
KOSOVO MARKS INDEPENDENCE DAY WITH ARMY PARADE

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Kosovo is marking the eleventh anniversary of its independence from Serbia amid considerable political turmoil □ struggling to find unity across the political spectrum on the question of normalisation of relations with Serbia and a possible final agreement with Belgrade.

The February 17 events started with a solemn meeting of the government led by Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj, followed by a ceremonial parliamentary session.

To mark Independence Day, the Kosovo Security Force, KSF, staged a parade for the first time in the countrys history, after parliament expanded its competences last December to create a legal base for its transformation into a regular army.

The independence monument, NEWBORN, this anniversary is dedicated to environment, with the letters symbolising: nature, energy, water, biodiversity, and recycling, as well as being decorated with colorful doodles by local artists.

As one of the main traditional activities marking the day, Kosovo leaders paid tribute to the Kosovo Liberation Army commander Adem Jashari and his family at the Memorial Complex in Prekaz, where Serbian forces killed them in 1998.

The mainly ethnic Albanian former province of Serbia declared independence in 2008. However, Serbia has said it will never recognise Kosovos statehood.

Its independence remains contested. According to the website of the Foreign Ministry, 116 states recognise Kosovo as an independent state.

However, Serbia, China, Russia and many other countries have not followed suit □ including five members of the EU – Greece, Cyprus, Spain, Romania and Slovakia.

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