
KOSOVO IMPOSES CUSTOMS TARIFFS ON SERBIA, BOSNIA

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The Kosovo government decided on Tuesday to impose a customs tariff of ten per cent on products made in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

For the first time in our new history as a country, we have imposed customs tariffs on all the products made in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, excluding those of international brands, Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj told media after the decision was made.

He said that the decision was because of Serbias hostile approach towards Kosovo.

We also took such action today because of the fact that we have illegal obstructions, there are threats from Serbia against innocent citizens of Kosovo just because their sons and daughters join the Kosovo Security Force, Haradinaj added.

Minister of Trade and Industry Endrit Shala told BIRN that Bosnia and Herzegovina, which also does not recognise Kosovo, was targeted because it was blocking goods from Kosovo.

Bosnias approach to Kosovo is the same [as Serbias]; they put up barriers for Kosovo products, they do not even recognise our documents, Shala told BIRN.

As Kosovo imports mostly from Serbia, officials claim the decision will hit Serbias budget, reducing the amount that Belgrade has to spend on lobbying against Kosovo.

Serbia is spending a huge amount of money to damage the state of Kosovo and a big part of this money is coming from our market, said deputy premier Enver Hoxhaj.

He added that the tariffs were the best answer to the destructive behaviour of Serbia, and urged people in Kosovo not to buy Serbian products

Of the countries from which Kosovo imports goods, Serbia is in first place.

During 2017, imports from Serbia were around 400 million euros and from Bosnia and Herzegovina around 80 million euros. The same trend has also continued during 2018, Kosovo Customs spokesperson Adriatik Stavileci told BIRN.

One of the products to be affected by the tariffs is water.

Of the 25 million litres of water imported to Kosovo in 2016, 12.3 million came from Serbia.

Calls to boycott goods from Serbia are not new in Kosovo.

The opposition party Vetevendosje has advocated a ban on and boycott of Serbias products by Kosovo costumers for years.

In recent years, Vetevendosje activists have overturned trucks transporting goods from Serbia to Kosovo.

EU spokesperson for Foreign Affairs Maja Kocijancic told BIRN that the EU is seeking urgent clarifications about Tuesdays unexpected decision by the Kosovo government to impose a 10 percent increase on import taxes on goods coming from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

These measures are a clear violation of Kosovos obligations under CEFTA. The EU expects Kosovo, who currently holds the CEFTA chairmanship, to fully comply with its CEFTA obligations and revoke the measure, she pointed out.

The decision by the Kosovo government undermines regional cooperation, including the Regional Economic Area, and is not in line with the principles underpinning the EU-Kosovo SAA, she added.

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