

# General Elections in Kosovo, 12<sup>th</sup> December 2010

from **Corinne Deloy**  
Translated by *Helen Levy*

**ANALYSIS**

1 month before  
the poll

On 2<sup>nd</sup> November last the interim President of the Republic and former President of Parliament Jakup Krasniqi (Democratic Party, PDK) dissolved the Parliament and convened early general elections for 12<sup>th</sup> December next after the vote of a motion of censure launched by the Alliance for a New Kosovo (AKR) and delivered by 40 MPs thereby causing the collapse of the government led by Hashim Thaci (PDK) (66 votes in favour out of 120).

The President of the Republic Fatmir Sejdiu (Democratic League, LDK) was forced to resign on 27<sup>th</sup> September after the decision of the Constitutional Court on 24<sup>th</sup> September which was given following a complaint lodged by 32 MPs. This decision noted that the Head of State had infringed the Constitution by maintaining the position of chair of the LDK whilst he occupied the highest office in State. Fatmir Sejdiu, who was elected for the first time in 2006 after the death of his predecessor (2002-2005) Ibrahim Rugova, was re-elected in 2008 and became the first President of independent Kosovo. "I was convinced that maintaining the function of chair of the Democratic League without actually exercising was not contrary to the Constitution. The Constitutional Court has a different opinion. I respect its decision," declared Fatmir Sejdiu. Even though this has occurred late in the day the Head of State's resignation enhances the rule of law in Kosovo.

After the resignation of the President the two main parties in the country – the Democratic Party (PDK) and the Democratic League (LDK) – did not reach agreement on the means for the re-election of the Head of State who is appointed by the members of Parliament in Kosovo. The PDK was against the fact that Fatmir Sejdiu's successor would be elected for a five year mandate and wanted the latter to finish the present mandate and stay in office until January 2013. On 15<sup>th</sup> October this disagreement led to the LDK quitting the government coalition that it had formed with the PDK since January 2008.

The Parliament which will emerge from the urn on 12<sup>th</sup> December will therefore be called on to elect the President of Kosovo.

**A crisis that comes at a bad time**

The political crisis is damaging Kosovo's image since it is a state that is still growing and is about to start discussions with Serbia. On 9<sup>th</sup> September last Belgrade accepted before the UN's General Assembly to enter dialogue with Pristina after being warned that its hostility might impede progress in the country's bid to join the EU. This resolution also led the EU to give the green light on 25<sup>th</sup> October to the examination of Belgrade's membership application. On 22<sup>nd</sup> July the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague declared the independence of Kosovo legal with regard to international law. The country which has been inde-

pendent since 17<sup>th</sup> February 2008 has been acknowledged by 71 States in the world including 22 of the 27 EU Member States. Serbia, like Russia has still not acknowledged it.

Discussions between Belgrade and Pristina are to take place under the guidance of Brussels. They are firstly designed to settle practical issues that the population face (Serbs and Albanians alike) and which involve for example passports, car licence plates (some Serbs have kept the plates from the time when Kosovo was a region of Serbia). Discussions are also due to address economic issues. "Discussions will focus on taking cooperation forward and improving people's lives," decla-

red Catherine Ashton, the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and the Security Policy who spoke with the President of Serbia, Boris Tadic (Democratic Party, DS) on 23rd September to set the rules for the upcoming discussions. "We are ready to discuss and will shall do it in good faith," declared the Serb Head of State. "The time has come to put an end to a century of conflict between Kosovo and Serbia. Kosovo wants to talk with the Serbs over practical issues as two States, as equals," indicated the Prime Minister Hashim Thaci. In October American Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton travelled to Belgrade and Pristina where she said she wanted to see the beginning dialogue between the two countries and also the completion of these as quickly as possible.

The political crisis is also delaying the privatisation of national companies launched by the government notably that of the postal services and telecommunications which has already brought the LDK and the PDK into conflict. In April last the PDK approved the privatisation of the sector whilst its coalition partner was against it. On 14<sup>th</sup> October the interim President Jakup Krasniqi refused to promulgate the law.

### **The issues at stake in the electoral campaign**

Relations between the country's two main parties – the PDK and the LDK – who have been allies since January 2008, are very tense.

The LDK was not very enthusiastic about an early election and did not approve the censure motion against Hashim Thaci on 2<sup>nd</sup> November last. According to the leader of his parliamentary group, Ismet Beqiri, the electoral campaign has been too short and is not enough for the party to prepare correctly for the election. On 7<sup>th</sup> November the Mayor of Pristina Isa Mustafa was elected as head of the LDK winning 235 votes out of 359 and won easily over former President Fatmir Sejdiu who was running for office again. The LDK which has been on the decline since the death of Ibrahim Rugova on 21st January 2006 hopes to take advantage of the popularity of its new leader on 12<sup>th</sup> December.

The PDK should increase its power during the general elections. In spite of the scandals over the last few years the Kosovo citizens are still attached to this party that includes former member of the Kosovo Liberation

Army (UCK) considered as the heroes of the country's independence.

"These general elections are a new start for Kosovo," declared the outgoing Prime Minister in a somewhat paradoxical manner after the vote on the motion of censure against his government on 2nd November. He repeated that the LDK is the only one responsible for the political crisis. The head of the outgoing government should take advantage of the absence of former Prime Minister (2004-2005) Ramush Haradinaj, leader of the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo from this election – he is ineligible at present because he is in prison at the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague for war crimes. Acquitted for the first time in 2008 the ICTY ordered his re-arrest on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2010. A new trial will be organised since the Court believes that witnesses were not adequately protected.

If the PDK wins on 12<sup>th</sup> December it may join forces with the Alliance for a New Kosovo (AKR) led by businessman Behxhet Pacolli as well as with the Serb parties to form the next government coalition.

The Serbs of Kosovo remain divided over their participation in the early election. They turned to Serb President Boris Tadic, the only one in their opinion who has the right to decide over the issue. Randel Nojkic, leader of the Serb Revival Movement supports participation in the election. Tomilsav Nikolic, leader of the Serb Radical Party (SRS), indicated that he would not condemn the Serbs of Kosovo who turned out to ballot. Milan Ivanovic chair of the Serb National Council for North Kosovo called for a boycott of the election. It is unthinkable for Serbs to take part in elections which in his opinion "would legitimise an almost independent State," adding, "the Serbs have to vote for Serb institutions."

### **The Kosovo Political System**

The unicameral Parliament has 120 MPs elected for four years by proportional representation. 20 seats are reserved for the minorities: 10 for the Serbs, 4 for the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians (so called because they are supposed to have come from Egypt – the latter are Muslims of Albanian mother tongue like the Ashkali), 3 for the Bosniaks, 2 for the Turks and 1 for the Gorani (members of the Slav speaking Muslim community living in Kosovo).

The first general elections in independent Kosovo took place on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2007.

5 political parties are represented in Parliament:

- the Democratic Party (PDK), holds the majority with 37 seats and is led by outgoing Prime Minister Hashim Thaci;
- the Democratic League (LDK), the party of former President Fatmir Sejdiu, led by Isa Mustafa with 25 MPs;
- the Alliance for a New Kosovo (AKR) has 13 seats;
- the Democratic League Alliance of Dardania-Christian Democratic Party (LDD-PSDK) has 11 MPs;
- the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) led by Ramush Haradinaj imprisoned at present by the ICTY has 10 seats;

10 parties represent the minorities: the Turkish Democratic Party of Kosovo, the Ashkali Democratic Party, the Vaka Coalition, the Serb Democratic Party of Kosovo and Metohija (name given by the Serbs to the south west part of Kosovo), the Democratic Action Party, the Serb People's Party, New Democracy, Gora Civic Initiative, the Serb Party of Kosovo-Metohija and the New Initiative of Kosovo.

Interim President Jakup Krasniqi has called on international observers to come and monitor the election. "Their presence would have an enormous effect on the credibility and reliability of the election," he wrote in a letter to Catherine Ashton. Pieter Feith, the EU's special representative in Kosovo has called on all political representatives to "show responsibility in the national interest and to guarantee flexible transition."

#### Reminder of the General Election results of 17<sup>th</sup> November 2007 in Kosovo

Turnout : 40.1%

Political Parties	No of votes won	% of votes won	No of seats won
<b>Democratic Party (PDK)</b>	196 207	34.3	37
<b>Democratic League (LDK)</b>	129 410	22.6	25
<b>Alliance for a new Kosovo (AKR)</b>	70165	12.3	13
<b>Democratic League of Dardania (LDD)</b>	57 002	10	10
<b>Albanian Christian Democratic Party (PSHDK)</b>			1
<b>Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK)</b>	56 611	9.6	10
<b>Ora Reformist Party</b>	23 722	4.1	0
<b>Justice Party</b>	9 890	1.7	0
<b>Others (including minorities)</b>	30760	5.4	24

Source : Parliament of Kosovo

## General Elections in Kosovo, a round-up one week before the election

On 12<sup>th</sup> December next Kosovo is organising its first general elections since independence (17<sup>th</sup> February 2008). 1,630,636 people are being called to ballot including 72, 288 new voters i.e. 4.4% of the total. 29 political parties, 8 of which are representing the Serbs living in the country were registered by the Electoral Commission. The election

**D-7**  
7 days before  
the poll

is taking place one year early after the adoption of a motion of censure on 2<sup>nd</sup> November. On 27<sup>th</sup> September the President of the Republic Fatmir Sejdiu (Democratic League, LDK) was forced to resign after a decision by the Constitutional Court which notified that the Head of State had infringed the Constitution by maintaining his position as chair of the LDK whilst he occupied the highest office in the State.

The election distinguishes itself because of the large number of coalitions that have been formed. Hence the Alliance for a New Kosovo led by businessman Behxet Pacolli joined forces with seven other parties including the Social Democratic Party (SDP) chaired by former Prime minister (2006-2008). *"These general elections will be unprecedented because they will be organised without any international involvement. The world will be watching us and assess our democratic culture as well as our political maturity,"* declared interim President and former leader of Parliament, Jakup Krasniqi (DSK) who called on the parties to *"undertake a worthy campaign void of hate and intolerance."* 150 observers from the European Network of Election Monitoring Organisation (ENEMO) will be visiting 700 polling stations. 4800 local observers including many members of the NGO Democracy in Action will be in the field to ensure that the election takes place correctly.

The Democratic Party (DSK) which holds the majority in Parliament and led by outgoing Prime Minister Hashim Thaci is due to win on 12<sup>th</sup> December. *"I believe that not only will the Democratic Party, which is the biggest political machine in Kosovo and the best organised maintain its percentage of votes won in 2007 (34.3%) but it may even increase the figure slightly which will enable it to rise over the 35% mark of votes"* anticipates Editor in Chief of the daily Koha Ditore, Agron Bajrami. If he retains his position the outgoing Head of government, who hopes that the Kosovars will be able to travel without a visa within the EU and that his country will become a NATO member mid-term, may quickly start dialogue with Serbia. *"Hashim Thaci wants to invest his international image and may quickly start negotiations to show that he is truly the victor of the elections and the person who counts in Ko-*

*sovo,"* indicates political expert Belul Beqaj. Kosovo has been acknowledged by 71 States in the world including 22 EU Member States – except for Greece, Cyprus, Spain, Slovakia and Romania. Belgrade, like Moscow and Beijing has no diplomatic relations with the new State. According to many political observers the DSK may form a government coalition with the Alliance for a New Kosovo as well as with one or several other Serb parties.

The Democratic League, the country's second most important party, formerly that of President of the Republic (2006-2010) Fatmir Sejdiu, and led by the Mayor of Pristina, Isa Mustafa, believes it has a good chance even though it is lagging behind in the polls. The LDK which may however win a few points back due to the popularity and charisma of its new leader has announced that it was ruling out any chance of governing with the DSK. *"We shall form a government of men with a clean bill so that they can really provide solutions to our problems,"* declared Isa Mustafa who, in order to scare the electorate, points to the fact that outgoing Prime Minister Hashim Thaci is about to join forces with the Serbs in the North of Kosovo.

Many analysts think that Isa Mustafa has committed two strategic errors: after having confirmed his desire to define *"a new programme for a new Democratic League"* he gave up undertaking the expected changes to the party and contented himself with half measures in addition to this he did not succeed in retaining Ukë Rugova, the son of the former President of the Republic (2002-2005) and former LDK leader, Ibrahim Rugova within the party. After failing to come to a *"re-integration"* agreement the latter quit the party on 10<sup>th</sup> November with members of the Democratic League-Ibrahim Rugova group which he is leading with Bujar Bukoshi. Ukë Rugova is due to

join up with the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo whose leader is in prison at present at the ICTY in The Hague. *"We are not joining the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo. We are the Ibrahim Rugova List and we are part of the Democratic League. Unfortunately we have not been able to find our place within our party,"* declared Ukë Rugova.

In spite of the recommendation by the Belgrade authorities (they officially called on the Serbs of Kosovo not to take part in the election) a major share of the political parties in this community will participate in the election. Judita Popovic, an MP for the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) led by Dedomir Jovanovic asked the Serbs to fulfil their civic duty on 12<sup>th</sup> December next. *"By participating the Serbs will show that they are prepared to be integrated into society."* Sreten Ivanovic, the leading candidate on the United Serb list believes that these general elections are a chance for the Serb community to solve their most important problems. *"Participation by the Serbs living north of the Ibar in Kosovo institutions is a necessity if we want to continue living here. We boycotted the local and general elections organised by Pristina and finally we have understood that it brought nothing."* However the Assembly of the Town Council Union of Kosovo-Metochia (the name given by the Serbs to the south west part of Kosovo) called on Serbs not to take part in the election and condemned the initiative taken by the United Serb list *"Serbs must not*

*take part in a process whereby they will be acknowledging the independence of Kosovo."* Finally 104 intellectuals and personalities from Serbia sent a message to the Serbs of Kosovo to encourage them to take part in the elections. *"The positive experience of taking part in local elections in 2009 should encourage the Serb community to strengthen its position as an autonomous political entity in Kosovo. We strongly believe that a boycott would be damaging to the Serb community in Kosovo which would only contribute to it becoming a ghetto,"* reads the press release.

According to the polls the DSK is due to win and consolidate its majority in Parliament. The LDK may suffer a setback and lose its place as Kosovo's 2<sup>nd</sup> most important party. In the absence of its leader Ramush Haradinaj the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo led by Ukë Rugova is well placed in the polls. Two other parties are due to make a breakthrough: the Movement for Self-Determination (Vetvendosje) led by Albin Kurti and New Spirit (Fryma e Re), founded and led by Ilir Deda and Shpend Ahmeti, two young graduates of American and British Universities who are defending a social programme and a plan to counter corruption. According to the International Institute for Middle East and Balkan Studies in Ljubljana (IFIMES) these two parties may notably attract the youngest voters and the undecided.

Whatever the result, it seems that the general election on 12<sup>th</sup> December will renew in part the political landscape in Kosovo.

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### **The Democratic Party of outgoing Prime Minister Hashim Thaci won the Kosovar General Elections but it might find it hard to form a government.**

The Democratic Party (DSK) of outgoing Prime Minister Hashim Thaci won the early elections that took place in Kosovo on 12<sup>th</sup> December. According to still incomplete results it is said to have won 33.5% of the vote. It came out ahead of its main rival, the Democra-

RESULT

tic League, led by the Mayor of Pristina, Isa Mustafa which won 23.6% of the vote. The Movement for Self-Rule (Vetvendosje) led by Albin Kurti, which lies to the left and which opposes the presence of foreign troops in the country and supports Kosovo's annexation to Albania came third with 12.2%. It is followed by the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) led by Ramush Haradinaj who is in prison at present at the International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague (ICTY), which won 10.8%. However New Spirit (Fryma e Re), a party founded and led by Ilir Deda and Shpend Ahmeti, did not succeed in rising above the 5% threshold necessary to be represented in Parliament.

The final turnout rose to 47.5% i.e. +7.4 points than in the elections of November 2007. The Serbs living in the enclaves in the South of Kosovo turned out to vote (41% in Graca-

nica, 48% in Strpce, 50% in Partes and 50.32% in Novo Brdo) whilst turnout was almost zero in Serb areas in the north. Around 120,000 Serbs live in Kosovo. The government in Belgrade, which is still claiming Kosovo as one of its provinces, called for a boycott of the election.

These general elections, the first since the independence of Kosovo (17<sup>th</sup> February 2008), were considered by the EU and the USA as a test of the country's democratic maturity. The voted was monitored by 32,000 observers, of whom 840 were from abroad, and the police totalled 6,000 men to ensure that the election occurred peacefully.

*"Victory is ours! The general elections were a referendum on the European future of Kosovo. The Democratic Party achieved an historic, far reaching and most decisive victory this evening,"* declared Hashim Thaci when the results were announced. *"Kosovo is voting for a European future, for the liberalisation of visas, for a Kosovo that is part of NATO, for integration into the EU and the UN,"* he said as he went to vote.

*"Hashim Thaci's Democratic Party is delighted with the support of a very disciplined electoral base,"* said Krenar Gashi, journalist and research director for the think-tank KIPRED just before the elections. The loyalty of the DSK's electorate enabled it to fight off the rise of new parties. In spite of the scandals of recent years the Kosovars have remained extremely attached to the DSK which has many former soldiers of the Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK) amongst its ranks, considered as heroes of the country's independence.

The Democratic League, a member of the government led by Hashim Thaci until a few weeks ago,

has suffered because of the short electoral campaign and did not have enough time to assert its opposition with regard to its former government partner. However in these elections its leader Isa Mustafa was pursuing a more long term goal hoping undoubtedly to strengthen the LDK than win the ballot at any cost. The Mayor of Pristina knows he will need time to build a party that can convince new voters and which is able to compete against the DSK and its other rivals.

*"Albin Kurti was on the sidelines but he was there – he took part. It was already an alternative before and he offers new possibilities in a new situation,"* declared political analyst Ramush Tahiri. Deputy Chair of the Students Union of the University of Pristina, Albin Kurti was the main organiser of the peaceful demonstrations in the autumn of 1997 and the spring of 1998 in Kosovo. He was then the spokesperson for the Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK) before being imprisoned for two years by the Serbs (1999-2001). On his liberation he took over the leadership of the non-violent nationalist movement and rose up against the presence of foreigners in Kosovo and endemic corruption. *"The European Union should send us doctors and economists not policemen and judges. They qualify us as newborn but they throw us into the arena like gladiators. Let them treat us like adults, we can get by on our own"* declared Albin Kurti.

With 16% of the vote and 3<sup>rd</sup> place after his first general election the leader of the Movement for Self-Rule may very well take part in the renewal of the Kosovar political classes.

The next Kosovar government will have a hard task in continuing the construction of the State. It

will have to undertake dialogue with Serbia – as hoped for by the European Union and the USA, obtain the liberalisation of visas, normalise the status of the north of Kosovo – a territory which Pristina still does not control – draw closer to the EU and prepare its entry into NATO.

The country's economic and social situation is still precarious: 45% of Kosovars still live below the poverty line 15% of whom are in a dire situation. All of the parties campaigned on the theme of economic recovery, the reduction of unemployment levels (which affects 48% of the working population) and the fight to counter corruption that is endemic in the country. Hashim Thaci has promised to increase wages (up to 50% for civil servants), to build motorways and to negotiate the abolition of visa obligations for Kosovars who want to travel in the EU

and the USA. Isa Mustafa focused his campaign on the population's growing discontent as well as the fight against corruption and organised crime.

The two main parties have ruled out forming an alliance for the next government. Therefore they will have to deal with one or several of the 27 parties – of whom 15 represent the country's ethnic minorities – which were running in this election. The Movement for Self Rule and the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo have explicitly said that they do not want to join a coalition dominated by the DSK. *"We are going to have a difficult time after these elections because more than two parties are necessary to form a government and in the end there will not be a stable government for the next four years,"* indicated Ardian Arifaj, journalist at the daily Koha Ditore.

#### Results of the General Elections on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2010 in Kosovo

Turnout: 47.5%

Political Parties	% of votes won
Democratic Party (DSK)	33.5
Democratic League (LDK)	23.6
Movement for Self-Rule (Vetvendosje)	12.2
Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK)	10.8
Others	19.9

Source: Central Election Commission of Kosovo  
<http://www.kqz-ks.org/SKQZ-WEB/al/materiale/Rezultatet%20Preliminare%20%202010.pdf>

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