

The capital city of Serbia has a pro-western Mayor

The city council of Belgrade finally elected a new mayor on August 19, 2008 after few weeks lasting obstructions. The new mayor is Dragan Djilas from the Democratic Party (DP) who was the leader on the list of candidates called "For European Belgrade" in the municipal elections in May 2008.

Dragan Djilas was elected together with his deputy by secret ballot. The opposition parties criticized the elections as being non-democratic. The opposition boycotted the elections and refused to accept the seats in the local government offered by DP and its coalition partners. The mayor reaffirmed his election pledges for the Serbian media. His priorities include the solving the infrastructure, educational system, fight against corruption, city ecology, social politics or help in the most vulnerable parts of Belgrade.

Dragan Djilas comes from Belgrade, he worked as a journalist. In the 90s he was active in opposing the Milosevic regime as a leader of the student movement. He was the director of the President's Office and also acted as Serbian Minister of Investments before being elected as a Mayor. He is the leader of DP in Belgrade, co-owner of a PR company Multikom, and co-founder of humanitarian organization Our Serbia that helps children affected by the wars in former Yugoslavia.

Sources: B92, Danas, BalkanInsight.com

Macedonia will soon recognize Kosovo's independence

The government in Skopje will recognize Kosovo's independence in a short period of time, claims the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), an Albanian party that is part of the coalition together with Macedonian party VMRO DPMNE.

The reluctance of Macedonia to recognize Kosovo as an independent country comes from various reasons. There is a fear of Belgrade response, territorial disputes between Macedonia and Kosovo connected with boundary line demarcation, or possible negative effects on political stability in Macedonia. Albanians form a 25% minority in Macedonia that exercises high political autonomy thanks to Ohrid Agreement from 2001. On the other hand, some analysts claim that Kosovo recognition might have a stabilization effect. The government would gain new legitimacy taking this step.

Skopje is also reminding of its international political aspirations that are the EU and NATO integrations. The government together with President Nikola Gruevski might follow the EU policy when the majority of its members already accepted Kosovo's independence.

Sources: BalkanInsight.com, NewKosovaReport.com

Karadžić will not get any financial assistance from Belgrade

Radovan Karadžić, former Bosnian Serb leader, who is accused of war crimes and stands trial before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) at The Hague will not get financial support as claimed earlier by Radovan Stojanović, Serbian envoy to The Netherlands. According to Belgrade, Karadžić does not qualify for financial assistance, because he is not a citizen of Serbia, he did not give himself up voluntarily into The Hague neither did his family ask for financial help. These are the reasons why the Serbian Office for Cooperation with ICTY denied his pledge for legal and financial assistance.

Karadžić, who was at large from the authorities for almost 13 years, was arrested and extradited into The Hague last month, where he wants to lead the defense by himself.

Sources: B92, BalkanInsight.com, SME