

Kosovars Demand Citizenship, Protest UNMIK

JUNE 11 - PRISHTINA.

Resolution 1244's five-year anniversary was marked by demonstrations as Kosovars gathered outside the United Nations Mission in Kosovo - UNMIK - headquarters to protest the UN's continued presence in Kosovo.

Blowing whistles and throwing red cards, protesters used a football metaphor to call UNMIK "out". They demanded that UNMIK recognize Kosovars as "citizens" and set a date for ending its mission.

Signed on June 11, 1999, UN Security Council Resolution 1244 gave Kosovar refugees the "green light" to return home. It has since served as UNMIK's mandate for governing the protectorate until its final status is resolved. Now, a mandate that was originally meant to last only a couple years, according to inside sources, is receiving criti-

cism as "outdated" and "progress hindering."

Perhaps this was best demonstrated last March when local frustrations led to violent riots. An International Crises Group report *Collapse in Kosovo*, which analyzed events leading up to the violence, criticized UNMIK for failing to ameliorate Kosovo's development deficits. "UNMIK's structure and mandate are now exposed as inappropriate to prepare Kosovo for the transition from war to peace, from socialism to the market economy and from international political limbo to final status," the report said. "The international community



Throwing red cards outside UNMIK headquarters, protesters asked UNMIK to set an exit date and that Kosovars be referred to as "citizens".

had beguiled itself into believing that the patchy half-promises [...] to begin reviewing Kosovo's final status by mid-2005 represented a complete policy. Unable to agree on what that

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UPCOMING EVENTS

WORKING WITH THE EU:
Institutional Relations
and Public Affairs

October 17-22
November 21-26

Contact ATRC for more
information.

US Delegation Hears Kosovar NGOs' Concerns

JUNE 11 - MITROVICA.

Serbian and Albanian NGOs met with a USAID and US Congress delegation to express concerns regarding future cooperation, following the March riots in Kosovo.

Some NGO representatives said that the reconciliation process was imposed on locals by international donors after the war and

that this only resulted in cosmetic effects.

"The international community should listen more closely to the local community," Tamara Djordevic from Nansen Dialogue said.

The Serbian NGOs suggested that the international community improve communication between international bodies and Serbian NGOs. Restriction of Serbian freedom of movement after the March events created a backlog of communication between Serbian and Albanian NGOs, making the realization of projects more difficult.

"The lack of a bottom up approach is one of the main problems; people re-

volve around political parties rather than demand political parties serve the people." Kreshnik Berisha from ATRC said.

The delegation welcomed suggestions and expressed their willingness to support NGOs' future steps. They promised to advocate for the US government to listen to Kosovar citizens' concerns. The delegation consisted of Dale Pfeiffer, USAID Head of Mission; Tom Costa, Professional Staff, House Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations; Joel Starr, Chief of Staff/Legislative Director, Legislative and Public Affairs, USAID; and Lt. Col. Anthony Steadman, US Air Force Legislative Liaison. ■



USAID Head of Mission Dale Pfeiffer speaks with NGO representatives during a meeting in Mitrovica on June 11.

Policy Manual for Public Hearings Released

JUNE 17 - PRISHTINA. To support the Assembly of Kosovo, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and OSCE Mission in Kosovo published a Public Hearing Manual. The manual was designed for the staff and members of the Central and Municipal Assemblies. It is a practical guide for preparing and conducting parliamentary hearings, which are an important mechanism for information gathering, policy analysis and government supervision by parliamentary committees. The manual was published in English, Albanian and Serbian and can be downloaded from www.osce.org/kosovo under latest documents.

“One of our goals is to influence the assembly and decision-making. Public hearings can facilitate this process,” ATRC Director Kreshnik Berisha said at the ATRC public discussion where the manual was presented.

“Public hearings are one of the assembly's duties,” Patrick Cadle from NDI said. He described hearings as an important aspect in government transparency and informed citizenry. According to Cadle, hearings give experts an opportunity to consult and allow for ministers to speak publicly, on the record, regarding draft laws and other topics. Hearings also educate assembly members because few members have expertise in all subjects.

“Sometimes civil servants or politicians forget for whom the law is being drafted, so hearings give civil society a chance to contribute and link the law to reality.” Ulrich Steinle from OSCE emphasized.

They encouraged participants to attend public hearings and to give specific suggestions in legislative language so their input will have greater impact.

The manual was prepared by Dr. Sherrie Wolf from NDI in cooperation with the Assembly Support Initiative (ASI).

Flaka Monitors Municipal Assembly in Lipjan

SEPT. 2003 - LIPJAN. NGO “Flaka” started a project monitoring the Lipjan Municipal Assembly, specifically the Commission for Policy and Finances and the Department of Education.

Prior to initiating the project, they held meetings with elected officials and drafted monthly reports on officials' relations with their constituencies. The resulting report contained assembly meeting minutes for a period of four months, requests submitted by the citizens, newly adopted legislation and other relevant issues.

Flaka also organized an advocacy campaign in four villages where they lobbied for citizens' individual requests.

“We were surprised by the warm welcome and great



Women members of the Lipjan Municipal Assembly meet with FLAKA staff to discuss their new project.

cooperation shown by the public officials,” Melihate Dedushaj said.

Flaka also provided trainings to educate the population on issues where advocacy is needed. The trainings aimed to make public officials more accountable to their constituencies.

Flaka also advocated for a reading hall for Lipjan's students by collecting signa-

tures from students. They held a round table in March with municipality officials where they discussed students concerns and student needs for a reading space.

Flaka has organized discussions on public participation in projects and donations that are handled by the Municipality, including the manner in which donations are spent. ■

NGO Increases Public Participation in Decision-Making

PRIZREN. Kosovar Group for Local and Regional Initiative (GKILR), an advocacy NGO, is advocating for referendums in Prizren municipality to be used as a mechanism for increasing public participation in decision-making. The project aims to engage citizens in political decision-making at the local level.

Initially GKILR representatives spoke informally with citizens regarding their knowledge on public participation. They also considered the involvement of informal community leaders (e.g. religious leaders), who may influence particular

groups of people. GKILR held trainings and seminars on raising awareness among public target groups such as youth, women and local politicians as viable stakeholders in public participation. In these seminars, they tried to elaborate on citizen participation, to identify the local administration's failures, to address citizens' problems and to consider the referendum as a solution.

Following this awareness campaign, citizens are expected to advocate for changing the municipality statute with the approval of the municipal assembly.



GKILR facilitates one of their awareness-raising discussions regarding referendums.

The statute should include the following elements:

- to approve the law on obligatory referendum
- to establish mechanisms for implementation of this idea
- to establish a special direc-

torate for the referendum “This is the first time that citizens have been offered a concrete mechanism to participate in decision-making” Hajrullah Çeku said.

GKILR is collaborating with its local partners: Vizioni 029, Center for Human Research GANI BOBI and other local NGOs in Prizren for the project's implementation. GANI BOBI will conduct research on citizen opinion and the level of support for the referendum idea. A survey will be done prior to and after the referendum. GANI BOBI will then monitor how much citizen opinions have changed during the project. The voting methods include online voting through the municipality's website and direct voting at the local district centers for those who are computer illiterate.

GKILR believe that the number of votes will indicate the citizen's interest in holding a referendum and its benefits. ■

New Law Affects NGOs

JUNE 23 - PRISHTINA.

Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) gathered to review the new draft law for associations' rights, which the Kosovar Institute for NGO Law (IKDO) and the Prime Minister's Office are working to draft. The draft law will be designed based on NGOs' comments at three discussions held in Gjilan, Prizren and Prishtina.

"The legal framework for the registration and functioning of NGOs in Kosova approved by UNMIK four years ago is obsolete and does not meet the current requirements of this sector" one participant said.

Discussion participants mentioned that nepotism and financial support for political parties disrupt NGOs' activities most frequently.

"In 1999/2000 NGOs may have sympathized with political parties, but now some NGOs are very explicitly supporting political parties - openly or secretly," a NGO representative said.

"Just like natural persons have a right to support political parties, it is normal for legal entities to exercise a similar right" Kreshnik Berisha from ATRC said.

Proceedings for complaints in regard to financial misuse by NGOs will be reviewed in the future based on the law on administrative procedures, which will soon be adopted by UNMIK, according to Gjuljeta Mushkolaj from IKDO. In order to process these complaints a special judicial panel needs to be established, she said.

The new legal framework should ensure that citizens are better informed as to which NGOs are active, Amy Horton from the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) said.

An open debate with NGOs' suggestions and comments regarding the new law will continue via IKDO's e-mail address:

admin@ikdo.org. ■

Communication Problems Exist Between Locals, Internationals

JUNE 23 - PRISHTINA. In their latest research, the Kosovar Documentation Institute (KODI), a policy analysis think tank, examined the communication gap between locals and the international community, particularly UNMIK.

KODI interviewed 90 local and international actors, including representatives from the Kosovar Government, UNMIK and civil society. They asked:

- Are there mechanisms for communication and cooperation between locals and internationals in Kosova?
- Does a dialogue among locals in Kosova exist, specifically between Albanians and minorities?
- How can we improve the quality of dialogue?

"Rhetoric of partnership, capacity building and empowerment provides a mask for a relationship of domination on one side and

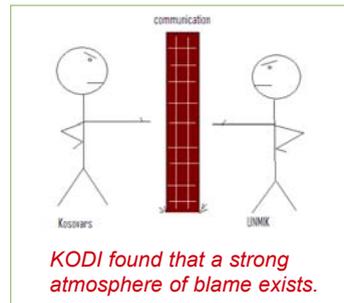
dependence on the other," one interviewee said.

KODI found that a strong atmosphere of blame exists throughout Kosova. In general, locals saw internationals as rude, colonial, and lacking understanding regarding Kosova's history and reality. On the other hand, internationals tended to view Kosovars as products of tribal structures, a socialist system not compatible with the modern world and, consequently, incapable of dealing with new democratic principles.

"As a result, we have a population that feels fully powerless," an interviewee said.

KODI representatives said that comments in interviews conducted before March 17 were similar to those conducted after. However, recent comments are stronger.

"There is no partnership between local and international structures," one inter-



viewee said.

A tense silence has returned following March 17 and 18. Yet fear still exists: if there are no changes, violence will reoccur. One of the violence's consequences was polarization of approaches pro and against different communities, KODI concluded.

KODI's project aimed to analyze various mechanisms, frameworks and processes for dialogue, consultation and participation to provide an analysis and constructive recommendations for addressing communication problems. ■

Conference Addresses Women's Political Participation

June 18-19 - PRISHTINA.

International and local women activists and other interested parties gathered at the Grand Hotel to discuss "Women's Leadership - Strategies for Empowering Women in Political Decision-making".

The conference focused on four areas of women's participation in political decision-making: bringing more women into governmental decision-making; strengthening political parties; the role of NGOs and the media in promoting women's participation in decision-making; and mobilizing citizens and voters in support of women.

Their discussions resulted in a Women's Political Participation in Kosova Plan of Action, which includes concrete conclusions and recommendations that the Kosova Women's Lobby,

political parties, parliament, and women's NGOs can use in their efforts to involve more women in all levels of political decision-making.

Kosova's general elections will take place in autumn 2004. While women currently make up 30% of the Kosovar Members of Parliament, very few women have an influential role in politics, especially in political parties.

The conference targeted political party leaders, government officials, Kosovar women's NGOs, the media and donors who are engaged in or support programs that work towards increasing women's participation in Kosovar political decision-making.



Women finalize their recommendations during the working groups.

Conference speakers included leading politicians, women's NGO representatives and journalists from Kosova, the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, Croatia, Bulgaria, Greece and Albania.

STAR Network of World Learning/Kosova; United States National Democratic Institute, and Kosova Women's Lobby organized the conference, and it was co-financed by UNIFEM, the Swiss Cooperation Office and Fridrich Ebert Stiftung. ■

