tourist season.

After the photographs of the pollution were published online, discussion brewed on ways to take action, organize and clean up the cape.

Brahaj teamed up with activists from Tirana Express Center, a cultural hub that has become almost

synonymous with Albania's underground art-scene.

Klajdi Kruja, one of the founders of Tirana Express, says that few people in Albania understand the dangers of plastic, considering that the older generations grew up in a society where there were no consumer goods and most things were not packaged as they are today.

"Albania has 360 kilometres of coast and today in six hours we cleaned a kilometre of it, suddenly realizing that despite all this plastic horror there is a solution," Kruja said.

"Although voluntarism is not yet very well understood you can almost feel in the air a great desire to contribute to a cause that is real," he added.

Vasilika Laci, a Tirana human rights activist who joined the movement to clean up the cape, agrees, saying she felt pulled by a strong desire to clean up as much

as she could from the shores.

"It's an empowering feeling and all of us who have come here have discovered a spirit of solidarity that we should hold on to," she said.

"Being part of a community that shares the same ideals and mindset is beautiful," Laci added.

Brahaj notes that voluntarism is a process in which you cannot pull people along by their sleeves; rather, it requires critical thinking and sensitization - for which the social media can be very helpful.

"If the social media was used in the 'Arab Spring' to overthrow dictators, here it's being used to engage young people to take action and clean up the environment," she said.

"I don't believe that we are plagued by apathy in Albania, but people need to be made aware that problems can be solved," Brahaj added.

Women of Fushe Kosove Unveil Stunning Handicraft Display



By Mihane Mustafa

Garments and jewellery made of embroidery, lace and beads - and created by women of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian community of Fushe Kosove - went on display last week in Prishtina.

Elife Berisha, 19, of Fushe Kosove, said she had been unemployed and had not pursued education after high school.

But in February this year she joined the recently formed NGO "Levizja Rinore e Komuniteteve", LRK, which translates as "Community Youth Movement", and began to learn new skills.

She says she has already learned many new talents, including spinning sweaters, hats, traditional vest with lace

and other items of clothing.

"It was the first time I got any work and I had the opportunity to learn. My work can be seen in the exhibition and it has been very good for me," Berisha told Prishtina Insight.

LRK invited all young women from Fushe Kosove to be part of the exhibition, which was supported by UNICEF Innovations Lab Kosovo and Terre des Hommes.

The exhibition is part of the "Youth Micro-Projects" by UNICEF and aims to promote the work and talents of young women from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

Officials from Fushe Kosove municipality and the police attended the event.

Laila Omar Gad, new head of UNICEF Kosovo, told the participants: "Continue to work because you have the capacity, and your future is in your hands."

Ibrahim Qerimi, director of LRK said: "Even though we are a minority commu-



Jewellery handmade in Fushe Kosove

nity in the Republic of Kosovo, there is no lack of culture and tradition.

"We are a community that can organize events and promote them, as with this exhibition."

For more information visit the Facebook page of "Levizja Rinore e Komuniteteve".

Photo News



Wells Dug Deeper to Beat Drought

This year's drought has led to an increase in the number of people digging wells in Prishtina. These workers were caught on camera on August 26, drilling a new well in central Prishtina to a depth of up to 15 meetings in order to find water.

Women Call for Better Facilities at City Mosques

Women are an increasingly regular visitors to Prishtina's mosques, but just five of the city's 25 religious buildings provide facilities for the fairer sex.



By Njomza Salihi

Lavdie Selimi from Gjilan works as teacher at a Prishtina kindergarten. Every day she visits her local mosque in Sunny Hill at midday to pray.

"The mosque is near my working place and it has decent conditions", Selimi told Prishtina Insight.

"I come here because very few mosques in Prishtina have space where women can perform the ablution," she said.

Just four other mosques in town provide space reserved for women - Muhaxheret, Kater Lullat, Zenel Hajdini and Bunari i Hajratit.

Calls are now being made by the women in Islamic Union of Kosovo, BIK, to make new facilities available as demand increases.

Fadil Sogojeva, imam of the mosque in Sunny Hill, says that the mosque has all the necessary facilities and space for women.

"Women can perform ablution separately, they have a separate space for prayer as well as space for children," said Sogojeva.

Baki Imeri, imam of the mosque at Muhaxheret, says that his mosque was built in 2007 with and meets the needs of the male and female faithful,

"There is a separate entrance for women in this mosque and special space for ablution for women," said Imeri. "There is big-



Women praying at the mosque in Sunny Hill, Prishtina

ger presence of women during Ramadan, but they come rarely during other months."

Many Muslim women that live far from such mosques carry out their ablution at their homes, before visiting their nearest mosques, Prishtina Insight has learnt.

Vaxhide Podvorica, head of women department at BIK, says that in Kosovo's mosques, and particularly in the mosques of Prishtina, there is insufficient space for ablution.

"Me, personally, I perform ablution at

home, my work place or in mosques that offer this possibility," Podvorica told Prishtina Insight.

She said that she raised this topic at BIK. "This issue has been raised for some time now at BIK, especially after the liberation of Kosovo where Muslim women have returned and are more visible, in the mosques," said Podvorica.

The city of Prishtina, according to last census, has around 180,000 inhabitants and 25 mosques, while another two mosques are under construction.

Podvorica says that officials at BIK promise that new, bigger mosques will have better facilities for women.

Bahri Sejdiu, president of BIK's leading council, and responsible for mosques in Prishtina, says that mosques with special space for women are a new addition, and were only built after the war.

"In old mosques, we cannot intervene and fix them because they are protected under the department of cultural heritage," said Sejdiu.

Beside the ablution areas, women say that there is a lack of adequate space for lectures and lessons on religion, libraries and space for children.

But Sejdiu says that the construction of a cultural centre for Women has started.

"A Cultural Centre for Women will offer greater space for them. They can attend foreign language and computer courses. Such space hasn't existed before," Sejdiu said.



The area for ablutions at the mosque in Sunny Hill, Prishtina

Software Freedom Conference Next Week

The fourth "Software Freedom Kosova" will be held in Prishtina next week, discussing free and open source software.

It is the largest conference of its kind in the region. The conference is being organised by Free/Libre Open Source Software Kosova (FLOSSK), Kosovo Association of Information and Communication Technology, Ipko Foundation and Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering of the University of Prishtina.

Workshops will be held at the UNICEF Innovations Lab Kosovo between September 7 and 10

The Conference will be at the Technical Faculty of the University of Prishtina on Sept 8.

For more information visit <http://www.flossk.org/>

Prishtina through the Eyes of:



Alexander Zahn

Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, GIZ

What surprised you most about Prishtina?

That many people speak German

What's your favorite hangout?
Dafidofi for sunset and Gege bar

Do you do anything cultural?
Ethnographic museum and green drinks

What is the most annoying thing about Prishtina?

Exhaust gases from cars and power plants

If you were mayor of Prishtina

for the day what would you change?

Buy new electro buses for public transportation

How many macchiatos do you drink a day?

Zero

What's the tastiest Kosovar food?

Fresh bread, Sharri white cheese, ajvar and fresh vegetables

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

Hotel Ambassador

Home is Where the Heart is

The first lunch I ate in Kosovo, six years ago, was at Home restaurant. Of course, it didn't feel like home then – this country of unpronounceable nouns and unfamiliar mouthfuls. But the food was great, and I have returned frequently.



By Elizabeth Gowing

As always (sigh) when I order in restaurants here I ask for Kosovan wine and Kosovan water with my meal, and there was a time when the waiters would look apologetic and shuffle, and I would tut, and we would discuss the importance of local products for Kosovo's economic and environmental sustainability in the same ritual way that people here ask you whether you are tired, without really listening to the answer, and I would end up having a fruit tea (at least that way I know the water is locally produced). But when I visited the restaurant earlier this month, the waiter came up to me proudly and asked whether I would be coming to their next local products evening.

These designated evenings have been held every week over the summer, and will continue into September.

All the food is local, with a traditional menu building on local specialities (fli, pite, cornbread with spinach and cheese, peppers, suxhuk local sausage along with other meats, and pogaqe or pitalka breads).

Accompanying drinks (yes, that means the water and the fruit juices as well as Peja beer, wine and a fine range of rakis – including not only grape but my favourite, quince) are also all locally produced. And the evening is accompanied by traditional music.

Home is an established (for 10 years) classy restaurant, with freshly prepared food (their tomato sauce on my favourite pasta doesn't just taste 'red'; you can tell that very recently these were growing on the vine) and modern approaches to presentation and service. It is located in a little oasis of a garden in central Prishtina - a few doors down from the former OSCE building. Their local produce evenings are therefore the perfect fusion for anyone wanting to experience the best of Kosovan food without actually taking a Kosovan wife.

But don't let your enjoyment of local products stay at Home; take it home.

Do you know where your bottled water comes from? Do you choose fruit juice produced in Kosovo? Local honey? Seasonal fruit and vegetables? Vita milk?

Do you know how to say 'is this produced in Kosovo' in Serbian or Albanian (in Albanian 'A është produkt vendor?' - phonetically 'ah urshht proDUKT venDOR' - or in Serbian 'Da li je ovo proizvedeno na Kosovu?'; phonetically 'da lee yeh ov-oh pro-iz-ved-en-oh nah Kosovoo?') when you're shopping, so you can choose something that has travelled less far, that is supporting farmers and producers in this country?

When your workplace organizes meetings, conferences, lunches or other hospitality, do you check with those organising the catering that it is Kosovan products being used? There is a terrible irony in the conferences held to support Kosovo's economy but which start with everyone taking a sip of a glass of Italian or Slovenian water. When you are at a restaurant, do you specify that you would like Kosovan water, fruit juice, beer or wine?

If you're at Home restaurant, of course, you don't need to worry! Here's hoping that other restaurants will take a tip from the initiative, and that they will all find diners to support them.

You can find out more about the local products evenings at Home - and how to make a reservation - through their Facebook page

www.facebook.com/HomeRestaurant.

Elizabeth Gowing is a founder of The Ideas Partnership, a Kosovan NGO working on educational, cultural and environmental projects. She is also the author of the recently-published, Travels in Blood and Honey; becoming a beekeeper in Kosovo. She can be reached at theideaspartnership@gmail.com

Outside In

Kosovo's Heroes Without Guns



By Kreshnik Hoxha

Those traces of hope that Kosovar Albanians had of building a state of equal rights and opportunities in the aftermath of the institutional oppression from Serbia in 1990s have pretty much dissolved. Living in today's Kosovo, above all, has become a major burden. Being a citizen of this country is traumatic. Working in this jungle of corruption requires one to have a thick skin and flexible dignity in order to comply with the system.

It would be unfair to claim that we are a masochist society, but owing to a poor education system, we nonetheless inflict pain on ourselves with our apathy, jealousy and stinginess. And in an attempt to soothe the pain, we collectively do one thing: lick the froth of our macchiatos while lamenting our national tragedy in Kosovo's cafes.

Our history allegedly starts from 1999 and is filled with lots of national heroes. Our leaders have been paying tributes to our fallen for 13 years. However, our collective social memory has forgotten about all those exceptional individuals of national importance who contributed to this society before 1999. We don't even acknowledge the fact that they existed, never mind remembering their legacy. Why is this so?

Because, apart from being a short-sighted society, Kosovo's post-war leadership has already set the eligibility criteria as to who qualifies to be a national hero with honorary orders. Such eligibility criteria is grotesque, bizarre and irritating. It transpires that in order to qualify as a national hero in today's Kosovo you have to have been a warrior against Serbia and have been subsequently killed in a battlefield. All others who do not meet this criterion simply do not deserve a mention.

The fact that Kosovo's armed resistance in 1997-1999 and its fallen warriors should be remembered is not even a matter of discussion. Their legacy is sacred and should be honoured with street names, and even airports. However, these are not our only heroes.

There are many other names who are not with us anymore, but whose contribution to Kosovo has been pivotal in our national emancipation. These people did not fight with weapons. Neither did they fight on battlefields across Kosovo's mountainous landscape. Some fought with their academic merits, others with science, some fought for the national awakening and some for ending blood feuds. While I apologise for not being able to include all those names, I will mention six key names, whose work was central to the national illumination of Albanians in Kosovo, at a time when our collective extinction had become a state policy.

The first Rector of University of Prishtina, Prof. Dr Dervish Rozhaja



Not all heroes had guns, writes our columnist Kreshnik Hoxha

became the youngest Doctor of Philosophy in Yugoslavia after graduating in biological sciences in the former Soviet Union at the age of 24 back in 1959. Two very important names for Kosovo are Qamil Batalli and Mehmet Gjevori, co-authors of the primary school books on the alphabet and the orthography of the Albanian language. This book has taught many generations over 28 years and was even published at the time when education in Albanian was deemed illegal by Belgrade.

Two other indispensable names are Prof. Dr Qamile Jaka, Kosovo's first orthodontist, and Prof. Dr Anton Cetta, who tasked himself with ending blood feuds among Albanians back in 1990s.

Finally, the third rector of University of Prishtina, Prof. Dr Gazmend Zajmi whose skills and legacy can be explained by an anecdote dating back to 1980. While returning from the Conference of Rectors of European Universities in Strasbourg, there had been an eight-hour delay at the airport due to severe weather conditions, which

had stranded the rectors of former Yugoslav universities. A piano at the terminal had caught the attention of Prof. Zajmi, a lawyer. During a mini-concert he performed Europe's classics, attracting the attention of the rector and pro-rector of University of Sarajevo, Edhem Camo and Zdravko Pujic. Camo and Pujic regularly told the story as to how an Albanian from Kosovo had entertained them and made the eight hours pass by like eight minutes.

These names deserve to be honoured because each and every one of them made major contributions to this society in their own way. Maybe we as a society also need eight hours to reflect and analyse as to how we got to this situation with leaders that barely know the alphabet of Batalli and Gjevori, and MPs that cannot tell the difference between theatres and cinemas.

It transpires that owing to this collective ignorance, we forgot the merits of our intellectuals - precisely how those that oppressed us for decades would wish.

Time to Look Beyond Macedonia's Ohrid Agreement

More than a decade after its adoption, the Ohrid Framework has become a part of history and it is time now to start a debate on the future.



By Harald Schenker

When the Ohrid Framework Agreement was adopted under extremely delicate and difficult circumstances, the international community hailed a victory of international diplomacy.

Local communities in Macedonia were more down to earth. For many among the majority Macedonians, the agreement imposed a limit beyond which it was impossible to make more concessions.

Many in the ethnic Albanian community considered the deal an acknowledgment of their struggle for more rights and equal treatment and a necessary step.

The other, smaller communities felt they got something out of it, but were wary of being marginalised by the ethnic Albanians when it came to the issue of minority rights.

Today, more than a decade later, much has changed and much has remained the same. The statements above can remain almost unaltered, although the reality has evolved.

Some eulogised the agreement on its tenth anniversary one year ago and I will not repeat that now, beyond saying that it has fulfilled its purpose. It stopped a conflict.

It changed the face of Macedonia, turning it legally into a multi-ethnic state, governed with elements of power sharing. And it impacted on its citizens' reality. Most state institutions reflect to a large extent this multi-ethnic reality and the monopoly of only one language has gone.

A lot of questions about implementation of the agreement remain. The one with most impact is the political postulate of quantity before quality. Following this logic, it seems better to fill up numbers of party-affiliated persons in the administration in order to reach the quota of "equitable ethnic representation" rather than to uphold professional and educational standards.

Macedonia's administration is paying the price for this policy; the absorption capacity of EU funds being still at a very low level. But the higher goal of short-term ethno-social pacification is at least achieved for now.

The agreement is undergoing yet another review, pushed by the EU, and the conclusions from this are likely to be included into future planning. But these remain admin-

istrative matters. And the fact that the two guarantee powers of the agreement, the EU and the US, will continue to play their role is an insurance policy that these administrative matters will receive appropriate attention. The political work, however, is done. There is no more to achieve there.

Now Macedonia faces other essential problems, which need to be solved this decade, if possible. A provisional list would include:

Identity:

From the onset of Macedonia's independence, a paradox has existed between the need of ethnic Macedonians to canonise their ethnic identity and the need to find a formula of citizenship that attracts all the country's inhabitants.

The constitution and legislation try to combine the concepts of individual-based citizenship and group-based ethnic identity with elements of power sharing, such as the double majority principle, or so-called "Badinter majority", which means that a majority among ethnic community MPs is needed in addition to the parliamentary majority for legislation impacting on ethnic communities. While this may function at the level of day-to-day business, it does not solve the paradox.

The multi-ethnic setup as defined by the constitution has received little more than the lip service required by protocol. Political and intellectual elites, which are too little distinct from each other, have not invested intellectual or political capital in seeking a distinct Macedonian (cross-) national identity that transgresses the narrowness of ethnic definitions and the mythology surrounding them.

On the contrary, the national discourses have been accentuated. The powerful process of creating a new, distinct and antique Macedonian identity is in full flow. It calls for a total change of paradigms. Its success can be measured in opinion polls and partially relates to the immense financial means and political capital invested in pushing this process forward, as well as the collective subjective need to address the identity question.

While pursuing this process, the political and intellectual elites driving it must be aware that it is not countering the strong group identity of the Albanians, who define themselves as part of a larger, cultural nation. Little is on offer for the ethnic Albanian group or the other, smaller minorities to add a layer of collective Macedonian patriotism to the catalogue of multiple individual identities.

Thus, Macedonia's nation-building process does not cover the entire

population and actually opens the way for strengthening existing distinct collective identities, or forming new ones. For examples of this, look at the way that some Macedonian Muslims are striving to become an ethnic community.

To make things worse, the academic debate on the abovementioned issues is marred by an almost Babylonian confusion of terminology. Terms like multiculturalism, multi-ethnicity, multilingualism, etc. are thrown around without reflection, adding to the confusion. When media and politicians pick up the phrases and build them into their discourses, the damage is difficult to undo.

The unsolved conflict with Greece about the name of the country, the dormant conflict with Bulgaria about the Macedonian language and with Serbia about the recognition of an independent church also do their part to keep the identity issue in limbo.

Administrative reforms:

A hurried process of decentralisation and a variety of administrative reforms have failed to produce a sustainable model, balancing the central level and a variety of regional and local levels of interest.

These processes have produced a large number of municipalities that are not going to be able to raise the resources to sustain themselves. It is only natural that as they cease to try and find funds that will never be sufficient at the central level, they will start gravitating around the larger urban centres. This process is ongoing and pooling of resources and expertise is something that every donor will encourage.

All this is unproblematic - until the realisation comes that a de facto regionalisation is under way, which may give rise to discussions about a different administrative setup that would take into account the different and differing interests of the respective regions. This poses two threats to the central level: one is the loss of political leverage and the other is the partially ethno-linguistic dimension of these processes.

In a general context, in which there is a clear push among the ethnic Albanians to establish Albanian as a second, fully equal official language, and if this push succeeds, it would be naïve to think that this would have no political implications for the whole of Macedonian society.

A more open society:

Macedonia's constitutional and legal frameworks stipulate inclusiveness and guarantee a wide



The Macedonian flag flies at Ohrid

range of rights and freedoms. The debates on the anti-discrimination law and on the de-criminalisation of libel have shown political limitations but have also started processes that will eventually lead to results that are in sync with European reality.

Nevertheless, the social and political developments of the last two decades have produced at least two parallel societies with little interaction and high levels of segregation. Ethnic distance is growing and tolerance towards non-mainstream groups, be they religious, based on sexual orientation, etc. is decreasing.

This in itself is a worrying development, which, combined with a crisis in the education system, offers a platform for the manipulation of generations of young people entering society. Critical thinking is not on the agenda, and young people are educated to obey rather than use their reasoning.

With ethnic and social gaps widening, there is a need for structured communication among citizens, whatever their background. There is need to create a social glue as well as a philosophical and possibly even ideological one, to help bridge these gaps and avoid further separation.

The only feasible path Macedonia can take is towards an open and inclusive society. But for that to happen, the culture of talking and listening to each other has to be nurtured. This culture has to take into account that we are living in the 21st century, in a period of urban concentration. It is not enough to know each other's folklore and history.

In order to co-exist, it is necessary to know each other's modern reality. The only way to achieve this is through communication, not spontaneous encounter; left to hazard, but structured communication, which has as its target the construction of a joint narrative for this soci-

ety.

This list is by no means comprehensive, I simply touched some of the more visibly burning subjects. Others, to which I shall come back later, include arts and culture, economy, regional integration, and, of course, EU accession.

These issues all need to be talked about across society. The results of dealing publicly with them are difficult to predict. On the other hand it is safe to say that the lack of public discourse as well as their taboo status will not have a positive effect on the wellbeing of the society.

By keeping these issues out of the public realm, political elites nurture an illusion that these processes can be controlled and steered. It remains an illusion. Policy planning has to take into account the opinion, interest and wellbeing of the sovereign people. The times of "cabinet policies" have long passed and it is time for Macedonia's policy makers to take this reality into account.

Party politicians and strategic thinkers need to understand that debate does not pose a threat to policy-making. On the contrary, it democratically legitimises decision-making, when both the process and the contents of public debate are taken into account by policy makers.

This is the moment also for the intellectual elites to step up and get beyond narrow personal or group interests and show the real grandezza of intellectual work: to look beyond the day-to-day administration of reality and realise the need for a vision for Macedonia as a whole: a joint narrative that takes into account all particularities but integrates them for a common aim.

In this respect, the Ohrid Agreement was a first, necessary step. Treating it like the Holy Grail is ignoring the fact that the work has just begun. Or rather, it is about to begin.

Goranis Struggle As Milk Runs Dry



The summer-long drought which has gripped the Balkans is affecting the mountainous Gorani people, inhabitants of the Dragash region of southern Kosovo.

As a result of the lack of rain, Sheep, which the Gorani are famous for shepherding, have had less to graze on, affecting the production of milk and cheese.

Farmer Negjip Gjeŕce (see photos) has warned that there has been a "drastic reduction in the production" of milk and that many of the animals may struggle to survive the winter.

The Gorani are believed to have sheep flocks totalling around 4,000 animals.



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Easy

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				3			5	8
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		8				7	2	
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Hard

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