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July 18, 2008

Ban Ki-Moon: Tensions between Serbs and Albanians on the rise

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United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon warned that the declaration of Kosovo's independence and the events that followed, including the new constitution and the Serbian rejection of the freshly proclaimed statehood, have increased tensions between Serbs and Albanians, despite the fact that overall security situation appears calm at the surface.

“While the general security situation remains calm on the surface, Pristina's declaration of independence and the entry into force of the Kosovo constitution, and reactions by Kosovo Serbs and Belgrade have increased tension between the Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb communities,” Ban said in a regular quarterly report, which will be reviewed by the UN Security Council on July 25.

UN Secretary General reiterated that the world organization “maintained a position of strict neutrality on the question of Kosovo's status.”

“However, since Kosovo's declaration of independence, UNMIK has been confronted with a substantially changed situation in Kosovo and has faced fundamental challenges to its authority and role. As I have communicated to the Security Council, in the light of these developments, it is my assessment that UNMIK can no longer perform as effectively as in the past the vast majority of its tasks as an interim administration throughout all of Kosovo,” Ban said.

“In the light of the fact that the Security Council is unable to provide guidance, I have instructed my Special Representative to move forward with the reconfiguration of UNMIK... in order to adapt UNMIK to a changed reality and address current and emerging operational requirements in Kosovo,” Ban said.

Ban's new report came amid lasting diplomatic battle between Belgrade and Pristina over the international support for their opposing goals, with both sides equally active in lobbying various countries to back either quest for full sovereignty or continuation of Serbia's territorial integrity.

UN chief notified the 15-member body that his new representative in Kosovo, Italian diplomat Lamberto Zannier “would engage in dialogue with Belgrade in six key areas of practical mutual concern”, including police, courts, customs, transportation and infrastructure, boundaries and Serbian patrimony.

The dialogue, Ban added, would be brought forward in close consultation with the authorities in Pristina and with key stakeholders.



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An also warned of “downward trend” considering the return of displaced persons to Kosovo, as just 215 people, 49 Serbs and 108 Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians, returned to Kosovo between January and May.