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The plan that seeks “ethnic balance” in North Mitrovica

Kosovo’s Prime Minister has acknowledged that the issues of unifying Mitrovica came up in London. Bajram Rexhepi said that this a package-agreement and the first element is the return of the displaced person to their houses and apartments to north Mitrovica.

What does the idea of unifying north Mitrovica with Zvecan Municipality foresee?
What did the European Stability Initiative (ESI) in fact presented as a proposal on the conference on Mitrovica held two weeks ago in London? ...

Kosovar officials, at the municipal level and those of central institution were surprised by this proposal. Officials from the Municipal Assembly say that they cannot take a stand nor views on this proposal as it is not clear to them where this proposal is coming from. ...

Until 2000, Zvecan was a district within the Municipality of Mitrovica. ...

The main argument that the authors of the proposal have is the fact that the Serbian community fears that if two divided parts of town unify, the Albanian community will be a the majority, and this way will be over-voted. “According to ESI, if North Mitrovica unifies with Zvecan municipality a multiethnic balance of 60 % Serbian and 40 % Albanian population could be achieved’: said Bajram Rexhepi Kosovo’s Prime Minister, who was one of the attendants of the London conference.

According to Mustafa Pllana, vice-president of the Municipality Assembly, who also attended the London Conference, the proposal is not to unify North Mitrovica with Zvecan Municipality but to ‘twin’ the municipalities. There was no proposal made at all. All that was going on were informal discussions. There might have been other proposals (scenarios) going on, but the material that they presented proposed to ‘twin’ the municipality of Mitrovica and Zvecan.

According to the information that we found on Internet, ESI is a non-profit research and political institute, created in recognition of the pressing need for independent, in-depth analysis of the complex issues involved in promoting stability and prosperity in South Eastern Europe. ESI was founded in July 1999 by a multi-national group of practitioners and analysts with extensive experience in South Eastern Europe. ESI's efforts depend on the contributions of governments, corporations and private individuals to fund its activities.

It is believed that the ESI initiative took place based on information they gathered from both sides and the main question remains: how to encourage local political structures and Mitrovica citizens to enter a new project of economic development perspectives and enter a project for the creation of new job opportunities.

Kosovo's Prime Minister has acknowledged that the issues of unifying Mitrovica came up in London. Bajram Rexhepi said that this a package-agreement and its first element is the return of the displaced person to their houses and apartments to north Mitrovica. "First the freedom of movement should be achieved; we should enable the return of all those who have their houses and apartments in North Mitrovica and then we can move on to agree whether the unification of North Mitrovica with Zvecan municipality shall take place": declared Bajram Rexhepi, Kosovo's Prime Minister. "This was the idea that we discussed in London. We tried to see if we this is a reasonable proposal however no agreement or promise took place" continued Prime Minister Rexhepi.

He refused to comment whether the idea of this British institute will be accepted or refused but he promised that he would seriously consider it. But the Prime Minister never marked one negative point of this proposal. He encouraged all institutional leaders as well as the political leaders to consider seriously this proposal.

If the proposal is fully accepted, the return of the all the displaced inhabitants and legal local elections will have a positive impact that the division of the town of Mitrovica is not feasible. I cannot yet say whether I am in favor or not of the proposal. We shall take a deep look at this issue. Also we will consider the price we have to pay if we accept or refuse the proposal said Prime Minister.

"Now we shall have our aims set clearly. Do we want a Kosovo, which is administrated, by UNMIK and our own institutions that will have power over all our territory or we want Kosovo to be led by parallel structures and enclaves. We have to give our opinions and evaluate ourselves and then give an answer.

There is a status quo existing in Mitrovica, besides the positive changes such as movement over the Iber Bridge, UNMIK administration in North Mitrovica, Mitrovica still needs a brighter perspective, said Rexhepi. Mustafa Pllana sees this as a "lost idea": I do not know who will be the one that will present this idea to the Municipal Assembly. According to him this is a complex issue because municipal "borders" can be determined by the SRSG only.

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