

## **Kosovo: New UN Boss Faces Political Mess**

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Kosovo's newly appointed UN administrator will have his hands full when he takes up the post.

A new UN chief for Kosovo has finally been named, but with the province close to chaos, he faces an uphill struggle.

At the moment, it is not clear when Michael Steiner will take over as UN administrator for Kosovo, replacing Hans Haekkerup who resigned unexpectedly in December, leaving the international protectorate with a power vacuum.

Kosovo currently has no president, no prime minister and no functioning ministries. What's worse, the internationals who once ran the show are faltering. In addition to Haekkerup's resignation last month, the mandate of Daan Everts, chief of OSCE mission in Kosovo, expired on November 30, 2001, with his successor, Pascal Fieschi, being named only a week ago.

Two years after the war, the people of Kosovo hoped that the November 17 elections would give the region self-governing institutions, after a decade of Belgrade's apartheid policies.

But the new Kosovo assembly has failed to elect a president in three consecutive sessions due to squabbling among the main political parties, and without a president, no prime minister or other government ministers can be appointed.

Val Percival of the International Crisis Group, ICG, said,"

"Haekkerup left too early - and the fact that parliament has not yet elected a president leads me to believe that [Kosovo] is in an institutional vacuum."

Kosovo currently has no functioning ministries and the Joint Interim Administration departments, made up of locals and internationals, were wound up weeks before the parliamentary elections were held, to prepare the way for a new local administration.

In theory, the UN chief administrator's deputy, Charles Brayshaw, continues to make important decisions about the running of the region, but the impression is that he is not coping too well.

This is evident from the fact that in education and other public service sectors there are real problems which seem to have resulted from the absence of high-level decision-making.

There are many disputes over when the new semester should begin after the winter vacation is over. Education chiefs on municipality councils have ordered schools to reopen at different times - as a result some children are back in class while others are still on holiday. The Kosovo energy company, meanwhile, says it needs help in collecting unpaid electricity bills.

The power vacuum has itself become the issue of yet more wrangling, with every political player trying to

pin the blame for the current crisis on someone else.

The four biggest parties in Kosovo, namely - the Democratic League of Kosovo, the Democratic Party of Kosovo and the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, as well as the Serbian coalition Povratak - have all criticised Haekkerup for resigning at such a crucial time, claiming his departure has contributed to the chaos.

UNMIK spokesman, Simon Haselock, says the criticism is unfair. "I do not think the [Kosovo] president would have been elected had Haekkerup been here. The UN chief administrator cannot force the politicians to reach a deal."

ICG analyst Peter Palmer claimed Kosovo politicians bore much responsibility for the current mess. "How can new institutions, a government and ministries be established when political leaders have not shown readiness to establish the government."

Arsim Bajrami, from the Democratic Party, warns that the political deadlock could lead to anarchy, as the one-month delay in establishing institutions means six-month delay in the legislative process.

Some locals believe that the arrival of a new chief UN administrator will help move things forward. Shkëlzen Maliqi, a philosopher and an analyst, says Michael Steiner's familiarity with Balkan affairs will stand him in good stead, particularly in dealing with the big issues affecting the region,

such as Kosovo's future status.

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