American Foreign Policy Council

# Kosovo

## QUICK FACTS

Population: 1,815,048

Area: 10,887 sq km

Ethnic Groups: Albanians 92%, other (Serb, Bosniak, Gorani, Roma, Turk, Ashkali, Egyptian) 8%

Religions: Muslim, Serbian Orthodox, Roman Catholic

Government Type: Republic

GDP (official exchange rate): $3.237 billion


Map and Quick Facts courtesy of the CIA World Factbook (Last Updated July 2010)

*Although Islam has been present in Kosovo for the past seven centuries, the most significant developments have occurred since the 1999 NATO intervention, which enabled numerous Islamic states and fundamentalist-oriented charities to enter the country, then under the jurisdiction of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). For the first time, Islamic governments, donors and proselytizers had open access to this economically underdeveloped, war-ravaged corner of Europe.*

*Today, Kosovo is an independent state (though still not recognized as such by many countries), and the domestic discussion of Islam—and Islamism—has entered a new phase. Although foreign Islamists left behind numerous new mosques and religious schools, they have, at least so far, failed to re-orient the majority of Kosovo's*

*Muslims toward a strict Wahhabi interpretation of the religion. At the same time, efforts by Catholic and Protestant missionaries from abroad have generated a countervailing pressure. Yet a number of violent incidents within Kosovo, and terrorist attacks abroad involving Kosovar Muslims, showcase the potential for a growth in Islamic radicalism—and its spillover into the international arena.*

# ISLAMIST ACTIVITY

Ethnic Albanians comprise 90 percent of Kosovo's population of two million. The vast majority is Muslim, although the lack of recent census data makes accurate figures hard to ascertain.[1] Approximately three percent of Kosovo's Albanians are Catholic, though this population seems to be increasing, while various foreign Protestant denominations have tried (so far, with lesser success) to convert Kosovo's Muslims to their faith. The beleaguered Serbian minority of 120,000 persons, largely concentrated around a few scattered central enclaves and in more compact northern municipalities around the ethnically-divided city of Mitrovica, is Orthodox Christian. However, there is also a small Serbian-speaking Slavic Muslim minority, the Gorani, who primarily inhabit the mountainous southwestern area around Dragas, nestled between Macedonia and Albania. The small Roma (Gypsy) minority is mainly Muslim as well, but less active, limited by having an idiosyncratic lifestyle on the margins of society.

In Kosovo, Islam has played an important role in shaping national identity. The country is often referred to as the "cradle" of the medieval Serbian empire, which left abundant reminders of its presence in scores of Orthodox Christian churches and monasteries. However, Kosovo was captured by the Ottoman Turks in the late 14th century. Islam thereafter became the dominant religion, with considerable privileges conferred on those who converted (such as the gradually increasing ethnic Albanian population). During Communist Yugoslav rule, all religions were strictly controlled, while the Kosovo Albanian population increased further and several thousand ethnic Turks and Albanians emigrated to Turkey.

Today's Islamist activity in Kosovo (in terms of an organized and

foreign-influenced version of Islam) began around the time of the NATO intervention that ended Yugoslav rule over the province in summer 1999. The Kosovo crisis sparked considerable sympathy among foreign Islamic donors (and also brought some additional fighters to the region), though the nationalist character of the uprising meant that the Albanian rebels sought to downplay any religious element in their protest. Indeed, the majority of funding for the resistance, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), came from other means—from the personal donations of patriotic Diaspora Albanians, as well as from the proceeds of narcotics trafficking conducted by tight-knit Albanian mafia structures involved with heroin distribution in Europe.[2]

Any detailed discussion of Islamist activity in Kosovo must begin with an acknowledgement of the complexity and singularity of the prevailing local conditions, which cumulatively have created a friendly environment for a certain kind of Islamism to take root. Powerful clan structures and pervasive organized crime have long fueled allegations of crime and corruption against local and international leaders alike. Frustration among the general public after 1999 was also fueled by the perceived lack of political and economic change in the post-Yugoslav "transition" period. The unaccountable and uninvolved nature of an international UN mission that changed staff frequently and had no long-term responsibilities for Kosovo's well-being also hindered prospects of real change. And, most visibly, there has been the continuing political impasse with Serbia, which refuses to concede Kosovo's independence—a policy in which it is still supported by a majority of the world's nations. All of these local realities have created in Kosovo a situation in which Islamism can be presented both as a long-term social solution and in the short-term manipulated for violence in otherwise ethnic-based incidents.

The first foreign Islamist actors in Kosovo came via an assortment of Islamic charities, the most important being an umbrella organization of the Saudi government, the Saudi Joint Commission for the Relief of Kosovo and Chechnya (SJCRKC), and its official Kuwaiti counterpart, the Kuwaiti Joint Relief Committee (KJRC). Along

with waves of returning Albanian refugees, representatives of these groups (and the Islamic charities organized within them), entered the country from neighboring Albania, where Albanian and U.S. authorities had been monitoring, and working to control, suspected international terrorist suspects. The Saudis initially allocated over $22.5 million for the rebuilding (or construction of new) mosques and schools, and also for supporting orphans in Kosovo.[3]

Aside from charities, a major opportunity for foreign Islamic development, recruitment and intelligence activity came as a result of the broad participation of many nations (including major Muslim states) in the interim UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), and the Kosovo Force (KFOR) peacekeeping units authorized by UN Security Council Resolution 1244. Muslim states like Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Egypt and Turkey used this rare "official cover" in a previously closed part of Europe to develop their own interests in Kosovo. For example, in October 1999 alone, Saudi sponsors donated 200,000 copies of the Koran in Albanian/Arabic translation as part of efforts to promulgate the Kingdom's official brand of Islamism in the Balkans.[4]

Although the volume of such personnel would gradually diminish over time, and in some cases disappear completely with the progressive downsizing of the UN mission, there is little doubt that Kosovo was vulnerable to foreign Islamist penetration in the early years of post-Yugoslav rule. The legal limbo of Kosovo's international status also meant a no-visa policy, which opened up the borders and made Kosovo Europe's primary "safe zone" for foreign radicals.

From early on, Western experts raised concerns regarding the arrival of Wahhabism—the Saudi state's ultra-conservative version of Islam—and what it could portend for Kosovo's future. However, Kosovar Islamic leaders maintained (then as now) that the appeal of such worldviews was limited and represented no threat to the traditional fabric of Islamic society.[5] Indeed, overly aggressive Wahhabi sponsors angered local Albanian Muslims on a number of occasions, such as when they desecrated tombs and demolished parts of shrines belonging to the traditional Bektashi order of Islam—a

more relaxed, Shi'ite-influenced hold-over from Ottoman times that was and is considered heretical by many Sunnis (including the Wahhabis).[6] This aggressive strategy caused a backlash among local Muslims, leading Wahhabi groups to cease destroying "heretical" structures and simply concentrate on building new mosques in the distinctive Arab style.

The dynamic of Islamist activity in Kosovo has changed gradually, along with the political and social situation. In the early years, a key target was the country's non-Muslim population. Chronically antagonistic relations between Albanians and Serbs have largely been ethnic in character but, as a 2010 U.S. Department of State report noted, "the close link between ethnicity and religion [have] made it difficult to determine if events were motivated by ethnic or religious animosity."[7]

These animosities and related attacks are indeed difficult to ascertain, though there has undeniably been a religious aspect to violence on both sides. According to Albanian sources, 216 of the 513 mosques that existed in Kosovo in the year 2000 had been damaged in fighting during the 1990s, while over 80 Christian churches and mosques were attacked by Albanians (*after*, not before, the arrival of 40,000 NATO peacekeepers in July 1999).[8] And there is no question that the major post-war conflagration—the country's March 2004 riots, in which 50,000 Albanians targeted Serbs and foreign nationals across Kosovo—had an Islamic aspect. For example, after over 30 Serbian Orthodox churches were attacked, DVDs of the destruction were soon being circulated in radical Western European mosques; further, a confidential NATO document subsequently indicated that the alleged masterminds of these pre-planned riots had had ties to Hezbollah and al-Qaeda.[9]

Whereas traditional antagonisms were ethnic in nature (albeit with religious overtones), recent years have seen an emergence of intra-ethnic tensions within the Albanian Muslim community, as well as hostility from Albanian Muslims toward Albanian Catholics, and finally toward local and foreign members of the Catholic and Protestant denominations. This is due to two factors: first, the steady

decline of the Serbian minority and Kosovo's 2008 declaration of independence, both of which minimized the Serbs' traditional status as the primary oppressive force restricting the freedom of Albanians; and second, the internal struggles for control between rival Muslim factions, as a young generation trained abroad or exposed to foreign versions of Islam openly contests the worship practices of their elders.

This phenomenon is similar to that currently seen in neighboring Albania and Macedonia, where ethnic Albanians also comprise the vast majority of local Muslim populations. Internet websites, social media, book printing and distribution, and use of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been the main vehicles for "networking Islam" within Kosovo (and its neighboring countries). As in these and other parts of the Balkans, it is commonly believed that the sect members are paid by foreign Islamic groups for men to grow long beards and to cover women. (Evidence of such a connection, however, is limited to the anecdotal testimony of local Muslims.) It is significant to note that these younger, foreign-oriented Muslims do not call themselves Wahhabis (now a pejorative term in the Balkans) but rather see themselves as "brothers" or simply "believers."

Tensions within the wider Islamic community in Kosovo over control of mosques or other religious institutions likewise have been witnessed. For example, an elderly *imam* in the Drenica region of Kosovo was attacked in January 2009 by numerous bearded Wahhabis from the area in an act of intimidation believed to be associated with a desire to "take over" the mosque.[10] Attacks of this type have been witnessed throughout the Balkans in recent years.

A common facet of Islamist activity has been the use of charities and NGOs, and appropriation of public facilities such as sports halls for fundamentalist preaching. This is something authorities and international watchdogs have noted and tried to counter when possible. For example, the State Department's 2009 *Country Reports on Terrorism* noted that Kosovo police and the UN Mission in Kosovo "continued to monitor suspected terrorist activity," believing that

several NGOs were involved in "suspicious activities." These authorities were also trying "to prevent extremists from using non-governmental organizations to gain a foothold in Kosovo," and "to prevent misuse of facilities for events that had no consent from the relevant religious community."[11] Such events, some of which are also held in private residences or apartments, have been recorded by Islamists and circulated on DVD or Internet websites.

Islamist activity has also targeted foreign Christian groups attempting to establish themselves in Kosovo. Unsurprisingly, Evangelical Christian attempts to convert local Muslims, particularly in more violence-prone provincial areas, have yielded a severe response. In recent years, Protestants have increasingly reported threats and intimidation from local Islamists; in one high-profile case, personal data on members of the Protestant community was reproduced by up to 100 Islamic websites. Subsequently, in May 2010, a missionary reported being physically attacked by Islamists in the southern town of Prizren, a long-acknowledged center of Islamism in Kosovo.[12]

The most dangerous, and unpredictable, aspect of Islamist activity related to Kosovo often occurs outside of its borders. Over the past few years, Kosovar Albanians in the Diaspora have been found involved in both terrorist cells and organized crime.[13] In the United States, these extremists were implicated in the foiled 2008 attack on Fort Dix in New Jersey,[14] and in a more recent but similar foiled plot against the U.S. Marine Corps base in Quantico, Virginia.[15] However, an organized al-Qaeda terrorist cell is not believed to exist in Kosovo currently. In recent years U.S. and other intelligence services have estimated that there may well be loose connections on the individual level between local Muslims and radicals abroad.

# ISLAMISM AND SOCIETY

Kosovo has one of the youngest populations in Europe, and is plagued by high unemployment, pervasive organized crime and limited socio-economic opportunity—factors known to contribute to violent extremism. As such, the situation in Kosovo bears careful monitoring.

The officially recognized Muslim organization in the country is the Islamic Community of Kosovo (in Albanian, *Bashkësia Islame e Kosovës*, or BIK), led by Chief Mufti Naim Trnava.[16] It is intended to represent the totality of Islam in the country, though there are traditional Bektashi Sufi communities, particularly in western Kosovo, that have certain differences in doctrine and practice. Nevertheless, both the Bektashi and Hanafi Sunni Muslims generally get along and are united by a strong sense of ethnic Albanian nationalism. There are, however, foreign-oriented Wahhabi Muslims who fall outside the cracks of the BIK and its control. Their numbers are notoriously difficult to calculate, as there is no strict doctrine or separate institutions governing them; they simple consider themselves "better," more committed Muslims than the rest.

As discussed, in the aftermath of the NATO intervention, Muslim charities made extensive efforts in the areas of proselytization, orphan care, Islamic education, banking and loans, and so on. However, while their more aggressive efforts met with resistance from Albanians determined to preserve their own traditions and local control, foreign states have succeeded in some respects. With unemployment remaining high and the social needs of the country's poorest and neediest still often neglected, Islamic groups have sought to style themselves as alternative service providers. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other countries thus have built numerous mosques and educational facilities, with a clear strategic goal: in the words of one Kosovar commentator, "to create a new generation of loyal Muslims – not (loyal) to Kosovo but to the Islamic international."[17]

While these efforts have failed to make notable inroads among the majority of Kosovo's Muslim population, they have succeeded in building a tangible and ideological infrastructure in terms of new, Saudi-style mosques and young *imams* and students educated in Islamic states. Their subtle but increasingly vocal influence has manifested itself in occasional protests over issues such as bans of the head scarf in public institutions, and protests against construction of churches by their Catholic ethnic kin. In post-Serbian Kosovo, these examples of discord may mark new cleavages to come between

secular and religious Albanians, and among Albanians of different faiths.

Islamists have typically used Islamic NGOs and youth groups to foment protests and shape common policies on these controversial issues. For example, in May and June 2010, Islamist groups organized street protests after a high school student in the town of Ferizaj was expelled for wearing a headscarf. While the Kosovo government has sought to implement strictly secular laws in this regard, a local court had given Islamists room for hope in overturning another, similar ban on a schoolgirl from Vitina who wished to wear a headscarf. Veiled Muslim women have also complained that employers will not hire them.[18]

Emerging discord between Albanian Muslims and Catholics became apparent in September 2010, when the new Catholic Cathedral of the Blessed Mother Teresa—the famed nun of Calcutta is an ethnic Albanian national hero—was opened in the capital, Pristina. The building drew the ire of Muslim groups, who chafed at the apparent preferential treatment from the government received by Catholics (who comprise only about three percent of the population), and for good reason; a 2004 Muslim demand for a grand mosque had been turned down by authorities. This refusal was deemed "unacceptable" by Ferid Agani, chairman of the pro-Islamic Justice Party of Kosovo (a small but vocal conservative party which holds two out of Kosovo's 120 parliamentary seats) and as a "political decision" by *imams* in media testimony.[19] Soon after the Pristina cathedral was opened, threatening graffiti began to appear throughout the city proclaiming that Islamist worship would be conducted in it.[20] Other pro-Islamist figures at the time argued that "fairness" required a mosque to be built if a church was—an argument identical to the one that their co-religionists continue to make throughout the region.

Although the Catholic population of Kosovo is a mere 60,000 persons, it has a disproportionate significance, for both historical and contemporary reasons. Before the arrival of the Turks in the late-14th century, Albanians were Catholic. However, they subsequently converted to Islam for the social benefits it conferred. Therefore,

the idea of "returning" to an "original religion" is an argument sometimes encountered in Kosovo. Further, the idea that becoming Christian will give one a better chance of acceptance in Western Europe is also widely held.[21] In 2005, former Albanian president Alfred Moisiu provoked an uproar from Islamist groups following a speech in England in which he stated that Albanians follow a "shallow" sort of Islam, and have deeper Christian roots.[22]

Further, with the erection of the Pristina cathedral, the Catholic Church there has been upgraded to the status of diocese by the Vatican. It is clear from recent events that the Roman Catholic Church is taking a greater interest in spreading Catholicism in Kosovo. Significantly, on February 10, 2011, the Vatican commissioned its first apostolic delegate to Kosovo, Papal Nuncio in Slovenia Juliusz Janusz. While the Vatican has made clear that it does not recognize Kosovo's independence, and takes pains to not "offend" the Serbian Orthodox Church on this issue, it clearly seems to believe that the time has come to promote Catholicism more strongly against Islamic expansionism.[23]

Islamic assistance to Kosovar society has come over the years from a variety of organizations, starting with the Saudi Joint Committee and continuing with numerous foreign-based charities which have sought to develop local offshoots and self-sustaining entities. Their social impact is still not clear, in part because they have concentrated on Islamic education for the young and very young (orphan sponsorship and care has been a main project of numerous charities). While a number of "suspicious" charities were closed in the aftermath of 9/11, major global organizations like Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) continue to operate. Aside from typical charity activities, such groups offer loans and "micro-credit" schemes in a bid to extend Islamic influence over small businessmen and rural communities. By 2004 alone, the IRW had handed out over 500 loans "based on Islamic principles" to Kosovar businesses.[24] The organization remains very active in Kosovo today, as well as in other Balkan states.[25]

The issue of Islam in social assistance has led to some difficult

choices for average Kosovars. A prominent example was the case of Kastriot Duka, a former *imam* in the village of Marina, near Mitrovica. Although the locals were grateful for the financial and other assistance he had provided through contacts with a British-based charity, Rahma Mercy, the religious conservatism he promoted in the mosque—such as veiling four-year-old girls—was widely seen as excessive. By order of the local mayor, Duka was sent back to his native Albania (officially, on charges of visa violation). Duka's expulsion came after a petition against him was signed by 6,000 locals.[26] This kind of difficult decision between social care and fundamentalism will continue as the weak state struggles to care for its citizens, and as international disagreements over Kosovo's legal status continue to hamper the country from full participation in all international institutions.

## ISLAMISM AND THE STATE

Long before becoming an independent state in 2008, Kosovo's relationship with Islam had been heavily influenced by external considerations. After the spectacle of thousands of "Afghan-Arab" *mujahideen* joining the Muslim side during the Bosnian war (1992-1995), the KLA considered it wise to ignore offers for help from foreign fighters in the subsequent conflict in Kosovo, in order to win political support from the United States. Although numerous Muslim charities and state actors were welcomed into Kosovo in the immediate aftermath of the 1999 NATO intervention, the 9/11 attacks had a sobering effect, and the Kosovar administration, then heavily controlled by the UN Mission, attempted to purge those NGOs and charities seen as linked to terrorism. At the same time, partisan critics of Kosovo Albanian separatism increasingly tried to draw connections between Kosovo and Islamic terrorism, making Islam a highly political (and opaque) issue.

The subsequent U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq led American diplomats to search the globe for examples of "success stories" in "pro-American" Muslim states. Kosovo was an obvious choice in this regard. The drive toward Kosovo independence, a goal supported by powerful countries such as the U.S., UK and Germany, led to the depiction of Kosovo's brand of Islam as harmless, a sort

of "Islam-lite."[27] However, the Kosovar state also was trying to woo the Arab world—which had poured billions into the country's development and anticipated Islamic re-direction, to little apparent effect—and reverse Serbia's initial successes in preventing the major Islamic states from recognizing Kosovo. Although powerful states such as Saudi Arabia have since recognized Kosovo, Belgrade pledges to continue to slow the recognition process as much as it can, while Pristina seeks to win further recognition.[28]

The ongoing political impasse with Serbia, as well as highly combustible issues impairing Kosovar-EU relations—such as alleged involvement of Kosovo's top leaders in wartime organ trafficking and drug smuggling—have left one country as the clear beneficiary: Turkey. The current Islamist-leaning government in Ankara seeks to expand its influence in formerly Ottoman lands, and in Kosovo it has done so through development work, investment and political engagement. Moreover, many Kosovars have relatives in Turkey, as a 1950s-era resettlement program by former Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito sent thousands of Kosovar Albanians there. These ties, and the Western desire for Islam to remain "moderate" in the Balkans, feed naturally into the idea of a Turkish expansion in Kosovo and neighboring states.

In this regard, the relative strength of Kosovar state institutions is of paramount importance. A major test of this came with the abovementioned terrorist plot against the Marine base in Quantico, Virginia in 2009. When the FBI sought to extradite a chief supporting suspect, Bajram Asllani, a judge with the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) ruled that he could not be rendered for lack of a valid bilateral agreement, and insufficient evidence.[29] Although it is not known whether fears of an Islamist backlash played a role in the judge's strange decision, this dysfunctional trans-Atlantic security cooperation is clearly benefiting the increasingly confident and assertive Islamist groups of Kosovo.

# ENDNOTES

[1] At time of writing, Kosovo was planning its first post-independence national census for fall 2011. In noting these tentative religious group calculations, a 2010 US State Department mentions that the last reliable census was held in the 1980s (during the former Yugoslavia). See United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *International Religious Freedom Report 2010*, November 17, 2010.

[2] For the first, see Dutch filmmaker Klaartje Quirijns's 2005 documentary *The Brooklyn Connection* (www.thebrooklynconnection.net), which details how Albanian-American Diaspora leaders were able to raise $30 million for weaponry which they then smuggled to the KLA. There is a vast literature on the second aspect; for example, read the very detailed contemporary testimony of then-Interpol Assistant Director Ralph Mutschke, who gives an impressive assessment of the range of activities, geographical scope, profits and international crime partners of the major Albanian syndicates, as well as comments on links between such organized crime proceeds and terrorism. See Ralf Mutschke, Testimony before the House of Representatives Judiciary Committee, October 24, 2006.

[3] A detailed contemporaneous description of the specific Kosovar refugee relief operations undertaken by Arab groups in Albania, and their subsequent entrance from there into Kosovo, is found in Hussein Saud Qusti, "Unsung Heroes," *Saudi Aramco World*, July/August 1999. Regarding the role of U.S. and Albanian authorities targeting Islamist groups in Albania during the mid-1990s, see the *World Almanac of Islamism* chapter on Albania.

[4] Frank Brown, "Islam Builds a Future in Kosovo, One Mosque at a Time," Religious News Service, September 12, 2000.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Examples include United Arab Emirates soldiers forcing Albanian villagers in Vushtrri to destroy two historic graveyards in October 1999, and the Saudi bulldozing of a 16th-century Koranic school and Ottoman library in Djakovica in August 2000. See Jolyon Naegele, "Yugoslavia: Saudi Wahhabi Aid Workers Bulldoze Balkan Monuments," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, August 4, 2000.

[7] See United States Department of State, *International Religious Freedom Report 2010.*

[8] Brown, "Islam Builds a Future in Kosovo, One Mosque at a Time."

[9] See Christopher Deliso, *The Coming Balkan Caliphate: The Threat of Radical Islam to Europe and the West* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2007), 65-67.

[10] The story appeared in numerous local media, including on *Radio Television Kosova*, January 12, 2009.

[11] "Chapter 2 Country Reports: Europe and Eurasia Overview," in United States Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2008* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, April 30, 2009).
[12] Cases cited in United States Department of State, *International Religious Freedom Report 2010*. (Protestant community members have also reported independently to the author of having been physically assaulted by Islamists in Kosovo). This report also notes the official Kosovo Islamic Community's "concerns about radical Islamic groups they alleged were operating from private homes and led by persons from outside of the country."
[13] The full story of this interaction is reported only partially, and in various sources. See "Kosovo Drug Baron among Terrorists," *Blic* (Belgrade), September 27, 2006. See also Genc Morina, "Radical Islam: Wahhabism a Danger to Kosovo's Independence!" *Express* (Pristina), October 15, 2006. For official reactions to the acquittal, see Nina Berglund, "Reaction Mixed to Terror Acquittal," *Aftenposten* (Oslo), June 4, 2008
[14] Geoff Mulvihill, "Man pleads guilty in Fort Dix plot case," Associated Press, October 31, 2007.
[15] See Gerry J. Gilmore, "FBI, Navy Foil Alleged Terror Plot on Quantico," American Forces Press Service, September 25, 2009. See also U.S. Department of Justice, "Kosovar National Charged with Terrorism Violations," June 17, 2010.
[16] The official web site of the BIK is www.bislame.net.
[17] See Genc Morina, "Radical Islam: Wahhabism a Danger to Kosovo's Independence!"
[18] United States Department of State, *International Religious Freedom Report 2010.*
[19] Gjergj Erebara, "Kosovo's New Cathedral Stirs Muslim Resentment," BalkanInsight, October 4, 2010
[20] Ibid.
[21] See Christopher Deliso, "Lost in Conversion?" www.balkanalysis.com, October 23, 2008.
[22] The original text of the speech was published on the official website of the President of Albania, www.president.al.
[23] See Matteo Albertini, "The Vatican's Growing Prominence in Kosovo," www.balkanalysis.com, April 14, 2011
[24] Deliso, *The Coming Balkan Caliphate*,65-67, 120-121. Islamic Relief still has extensive activities in Kosovo and helps maintain the UK-Kosovo axis of Islamist activity.
[25] A list of the charity's projects in Kosovo is available on its official website, www.islamic-relief.com.
[26] Linda Karadaku, "Kosovo Deports Self-Proclaimed Imam," *SETimes*, March 11, 2010.

[27] This could be seen in media pieces printed immediately after the independence declaration, such as "Kosovo Touts 'Islam-lite,'" Associated Press, February 21, 2008.

[28] At the time of writing, a total of 76 countries have recognized Kosovo's independence. The major Muslim countries that immediately or eventually recognized Kosovo include Afghanistan, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Somalia, Qatar and Oman. However, powerful nations such as Russia, China, Brazil, India, Israel, South Africa and Iran, still do not. A number of other countries are said to be deciding soon, such as Kuwait, but diplomatic pressure from both Pristina and Belgrade continues to play a role.

[29] For background, see Fatos Bytyci, "Alleged Jihadist Wanted by FBI Lives Openly in Kosovo," Reuters, November 24, 2010. The suspect remains on the Bureau's most-wanted list.