

Reform 2004 Coalition Demands Democracy in Kosovo

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Reform 2004 - a coalition representing 300 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from across Kosovo - rallied to influence UNMIK Special Representative Harry Holkeri's decision regarding the electoral system. Despite their advocacy work, Holkeri recently signed into effect a system other than that requested by Reform 2004.

Holkeri's decision has not deterred activists.

"We will continue, saying he made the wrong decision," Igballe Rogova, a Reform 2004 leader and Executive Director of the Kosova Women's Network (KWN) said.

KWN recently received a grant from the Foundation for Democratic Initiatives

"We thought this was a democracy."

(FDI) to increase the visibility of the election reform campaign. The campaign has included writing letters to Holkeri, the five diplomatic offices in Prishtina, the European Union and the UN in New York; media discussions involving citizens; famous Kosovars giving televised personal messages supporting reform; and posters explaining Reform 2004's requested changes to the electoral system: establishing open lists, seven voting districts and a gender quota.

During the media campaign, citizens publicly accused international gov-



"No one explained the [voting] system to the people. [International governing bodies] just wanted us to vote blindfolded," Rogova said. "If nothing else, the Reform 2004 campaign educated people."

erning institutions of failing to uphold democracy in Kosovo.

"We are offended," Rogova said. "We thought that this was a democracy. This just shows who really runs this country."

For more information, see the "Guest Article" and an article published on IWPR: http://www.iwpr.net/index.pl?archive/bcr3/bcr3_200403_483_3_eng.txt.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Special FDI Grants Due**April 11.**
- Regular FDI Grants Due**April 14.**

NGOs Form Coalition to Address Kosovo's Situation

Representatives from more than 50 nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) gathered in Prishtina's Grand Hotel March 19 to draft a public statement against the recent violence in Kosovo. At the meeting, NGOs formed an ad-hoc group with representatives from leading NGOs to discuss civil society's future steps for addressing Kosovo's situation.

At the NGO workgroup's first meeting, the Kosovar Action for Civil Initiative (KACI) proposed that the group organize a demonstration in support of NATO and the international community. The event took place on March 24, a

date that marks the first NATO air strikes and that represents Kosovars' liberation from the Milosevic regime. Civil society representatives, politicians and citizens gathered in front of Prishtina's National Theatre carrying NATO flags and flowers. The manifestation aimed to show Kosovars' support for KFOR and the international community and to express concern regarding the recent violence.

The NGO workgroup also drafted a petition based on civil society's recent declaration, which condemns violence. The



Young demonstrators in front of the National Theatre in Prishtina send an anti-violence message to the community.

petition was placed at various points in the city for citizens to sign.

The Kosovar Research and Documentation Institute (KODI) also proposed for NGOs to write a report identifying what caused the violence and to initiate intensive lobbying on issues vital for Kosovo's future.

“The penalty that good men pay for not being interested in politics is to be governed by men worse than themselves.”

-- Plato

Meet the donors: KFOS

ATRC hosted the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (KFOS) at their Meet the Donors program this month.

Currently, KFOS encourages NGOs to apply to its East-East program, which supports cooperation among Eastern European organizations, for participation in regional conferences, networks and joint projects.

KFOS is redesigning its strategy to implement its own programs. When KFOS seeks implementing partners, it usually selects NGOs it has worked with before and that have high levels of performance.

One participant criticized KFOS' approach, specifically when KFOS refuses a project without providing a reason why.

"Our board does not have time to give guidelines and justifications for each proposal refused since they review around 30 proposals at every meeting" Seb Rodiqi, KFOS Program Coordinator said.

He explained the grant review procedure as follows: first, the project proposal is sent to the coordinator who invites the grant review commission depending on the amount of the grant. If it exceeds 10,000 Euros, it is forwarded to the foundation board. Proposals are considered for funding completely, partially or not at all. "We usually prioritize projects already funded by other donors," Rodiqi said.

Established in 1999 as part of the Open Society Network, KFOS supports activities that reform education, build local governing institutions, strengthen women's organizations and provide for minority programs.

Mjajt! and KAN Civic Leaders Challenge Civil Society

Albin Kurti and Erion Veliaj, leaders of the most renowned civic movements in Kosovo and Albania, presented their work to NGO and media representatives at an ATRC public discussion on March 5th.

At the discussion, both leaders argued that citizen movements are more powerful than political parties. "By making noise, citizens show power," Kurti said. "Political parties, in fact, have no power," he added.

As leaders of civic movements, they also critiqued civil society. The public often considers civil society a well-paid occupation when in reality civil society consists of everyone and demands all citizens' involvement, they said. Both leaders challenged citizens to overcome merely complaining about societal problems and to actually act.

“By making noise, citizens show power. Political parties, in fact, have no power.”

"Disinterest in politics and social issues in Kosovo is as tragic as when a man with a knife approaches you and you say, 'oh, no, this has nothing to do with me'," Kurti said.

Mjajt!

Mjajt!, literally translated as "Enough!", addresses citizen discouragement and apathy by involving Albanian pop and street culture. "Mjajt is a creative, infectious, instant attraction, incorporating the 'Aesthetics of action'," Veliaj explained. Mjajt! campaigns educate citizens regarding peaceful protest and address issues such as discrimination against Albanians in Greece, corruption, blood feuds and poor telecommunication system management. Today Mjajt! is a rapid reaction movement capable of



Mjajt and KAN representatives present their citizen initiative projects NGOs and the media.

mobilizing thousands of people within a few hours. "When injustice occurs, we react. That is our mission," Veliaj said.

KAN

Kosovo Action Network (KAN) originated as part of student protests in 1997 and was reactivated in 2003. KAN functions without an organizational structure or hierarchy. KAN members work towards consensus by first identifying problems and then organizing group reactions. KAN has organized coalitions to deal with missing persons as well as an art show in the Prishtina mall.

NGOs Release Publications on Transparent Procurement and Adoption

Epoka e Re released a report analyzing Decan's procurement procedures at a roundtable discussion on March 11. At the presentation, NGO representatives criticized government officials for lacking transparency in the procurement process and requested that the process be opened to the public for monitoring. Officials responded that the public lacks the necessary expertise to attend procurement meetings.

In their publication, "Municipal Procurement Policies", Epoka e Re identified problems and solutions for Decan municipality's procurement process. Recom-

mendations for deterring the misuse of public funds included promulgating a law; classifying and qualifying offers; establishing an evaluation commission; improving information-sharing; establishing transparent procedures; allocating funding; clarifying tendering issues; notifying businesses of tenders; and reviewing the quality of the projects after completion.

SIK Presents Child Adoption Manual

Hida Halimi, Director of the Syndicate of Social Service by International Standards (SIK) presented SIK's latest publication "Child Adoption

According to Hague Convention 93" at an ATRC public discussion on March 15. The manual aims to treat important issues regarding adoption procedures, specifically procedures that should be followed during the adoption process. The complete document includes adoption application forms based on 'Hague Convention 93', a convention applied worldwide. The manual is a translation of the same document issued by the International Social Service in Switzerland. It was drafted by well-known justice, social work and psychology experts.

Special Call for Proposals!

The KNAP/FDI Public Policy Grant Program is soliciting proposals for projects that will specifically analyze the events that led to the recent violence and that will provide concrete recommendations on how to move forward. This will include:

- Analysis, strengths and weaknesses, of Kosovar governing institutions, civil society, and the media in regards to their handling of the situation; and
- Concrete recommendations on how to move forward. This should include practical and realistic steps for each respective government and for non-governmental organizations.

Joint applications that include NGOs working with minority counterpart organizations are strongly encouraged. Unique use of media outlets will be looked upon favorably. Youth, minorities and women are encouraged to apply. The maximum grant amount is € 40,000.

Grant Applications Due April 11

FDI Announces Grant Competition

FDI invites NGOs to apply for Kosovo NGO Advocacy Project (KNAP) grants. Projects submitted jointly by advocacy and think tank/policy NGOs will be given priority. FDI strongly encourages applicants to propose innovative approaches to working with the media to increase the impact of proposed activities. Grants ranging from €4,000 to €40,000 are available for anti-corruption, policy analysis and advocacy activities. Applications are due by **April 14**. For further information and grant applications please contact FDI:

fdigjakova@hotmail.com

PRO Advocates for Better Urban Living for Minorities

In Gjakova municipality, some minorities inhabit non-urbanized neighborhoods with minimal living conditions. Various social, economic and property issues have resulted in many problems not only for the residents of this neighborhood, but also for the city.

An increase in the number of residents in the eastern part of Gjakova, also called "The Colony", has resulted in living space shortages and bad infrastructure. The Colony, mainly populated by the Egyptian community with some Serbian and Albanian residents, has no water, sewage system, electricity or public lighting.

The only source of income is waste collection, which causes many health problems for residents. The area's isolation from other parts of the city makes it dif-

ficult for The Colony's children to attend school. This leads to increased unemployment and minor delinquency.

Therefore the Peace and Reconciliation

Project (PRO) decided to advocate for local governmental structures to adopt and implement an urban solution plan for The Colony. The plan would aim to: integrate minority families; improve living conditions; and avoid the negative consequences of poor urban infrastructure.

A preliminary inspection of The Colony's living conditions by PRO staff and a group of experts showed that the neighborhood's poor hygienic-sanitary, economic and social conditions are a source of various infectious diseases that are hazardous for enclave resi-



Gjakova's "The Colony" is a health risk for citizens.

dents and citizens in the surrounding territory.

"The living conditions in this area are appalling. Yet the local government has done nothing," stated Zana Haxhiavdyli, PRO Director.

PRO expects that after the project city officials will visit The Colony more frequently to perform public services. The proposed urban plan includes road construction, which will allow The Colony's children to attend school regularly. This plan will decrease delinquency and better enable the Kosovo Police Service to monitor the area, according to PRO.

"Living conditions in this area are appalling. Yet the local government has done nothing."

KDC Requests Inspection of Imported and Local Milk

KDC started a FDI-funded project to advocate for greater control over the quality of imported and locally produced milk in September 2003.

After experts conducted

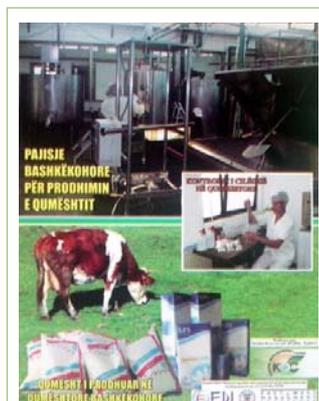
surveys in various cities, they concluded that there is no sufficient quality control for milk and other products and that not all analyses are conducted according to international standards.

"Consumption of unhealthy milk represents a danger for the life and health of consumers. Therefore our institutions have an obligation to control the quality of imported and local milk," Bajram Morina, KDC Program Manager said.

This project aims to raise awareness among the relevant institutions so that they can control the quality of imported and local milk, protect the health of milk consumers, raise awareness among consumers and

exercise quality control at the borders where milk is imported. KDC also expects to draft a law on food consumption and to establish a National Agency for inspecting food product quality.

KDC has held roundtables to discuss the role of an inspection body and current problems faced by milk producers and processors in Kosovo. Food experts, representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, Controlling Institutes, Biotechnical Institute in Peja, National Institute and Agriculture Faculty attended. Recommendations compiled during KDC activities will be forwarded to the Ministry of Agriculture for further steps.



Brochures by KDC raise consumer awareness regarding health problems associated with drinking uncontrolled milk.

Regional NGOs Gather for Freedom of Information Conference

As part of a regional effort to promote free access to information held by authorities, the Access to Information Project (AIP) in Bulgaria is organizing a two day conference: Advocacy for the Implementation of Access to Information Laws - Independent Monitoring on 14 -15 May in Sofia, Bulgaria. AIP is a leading Southeastern European organization that promotes this issue (www.aip-bg.org).

ATRC representatives will attend the conference to learn from the experiences of other countries in implementing the Freedom of

Information Act (FOIA). ATRC has already started FOIA project implementation in Kosovo. The FOIA coalition is led by Article 19 and supported by the European Commission. Article 19 works to promote free access to information around the world. It has gathered leading South-eastern European non-governmental organizations from Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro to promote citizens' rights to access information in the hands of their governments.

In Kosovo, the Law on Access to Official Documents has recently been adopted by the Assembly. The UN Administrator signed the law in November 2003.

The aim of ATRC's FOI project is to build NGO and public awareness on how to best use their rights under this law. The law allows for all citizens to request official documents from the authorities and obliges the authorities to disclose the requested information, except for documents that fall under the exemptions of the law.

Rr. Agim Ramadani Nr. 15
(formerly Ramiz Sadiku)
2nd Floor
Prishtina, Kosovo

Phone: +381 38 244 810

Fax: +381 38 244 810

Email: atrcknap@yahoo.com

Director

KRESHNIK BERISHA

keka@advocacy-center.org

General Manager

KIMETE KLENJA

kimete@advocacy-center.org

Training Manager

NATYRA ZHJEQI

natyra@advocacy-center.org

Information and Outreach Officer

NICOLE FARNSWORTH

nicole@advocacy-center.org

Information and Outreach Coordinator

DAFINA ZHERKA

dafina@advocacy-center.org

Office Administrator

GANI ASLLANI

gani@advocacy-center.org

Guest Article: Zëri i Ditës

Reform 2007

Now everything is clear: the second parliamentary election in Kosovo will be held on October 23 with a proportional and closed list system. I guess that it would have been stronger if UNMIK's decision was made public earlier, since the chances of substituting closed lists with the open lists were bleak.

The prolongation of making this decision public enhanced civil society's hopes, as they were very active during the last weeks in their attempt to reform the electoral system. What was very obvious those days was the lack of balance between the interests of the nongovernmental reformers and the manner by which this campaign was monitored by political parties, the latter playing the role of a neutral observer.

Nevertheless, we cannot waste time discussing this attempt's failure. Political parties and individuals interested in entering the Kosovo Assembly know the rules of the game. New to



"Reform 2004" coalition members rallied outside UNMIK on February 26th. They requested a new electoral system with open ballots, voting districts and gender representation for the parliamentary elections to be held on October 23.

this year's election is that it will have a shorter electoral campaign.

It is often said that these should be the last elections organized in this manner. The next elections, which will hopefully be held after Kosovo's final status is resolved, are expected to happen according to the Election Law promulgated by the Kosovo Assembly and in consultation with the New Constitution of Kosovo. In regards to the constitution and the election law, it would be a waste of time if our aim focuses on reforming the existing legal framework. However, drafting the Election Law requires a long consultation

period with input from political and civil society actors who will offer a critical perspective in favor of changing the electoral system.

Due to this reason, it would be a great mistake if every-

We should make use of the existing enthusiasm for change characterized by "Reform 2004".

thing is left for later, let alone after the definition of final status. At least, we should make use of the existing enthusiasm for change characterized by "Reform 2004".

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