

Haradinaj's Indictment Leads to another Tumultuous March

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Upcoming events at ATRC :

Friday April 8, a public discussion on "Decentralization and the pilot plan"
Mon, April 21, a legislative briefing on "How the government works" focusing on Kosovo Budget
For more information call ATRC at (381)38 244810

Pristina, March. Before the snow could melt, in one of the first sunny days of spring, Kosovars received some unwelcome news. Ramush Haradinaj, Prime Minister of Kosovo since October 2004 and former commander of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) for the Dukagjini region during the war was indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) on several charges relating to the maltreatment of the Serb minority and execution of Albanian "collaborators".

Haradinaj informed the public of the indictment in an emotional press conference, which was closely followed by a shocked and at times tearful

audience. Haradinaj pled for peace and stability in Kosovo, explaining that he had to take this trip to The Hague.

The Kosovar public has been supportive of the Prime Minister, and civil society demonstrated its support by circulating a petition.

A letter, drafted with ATRC's help, has been sent to the Hague Tribunal.

Since Haradinaj's indictment, there have been both peaceful

protests and some minor violent incidents. A hand grenade exploded near the United

Continued on page 4, Haradinaj



Mr. Haradinaj peacefully accepted an indictment by the Hague Tribunal. (Photo credit AP)

Informing the Public on Rights to Participation in Decision-making

As part of the Public Participation Project, which is financed by the Balkan Trust for Democracy and implemented by FDI and ATRC, ATRC organized six trainings in three municipalities: Klina, Istog and Dragash. More than 70 participants attended these trainings, which were held between March 21 and March 30.

The purpose of Public Participation Project is to increase citizen participation in decision making, through grants to NGOs, trainings for municipal officials and civil society and public discussions.

"How to Facilitate Public Participation" and "Building Relations with Citizens for Better Public Participation and Existing Public Participation Legislation" were the topics of trainings offered to the local authorities (municipal officials) and civil society representatives in these municipalities. The trainings were orga-

nized to increase the capacity and knowledge of NGOs, citizens and government officials on the importance of increasing public participation in decision making.

The trainers, Professor Enver Hasani from the University of Prishtina and Kosovo NGO Advocacy Project Trainer Emrush Azemi, provided examples from different countries on how to better facilitate public participation. They also engaged the participants in planning efforts that they could undertake to increase public participation, based on their needs.

While some participants were very familiar with citizens' rights to public participation,



Training were held in several towns of Kosovo

others had little knowledge of their rights and duties. Apparently, much remains to be done in order to increase public participation in decision-making. Both municipal officials and civil society need further training because this is a fairly new form of governance and all actors are just becoming acquainted with its rules.

ATRAC and FDI plan to continue the Public Participation Project by organizing public discussions in these three municipalities. ■

AvoKo Hires Coordinator

In March, AvoKo hired a Coordinator, Shqipe Pantina, to organize the network's activities. AvoKo is a network of local, advocacy-oriented NGOs that operates in several regions throughout Kosovo.

Pantina, a member of AvoKo since its inception, was chosen by other AvoKo members from an extensive pool of applicants. She is a graduate of the University of Prishtina, where she studied Political Science. She has previous experience as a Campaign Coordinator for the Kosova Women's Network.

Pantina will lead the AvoKo public education campaign on UN Standards for Kosovo and will assist the network in building its capacity for future advocacy work.

ATRC has also been a member of AvoKo since the network's inception. ■

AvoKo Public education campaign on the Standards for Kosovo

AvoKo will undertake a public education campaign on UN Standards for Kosovo. This campaign will support the Kosovar government and the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) efforts to inform citizens about the Standards and their implementation process. Aiming to increase citizen support for the Standards' implementation process, AvoKo will engage in several activities at the municipal level that will serve to inform citizens on how the Standards will benefit their lives, as well as to dispel myths about some of the Standards, especially those dealing with minorities. ■

Mjaft! Provides Advice for Effective Advocacy

Pristina, March 1-3. The Tirana-based Mjaft! (Enough!) and ATRC cooperated to organize a training on how to conduct an advocacy campaign. The training was attended by more than a dozen representatives of local NGOs, including members of the AvoKo network of local advocacy NGOs. Arbian Mazniku and Marinella Lika, founding members of Mjaft!, conducted the training. The training was made possible through an East-West Management Institute, Inc. grant, funded by the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The Mjaft! representatives shared their experience in organizing previous advocacy campaigns in Albania. The success of these campaigns and of the Albanian civic movement Mjaft! has been



Arbian Mazniku from Mjaft! offered a detailed view on how to run a successful advocacy campaign

recognized by the international community with grants and awards, the latest being the prestigious 2004 UN Civil Society Award.

During the training, the Mjaft! representatives showcased two specific campaigns. The first resulted in the prevention of price hikes for energy and phone calls in Albania. In this case, Mjaft! pressured the Albanian go-

vernment, the sole stakeholder in both the electric and the telecommunications companies. In the second case, Mjaft! successfully prevented an Italian company from importing waste for processing in a heavily populated area of Albania. The chart on the following page offers some guidelines on how to run an effective advocacy campaign.

Mazniku stressed the importance of achieving your strategic goals, especially in high profile campaigns. "Thanks to high profile successes, now we are able to resolve many issues through negotiations, under the threat of organizing an efficient high profile campaign," he explained. Both Mazniku and Lika stressed the need to research in depth the issue with which the campaign will deal and build relationships with specialists.

After Mjaft! presented its work, training participants presented topics of interest for future advocacy campaigns. They discussed a simple structure for future campaigns. The training concluded with Mjaft! inviting the participants to visit Tirana and meet with the rest of the organization. A tentative date has already been set, and ATRC will cooperate in organizing the trip. ■

Identify the Problem

Identify the objective of the campaign

Analyze interest groups

- Who are the decision -makers?
- Who are the allies and partners ?
- Who are the opponents?

Analyze the resources

Determine the correct policy

Draft an Action Plan

- The individuals targeted to influence
- Projected timetable
- Assign tasks
- Strategy development
- Have answers to: Who, how, why, when

Prepare your message

Jeto Jetën Advocates for Equal Transportation Rights

Pristina, March 2. ATRC and the Foundation for Democratic Initiatives (FDI) grantee Jeto Jetën (Live Life) co-organized a public debate on the needs and rights of disabled people at the Grand Hotel Pristina. More than thirty participants from local and international NGOs, the business community and governmental institutions attended the debate.

At the debate, Jeto Jetën released findings from its study on the lack of institutional support for “physically challenged” drivers. According to the study, the regulation on drivers’ education does not require driving schools to have a car for teaching disabled people to drive. Driving schools do not have such cars in their possession, and there are few mechanics that can modify normal cars for use by disabled persons.

Civil society representatives demanded that officials in the Ministry of Transportation change the regulation to facilitate learning and free movement for the disabled.

The participating members of Parliament supported the proposed changes to the regulation, and members of the business community considered it their duty as well as a source of profit to provide equal opportunities to the differently able. ■

NGOs Learn the Role of the Kosovo Police Force

Pristina, March 14. Continuing our activities on “How the government works”, ATRC organized a workshop on “The Role of the Kosovo Police Force and Its Future Transformation”. The purpose of the workshop was to explore the duties of the Kosovo Police Service (KPS) because it functions quite differently from most police forces, providing public services that are usually carried out by other institutions. The workshop was attended by more than 20 members of governmental organizations and NGOs.

Colonel Behar Selimi, Head of KPS Support Services, explained the competencies held by KPS. KPS is a reserved power institution, which means that it is still managed by the international administration rather than the Parliament or any Ministry. In the six years of its existence, KPS has

grown to include more than 6200 police officers.

Steve Bennet, Director of the Kosovo Police School, described the school's efforts, which have been an integral part of the police force's success. He noted that the Kosovo Police School provides a variety of trainings which in other countries are only offered in separate schools.

Nicholas Booth, Senior Adviser to the Deputy Special Representative to the Secretary General for Police and Justice, said that United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) Pillar 1 is in the process of draf-



Police officers as well as members of local NGOs contributed to our public debate

ting a law. He was optimistic that authority over KPS would soon be transferred to locals.

In conclusion, Steve Bennet invited participants to visit the Kosovo Police School to see how the future police force is training to become a modern police force. The invitation was accepted and a trip to the Kosovo Police School has been planned. ■

NGO Calls for Law on Mentally Challenged

Pristina, March 10. A public discussion on “Initializing and Promoting the Law on the Mentally Challenged” was organized at Grand Hotel Pristina by the Association for Psychological Assistance to Children and Family (APACF). More than thirty participants, including members of the Kosovo Police Service (KPS), local NGOs and the Parliament, attended the debate. The debate synthesized findings from local debates held in Gjakova, Mitrovica and Ferizaj. It also considered the legal framework from Bosnia and Herzegovina on this issue. All activities were made possible through an FDI grant.

Based on the findings from previous local debates, the NGO drew a detailed picture of the state of mentally challenged people in Kosovo. Some of the most disturbing findings included the need for forensics expertise to ensure that mentally challenged persons are not abused, and the need for further co-

operation with KPS to prevent abuse. Since there are few specialists in this branch of medicine and only a few institutions that deal with such issues, APACF recommended that the government assist by sending some of the most sensitive cases to institutions outside Kosovo where they could receive the necessary treatment.

APACF also highlighted some successes, such as the Medical Service’s professionalism and the satisfactory cooperation with KPS.

“The situation is neither black nor white, but it could be better,” an APACF representative said. A legal framework could



Present in the seminar where members of the parliament as well as representatives of various NGOs and police officials

advance the status of the mentally challenged, he said.

The participants debated the proposed legislation, which was based on Bosnia’s legislation. They commented on an older draft that was never approved because it seemed too advanced for the conditions in Kosovo. One participating Member of Parliament promised that he would present a draft of the law to the Kosovar Parliament as soon as it became available. ■

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The Foundation for Democratic Initiatives is the primary implementing partner for the Kosovo NGO Advocacy Project, which is an East-West Management Institute/USAID cooperative agreement, funded by the American people.

Citizens Demand Faster Monetary Transactions

Pristina, March 25. A public discussion entitled “How the payment system functions in Kosovo”, co-organized by ATRC and Business Club Prizren (BCP), was held at ATRC. At the debate, BCP presented their study on delays in banking transactions in Kosovo. The debate brought together representatives from different institutions involved in monetary transactions, within or between banks, to discuss the responsibility for transaction delays. The study and debate were made possible through an FDI grant.

Representatives from the World Bank, local NGOs, small businesses, “Oda Ekonomike” (Kosovo Chamber of Commerce) and Banka Popullore e Kosovës (BPK), which serves as a central bank, as well as the Deputy-Minister of Trade and Industry attended the debate.

BCP’s study showed that although transactions are supposed to happen within 24 hours, they often take much longer - between 2 and 60 days - which can potentially cause businesses significant losses. It can

take up to two weeks for a transfer to be completed, even when funds are transferred within the same bank, from one branch to another. Another significant fact brought forth was that citizens are not aware that paying a priority fee of five euros can ensure a swift transfer within six hours.

Several reasons for the delays were identified. The lack of infrastructure was noted as a significant barrier. In addition, it is within the banks’ interests to hold transfers.

“Cash is expensive because Kosovo cannot produce its own money,” Liman Asllani explained.

Deputy-Minister for Trade and Industry Kadri Kryeziu welcomed the BCP study. “These are relevant facts and data for our work,” he said.



Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry participating in the discussion on the reliability of the banking transfers

Florim Haxhariaj, a representative of BPK, disagreed with the findings. He stressed that his institution had only received five or six complaints about tardiness in transactions. However, no bank had been penalized for this. In the debate that followed, it was noted that although the BPK has the authority to penalize banks that delay transfers, no penalties are specified.

Following the debate, the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce, an independent trade and business association, promised to offer support in promoting the BCP study and in finding a solution to the problem. ■

Haradinaj, Continued

Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), damaging the surrounding cars and wounding one person. Three days later, a graver incident took place about 30 yards from ATRC’s

office in Pristina; a TNT device exploded as President Ibrahim Rugova’s convoy was traveling to a high level meeting with Javier Solana, European Union Foreign Policy Chief.

Two people were wounded by the explosion, and the ATRC office was closed as the whole street became a crime scene.

Yet, as various local and international media have noted, the situation did not deteriorate to the point that many feared it would. To the surprise of many, there were no massive violent protests, only one peaceful protest organized by university students. The acts of violence were limited to institutions and apparently lacked popular support.

The non-violent resolution of another difficult March came with the election of a new Prime Minister, Bajram Kosumi, which signified a continuation of the governmental coalition. ■



A bomb targeting the convoy of president Rugova exploded 30 yards from our Pristina office. (Photo credit: Visar Kryeziu EXPRESS)