



25 JANUARY 2015

## ECMI KOSOVO CALLS FOR REASON AND ACTION IN LIGHT OF PROTESTS IN PRISHTINË/PRIŠTINA

On January 24, an estimated 10,000<sup>1</sup> protesters took the street of Prishtinë/Priština, in one of the largest demonstrations organized in Kosovo in recent times, demanding that Prime Minister Isa Mustafa dismisses Minister Aleksandar Jablanović over his controversial statements and that the Government of Kosovo take over the ownership over Trepça, Kosovo's large and economically central mining complex. The protests were called by Vetëvendosje and the NGO "Thirrjet e Nënave" (Mothers' Calls). The opposition parties AAK and "Nisma për Kosovën" joined the protests and their leaders, Ramush Haradinaj and Fatmir Limaj, took part. Albin Kurti of Vetëvendosje and the representative from "Thirrjet e Nënave" gave the Government the ultimatum to fulfil the protesters' demands by Monday afternoon, 26 January. If the Government fails to meet these demands, they will call for another protest for Tuesday, 27 January.

Although largely non-violent, by the end the demonstration turned into a violent spree with protesters throwing rocks in the direction of the government building and breaking several windows in the process, while still others broke the chairs and windows of some of the businesses nearby. Kosovo Police announced that 22 protestors were apprehended; 19 police officers were also injured. Serb journalists of the Kosovo public broadcaster RTK 2 were harassed by the crowd, after they heard them reporting in Serbian.<sup>2</sup> No incidents were reported elsewhere in Kosovo, including in Serb-majority areas. ECMI Kosovo calls all sides to keep their calm and joins the President of Kosovo, Atifete Jahjaga, in reiterating the right to protest in a non-violent manner.

The violent outcomes of the demonstrations, its nationalistic undercurrent (the Albanian flag was prominently present, whereas the Kosovo flag was remarkably absent, and the protesters targeted Srpska lista as a whole), and the incident with Serb-speaking journalists indicate the slumbering rise of ethnic confrontations since Srpska lista became part of the Kosovo government. As ECMI Kosovo has showed in more detail in recent reports, the fact that the

<sup>1</sup> The police put the number to 10,000, the organizers put the number to 25,000 thousand.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.gazetaexpress.com/lajme/momenti-kur-gazetaret-e-rtk2-u-sulmuan-nga-protestuesit-video-75778/>

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ministers of Srpska lista publically ignore or refuse to recognise the Republic of Kosovo and have close ties with Serbia's government has put the new government in complete disarray.<sup>3</sup>

We urge all involved to not let these matters slip into possible inter-ethnic violence, which would damage not only ethnic relations in Kosovo, but also set back Kosovo's efforts at domestic and European integration. Therefore, we call on the Government of Kosovo, along the lines of our recent Policy Brief<sup>4</sup>, to forge a working environment within the Government of Kosovo on the basis of a fundamental agreement with Srpska lista which would clearly distinguish the communication used by politicians in their capacities as government officials from the long-term political agendas of their parties. Such an agreement will defuse the rise of ethnic controversies that, as Saturday's demonstrations have indicated, can lead to situations and incidents that are unpredictable and difficult to contain at a critical time in Kosovo's efforts toward internal stabilisation and integration in the European Union.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ecmikosovo.org/?p=5989> and <http://www.ecmikosovo.org/?p=5992>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ecmikosovo.org/?p=6044>