



**MULTI-ETHNIC
CARAVAN**
FOR PEACE AND
COHABITATION

**Meetings
in Peja/Peć:
Municipal and Religious Leaders**

November 2024

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Foreword

The civil society initiative "Multi-Ethnic Caravan for Peace and Cohabitation" includes 10 representatives from the Albanian and Serbian civil society communities, led by the Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development (KIPRED), based in Prishtina/Priština, and NGO Aktiv, based in North Mitrovica. This initiative is supported by the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (KFOS).

The "Multi-Ethnic Caravan for Peace and Cohabitation" aims to foster dialogue, understanding, and cooperation between different ethnic and religious communities, and to contribute to strengthening inter-ethnic cohabitation in Kosovo.

A unique aspect of this initiative is the "Letters of Desires and Expectations," written by the Caravan participants. These letters express their hopes and visions for cohabitation and mutual respect between different ethnic groups. They serve as a basis for our discussions with mayors and religious leaders, and they also include suggestions for improving relations and cohabitation between ethnic communities.

We invite you to support the goals of this initiative in strengthening the foundations and building a multi-ethnic, democratic, and liberal society in Kosovo.

Lulzim Peci
Executive Director
KIPRED

Miodrag Miličević
Executive Director
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I. Introduction

The "Multi-Ethnic Caravan for Peace and Coexistence" third stop was Peja/Pec – the city which represents a unique crossroad for Serbian Orthodox Church, The Catholic Church and the Islamic Community. It was also among the most damaged urban centres from the war of 1998-1999. The meetings included the Mayor of Peja/Pec municipality, the local head of the Islamic Community of Kosovo, the local representative of the Catholic Church, and of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Central to this endeavor are the "Wishes and Expectations Letters," which are thoughtfully composed by the participants of the caravan. These letters are more than mere formalities; they embody the sincere hopes and visions of their authors for a future where different ethnic groups live together in respect and peace. The letters are foundational to the dialogue process, guiding discussions with mayors and religious leaders. They contain insightful suggestions that are aimed at improving interethnic relations and enhancing daily cohabitation among communities.

Prior to the meetings, all members of the Caravan wrote "Letters of desires and expectations" to the key interlocutors in Peja/Peć: Mayor Gazmend Muhaxheri; local Head of Islamic Community of Peja/Peć – Musli ef. Arifaj, Don Lorenc Sopi of the Catholic Church of Saint Catherine in Peja/Peć and Mother Haritin, Abbess of the Patriarchy of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Peć/Peja.

The following text outlines the key insights drawn from these important discussions, as well as the letters expressing the aspirations and expectations shared by the Caravan members.

II. Meeting with political and religious leaders in Peja/Peć

Key takeaways from the meeting with the Office of the Mayor

Meeting with the Mayor of Peja, Mr. Gazmend Muhaxheri, 11 November 2024. Through the letters of desires and expectations, members of the Caravan expressed their desire for a greater role of the municipality of Peja/Peć in advancement of multi-ethnicity and tolerance, and have put forth concrete proposals for consideration.

Key proposals from the letters of desires and expectations addressed to the Mayor:

- **Promotion of Multi-Ethnic Dialogue:** Civil society leaders emphasized the need to foster dialogue between different ethnic communities in Peja/Peć to enhance mutual understanding and respect. The mayor's support for initiatives that elevate cultural diversity and promote common values is considered crucial.
- **Encouraging Inter-Ethnic Collaboration:** There is a strong encouragement for the mayor to support joint initiatives and collaborative actions among civil society organizations, local governments, and religious leaders to work towards common community goals.
- **Addressing Discrimination and Ensuring Equality:** The letters urge the mayor to implement and support legal mechanisms that monitor and address ethnic tensions or discrimination, ensuring fairness and protection for all citizens.

- **Economic Collaboration:** There is a call for promoting economic collaboration between different ethnic communities through joint business ventures and creating platforms such as local markets for trade and cooperation to strengthen local economies and foster unity.
- **Community Inclusivity:** The initiative stresses the importance of developing programs that highlight the value of diversity and cooperation, ensuring that all citizens feel valued and included.
- **Cultural and Educational Programs:** There is a suggestion to establish a citizens' advisory council with representatives from various ethnic groups to ensure every voice is heard and considered in municipal decisions.
- **Advocacy for Serb Leadership and Inclusion:** Proposals include advocating for the inclusion of Serb perspectives in regional and national policymaking and supporting Serb community members to participate actively in decision-making processes.
- **Inter-Municipal Cooperation:** Exploring pathways to increase intermunicipal interaction through regular meetings with other mayors to discuss mutually beneficial projects, possibly establishing a Multi-Ethnic Youth Centre for youth of different ethnic backgrounds.
- **Cultural Celebrations of Diversity:** Proposing events in local schools and the community that celebrate Kosovo's diversity, possibly through exhibitions and cultural festivals that involve all community members.
- **Strengthening Municipal Committees:** Placing greater emphasis on the functionality of the Municipal Communities Committees to ensure they are effectively addressing the needs and concerns of all ethnic groups.

Mayor Muhaxheri expressed gratitude and strong support for this initiative, sharing knowledge on the ongoing efforts of the municipality to promote harmony between different ethnic and religious communities.

During the meeting, the civil society members expressed their appreciation for Mayor Muhaxheri's exceptional support for ethnic communities. They conveyed positive feedback from Mati Haritina regarding the Mayor's supportive efforts towards the Serbian community and the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate. His inclusive approach to cohabitation and ethnic diversity sets him apart from many other regional leaders.

Mayor Muhaxheri shared insights into his proactive efforts to promote peaceful cohabitation, particularly highlighting the Serb majority village of Gorazhdevc/Goraždevac as a model of successful communal living. In Gorazhdevc/Goraždevac, residents from different ethnic backgrounds live and conduct business harmoniously.

He emphasized his respect for all religious communities, marking his attendance and active participation in their celebrations and addressing their concerns irrespective of their religious affiliations. The Mayor organizes and leads the annual observance of September 21— the Day of Cohabitation and Religious Tolerance. This event sees active participation from various religious leaders, including the Serb Orthodox priest, symbolizing a unified commitment to interfaith dialogue and respect.

Despite facing political challenges and propaganda aimed at discrediting his inclusive policies, Mayor Muhaxheri remains steadfast in his commitment to a cooperative and proactive governance style. He recounted a thwarted collaboration with the Municipality of Šabac/Shabac,

Serbia, intended to boost local agriculture through a strawberry cultivation project. Political barriers obstructed this initiative, illustrating the challenges of inter-regional cooperation.

Mayor Muhaxheri also highlighted ongoing local projects and the occasional technical issues that arise, such as contractual failures by firms during construction works. However, he reassured that these are actively addressed, mentioning plans to secure funding for a children's playground intended for completion in the following year.

In an effort to maintain transparency and direct communication with his constituents, Mayor Muhaxheri has instituted "Open Office Thursdays," where he personally meets with citizens to discuss their concerns and suggestions. This initiative is part of his broader strategy to ensure that all community voices are heard and integrated into the municipal governance processes.

The meeting concluded on a note of mutual respect and a reaffirmed commitment to continue fostering a peaceful and inclusive community in Peja/Peć, with the Mayor and civil society leaders agreeing on the importance of continued dialogue and collaborative efforts to advance these goals.

Key takeaways from the meeting with religious leaders

Key messages from the letters of expectations and desires addressed to the religious leaders were centered along the lines of further advocating understanding and coexistence between ethnic communities, including joint activities, especially given the positive example of Peja. Key proposals from the letters were the following:

For the Islamic Community of Peja/Peć:

- **Promoting Multi-Ethnic Cooperation:** Advocating for dialogues and cooperation to cultivate a sense of unity and mutual respect within Peja/Peć, with suggestions for community-driven initiatives that promote tolerance and understanding among different ethnic and religious groups.
- **Educational and Community Programs:** Initiating projects that bring together people from diverse backgrounds to participate in intercultural dialogues and events, enhancing shared values and contributing to a harmonious and inclusive community.
- **Public Sermons and Addresses Emphasizing Unity:** Leveraging public platforms to underscore the importance of unity, tolerance, and respect for all, highlighting the unique role of religious leaders in fostering these values.
- **Interfaith Dialogues:** Conducting regular interfaith meetings to discuss common values and foster spiritual wisdom that can bridge cultural and religious divides.
- **Community Service Projects:** Encouraging joint charity initiatives that involve community members from different ethnic backgrounds, building trust and cooperation through positive joint actions.
- **Cultural and Religious Festivals:** Organizing festivals to showcase the rich cultural and religious diversity of Peja/Peć, including religious holidays and art exhibitions, to highlight common values and history.

- **Joint Public Statements for Peace and Reconciliation:** Issuing united calls for peace and reconciliation from all religious leaders in Peja/Peć to have a profound impact on the community.
- **Engagement in Municipal Safety Councils:** Actively participating in safety councils to present problems and updates, thus enhancing community security and cohesiveness.

Meeting with Imam Musli ef. Arifaj of Islamic Community of Peja/Peć, 11 November 2024. The discussions highlighted Peja/Peć's exemplary role in maintaining excellent interfaith and interethnic relationships, often seen as a model for other municipalities. The civil society members expressed their appreciation for the inclusive and peaceful coexistence observed within the community.

Imam Arifi shared insights into the Islamic Community's efforts to facilitate regular interactions among different religious groups in Peja/Peć. He mentioned the annual observance of a day dedicated to interfaith tolerance, celebrated with various activities that actively involve the community. He noted the rarity of incidents disrupting peace, attributing this to the strong communal bonds and mutual respect cultivated through shared celebrations and events. For instance, leaders from all religious communities in Peja/Peć actively participate in each other's major holidays, such as Bajram, fostering a sense of unity and mutual respect.

Addressing challenges, Imam Arifi reflected on the need to move beyond past conflicts that have historically set communities against each other. He acknowledged certain bureaucratic hurdles in engaging with the Orthodox Church, which requires approvals from the main patriarch in Serbia for any significant decisions or meetings. Despite these obstacles, he affirmed that the relationship remains positive, albeit with room for improvement.

Further, Imam Arifi praised the Mayor of Peja/Peć for his proactive approach in supporting religious communities, highlighting the appointment of a dedicated liaison to handle religious community affairs. He cited recent collaborative efforts like an interfaith exhibition where funds raised were donated to charity, benefiting people across all ethnicities, and initiatives like local women from Gorazhdec selling their products at these events.

The meeting also addressed the recent issue where the government did not permit the Serbian Patriarch to participate in the religious celebration of Slava. The civil society representatives questioned if other religious leaders could do more to show solidarity with the Serbian Orthodox Church. Imam Arifi called for reflection on the impacts of war and emphasized the importance of thinking about the future generations living in Kosovo. He stressed that while politics often overshadow religious voices in public matters, the community continues to take small but firm steps toward building a harmonious environment for all. Imam Arifi also emphasized the importance of religious leaders maintaining a stance of neutrality, especially regarding nationalist rhetoric. He advocated for a clear distinction between religious activities and political messaging, in line with Kosovo's secular state principles.

The Imam highlighted the support from the OSCE, which has been instrumental in facilitating initiatives that encourage dialogue and cooperation among all religious groups in Kosovo. Additionally, he underscored the significance of the Kosovo safety municipality councils, noting that representatives of the religious communities actively participate in more than six meetings annually. These councils serve as vital platforms for discussing community concerns and updates, further contributing to the overall safety and harmony in the region.

The session ended with a consensus on the need for continued efforts to strengthen interfaith dialogue and to ensure that Peja/Peć remains a beacon of peace and multicultural coexistence in Kosovo.

For the Catholic Church of Peja/Peć:

- **Fostering Multi-Ethnic Relations:** The letters suggest enhancing multi-ethnic relations through cultural, artistic, and educational events that engage diverse communities, aiming to break down barriers and build mutual understanding.
- **Promotion of Religious Freedom and Harmony:** The letters call for the promotion of religious freedom and the organization of inter-religious activities that can help foster harmony and understanding among different faith groups in the region.
- **Educational Workshops on Diversity:** They advocate for educational programs and workshops that focus on the history and benefits of a diverse society, aimed at educating both the young and old on the values of coexistence and mutual respect.
- **Interfaith Dialogue Initiatives:** The letters suggest creating regular opportunities for dialogue among different religious communities to discuss common issues and explore ways of cooperation.
- **Support for Cultural Events:** The proposal includes organizing and supporting cultural events that showcase the rich religious and ethnic traditions of all community groups, helping to celebrate diversity and foster a sense of belonging among all residents.

Meeting with Don Lorenc Sopi, of the Catholic Church Saint Catherine of Peja/Peć, 11 November 2024. Don Lorenc Sopi shared insights on the commendable interethnic and religious harmony within Peja, which he considered a model for other municipalities. He provided a brief history of the Catholic Church Saint Catherine, noting its establishment as a parish since 1700 and its building dating back to 1928, which is slated for UNESCO protection. Despite being a minority in religious community, Don Sopi emphasized that the church doors are open to all ethnicities and religions, underscoring the inclusive nature of their community.

The church plays an active role in the community, with sisters of honour engaged in various social initiatives supporting the needy, elderly, women, and youth irrespective of their religious affiliations. The church frequently collaborates with civil society organizations and local institutions to organize exhibitions, concerts, and other community-building activities.

Addressing the broader societal challenges, Don Sopi reflected on the hardships endured before and during the Kosovo war and expressed a hopeful outlook for a more inclusive future. He highlighted the importance of moving forward, particularly for the sake of new generations, and cited a principle from the Bible that emphasizes empathy and moral conduct “what you don’t wish for your self don’t do it to the others.”

The discussion also touched upon the recent issue where the government did not allow the Serbian Patriarch to participate in the Slava celebration. Don Sopi pointed out that while the citizens and religious communities generally can’t influence the politics, an apology from the Serbs could significantly improve inter-community relations. He emphasized the need for open dialogue and cooperation as both Kosovo and Serbia navigate their ongoing processes.

Participants discussed the functioning of the safety municipality council, where the church actively participates, illustrating their commitment to civic engagement. Don Sopi voiced concerns over the exodus of youth due to high unemployment and other systemic issues, noting

that these challenges affect all ethnic groups similarly. He also remarked on the political dynamics affecting religious communities, mentioning the differential support received from various national and international bodies.

Concluding the meeting, Don Sopi praised the "Multi-Ethnic Caravan for Peace and Coexistence" initiative for its efforts to rebuild the historically harmonious relationships between different communities in Kosovo. He emphasized that historically, communities lived together in harmony, long before the terms 'multiethnic' and 'multireligious' became common descriptors of societal diversity.

For the Patriarchate in Peja/Peć, Serbian Orthodox Church:

- **Promotion of Inter-Ethnic Cohabitation:** Emphasis on the need for fostering mutual understanding and respect among different ethnic groups in Kosovo, specifically in Peja/Peć. The letters outline a vision for sustained peace and cohabitation, appealing to Mother Haritina's influential role in promoting tolerance and understanding among diverse ethnic and religious groups.
- **Importance of Dialogue:** The letters suggest that fostering dialogue between various communities is crucial. They encourage Mother Haritina to facilitate and support community projects, intercultural dialogues, and events celebrating common values to nurture a sense of peace, security, and belonging for everyone in Peja/Peć.
- **Leadership Role in Community Integration:** Highlighting Mother Haritina's unique position to lead by example, the letters urge her to participate in initiatives that bring individuals from different backgrounds together, underscoring her potential to inspire others to embrace unity, tolerance, and respect.
- **Engagement in Multi-Ethnic Initiatives:** The writers express a desire to see more active involvement from the church in multi-ethnic initiatives that could include joint community projects with other religious and ethnic groups, thereby reinforcing the social fabric of Peja/Peć.
- **Building on the Church's Legacy:** The letters reflect on the deep historical and cultural significance of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo, urging a continuation and expansion of its role in promoting interfaith and interethnic understanding.
- **Support for Vulnerable Groups:** They commend the church's existing efforts in supporting the needy, elderly, women, and youth, regardless of their religious affiliation, and encourage continued and expanded support in these areas.
- **Cultural and Educational Activities:** The letters suggest that organizing cultural exchanges, exhibitions, concerts, and other activities could further promote understanding and cooperation between different communities, highlighting the church's capacity to be a center for such activities.
- **Reflection on the Past and Future:** The importance of reflecting on the past to move forward is discussed, with a focus on teaching new generations about cohabitation and mutual respect, aiming to leave historical conflicts behind and build a peaceful future.
- **Advocacy for Rights and Inclusion:** There's an emphasis on the need for the church to advocate more vigorously for the rights of the Orthodox community and to ensure their traditions and interests are respected and integrated within the broader societal framework of Kosovo.

- **Interfaith and Community Leadership:** The letters call on Mother Haritina to lead interfaith efforts, suggesting that she could host or organize meetings that strengthen the bonds of community through shared religious and cultural understanding.

Meeting with Mother Haritin, Abbess of the Patriarchate of Pec of the Serbian Orthodox Church, 11 November 2024. Mother Haritina, a longstanding figure in the community with 65 years of residency, provided valuable insights into the harmonious interactions between the church, local community, police, and local leaders. Mother Haritina mentioned that religious leaders in the region typically gather once per year, facilitated by the Italian KFOR, which organizes a meeting aimed at fostering understanding and cooperation among different faith groups. She noted that while these relationships are correct and functional, they are seldom highlighted in public discussions.

She highlighted the supportive role of the current Mayor of Peja/Peć, who has shown exceptional cooperation and communication, particularly in his efforts to assist the Orthodox Church and the Serbian community. An example of the Mayor's commitment was his attempt to manage a prolonged road construction project near the Patriarchate, which was under central government control, to mitigate its disruptive impact on the local community.

The general atmosphere in Peja/Peć was described as peaceful, with rare incidents of localized tension. This peace is foundational to the potential for sustainable coexistence, dependent on continued dialogue and respect among various ethnic and religious groups.

However, a significant concern was raised regarding the central government's actions, particularly their refusal to allow the Serbian Patriarch to participate in "Slava," the most significant religious celebration for the community. Mother Haritina criticized the government's intrusion into religious affairs, pointing out the lack of any official explanation for this prohibition.

Civil society representatives expressed their disappointment and commitment to address this issue through advocacy with the government and international community. They recognized the limited but crucial role of civil society in fostering dialogue and promoting rights.

The meeting concluded with a collective call for increased solidarity among Kosovo's religious communities. The attendees emphasized the importance of supporting the Orthodox community, advocating for their rights, and preserving their religious traditions as essential steps toward building a more inclusive and peaceful multi-ethnic society in Kosovo.

III. Conclusions and Commitments for Future Actions

The meetings held on 11 November, 2024, in Peja/Peç provided extremely valuable insights into the state of inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations in the municipality. These engagements revealed both the significant progress made and the challenges that persist, emphasizing the need for further collaboration based on existing fundament, in order to ensure its sustainability. Peja is an example of inter-ethnic and inter-religious mutual understanding, respect and joint work.

Conclusions

1. **Strength of Local Collaboration:** Peja/Peç demonstrates a strong foundation of interfaith and interethnic harmony, which serves as a model for other municipalities in Kosovo. The inclusive efforts of local leaders, such as Mayor Gazmend Muhaxheri, and active participation from religious leaders are pivotal in maintaining and nurturing inter-ethnic and inter-religious cohabitation.
2. **Challenges from Central Governance:** Central government decisions, such as prohibiting the SOC Patriarch's participation in key religious events, undermine local efforts for reconciliation and highlight a disconnect between local and national approaches to fostering inclusivity.
3. **Role of Religious Leaders in Promoting Harmony:** Religious leaders from all faiths in Peja actively contribute to interfaith dialogue, respect for religious traditions, and mutual celebrations. However, political pressures and historical grievances continue to affect their roles, necessitating greater autonomy and support.
4. **Youth and Community Engagement:** The migration of youth due to economic challenges is a shared concern across all communities. Addressing unemployment and fostering civic engagement are critical to retaining young talent and ensuring a vibrant, multi-ethnic future for Kosovo.
5. **Historical Legacy and Shared Values:** The discussions underscored a shared historical legacy of coexistence that predates current tensions. This cultural and social history is a powerful tool for rebuilding trust and mutual respect.

Commitments for Future Actions

These commitments reaffirm a collective dedication to further the current positive relations in Peja, also making it a model to be followed by other municipalities and potentially the central government in the future. By focusing on dialogue, inclusivity, and shared progress, the meetings resulted in the following commitments.

1. **Inter-ethnic and inter-faith Dialogue and Collaboration:**
 - Establish regular interfaith and interethnic dialogue platforms to address possible tensions and foster mutual understanding.
 - Encourage greater participation of civil society in bridging gaps between local and central governance to advocate for inclusive policies across all ethnicities.
2. **Further Civic and Religious Engagement:**
 - Organize joint community activities, including interfaith ones, to strengthen bonds across ethnic and religious divides.

- Advocate for the protection and promotion of shared cultural heritage

3. Promote Youth Empowerment:

- Develop initiatives that address unemployment and provide platforms for young people to contribute to community development and reconciliation.
- Foster leadership programs aimed at empowering youth from all ethnic backgrounds to take active roles in civic and political life.

4. Address Political Barriers:

- Further work and advocacy for policies that respect religious autonomy and foster cooperation between religious institutions and the government.

5. Celebrate Diversity and Shared History:

- Institutionalization at national level of annual observances like the Day of Cohabitation and Religious Tolerance to celebrate Kosovo's diversity and shared values.
- Document and promote success stories from Peja and other communities to inspire similar initiatives throughout Kosovo and beyond.

Meetings in Peja/Peć: Mayor and Religious Leaders



Meeting with Mr. Gazmend Muhaxheri, Mayor
of Peja/Peć Municipality
November 11, 2024



Meeting with Imam Musli ef. Arifaj, Head of the
Islamic Community of Peja/Peć
November 11, 2024



Meeting with Don Lorenc Sopi Saint Catherine's
Catholic Church, Peja/Peć
November 11, 2024



Meeting with Abbess Mother Haritina, Patriarchate
of Serbian Orthodox Church in Peja/Peć
November 11, 2024



Letters of Desires and Expectations

Jovana Radosavljević, Ramadan Ilazi, Dušan Radaković, Ilir Deda, Senad Sabović, Mentor Agani dhe Zoran Savić

Mr. Gazmend Muhaxheri
Mayor of Peja/Peć Municipality

November 2024

**Jovana Radosavljević, Executive Director
New Social Initiative
North Mitrovica, Kosovo**

Dear Mayor Muhaxheri,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Jovana Radosavljević, and I am the Executive Director of the New Social Initiative, an NGO based in North Mitrovica that is dedicated to promoting reconciliation between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians. I am reaching out as part of the Multi-Ethnic Caravan for Peace and Cohabitation to share my expectations and hopes for fostering multi-ethnic cohabitation in Kosovo, particularly within the Peja/Peć community.

Your role as Mayor is pivotal in creating a community that is open, inclusive, and respectful of all its residents. **I believe that by encouraging dialogue and cooperation between different ethnic groups, you can help foster a sense of safety, unity, and mutual respect throughout Peja/Peć.** Supporting initiatives that celebrate our cultural diversity and promote shared values can go a long way toward building stronger bonds within the community.

It is essential that we cherish our diversity while ensuring that everyone feels safe, valued, and that their identity is respected and safeguarded. I encourage you to engage directly with citizens, addressing their concerns, and promoting community programs that bring together individuals from different backgrounds. Through joint projects and cultural events, we can work together to create a Peja/Peć where all voices are heard and appreciated.

Looking ahead, my vision is of a Kosovo where multi-ethnic cohabitation is not only possible but celebrated. **I hope to see programs that emphasize the importance of tolerance, respect, and cooperation, creating a space where everyone feels at home.** Establishing regular community dialogues and intercultural activities can help foster a sense of unity and shared purpose.

In conclusion, I respectfully urge you to continue your efforts in building a peaceful and inclusive Peja/Peć. **Your leadership can inspire others and set an example of a community where people from all backgrounds live together in harmony and mutual respect.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

With sincere respect,

Jovana Radosavljević

**Ramadan Ilazi, Head of Research
Kosovar Center for Security Studies
Prishtina, Kosovo**

Dear Mayor Muhaxheri,

My name is Ramadan Ilazi, and I am currently the head of research at the Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS). With a background in peace and conflict studies, holding a master's degree from the University of St. Andrews and a PhD from Dublin City University (DCU), I have dedicated my career to promoting Kosovo as a democratic and diverse society. My roles have included being an activist, leading organizations, and serving as Deputy Minister for European Integration.

Kosovo's Constitution begins with the vision of building a future as a free, democratic, and peace-loving country for all its citizens. This vision is pivotal, and it is our collective responsibility to bring it to fruition. Central to this vision is the idea that Kosovo is home to all its citizens, who should feel a sense of belonging and pride.

Diversity is a core strength of Kosovo, and it should be celebrated and nurtured. Civil society and public institutions must work together to foster tolerance, cohabitation, and education against discrimination.

I want to commend your efforts in Municipality of Peja, to promote dialogue and peace, including your participation in the enthronement of the Serbian Patriarch, a gesture that has resonated positively across communities. Your presence at such an important religious event sends a strong message of mutual respect, demonstrating Peja's potential as a model for fostering interethnic cooperation and understanding in Kosovo.

In light of your leadership, I would like to encourage you to continue your efforts and expand your support to other or new initiatives that promote interfaith and interethnic cooperation in Peja and across Kosovo. One example would be to encourage the high schools in the municipality to organize a festival celebrating cultural diversity of Kosovo, as well as to turn Peja into an annual host of a national conference on interfaith dialogue.

I look forward to seeing the continued progress in Peja under your leadership and am confident that your efforts will inspire other regions to follow your example.

Thank you for your commitment to these important values.

Sincerely,

Ramadan Ilazi

Dušan Radaković, Executive Director
Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture (ACDC)
North Mitrovica, Kosovo

Dear Mayor Gazmend Muhaxheri,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Dušan Radaković, and I'm Executive Director of the Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture (ACDC) in Mitrovica. As part of my work, I am deeply committed to fostering a multi-ethnic society in Kosovo, and I am writing to you as part of the Multi-Ethnic Caravan for Peace and Cohabitation initiative. This initiative seeks to promote mutual understanding, respect, and collaboration between different ethnic communities across Kosovo.

The purpose of this letter is to outline my personal expectations and desires regarding multi-ethnic cohabitation, with a particular focus on the Municipality of Peja, and to share how I believe our joint efforts can contribute to long-term peace and coexistence in Kosovo. Given your esteemed role as the Mayor of Peć, I am confident that your leadership can continue fostering a culture of inclusivity and mutual respect in the municipality. My expectations are that you will continue promoting multi-ethnic initiatives that bring together all communities, especially between the Albanian and Serbian populations. Peć, with its rich cultural and historical diversity, is uniquely positioned to be a model of peaceful cohabitation in Kosovo.

- I am interested in learning more about how Peć plans to build upon its previous cooperation with the Municipality of Šabac in Serbia? Are there any ongoing or planned projects that continue this cross-border cooperation?
- Do you have plans to establish new partnerships with other municipalities in Serbia?
- I would like to understand more about Peć's local efforts in integrating youth from all communities into these initiatives. Young people can play a pivotal role in fostering understanding and cooperation.

Looking ahead, I envision Peja taking even greater steps toward strengthening multi-ethnic cohabitation. One of my desires is to see the municipality introduce more joint cultural and educational programs that connect youth from all communities. Building on the cooperation with Šabac, I believe that extending these partnerships to other Serbian municipalities could significantly contribute to promoting peace and dialogue.

I encourage you to consider formalizing these efforts by establishing a dedicated working group focused on multi-ethnic dialogue and cooperation in Peć. Such an initiative could regularly bring together representatives from all ethnic groups to discuss concerns, exchange ideas, and collaborate on joint projects.

How can we work together to ensure that the long-term projects between Peja and Serbian municipalities continue to foster peaceful and meaningful relationships?

In closing, I want to express my deep appreciation for the work you and your administration have done so far to enhance multi-ethnic cooperation in Peć. I look forward to seeing how Peja continues to serve as a beacon of peace and coexistence, and I am optimistic that, together, we can contribute to a more inclusive and harmonious Kosovo.

I hope to meet with you soon as part of the Multi-Ethnic Caravan,

Warm regards, Dušan Radaković

**Ilir Deda, Civil Society Activist
Prishtina, Kosovo**

Dear Mayor Muhaxheri,

As you know, I have been engaged and involved in key issues for Kosovo and the Western Balkans for over two decades in various roles, including preservation and advancement of diversity in our country.

The purpose of this letter is to explore opportunities to begin the creation of culture of peace in our country, and to expand your involvement in promoting Peja as multi-ethnic and multi-confessional centre. This is especially important now when populist and exclusive attitudes are gaining ground.

You have been an inspiration for cultivating understanding and respect with the Serb community and the Serbian Orthodox Church, and you are held in high esteem from both, including the majority Albanian community in Peja.

I believe your work and respectful attitude can serve as a model to be replicated throughout Kosovo. In this respect, I believe there are a few short-term and long-term steps that can be taken from you and establish them into practices.

I am especially keen to explore deeper the following topics with you:

1. How can municipalities and the central government replicate the level of trust with the Serb community both at local and central level?
2. How can the central government learn and develop a framework for respectful working relationship with the Serbian Orthodox Church?

As you have been at the forefront of speaking against the arbitrary decision-making which harms the Kosovo Serbs, and in this you have a genuine, strong and honest ally in myself and I believe in the members of the Caravan, it is extremely important to understand if there are additional steps we can take to support your work.

I strongly believe that your leadership is critical at this point of development of our country, and express hope that you will consider the proposed actions.

With sincere regards,

Ilir Deda

**Senad Šabović, Senior Adviser
European Institute for Peace
Brussels – Prishtina**

Honorable Mayor Muhaxheri,

My name is Senad Šabović and I am writing to You as a supporter of the project called *Multi-Ethnic Caravan for Peace and Cohabitation*. I work as a senior advisor with the European Institute of Peace, with the primary focus on supporting the EU-facilitated Dialogue and the normalization process in general. My organization is part of a civil society coalition, called the Kosovo Civic Alternative (KCA), which strives to provide a tangible contribution in this field. As a former OSCE Mission in Kosovo official and as professional in the field of democratization and community rights, I have followed Your work over the years and have been thoroughly impressed with Your leadership. Your approach to the wellbeing of non-majority communities has been particularly striking. In addition to my professional engagement, I have also noticed this approach as a member of the Kosovo Bosniak community, many of whom dwell in Your municipality and enjoy the full benefits of Kosovo's multiethnic settings, which You so ably advance as mayor. Your tenure in this position is a living testament that it is quite possible to 'be nice to minorities' and win elections, a notion that is largely absent in Balkan politics.

This letter is meant to state my expectations from You in terms of multi-ethnicity and cohabitation. As we know, the Republic of Kosovo is defined as a multi-ethnic state of all of its citizens and communities. These principles are firmly embedded in Kosovo's constitutional and legal system. They also continue to be a key expectation of our Western partners and the organizational system of the Euro-Atlantic community, to which we aspire. As such, the principles of multi-ethnicity, understanding and peaceful cohabitation should be fully reflected in all our municipalities, as indeed is the case with Peja. I noted above the substantial contribution You have made in this regard and would like to invite You to share Your example broadly with the Kosovo public.

Likewise, the colleagues from the project and I would like to encourage You to expand on these initiatives and offer a few suggestions in this regard. In general terms, using the opportunities provided to stress multi-ethnicity as a value is extremely useful. In more particular terms, You could take the initiative towards joint inter-municipal projects to be conducted with select multi-ethnic municipalities from different Kosovo regions, for example with Prishtina, Prizren, Gračanica, Kamenica, or Shtërpce. This would be a great way to engage on development-oriented trust-building. It could develop into a standing inter-municipal cooperation structure that could then engage with the Association of Municipalities of Kosovo, as well as with other inter-municipal associations in the future, on projects reflecting this same concept.

Rest assured, Honorable Mayor, that my colleagues from the European Institute of Peace, from this project, as well as from the mentioned KCA coalition, would be more than willing to provide tangible support to You and Your team in the execution of any initiative that You may take in this framework.

With great respect and appreciation,

Senad Šabović

**Mentor Agani, Senior Researcher
Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development
Prishtina, Kosovo**

Honorable Mayor, Mr. Muhaxheri,

My name is Mentor Agani, and I am a Senior Researcher at KIPRED, The Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development, as well as a Lecturer at the Dardania College in Prishtina. During the period 2003-2016, I was also lecturer at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Prishtina. I am writing this letter with the intention of expressing some of my expectations and desires regarding the inter-ethnic cohabitation in Kosovo.

First of all, I hope this letter finds you in good health and spirits. I am writing it on my own, and on behalf of KIPRED, as well as of several other organizations with which we share a common commitment to fostering mutual respect and understanding between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo in general, and in the Municipality of Peja in particular. I cannot but express my admiration for your immense contribution in this direction: I understand how enormous courage and commitment one should have had to do what you have done for the improvement of ethnic relations in Kosovo in these extraordinary difficult times. I am deeply convinced that it is you, and people like you, who are the heroes of peace in Kosovo.

Now, our shared goal is to create a more inclusive, understanding, and peaceful environment for all citizens. We believe that by working together—local government, religious leaders, civil society and community leaders—we can initiate meaningful actions that bridge divides and strengthen inter-ethnic relations.

To that end, we would like to propose several initiatives that our NGOs, in collaboration with the Municipality, could undertake (indeed, without being limited only to them – we can find others in the process):

1. **Joint cultural and educational programs**, such as festivals, workshops, and historical tours that highlight our shared cultural heritage and promote mutual respect.
2. **Community-building projects**, where Albanians and Serbs participate in activities like public space improvements, neighborhood cleanups, or humanitarian initiatives that address the common needs of all citizens.
3. **Youth engagement and dialogue initiatives**, including sports events, artistic collaborations, and dialogue forums, designed to empower young people from both communities to work together and build lasting relationships.

Indeed, as one from the most important things, one of my primary hopes is to see the establishment of inclusive policy-making processes. It is crucial that all the communities feel represented and heard in taking of the decisions that affect their lives.

Certainly, platforms for dialogue would enable residents from diverse backgrounds to contribute their perspectives and ideas. This initiative would not only empower individuals but also foster trust and cooperation among ethnic groups.

We are convinced that the Municipality of Peja can play a pivotal role in these initiatives by providing support, facilitating dialogue, and endorsing projects that encourage peaceful coexistence. We are ready to collaborate closely with your office and other local institutions to develop and implement these ideas.

I would be honored to meet with you or your team to further discuss these proposals and explore how we might work together for the benefit of all residents of Peja. We are hopeful that these efforts can contribute to a more united and harmonious future for our municipality.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your response and the opportunity to work together for the good of our community.

With deep respect and best regards,

Mentor Agani

Zoran Savić, Project Coordinator
NGO AKTIV
North Mitrovica, Kosovo

Dear Mayor Gazmend Muhaxheri,

My name is Zoran Savić and I am a project coordinator in the non-governmental organization Aktiv from North Mitrovica. Although I was born in Pula, Croatia, I have actually lived in Mitrovica for 30 years and I am actively involved in social life in Kosovo, both through work and cultural life, considering that I am also a musician, and I have participated in various inter-ethnic projects with musicians of Albanian nationality.

At the same time, for many years I worked as a journalist in the Kosovo Sever portal - KoSSev, and through this job I became even more familiar with the political and security situation in Kosovo. Even today, I collaborate with many Albanian journalists and editors, both project-wise and through jobs that are not related to the same.

Your position as mayor of Peć can help a lot in promoting messages of peace and unity. Therefore, I am looking forward for your support in organizing inter-ethnic dialogues and community service projects that involve different ethnic groups working together.

In this spirit, I hope for a future where multi-ethnic cohabitation becomes the norm in Kosovo. I envision communities where ethnic differences are embraced as strengths rather than sources of division. To this end, you might focus on creating sustainable programs that educate on cultural diversity and tolerance, support joint community projects, and ensure equal representation of all ethnic groups in local governance.

Therefore, I encourage you to actively participate in creating a peaceful and inclusive community by supporting inter-ethnic initiatives, advocating for policies that guarantee equal opportunities for everyone, and fostering open and respectful dialogue between various ethnic groups.

I conclude this letter on a hopeful note, envisioning a future where our united efforts cultivate a genuinely harmonious and multi-ethnic society in Kosovo. I am certain that with our shared dedication, we can achieve remarkable progress toward this worthy goal.

Zoran Savić



Letters of Desires and Expectations

Jovana Radosavljević, Ramadan Ilazi, Dušan Radaković, Ilir Deda, Senad Sabović, Mentor Agani dhe Zoran Savić

Imam Musli ef. Arifaj,
Head of the Islamic Community in Peja/Peć

November 2024

**Jovana Radosavljević, Executive Director
New Social Initiative
North Mitrovica, Kosovo**

Dear Imam Arifaj,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Jovana Radosavljević, and I am the Executive Director of the New Social Initiative, an NGO based in North Mitrovica dedicated to reconciliation and fostering understanding between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians. I am writing to you as part of the Multi-Ethnic Caravan for Peace and Cohabitation to share my expectations and hopes for enhancing multi-ethnic cohabitation in Kosovo, especially in Peja/Peć.

As a spiritual leader, you play a crucial role in promoting tolerance, respect, and understanding among different ethnic and religious groups. **By encouraging dialogue and fostering cooperation, you can help cultivate a sense of unity and mutual respect within Peja/Peć.** Your guidance in promoting the values of tolerance, compassion, and community can serve as a foundation for building stronger relationships across cultural and religious divides.

It is essential that we cherish our diversity while ensuring that everyone feels safe, valued, and that their identity is respected and safeguarded. I encourage you to support and initiate programs that bring people from diverse backgrounds together. Joint community projects, intercultural dialogues, and events that celebrate our shared values can contribute greatly to a harmonious and inclusive Peja/Peć. Your sermons and public addresses can further emphasize the importance of unity, tolerance, and respect for all.

Looking ahead, my vision is of a Kosovo where multi-ethnic cohabitation is a lived reality. **I hope to see initiatives that foster understanding and cooperation, creating a space where everyone feels at home.** Regular interfaith meetings and cultural exchanges can help build a sense of shared purpose and connection among the different communities.

In conclusion, I respectfully urge you to continue your efforts in fostering a peaceful, inclusive, and tolerant community. **Your leadership can set a powerful example and inspire others to work towards a future where all people in Peja/Peć, and Kosovo, live together in harmony and mutual respect.**

Thank you for your time and commitment to this important cause.

With sincere respect,

Jovana Radosavljević

**Ramadan Ilazi, Head of Research
Kosovar Center for Security Studies
Prishtina, Kosovo**

Dear Imam Musli ef. Arifaj,

My name is Ramadan Ilazi, and I am currently the head of research at the Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS). With a background in peace and conflict studies, holding a master's degree from the University of St. Andrews and a PhD from Dublin City University (DCU), I have dedicated my career to promoting Kosovo as a democratic and diverse society. My roles have included being an activist, leading organizations, and serving as Deputy Minister for European Integration.

Kosovo's Constitution begins with the vision of building a future as a free, democratic, and peace-loving country for all its citizens. This vision is pivotal, and it is our collective responsibility to bring it to fruition. Central to this vision is the idea that Kosovo is home to all its citizens, who should feel a sense of belonging and pride.

Diversity is a core strength of Kosovo, and it should be celebrated and nurtured. Civil society and public institutions must work together to foster tolerance, cohabitation, and education against discrimination.

Islam, as a religion of peace, holds a significant place in shaping our society's attitudes towards tolerance and interethnic understanding. I encourage you to continue advocating for these principles through your sermons and other activities in the mosque. In particular I would like to encourage you to dedicate one of your Friday sermons to discussing the importance of interethnic cooperation and understanding, as well as interfaith dialogue.

Your voice in promoting peace and unity will have a lasting impact on strengthening peace and tolerance in our society.

Thank you for your leadership in these issues.

Sincerely,

Ramadan Ilazi

Dušan Radaković, Executive Director
Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture (ACDC)
North Mitrovica, Kosovo

Dear Imam Musli ef. Arifaj,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Dušan Radaković, and I'm Executive Director of the Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture (ACDC) in Mitrovica. As part of my work, I am deeply committed to fostering a multi-ethnic society in Kosovo, and I am writing to you as part of the Multi-Ethnic Caravan for Peace and Cohabitation initiative. This initiative seeks to promote mutual understanding, respect, and collaboration between different ethnic communities across Kosovo.

Expectations for Cohabitation: As the Head of the Islamic Community in Peja/Peć, I look forward to hearing your thoughts and contributions to the promotion of peaceful and respectful coexistence between all ethnic and religious groups. You are in a unique position to influence positive change, particularly by promoting tolerance and unity through the religious teachings and community work of the Islamic Community.

- How do you see the role of religious leaders, including your own, in fostering dialogue between the Albanian and Serbian communities in Peja/Peć?
- What role can religious teachings and community work play in bridging the gaps between different ethnicities and religions in Peja/Peć?

Desires for the Future: My desire for the future is that religious leaders such as yourself will continue to play an active role in building a multi-ethnic society where mutual respect and understanding are the guiding principles of everyday life. I believe that collaboration between religious leaders from different faiths can serve as a powerful example for the community.

- Are there any plans or ideas to establish more frequent interfaith meetings or joint initiatives with other religious communities in Peja/Peć?
- Would you be open to organizing cultural and religious events that bring together people from different ethnic backgrounds in the region?

I would also like to hear your views on how religious leaders, such as yourself, can inspire the youth of all communities to actively engage in peacebuilding efforts. In my experience, the involvement of younger generations is crucial for the long-term success of any initiative aimed at fostering peaceful coexistence.

Call to Action: I would encourage you to consider initiating or supporting regular interfaith dialogues between the different religious communities in Peja/Peć. Bringing together leaders and followers of different faiths could pave the way for deeper understanding and cooperation.

I believe that your voice as a religious leader could have a significant impact in reducing any remaining divisions between communities. By sharing messages of peace, unity, and respect in your sermons, you can inspire a more inclusive mindset among your followers.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your commitment to peace and cohabitation. I look forward to meeting with we can discuss how we can work together to build a more inclusive and peaceful future for all the people of Peja/Peć and Kosovo.

Warm regards,

Dušan Radaković

**Ilir Deda,
Civil Society Activist
Prishtina, Kosovo**

Dear Imam Arifaj,

I have been engaged and involved in key issues for Kosovo and the Western Balkans for over two decades in various roles, including preservation and advancement of diversity in our country.

The purpose of this letter is to explore opportunities to expand your involvement in promoting the multiethnic and multi-religious cohabitation in Peja. This is especially important now when populist and exclusive attitudes are gaining ground. Peja has a long tradition of deep respect among the religious communities, and the Islamic Community of Kosovo has had a central role in preserving and promoting this value. I believe there are a few short-term and long-term gestures that can be taken from you and establish them into practices. A few stem from the past practices.

In the past, there was a practice where religious leaders would publicly congratulate the most important religious holidays to each other. The reintroduction of this practice, although symbolic, would be the initial step towards advancing inter-religious respect in our country. This would mean respect for the most important religious holidays for members of Catholic and Orthodox communities.

Inter-faith dialogue and greater understanding is a modern form aiming to advance cohabitation and inter-religious harmony. Although we live in times when harmony is not valued, I believe Kosovo given its unique history, can establish inter-faith dialogue at the local municipal level, to begin creating the culture of peace. This forum would advance the mutual understanding between local religious leaders, including the understanding with local municipal authorities. It would also serve as a forum to discuss and address respective needs of each of the religious communities.

Kosovo will be successful only if it preserves its multi-ethnic character, and the Islamic Community of Kosovo has a key role in preserving and advancing this character of our state.

I strongly believe that your leadership is critical at this point of development of our country, and express hope that we can explore further actions in furthering multi confessional respect and inter-ethnic cohabitation.

With sincere regards,

Ilir Deda

**Senad Šabović, Senior Adviser
European Institute for Peace
Brussels – Prishtina**

Honorable Imam Arifaj,

My name is Senad Šabović and I am writing to You as a supporter of the project called *Multi-Ethnic Caravan for Peace and Cohabitation*. I work as a senior advisor with the European Institute of Peace, with the primary focus on supporting the EU-facilitated Dialogue and the normalization process in general. My organization is part of a civil society coalition, called the Kosovo Civic Alternative (KCA), which strives to provide a tangible contribution in this field.

This letter is meant to state my expectations from You in terms of multi-ethnicity and cohabitation. As we know, the Republic of Kosovo is defined as a multi-ethnic state of all of its citizens and communities. These principles are firmly embedded in Kosovo's constitutional and legal system. They also continue to be a key expectation of our international partners and the organizational system of the Euro-Atlantic community, to which we aspire. As such, the principles of multi-ethnicity, understanding and peaceful cohabitation should be fully reflected in the religious life of our country. A lot of work has been done in this regard, but it needs to further solidify and expand, especially at this time of increased tension and stalled normalization. Over the years, I have noticed with great appreciation the contributions of the Islamic Community of Kosovo in the context of different Inter-Faith dialogue frameworks and various Inter-Faith practical cooperation initiatives.

The colleagues from the project and I would like to encourage You to expand on these initiatives and offer a few suggestions in this regard. In general terms, using the opportunities provided to stress multi-ethnicity as a value is extremely useful. This may include joint press releases, social media content, or joint visits with different religious or institutional leaders to community centers and sites. Facilitating the inclusion of respect for religious and ethnic diversity into the Jumu'ah sermons, as I am sure is taking place already, is also an effective way of contributing. In more particular terms, I have proposed in some of my previous letters the establishment of a multi-confessional council that would coordinate and advise the state and international donors in terms of the protection and rehabilitation of vulnerable religious sites throughout Kosovo. Your municipality could be a place to pilot this project that could then grow Kosovo-wide. This would not only enhance the physical wellbeing of these sites but also continuously reaffirm the message of Peace, so firmly embedded in the Muslim Faith both in Kosovo and worldwide.

Rest assured, Honorable Imam, that my colleagues from the European Institute of Peace, from this project, as well as from the mentioned KCA coalition, would be more than willing to provide tangible support to You in the execution of the suggestions provided hereby or any other initiative in this respect.

With great respect and appreciation,

Senad Šabović

Mentor Agani, Senior Researcher
Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development
Prishtina, Kosovo

Honorable Imam, Musli Efendi Arifaj,

My name is Mentor Agani, and I am a Senior Researcher at KIPRED, The Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development, as well as a Lecturer at the Dardania College in Prishtina. During the period 2003-2016, I was also lecturer at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Prishtina. I am writing this letter with the intention of expressing some of my expectations and desires regarding the inter-ethnic cohabitation in Kosovo.

First of all, I hope this letter finds you in good health and spirits. I am writing it on my own, and on behalf of KIPRED, as well as of several other organizations with which we share a common commitment to fostering mutual respect and understanding between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo in general, and in the Municipality of Peja in particular.

We recognize the key role religious leaders and communities play in fostering peace, understanding, and reconciliation in the Kosovo's context. With this in mind, we would like to propose several initiatives that could be undertaken jointly by you, the other religious leaders in Peja, as well as the municipal authorities, civil society organizations, and local actors, in order to promote mutual respect and cooperation between Albanians and Serbs. Following is a list of initiatives that we believe will contribute meaningfully to these efforts: and, indeed, we should not be limited only on them.

1. **Interfaith Dialogues and Public Discussions:** Organizing regular interfaith dialogues, where religious leaders from the Islamic, Orthodox, and Catholic communities can engage in open and constructive conversations about shared values, spiritual wisdom, and how faith can be a bridge to peace. These discussions have to be open to the public, in order to spread to entire society, thus fostering deeper understanding and dispelling misunderstandings among community members of different ethnicities and faiths.
2. **Joint Charitable and Community Service Projects:** Bringing together Albanians and Serbs from various religious backgrounds to work on charitable initiatives that benefit the wider community—such as supporting vulnerable families, improving public spaces, providing humanitarian assistance, and so forth. These projects would encourage cooperation and build trust between the different groups through shared, positive actions.
3. **Youth and Family Engagement Programs:** Creating opportunities for young people and families from all backgrounds to participate in joint workshops, cultural exchanges, and sports activities. By engaging the next generation, we can create lasting relationships and nurture a culture of peace and respect. Religious leaders can play a significant role in shaping these programs, offering moral guidance and support.
4. **Public Interfaith Celebrations and Cultural Events:** Organizing joint festivals or events that celebrate the cultural and religious diversity of Peja, where members of the community can learn about and appreciate each other's traditions. Such events, endorsed and supported by religious leaders, could include shared religious holidays, art exhibitions, or music performances that highlight common values and shared history.
5. **Joint Statements and Appeals for Peace:** A united appeal for peace and reconciliation from all religious leaders in Peja could have a profound impact on the community. By issuing joint statements or participating in shared public prayers or reflections, religious

leaders can set a powerful example, encouraging all citizens to embrace tolerance, respect, and cooperation as essential elements of their everyday lives.

We believe that, through collaboration with the Islamic Community, the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, as well as municipal authorities, and civil society and local actors, these initiatives can make a tangible difference in improving relations between Albanians and Serbs. Your leadership as the head of the Islamic Community would be essential in guiding and promoting these efforts.

I would be honored to meet with you to discuss these ideas further and explore how we can work together to implement them as well as to look for new ones. We are eager to contribute to building a more peaceful, harmonious future for all the people of Peja regardless of their ethnic and/or religious background.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you and the opportunity to collaborate on these important initiatives.

With deep respect and warm regards,

Mentor Agani

Zoran Savić, Project Coordinator
NGO AKTIV
North Mitrovica, Kosovo

Dear Imam Musli ef. Arifaj,

My name is Zoran Savić and I am a project coordinator in the non-governmental organization Aktiv from North Mitrovica. Although I was born in Pula, Croatia, I have actually lived in Mitrovica for 30 years and I am actively involved in social life in Kosovo, both through work and cultural life, considering that I am also a musician, and I have participated in various inter-ethnic projects with musicians of Albanian nationality.

At the same time, for many years I worked as a journalist in the Kosovo Sever portal - KoSSev, and through this job I became even more familiar with the political, security and religious situation in Kosovo. Even today, I collaborate with many Albanian journalists and editors, both project-wise and through jobs that are not related to the same.

As you are the Head of the Islamic Community of Peja, you can greatly promote inter-ethnic harmony. Encouraging dialogue and cooperation between different religious and ethnic groups can help bridge divides. I urge you to support community programs and joint service projects that bring people from diverse backgrounds together. Your sermons and public addresses can emphasize unity, tolerance, and respect for all. Therefore, I am looking forward for your support in organizing inter-ethnic dialogues and community service projects that involve different religious groups working together.

In this spirit, I hope for a future where multi-ethnic religious cohabitation becomes the norm in Kosovo. I envision communities where religious differences are embraced as strengths rather than sources of division. To this end, you might focus on creating sustainable programs that educate on religious diversity and tolerance, support joint community projects, and ensure equal representation of all religious groups in local governance.

I conclude this letter on a hopeful note, envisioning a future where our united efforts cultivate a genuinely harmonious and multi-ethnic society in Kosovo. I am certain that with our shared dedication, we can achieve remarkable progress toward this worthy goal.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Zoran Savić



Letters of Desires and Expectations

Jovana Radosavljević, Ramadan Ilazi, Dušan Radaković, Ilir Deda, Senad Sabović, Mentor Agani dhe Zoran Savić

Don Lorenc Sopi
Saint Catherine's Catholic Church Peja/Peć

November 2024

Jovana Radosavljević, Executive Director
New Social Initiative
North Mitrovica, Kosovo

Dear Don Sopi,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Jovana Radosavljević, and I am the Executive Director of the New Social Initiative, an NGO based in North Mitrovica dedicated to promoting reconciliation and understanding between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians. I am reaching out as part of the Multi-Ethnic Caravan for Peace and Cohabitation to share my expectations and hopes for fostering multi-ethnic cohabitation in Kosovo, especially in Peja/Peć.

As a spiritual leader in Peja/Peć, your role is essential in promoting unity, tolerance, and respect among the different ethnic and religious communities in our region. **Your guidance in encouraging dialogue and cooperation between these groups can greatly contribute to building trust and mutual understanding.** By fostering an environment where diversity is embraced, you can help create a space where all people feel safe and respected.

It is crucial that we celebrate our cultural and religious diversity while ensuring that everyone feels secure, valued, and that their identity is respected. I encourage you to support and participate in programs that bring people from diverse backgrounds together, such as joint community projects and interfaith events. Through these initiatives, we can work toward a future where the bonds between our communities are strengthened, and everyone feels a sense of belonging.

Looking forward, my vision is for a Kosovo where multi-ethnic cohabitation is not only possible but a celebrated reality. **I hope to see continued efforts to foster understanding, cooperation, and mutual respect through cultural exchanges, interfaith dialogues, and events that highlight our shared values.** Such initiatives can be instrumental in creating a harmonious and inclusive Peja/Peć.

In conclusion, I urge you to continue your efforts in building a peaceful, tolerant, and inclusive community. **Your leadership within the Catholic Church of Saint Catherine can serve as a powerful example of the positive change we can achieve together, creating a future where all people in Peja/Peć, and Kosovo, live in harmony and mutual respect.**

Thank you for your time, and for your commitment to this important cause.

With sincere respect,

Jovana Radosavljević

**Ramadan Ilazi, Head of Research
Kosovar Center for Security Studies
Prishtina, Kosovo**

Dear Don Lorenc Sopi

My name is Ramadan Ilazi, and I am currently the head of research at the Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS). With a background in peace and conflict studies, holding a master's degree from the University of St. Andrews and a PhD from Dublin City University (DCU), I have dedicated my career to promoting Kosovo as a democratic and diverse society. My roles have included being an activist, leading organizations, and serving as Deputy Minister for European Integration.

Kosovo's Constitution begins with the vision of building a future as a free, democratic, and peace-loving country for all its citizens. This vision is pivotal, and it is our collective responsibility to bring it to fruition. Central to this vision is the idea that Kosovo is home to all its citizens, who should feel a sense of belonging and pride.

Diversity is a core strength of Kosovo, and it should be celebrated and nurtured. Civil society and public institutions must work together to foster tolerance, cohabitation, and education against discrimination.

As a leader of the Catholic community in Peja, your efforts in promoting reconciliation and interfaith dialogue are of great importance. The Catholic Church in Kosovo has historically played a key role in promoting peace and support in times of great need in our country. I encourage you to organize regular interfaith dialogues and speak to your community of the importance to celebrate our country's ethnic and religious diversity and foster mutual respect. I also encourage you to speak publicly about these issues.

These actions will help strengthen understanding between Kosovo's religious and ethnic communities.

Thank you for your continued leadership.

Sincerely,

Ramadan Ilazi

Dušan Radaković, Executive Director
Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture (ACDC)
North Mitrovica, Kosovo

Dear Don Lorenc Sopi,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Dušan Radaković, and I'm Executive Director of the Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture (ACDC) in Mitrovica. As part of my work, I am deeply committed to fostering a multi-ethnic society in Kosovo, and I am writing to you as part of the Multi-Ethnic Caravan for Peace and Cohabitation initiative. This initiative seeks to promote mutual understanding, respect, and collaboration between different ethnic communities across Kosovo.

As the Head of the Catholic Church in Peć, your influence is vital for fostering dialogue and understanding between communities. I would be keen to understand your perspective on how the Catholic Church can contribute more significantly to enhancing inter-ethnic cohabitation.

- How do you envision the Church's role in promoting reconciliation and understanding among the diverse communities in Peć?
- Are there specific activities or programs you believe could effectively engage both the Catholic and Orthodox communities in collaborative efforts?
- In your view, what behaviors or practices can encourage mutual respect and dialogue between the Albanian and Serbian communities?

Your insights could help guide initiatives that bridge divides and foster cooperative relationships among different ethnic groups. I am hopeful for a future in which diverse communities in Kosovo can coexist peacefully and collaboratively. I believe that the Church can be a leading force in this endeavor, promoting values of respect, compassion, and inclusivity.

- What long-term goals do you envision for the future of multi-ethnic cohabitation in Peć?
- Do you see potential for the Catholic Church to play a proactive role in interfaith dialogue and activities aimed at fostering unity among various religious communities?
- Are there specific programs or partnerships with other religious institutions that you would like to see established to support this vision?

Engaging youth and encouraging them to participate in interfaith activities is essential for nurturing future generations' understanding and acceptance of diversity. I encourage you to consider ways in which the Catholic Church can serve as a facilitator for inter-ethnic dialogue and peace-building initiatives in Peć.

- Would you be willing to organize events that bring together different faiths and ethnic communities to discuss shared values and goals?
- How can we, together, create more inclusive spaces for dialogue among the youth of Peć?

I believe that collaborative efforts between the Catholic Church and other religious organizations can yield significant positive outcomes. Thank you for taking the time to consider this letter, Don Lenc Sopi. I look forward to the possibility of working together in the pursuit of peace and inter-ethnic harmony in Kosovo.

Warm regards, Dušan Radaković

**Ilir Deda, Civil Society Activist
Prishtina, Kosovo**

Dear Don Sopi,

I have been engaged and involved in key issues for Kosovo and the Western Balkans for over two decades in various roles, including preservation and advancement of diversity in our country.

The purpose of this letter is to explore opportunities to expand your involvement in promoting multiconfessional respect and multiethnic cohabitation in Peja. This is especially important now when populist and exclusive attitudes are gaining ground.

Inter-religious harmony has been at the core values of our nation, and the Diocese Prizren-Prishtina has a central role in preserving and promoting this value. I believe there are a few short-term and long-term gestures that can be taken from you and establish them into practices. A few stem from the past practices.

In the past, there was a practice where religious leaders would publicly congratulate the most important religious holidays to each other. The reintroduction of this practice, although symbolic, would be the initial step towards advancing inter-religious respect in our country. This would mean respect for the most important religious holidays for members of Islamic and Orthodox communities.

Inter-faith dialogue and greater understanding is a modern form aiming to advance cohabitation and inter-religious harmony. Although we live in times when harmony is not valued, I believe Kosovo given its unique history, can establish inter-faith dialogue at the local municipal level, to begin creating the culture of peace. This forum would advance the mutual understanding between local religious leaders, including the understanding with local municipal authorities. It would also serve as a forum to discuss and address respective needs of each of the religious communities.

Last, visit to the local Serb Orthodox religious leaders would have a significant impact on advancing inter-ethnic peaceful cohabitation in our country. Kosovo will be successful only if it preserves its multi-ethnic character, and You have a significant role in preserving and advancing this character of our state, especially due to generational tradition of respect and inclusiveness of Peja.

I strongly believe that your leadership is critical at this point of development of our country, and express hope that we will explore further actions which promote multi-confessional respect and multiethnic cohabitation.

With sincere regards,

Ilir Deda

Senad Šabović, Senior Adviser
European Institute for Peace
Brussels – Prishtina

Honorable Don Lorenc Sopi,

My name is Senad Šabović and I am writing to You as a supporter of the project called *Multi-Ethnic Caravan for Peace and Cohabitation*. I work as a senior advisor with the European Institute of Peace, with the primary focus on supporting the EU-facilitated Dialogue and the normalization process in general. My organization is part of a civil society coalition, called the Kosovo Civic Alternative (KCA), which strives to provide a tangible contribution in this field.

This letter is meant to state my expectations from You in terms of multi-ethnicity and cohabitation. As we know, the Republic of Kosovo is defined as a multi-ethnic state of all of its citizens and communities. These principles are firmly embedded in Kosovo's constitutional and legal system. They also continue to be a key expectation of our international partners and the organizational system of the Euro-Atlantic community, to which we aspire. As such, the principles of multi-ethnicity, understanding and peaceful cohabitation should be fully reflected in the religious life of our country. A lot of work has been done in this regard, but it needs to further solidify and expand, especially at this time of increased tension and stalled normalization. Over the years, I have noticed with great appreciation the contributions of Your Church in this regard. Your Church's engagements with the leaders and representatives of other Faiths represented in Kosovo and Your leadership in the context of different Inter-Faith dialogue frameworks and various Inter-Faith practical cooperation initiatives have been particularly impressive.

The colleagues from the project and I would like to encourage You to expand on these initiatives and offer a few suggestions in this regard. In general terms, using the opportunities provided to stress multi-ethnicity as a value is extremely useful. This may include joint press releases, social media content, or joint visits with different religious or institutional leaders to community centers and sites. Emphasizing the Holy Bible's messages of tolerance and respect as appropriate in Your Diocese's engagements with the believers would also be an effective way of contributing, as I am sure is taking place already.

In more particular terms, You could take the initiative towards creating an Inter-Faith council jointly with the leaders of Kosovo's other Faiths that would coordinate and advise the state and international donors in terms of the protection and rehabilitation of vulnerable religious sites throughout Kosovo. This would not only enhance the physical wellbeing of these sites but also continuously reaffirm the message of tolerance and respect, so integral to the Catholic Faith both in Kosovo and worldwide.

Rest assured, Honorable Deacon, that my colleagues from the European Institute of Peace, from this project, as well as from the mentioned KCA coalition, would be more than willing to provide tangible support to You and Your fellow religious leaders the execution of the suggestions provided hereby.

With great respect and appreciation,

Senad Šabović

Mentor Agani, Senior Researcher
Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development
Prishtina, Kosovo

Dear Reverend Father Don Lorenc Sopi,

My name is Mentor Agani, and I am a Senior Researcher at KIPRED, The Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development, as well as a Lecturer at the Dardania College in Prishtina. During the period 2003-2016, I was also lecturer at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Prishtina. I am writing this letter with the intention of expressing some of my expectations and desires regarding the inter-ethnic cohabitation in Kosovo.

First of all, I hope this letter finds you in good health and spirits. I am writing it on my own, and on behalf of KIPRED, as well as of several other organizations with which we share a common commitment to fostering mutual respect and understanding between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo in general, and in the Municipality of Peja in particular.

As we work towards fostering better ethnic and religious relations, we recognize the vital role that religious institutions and leaders play in building the bridges between communities. With this in mind, we would like to propose several initiatives that could be undertaken in collaboration with the religious leaders in Peja, as well as with the broader Albanian and Serbian communities, in order to promote dialogue and reconciliation.

We think that these initiatives could include (indeed, without being limited to):

1. **Interfaith dialogues**, where religious leaders from the Catholic, Orthodox, and Muslim communities can come together to discuss shared values, common concerns, and the promotion of peace and tolerance.
2. **Community service projects**, where members of all faiths work side by side on charitable activities that benefit the local population, fostering unity through acts of service.
3. **Youth and family engagement programs**, which would involve educational workshops, cultural exchanges, and joint events that bring families and young people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds together in a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect.
4. **Joint religious and cultural festivals**, celebrating the diverse religious traditions of the community. This could involve shared events during major religious holidays, art exhibits, and music performances that highlight common spiritual values.
5. **Peacebuilding workshops**, where religious leaders and community members are trained in conflict resolution, mediation, and peacebuilding strategies to equip them with the tools to manage tensions and promote understanding within the community.

We are confident that the Catholic Church of Saint Catherine, as a respected and influential institution in Peja, can play a crucial role in these efforts. With your support and guidance, we believe that these initiatives can make a meaningful contribution to healing divisions and promoting harmony in our community.

We would be honored to meet with you to discuss these proposals in more detail and explore how we can collaborate with the Church in these efforts. We deeply value your leadership and activities, and are eager to work together to create a more peaceful and inclusive future for Peja.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your response and the opportunity to discuss this further.

With great respect and warm regards,

Mentor Agani,

Zoran Savić, Project Coordinator
NGO AKTIV
North Mitrovica, Kosovo

Dear Don Lorenc Sopi,

My name is Zoran Savić and I am a project coordinator in the non-governmental organization Aktiv from North Mitrovica. Although I was born in Pula, Croatia, I have actually lived in Mitrovica for 30 years and I am actively involved in social life in Kosovo, both through work and cultural life, considering that I am also a musician, and I have participated in various inter-ethnic projects with musicians of Albanian nationality.

At the same time, for many years I worked as a journalist in the Kosovo Sever portal - KoSSev, and through this job I became even more familiar with the political, security and religious situation in Kosovo. Even today, I collaborate with many Albanian journalists and editors, both project-wise and through jobs that are not related to the same.

Your leadership in the Catholic Church of Sian Catherine in Peć can greatly promote inter-ethnic harmony. Encouraging dialogue and cooperation between different religious and ethnic groups can help bridge divides. I urge you to support community programs and joint service projects that bring people from diverse backgrounds together. Your sermons and public addresses can emphasize unity, tolerance, and respect for all. Therefore, I am looking forward for your support in organizing inter-ethnic dialogues and community service projects that involve different religious groups working together.

In this spirit, I hope for a future where multi-ethnic religious cohabitation becomes the norm in Kosovo. I envision communities where religious differences are embraced as strengths rather than sources of division. To this end, you might focus on creating sustainable programs that educate on religious diversity and tolerance, support joint community projects, and ensure equal representation of all religious groups in local governance.

Looking forward, I envision a Kosovo where multi-ethnic cohabitation and religious tolerance is embraced. Regular interfaith meetings and intercultural initiatives can foster dialogue and cooperation.

I conclude this letter on a hopeful note, envisioning a future where our united efforts cultivate a genuinely harmonious and multi-ethnic society in Kosovo. I am certain that with our shared dedication, we can achieve remarkable progress toward this worthy goal.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Zoran Savić



Letters of Desires and Expectations

Jovana Radosavljević, Ramadan Ilazi, Dušan Radaković, Ilir Deda, Senad Sabović, Mentor Agani dhe Zoran Savić

Mother Haritina
Abbess Patriarchate Serbian Orthodox Church
Peja/Peć

November 2024

Jovana Radosavljević, Executive Director
New Social Initiative
North Mitrovica, Kosovo

Dear Mother Haritin,

I hope this letter finds you in good health and peace. My name is Jovana Radosavljević, and I am the Executive Director of the New Social Initiative, based in North Mitrovica. As a fellow Orthodox Christian and Kosovo Serb, I am deeply committed to reconciliation and understanding between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians. I am writing to you as part of the Multi-Ethnic Caravan for Peace and Cohabitation to share my hopes and expectations for fostering multi-ethnic cohabitation in Kosovo, particularly in Peć/Peja.

The Patriarchate of Peć/Peja is not only a revered spiritual center for our Serbian Orthodox community but also a symbol of resilience, unity, and faith. **Your role as Abbess places you in a unique position to promote tolerance, respect, and understanding among different ethnic and religious groups.** By encouraging dialogue and promoting compassionate interactions, you can help cultivate a sense of peace, safety, and belonging for all people in Peć/Peja.

It is essential that we cherish our diversity while ensuring that everyone feels safe, valued, and that their identity is respected and safeguarded. I encourage you to support and engage in initiatives that bring together individuals from various backgrounds, including joint community projects, intercultural dialogues, and events that celebrate our shared values. Your guidance and prayers, as well as the example set by the Patriarchate, can inspire others to embrace the values of unity, tolerance, and respect for all.

Looking ahead, my vision is for a Kosovo where multi-ethnic cohabitation is not only possible but celebrated. **I hope to see programs that emphasize understanding, cooperation, and the importance of a shared sense of purpose, creating a community where everyone feels at home.** Interfaith meetings, cultural exchanges, and continued open dialogue can help bring this vision to life.

In conclusion, I respectfully urge you to continue your efforts in building a peaceful, inclusive, and tolerant community. **Your leadership at the Patriarchate of Peć/Peja is a beacon of hope and inspiration, showing that with compassion and dedication, we can work toward a future where all people in Kosovo live together in harmony and mutual respect.**

Thank you for your time, and for your steadfast commitment to our faith and community.

With sincere respect,
Jovana Radosavljević

**Ramadan Ilazi, Head of Research
Kosovar Center for Security Studies
Prishtina, Kosovo**

Dear Mother Haritin,

My name is Ramadan Ilazi, and I am currently the head of research at the Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS). With a background in peace and conflict studies, holding a master's degree from the University of St. Andrews and a PhD from Dublin City University (DCU), I have dedicated my career to promoting Kosovo as a democratic and diverse society. My roles have included being an activist, leading organizations, and serving as Deputy Minister for European Integration.

Kosovo's Constitution begins with the vision of building a future as a free, democratic, and peace-loving country for all its citizens. This vision is pivotal, and it is our collective responsibility to bring it to fruition. Central to this vision is the idea that Kosovo is home to all its citizens, who should feel a sense of belonging and pride.

Diversity is a core strength of Kosovo, and it should be celebrated and nurtured. Civil society and public institutions must work together to foster tolerance, cohabitation, and education against discrimination.

The Patriarchate of Peja/Pec holds a special place in Kosovo's spiritual and cultural heritage. Your leadership, particularly in promoting understanding and cooperation between different religious and ethnic groups, is essential. I would like to propose organizing interfaith gatherings at the Patriarchate, where leaders from all religious communities in Kosovo can come together for dialogue, and joint statements promoting peace. I would also like, to suggest that the Patriarchate of Peja/Pec takes a more public and pro-active role in calling for greater integration of the Serbian community in Kosovo, and interethnic cooperation.

Such initiatives could further strengthen the message that our country's diversity is a source of strength, not division. I am confident in the positive impact your continued leadership.

Thank you for your commitment to this cause.

Sincerely,
Ramadan Ilazi

Dušan Radaković, Executive Director
Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture (ACDC)
North Mitrovica, Kosovo

Dear Mother Haritin,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Dušan Radaković, and I'm Executive Director of the Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture (ACDC) in Mitrovica. As part of my work, I am deeply committed to fostering a multi-ethnic society in Kosovo, and I am writing to you as part of the Multi-Ethnic Caravan for Peace and Cohabitation initiative. This initiative seeks to promote mutual understanding, respect, and collaboration between different ethnic communities across Kosovo.

As the Abbess of one of the most important religious and cultural institutions in Kosovo, your influence on both the spiritual and communal levels is immense. I would love to hear your thoughts on how the Serbian Orthodox Church, particularly the Patriarchate of Peć, can contribute to fostering greater unity among different ethnic groups in the region.

- How do you see the Patriarchate's role in bridging the divides between the Albanian and Serbian communities?
- Could the Patriarchate serve as a neutral space for interfaith and interethnic dialogues in Kosovo?
- Are there specific initiatives or activities that you believe would be effective in enhancing understanding and cooperation among different ethnic and religious communities?

Your leadership and the spiritual guidance of the Serbian Orthodox Church can play a critical role in demonstrating that the promotion of peace and reconciliation is a shared responsibility among all religious communities in Kosovo.

I sincerely hope to see the Patriarchate of Peć continuing its work to promote peace, respect, and mutual understanding among people of all faiths in Kosovo. My vision for the future is a Kosovo where religious and ethnic diversity is not only accepted but celebrated.

Do you foresee opportunities for religious communities to work together more closely in promoting the values of peace and reconciliation?

I also believe that young people play an essential role in fostering this future, and I would be interested in hearing your thoughts on how young Serbs and Albanians could be engaged in activities that bring them closer together, perhaps through religious or cultural education and exchanges at the Patriarchate.

I would like to encourage you to consider ways in which the Patriarchate of Peć could continue to serve as a beacon of peace and unity in the region. For instance, creating joint events or retreats that bring together individuals from different ethnic and religious backgrounds could significantly contribute to healing and reconciliation in Kosovo.

- Would you be open to leading or hosting a multi-ethnic dialogue or religious gathering at the Patriarchate to foster these ideals?
- Could there be opportunities to involve other religious institutions and communities, including those from Albanian and Muslim backgrounds, in such initiatives?

Thank you very much for your time and consideration, Mother Haritina. I look forward to the possibility of working together to promote peace and mutual understanding in Kosovo.

Warm regards,

Dušan Radaković

**Ilir Deda, Civil Society Activist
Prishtina, Kosovo**

Dear Mother,

I have been engaged and involved in key issues for Kosovo and the Western Balkans for over two decades in various roles, including preservation and advancement of diversity, multi-ethnicity and multi-confessionalism in Kosovo.

The purpose of this letter is to learn from You about pathways to promote multiethnic and multi-religious cohabitation in Peja and in Kosovo. Also, I would like to understand from you how can we help in protecting and promoting the wellbeing of the Patriarchate of Pec, multi-confessional coexistence and dialogue, and further the respect for the religious institutions by the public institutions.

I strongly believe this is especially important at present when populist and exclusive attitudes are gaining ground.

I am a firm believer that inter-religious harmony must be preserved and further promoted. The Serbian Orthodox Church, as a very old institution in Kosovo, has a very important role in preserving and promoting this value.

The wellbeing and prosperity of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Serb people in Kosovo is closely linked with wellbeing and prosperity of all people and religious institutions in Kosovo.

In times when political leaders promote exclusive attitudes, it is up to individuals of good will to work towards universal values of peace, cohabitation, mutual understanding and multiethnicity.

With sincere respect,

Ilir Deda

**Senad Šabović, Senior Adviser
European Institute for Peace
Brussels – Prishtina**

Honorable Mother Haritin,

My name is Senad Šabović and I am writing to You as a supporter of the project called *Multi-Ethnic Caravan for Peace and Cohabitation*. I work as a senior advisor with the European Institute of Peace, with the primary focus on supporting the EU-facilitated Dialogue and the normalization process in general. My organization is part of a civil society coalition, called the Kosovo Civic Alternative (KCA), which strives to provide a tangible contribution in this field.

This letter is meant to state my expectations from You in terms of multi-ethnicity and cohabitation. The principles of multi-ethnic society are firmly embedded in Kosovo's legal and constitutional system. They also continue to be a key expectation of the international community and are the primary mechanism for the well-being of non-majority communities in Kosovo, in particular the Serb community. As such, the principles of multi-ethnicity, understanding and peaceful cohabitation should be fully reflected in the religious life of Kosovo. A lot of work has been done in this regard, but it needs to further solidify and expand, especially at this time of increased tension and stalled normalization. Over the years, I have noticed with great appreciation Your Church's active participation in different Inter-Faith dialogue activities and various other forms of contribution to peaceful cohabitation.

The colleagues from the project and I would like to encourage You to expand on these initiatives and offer a few suggestions in this regard. I very much understand the unique position of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) in Kosovo and the sensitivities that come with this position. Nevertheless, Your active contribution to enhancing the sense of multi-ethnicity and tolerance – as has often been the case – would create a significant added value. This is particularly opportune in the municipality of Pejë/Peć, where You and Your Church have a strong partner in Mayor Muhaxheri and his team. Thus, either in terms of responding to positive external initiatives or initiating Your own, every opportunity should be used to stress multi-ethnicity as a value. This may include joint press releases, social media content, or joint visits with different religious or institutional leaders to community centers and sites. Emphasizing Your Faith's messages of tolerance and respect as appropriate in Your engagements with the believers would also be an effective way of contributing.

In more particular terms, I have also suggested to other religious representatives the creation of an Inter-Faith council by the leaders of different Faiths in Kosovo that would coordinate and advise Kosovo's institutions and international donors in terms of the protection and rehabilitation of vulnerable religious sites throughout Kosovo. You and Your Church may also wish to consider initiating this endeavor. This would not only enhance the physical wellbeing of these sites but also continuously reaffirm the message of tolerance and respect, so integral to Faith.

Rest assured, Honorable Mother, that my colleagues from the European Institute of Peace, from this project, as well as from the mentioned KCA coalition, would be more than willing to provide tangible support to You and Your fellow religious leaders the execution of the suggestions provided hereby.

With great respect and appreciation,

Senad Šabović

Mentor Agani, Senior Researcher
Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development
Prishtina, Kosovo

Reverend Abbess, Mother Haritin,

My name is Mentor Agani, and I am a Senior Researcher at KIPRED, The Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development, as well as a Lecturer at the Dardania College in Prishtina. During the period 2003-2016, I was also lecturer at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Prishtina. I am writing this letter with the intention of expressing some of my expectations and desires regarding the inter-ethnic cohabitation in Kosovo.

First of all, I would like to express my hope that this letter will find you well. I am writing it on my own, and on behalf of KIPRED, as well as of several other organizations with which we share a common commitment to fostering mutual respect and understanding between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo in general, and in the Municipality of Peć in particular.

As you are well aware, in different periods our shared history has been marked by tensions and conflicts, but also by peaceful cohabitation and collaboration; and, in both communities, this history of ours is also enriched by a deep cultural and spiritual legacy. The supportive policies of the Major of Peć, Mr. Gazmend Muhaxhiri, as well as the decision of the Supreme Court of Kosovo regarding the Visoki Dečani Monastery request on the Monastery land are the indications that the situation is developing in the right direction, in despite of the fact that the pace of this development might seem slow. As an Albanian myself, I can tell you that these two steps have required enormous courage and commitment. Therefore, it is our belief that, through good will and collaboration, we can pave the way toward a future where our communities will coexist in harmony, working together for the common good. To this end, we would like to propose a series of joint initiatives between our NGOs and the Patriarchate, aimed at promoting dialogue, trust, and cooperation between Albanians and Serbs.

We believe that these initiatives can take many forms, including (but not being limited to):

1. **Interfaith dialogues and cultural exchanges**, where members of both communities will come together to learn about each other's faith, culture, and shared values.
2. **Community service projects**, where Albanians and Serbs will work side by side in activities that benefit the local population, such as environmental cleanups, humanitarian aid, or support for vulnerable groups.
3. **Youth engagement programs**, where young people from both communities participate in workshops, sports events, or art projects, encouraging mutual understanding and lasting friendships.

We believe that the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate in Peć, as a respected institution with the ability to bring people together through faith, compassion and dialogue, can play a crucial role in these efforts. We are confident that with your support and guidance, these initiatives will help to create a more peaceful and inclusive environment for all who live in Peć.

We would be honored to meet with you, and/or the representatives of the Patriarchate to further discuss these ideas, and search for the new ones, and explore how we might collaborate to make them a reality. We look forward to hearing from you and hope that, together, we can build bridges between our communities and move toward a more peaceful future.

With deep respect and best regards,

Mentor Agani

Zoran Savić, Project Coordinator
NGO AKTIV
North Mitrovica, Kosovo

Dear Mother Haritin,

My name is Zoran Savić and I am a project coordinator in the non-governmental organization Aktiv from North Mitrovica. Although I was born in Pula, Croatia, I have actually lived in Mitrovica for 30 years and I am actively involved in social life in Kosovo, both through work and cultural life, considering that I am also a musician, and I have participated in various inter-ethnic projects with musicians of Albanian nationality.

At the same time, for many years I worked as a journalist in the Kosovo Sever portal - KoSSev, and through this job I became even more familiar with the political, security and religious situation in Kosovo.

The Serbian Orthodox Church has always been a cornerstone for the Serb community in Kosovo, providing spiritual guidance and support. Your leadership at the Patriarchate of Pec places you in a crucial role in fostering inter-ethnic harmony. Encouraging dialogue and cooperation between different religious and ethnic groups can significantly enhance unity and mutual understanding in our communities. I urge you to support community programs and joint service projects that bring together people from diverse backgrounds. Your sermons and public addresses should continue to emphasize the importance of unity, tolerance, and respect for all.

In this spirit, I hope for a future where multi-ethnic religious cohabitation becomes the norm in Kosovo. I envision communities where religious differences are embraced as strengths rather than sources of division. To this end, you might focus on creating sustainable programs that educate on religious diversity and tolerance, support joint community projects, and ensure equal representation of all religious groups in local governance.

Looking forward, I envision a Kosovo where multi-ethnic cohabitation and religious tolerance is embraced. Regular interfaith meetings and intercultural initiatives can foster dialogue and cooperation.

I conclude this letter on a hopeful note, envisioning a future where our united efforts cultivate a genuinely harmonious and multi-ethnic society in Kosovo. I am certain that with our shared dedication, we can achieve remarkable progress toward this worthy goal.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Zoran Savić