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## **EU RUNNING SCARED FROM FASCISM, SAYS KOSOVO'S LIKELY NEW PM**

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The Guardian (21 October 2019)

In exclusive interview, leftwinger Albin Kurti condemns blocs decision to halt Balkan enlargement talks.

The leftwinger set to become Kosovos surprise new prime minister has condemned the EUs decision to halt further Balkans enlargement, saying it showed western leaders had forgotten the lessons of two world wars and instead were in retreat in the face of fascism and populism.

Albin Kurti said the stance could damage the chances of Kovoso reaching a deal with Serbia, which has refused to recognise it as independent since the end of the 1998-99 war, as Belgrade has less incentive to act without the prospect of EU membership.

France caused dismay in the region at an EU summit last week by blocking Northern Macedonia and Albania from starting accession talks, so destroying Serbias chances of reaching the EU in the foreseeable future. French president Emmanuel Macron insisted that Europe needed to focus on its internal reforms.

The EU was formed as a response to fascism, but is now running scared in the face of populists and fascism, Kurti told the Guardian.

Criticising Macron, he said: You cannot say first we need internal reform in the EU and then external enlargement □ they go hand in hand. Europe is such an important historical project that no one man can be its author, directing or leading it. We have always seen that when [the outgoing EU Commission president] Jean-Claude Juncker said there would be no further expansion in the next five years, the situation in the Balkans got much worse.

Yes, the EU is important for the Balkans, but the Balkans is very important for the EU. Berlin and Paris should know this well, and it is really sad, for all of us, that they forget this. In a couple of decades, historians will write there were not two world wars, but just one world war with two episodes, and it all started in Sarajevo.

Kurtis leftist Albanian nationalist movement Vetëvendosje (Self-determination) emerged as the strongest party following snap elections last month. Imprisoned for 18 months by Serbian police during the height of its military conflict with Kosovo in 1999, Kurti, 44, finds himself on the verge of power, promising to end Kosovos two decades of neoliberalism.

He is currently in talks with the centre-right party LDK, which came second, on forming an administration, in which a minimum of 30% will be women. Kurti predicted an agreement within a month and says his priority is jobs and justice, not reaching a deal with Serbia.

After years of failed prosecutions against corruption, he promised to end what he considered the judiciary's capture by the state.

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