
BIDEN URGES KOSOVO TO SEEK RECONCILIATION WITH SERBIA

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Speaking in Pristina, US Vice-President Joe Biden said that Kosovo officials should work toward normalising relations with Serbia in order to make progress towards joining the EU.

During his visit to Pristina on Wednesday, US Vice-President Joe Biden urged Kosovo officials to seek reconciliation and work toward the normalisation of relations with Serbia in order to make progress towards joining the European Union.

I know that for many there are scars and the pain of war is still very raw, Biden told a press conference.

I was in and out of this region of wars too many times. I witnessed it, I saw it, but although these scars are still raw, the only way for Kosovo to move forward is to ensure a united future and to advance reconciliation, he added.

Biden argued that the way towards progress starts with cooperation and peaceful negotiations with former enemies.

President [Hashim] Thaci and PM [Isa] Mustafa have shown great commitment to advance in the process of dialogue with Serbia in order to move to a normalisation of relations between Pristina and Belgrade, he said.

Both sides have the responsibility to follow through the commitment made in Brussels. This is a critical for advance on Kosovos and Serbias full integration in Europe. Without that, it will not likely happen, he added.

Biden also stressed that the ratification of controversial agreements which have sparked protests in Kosovo - a deal on border demarcation with Montenegro and an agreement to establish an association of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo - would be important for regional stability.

At the press conference, Kosovo President Thaci said he would take responsibility for the implementation of these agreements signed in Brussels.

We cannot ask others to help and support us when we dont fulfil our duties , and I am confident, full of hope and trust that we will fulfil our obligations and responsibilities that are in the interest of Kosovo, the region and [our] Euro-Atlantic future, Thaci said.

He also said that reconciliation was possible and will happen, adding that dialogue was the only way to move forward.

Without ratifying the controversial agreements and therefore advancing its case for European integration, Kosovo will remain lonely and isolated from the world or left out by the US and Brussels, Thaci added.

Biden also encouraged Kosovo officials in Kosovo to work on fighting corruption, saying that it was a cancer for the country.

Later on Wednesday, Biden attended an emotional ceremony to name a road near the US military base Camp Bondsteel after his late son, Beau Biden, who died last year of brain cancer at the age of 46.

The US Vice-President arrived in Kosovo after visiting Serbia on Monday.

In Belgrade, he offered condolences to the families of the victims of the 1999 NATO bombing campaign and also urged Serbia and Kosovo to resolve their differences.

In talks with Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic, he encouraged Belgrade to make a success of the Brussels-backed negotiations with Pristina.

We had a couple of topics in our talks and number one was the advance of dialogue with Kosovo, Biden said in the Serbian capital.

<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/biden-kosovo-and-serbia-to-advance-reconciliation-08-17-2016>

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