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THE GORANI HOLIDAY ON 6 MAY: A MISSED OPPORTUNITY FOR THE KOSOVO INSTITUTIONS

On 6 May the Gorani community traditionally gathers on the hills and in the villages of the Gora region to celebrate the beginning of spring. This day is considered the national holiday of the Gorani and has been recognised as a memorial day by Kosovo Law.¹ This day serves as a good occasion to dwell on some of the issues the Gorani community in Kosovo is facing.

The Gorani are one of the smallest minority communities in Kosovo, with a total number of around 11,000. Most of them live in the mountainous area in the southernmost tip of Kosovo. There are also Gorani villages across the border in Albania and Macedonia. Field research carried out by the Gora Community Network, a coalition of CSOs representing the Gorani community established through the support of ECMI Kosovo, identified major concerns among members of the Gorani community related to employment, health care, education, and local government.²

Ahead of the Gorani memorial day, on Monday 4 May, a delegation representing the Gora Community Network was received for a brief meeting with Prime Minister Isa Mustafa. This was the first time representatives of the Gorani civil society had the opportunity to meet with the highest representative of the Kosovo government. The Gora Network informed the Prime Minister about some of the issues their community is facing in Kosovo and asked for increased efforts from the government in addressing these issues. The meeting reportedly was very cordial and the Prime Minister guaranteed his government's full support to the Gorani community.

The Gora Community Network also invited the Prime Minister to attend the festivities taking place in the Gora region on 6 May. The Prime Minister, however, could not accept the invitation due to his busy schedule but promised to visit the Gora region on another occasion. Beside a representative of the Secretariat of the Consultative Council for Communities within the Office of the President, no official representative of the Kosovo government or the local municipality of Dragash/Dragaš attended the 6 May festivities.

This is a missed opportunity for the Kosovo institutions, as it would have been a strong symbolic gesture that the government is actually concerned about the difficult position of the Gorani community in Kosovo. The absence of Kosovo official representatives confirmed the feeling among many members of the Gorani community that the central and local Kosovo authorities are ignoring the Gorani community and that the attempts from representatives of the community to establish more direct contact and cooperation with the Kosovo government

¹ [Law on Official Holidays in the Republic of Kosovo](#) (21 May 2008), Art. 5.

² ECMI Kosovo. '[Employment in the Dragash/Dragaš Region](#)' (18 November 2014); ECMI Kosovo. '[Decentralisation in the Dragash/Dragaš Region](#)' (18 November 2014); ECMI Kosovo. '[School Returns in the Dragash/Dragaš Region](#)' (18 November 2014).

(most importantly through their participation in the Consultative Council for Communities) are not taken serious.

A noted guest at the festivities was Aleksandar Vulin, Minister of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Policy of Serbia, who was accompanied by a number of Kosovo Serb politicians. Vulin also opened an office for employment and a centre for job searching in the parallel Serbian municipality of Gora, located in Vranište/Vranishtë.³ Vulin's visit symbolises the continuing efforts of the Serbian Government to maintain strong links with the Gorani community.

Serb politicians have repeatedly propagated the establishment of the current parallel Municipality of Gora within the Kosovo system as well and its subsequent inclusion in the Association/Community of Serb-Majority Municipalities. This municipality would include the southern part of the current municipality of Dragash/Dragaš, where Gorani would be in the majority.⁴ Many members of the Gorani community support this move, as it would guarantee the continued functioning of Serbian institutions while allowing them to enter into more direct cooperation with the central Kosovo institutions.⁵

The Gorani community finds itself in a particularly vulnerable position due to its limited access to education, employment, health care, and local self-government within the Kosovo system and its reliance on Serbian parallel institutions for many of these services. Therefore, it is imperative that the Government of Kosovo steps up its efforts to reach out to the Gorani community. The meeting between the Prime Minister and representatives of the Gora civil society is just a small first step in the good direction.

³ <http://www.tanjug.rs/multimedia.aspx?izb=v&&GalID=161773>.

⁴ For more on the Gora Municipality and its envisaged inclusion in the Association, see Adrian Zeqiri and Pieter Troch (ECMI Kosovo). '[The Association/Community of Serb-Majority Municipalities: An Exclusive Club Based on Ethnicity?](#)' (31 March 2015).

⁵ ECMI Kosovo. '[Decentralisation in the Dragash/Dragaš Region](#)' (18 November 2014).

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About ECMI Kosovo

ECMI Kosovo is the principal non-governmental organisation engaged with minority issues in Kosovo, with the overarching aim to develop inclusive, representative, community-sensitive institutions that support a stable multi-ethnic Kosovo. ECMI Kosovo contributes to the developing, strengthening and implementation of relevant legislation, supports the institutionalisation of communities-related governmental bodies, and enhances the capacity of civil society actors and the government to engage with one another in a constructive and sustainable way.