
IBNA EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH KOSOVO'S FOREIGN MINISTER, ENVER HOXHAJ

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IBNA: What is the level of relations between Kosovo and Greece now? What is the result of your meeting with the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs?

Relations between our two countries are excellent. Greece is an important partner for Kosovo, as a young state in the region and we have shifted between institutional cooperation between the two governments and our ministries toward deepening economic relations and exchanges between our two societies. What this relation is lacking is the recognition of Kosovo as a sovereign and independent state. But this is a decision that must be taken in Athens and is a decision that must be made by a sovereign government and state. What I mean by this is that its up to Greek foreign policy and Greek government to do this.

IBNA: How does political instability in Tirana and Skopje affect the political situation in Kosovo?

We are concerned that in the past two years, we've somehow seen history repeating, given that political stability is very fragile. In Skopje, we were expecting the creation of a new government as soon as possible after the election of Assembly Speaker, Talat Xhaferi. It is in the best interest of Athens, Tirana, Pristina, Sofia and all the countries of the region and European Union for this country to have stability, to be integrated in Euro-Atlantic structures, in order for peace and security to prevail and for the country to have a government which addresses all the problems of the people. As far as the situation in Albania is concerned, we were expecting understanding between government and opposition in order to solve the political crisis and for the elections to see the participation of all parties.

IBNA: Are the close relations between Kosovo and Turkey a staple in the European course of Kosovo?

We have very close relations with all the countries of Southeast Europe, including Turkey. Turkey is a country which has recognized Kosovo and has supported it in bilateral relations and also in its representation in different international organizations. I believe that this cooperation between the two countries will continue.

IBNA: The decision to transform Kosovo Security Force into an armed force has sparked a reaction by the Serb minority and NATO. Is this tension useful at a time when discussions between Kosovo and Serbia continue?

We must understand what President Thaci's objective has been and what Kosovo's domestic need is. The creation of Kosovo's armed forces is a process which has started since 2007, when during

the negotiations in Vienna, Marti Ahtisaari foresaw that once independence was proclaimed, Kosovo should have a security force. From 2008 until 2013, this security force should meet several standards and after 2013, it should be established as an army of Kosovo. This means that what President Thaci has presented is an international obligation. But, Kosovo does need to have its own army as a sovereign and independent state. Currently, we are coordinating with our American and European partners, who are NATO members, as far as the starting time for this transformation is concerned. What is unacceptable for us is for the Serb community that lives in Kosovo not to use its vote in Parliament as veto to prevent a process which is an international obligation and an internal need for Kosovo.

IBNA: It seems that Kosovo will hold snap elections. How will cooperation between PDK and LDK work?

We may have snap elections, given that Parliament is blocked in terms of decision making. We believe that a Parliament which is unable to deliver some of its strategic goals, must ask itself about its functioning and in this aspect, if we head to snap elections, I believe that we will preserve our partnership with the Democratic League of Kosovo and cooperation with every political party, because to us, as the largest party in the country, the stability of the country is important, but besides the political stability, we are also interested to have a modernizing European agenda, which will change things in Kosovo. In this aspect, we believe that snap elections would offer legitimacy for the future government and institutions. /IBNA

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