



Emergency State and Civil Protection
in the
Republic of Kosovo

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RESEARCH

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**Emergency State and Civil Protection in the
Republic of Kosovo**

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Introduction

Matters of emergency management present one of the most complex and very sensitive segments of every society. Every country gives a priority to the emergency readiness because preventive measure would minimize natural disasters which could threaten the state. The concept of civil protection mainly belongs to the internal affairs of states¹ nevertheless it is a flaw to say that this is a responsibility of exclusively one state. Natural disasters can occur not only within one state- they can have regional and wider repercussions. Truly, the matters of civil protection are already becoming more of international character.

Republic of Kosova, as a country in ongoing development, needs more prepared capacities to be able to react in crisis situations which could be of a different nature. In this case, the need for capacity building and resources we are facing the situations which are about civil emergency cases is unavoidable.

Since the end of the war in Kosovo until the Kosovo Independence Declaration, the responsibilities in the security sector were mainly a reserved competence of UNMIK. But, the emergency readiness issues and emergency management were responsibility of the locals.² Considering this, the question may arise: How much did the Kosovo institutions and the society do on development of this security segment? Was there an importance given by the politic-makers to this security segment? Did we build sufficient capacities in cases of disasters?

This research has found weaknesses and gaps in this segment. From the strategic level, initially the comprehensive security strategy is missing which would foresee threats and risks, in this case those that come from natural disasters and from human factor. The threat and risk assessment is an immediate need in Kosovo. Next, there is a lack of information of citizens regarding the issues of emergency readiness. Such authentic information would influence on awareness of citizens about this very important subject.

Besides, the employees of civil protection have a lack of motivation as a result of bad equipment and very low salaries.³ When we add the fact that the process of Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) dissolution is a matter that should occur, there is a concern that the motivation will fall on their engagement on emergency readiness during the process of KPC dissolution and building of the Kosovo Security Force (KSF). This may create a vacuum as for the emergency readiness of the institutions of the Republic of Kosovo until the KSF is fully operational.⁴

¹ School of Civil Protection, *Ethical Aspects*, f.6

² Since the establishment of PISG

³ This is foreseen also in the assessment done by the experts of the European Fire Brigade Association, who have done an assessment for OSCE regarding the state of the firemen in Kosovo. See "*Analyzing of the state-Service for Fire-Fight and Rescue in Kosovo*". OSCE

⁴ According to the mission it has, KPC is a main force of the second line but in some cases also the front line, when facing civilian emergencies

This assessment has used a comprehensive methodology. This includes the experience of KCSS experts, the current legislation in force and modern international literature on this subject.

Initially the aspects of assessment policies are evaluated in matters of emergency readiness. Afterwards, policies of strategic planning, in the central level same as in local level, have an important part. The inter-institutional coordination issues opposite this field as well comprise a part of this assessment. Indirectly are evaluated trainings, exercises and existing equipment. This research includes the matters of information and international cooperation as well. And in the end, conclusions.

The assessment policies

Identification of threats and risks presents a factor on building a responding readiness in the preventive aspect as well as in the reaction aspect. To put it simple, the threat and risk assessment in the security sector presents a kind of “constitution” in the security sector because according to that the policies are oriented. It is more than true that Kosovo is missing an assessment in this field. The most comprehensive assessment was done during 2005 and 2006 by UNDP where a chapter included the threats and risks in Kosovo.⁵ As well, there were threat and risk assessments as far as natural disaster are concerned, done by KPC, Department for Emergency Management in the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and OSCE but all there were either limited or do not stand anymore because they need to be updated.⁶

From the experts’ point of view, considering the development, investments and changes in the infrastructure, there should be assessments done and update of plans at least once in three years. With three years assessments, the plans would be prepared on preventive measures and operational ones. This would lead to the proper strategic planning.

As mentioned in the introduction, during the last nine years, it is invested in a certain amount in this field. In this direction, there is a structure which is a part of emergency management. In Kosovo, with the civil protection issues until now were dealt by KPC and Department for Emergency Management (DEM).⁷ Not going into details of emergency management chain of command functioning, it is worth to mention that possibilities for risk assessment exist. Nearly every municipality has the departments/sectors for save and rescue which have direct link to the Emergency Regional Operation Centers 112 (EROC) which have to report during the 24 hours regarding the civil emergency situation and the possible

⁵ See *Review of the Sector for Internal Security in Kosovo*, UNDP, 2006

⁶ According to the research, KPC conducted a wider assessment in 2004 and maybe another later on but at least in the last three years it is not updated. Also, the previous department of emergency readiness and civil security (DGEMC), which was within UNMIK, has conducted a risk assessment on municipality level in 2001. this was not updated later by DEM

⁷ DEM is within the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

risks.⁸ All the necessary information are collected and sent to the Situation Center (SC) which is located in the Kosovo Government building, within the Prime Minister's Office.⁹

This research showed that besides receiving information, neither EROC 12 nor SC, does not have a sector for analysis which would deal with evaluation of information which are about threats of risks in the field of civil emergencies. These assessments, if not in daily and weekly basis, would have to be conducted at least every month. The necessity for evaluation and analysis is increased when according to all SC will incorporate in the Secretariat of Kosovo Security Council (KSC).¹⁰

Strategic and operational planning

According to the threats and risks perception and assessment, it is necessary to prepare plans in the strategic as well as in the operational level. As for the strategic level, a comprehensive strategy is missing. There were intentions to draft such a strategy but the delays were excused by lack of funds, even though according to evaluations, the donors have contributed and could contribute further in this direction.

While compiling this assessment, the KSC is not established yet. KSC should be consolidated and conduct assessments, advising and discussions regarding the threats and risks in Kosovo, in this case, regarding the risks that comes out from natural disasters.¹¹ The importance of KSC in emergency management is that high such as in cases of emergency situations it has the main role in managing the situations.¹²

Truly, the strategy for respond to natural disasters should be based in the security strategy of Kosovo. Kosovo has not drafted this strategy yet even though its importance is unconditioned. Who should deal with drafting the security strategy? According to the law in force, KSC is the authority who should draft this strategy. By the time of writing this paper, KSC is not established yet and not even consolidated. Even though about the importance of KSC establishment should be done a separate assessment, in the concrete case the obstacles on establishment of this institutions influent not only in other security aspects, also in the issues of emergency management.

The research showed that in the ministerial level there are operational plans for responding in emergency managements. These plans are mainly drafted by DEM, Ministry of Health and

⁸ The Regional Operation Centers are in Prishtinë, Prizren, Gjiilan and Pejë. In Mitrovicë, such a center is not established yet due to political reasons.

⁹ Investment in the Situation Center if of a special importance. Equipment and methodology that is invested there is one of the best in the region.

¹⁰ See *Situation Center* <http://www.ks-gov.net/pm/RëndësiaesigurisëpublikënëKosovëdherajon/tabid/101/Default.aspx>

¹¹ For reasons of this document it is worth to mention some aspects of natural disasters. They can occur as a result of nature or as well as a result of individual actions. Disasters can be: earthquakes, volcano, floods, fires, chemical and radiological contaminations, explosions, spread of toxic elements, slides, flooding etc.

¹² See the Law on Kosovo Security Council, Article 12, "*During emergency situations, KSC acts authority and executive responsibility on the name of Government ...*"

KPC. The last case is drafting of a national plan on fire prevention,¹³ which has increased the awareness in all levels on taking the preventive measures. But in general, these plans do not refer to any updated assessment or strategy and as such can be considered as not sufficient.

As for the planning and assessments, there are weaknesses in municipal level especially basing in municipal specifics, respective planning and assessment is unavoidable.

E.g. some municipalities are more threatened by forest fires because of the forest density and improper terrain (Deçan, Pejë, Istog, Kamenicë etc). Or, in some municipalities there are problems with air pollution, toxic and radioactive items (Mitrovica, Obiliqi, Prishtina etc). Floods and slides (Fushë Kosovë, Kacanik, Vushtrri etc).

More specific is the region of Gjilan which seismological is not stabile and more affected. Based on these specifics, not only plans but also the action readiness should be conducted according to the circumstances. This research has proved that only some municipalities make plans (also not in regular basis) whereas some others do not update and some do not even have them.

Coordination

Coordination is one of the more complex issues during assessment and strategic planning as well as during the emergency reaction. Therefore to achieve a proper coordination there should be trainings and joint exercises conducted. This can be done best by defining the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) in country level.

The latest case on coordination failure is the entering of scows/barges with toxic substances in the territory of Kosovo. This is one of the current issues which is dejecting Kosovo opinion/population. Here we can see that there is no proper coordination of relevant institutions regarding this issue, starting from the border cross control on what is entering in our country, up to those who are obliged to issue respective document for transport or purchase and usage of such substances. The Ministry of Trade and Industry licenses companies for export without assessing and analyzing by experts (experts about risks) especially those about dangerous substances.

There is no proper coordination between the institutions starting from up to down but the same from down to up. With the new regulation on functioning of municipalities a lot of aspects of emergency management are transferred in responsibility of Municipal Presidents/Mayors. According to experience there is a belief that the majority of the Mayors

¹³ Koha Ditore, "National Plan on Fire Prevention", 16 July 2008

have a big problem to understand the importance of successful functioning of emergency services. In case of a disaster it may occur that there will be no proper coordination between relevant respective institutions. For instance, in these cases it is not clear if municipal emergency services should report to Ministry of Local Governance or to DEM.

This research has shown that DEM itself is looking for a centralization of emergency services for a proper functioning. This would certainly simplify the coordination in case of responding to civil emergencies.

Equipment and Infrastructure

In each level, there are initial capacities for responding to civil emergencies. Mainly these equipments are very old and a huge part of those are not in a good technical shape therefore the emergency services are not as efficient in facing the different risks. A detailed research regarding the lack of equipment and infrastructure for firemen is done by International Association for Fire and Rescue, supported by OSCE in Kosovo.

This research has shown that even those small funds in municipal level, given for civil emergencies; they are used for other municipal needs by not giving importance to this important issue. Equipment in local level for seismological measures, air pollution and radioactivity are almost all missing. Recently, in Gjilan is a first step done in this direction. The seismological metering regarding the possible earthquakes in this region is placed.

One of the more critical issues in the aspect of emergency readiness are hospitals. The current infrastructure will not be able to face a big afflux in cases of crisis. This is confirmed by the discomposure of the Director of Kosovo Emergency Clinic who warns for lacks of elementary items in the emergency clinic.¹⁴

Trainings and exercises

Parallel to preparation of the plan on risk assessment according to this assessment, there should be prepared also plans for training and exercises development in every level, individual as well as collective ones for civil emergencies. One of the key elements in this subject is the training of staff and regular ongoing exercises in order to achieve higher skills while responding.

Even though the Kosovo Center for Security, Education and Development, exists in Vushtrri, its capacities are limited. The main problem in the training aspect consists of lack of experts or trainers in this field. Except this center there should be used capacities that other institutions offer. More positively, beside the DEM staff, there should be other experts engaged, from academic as well as NGO part.

Beside the foreseen individual exercises, there is a need to have joint exercises in every level. The comprehensive exercise in a country level planned, organized and lead by KPC and

¹⁴ Director of Hospital Emergency Clinic sent a letter to Kosovo Government where he expressed his concern and warned about the lacks in this clinic, April 2008,

supported by KFOR was held for the first time.¹⁵ It would be good to organize such exercises up to twice per calendar year. Parallel to exercises in country level, because of the specifics mentioned above, there should be organized also exercises on municipal level by incorporating all respective services. Considering the lack of infrastructure and equipment capacity, the exercises in municipal level should be organized by participation of some municipalities with the same characteristics and geographic closeness.

Information

One of the gaps that characterize the respective institutions for civil protection is also lack of information. Kosovo Citizens are at least informed regarding the emergency readiness of institutions. DEM should do more on informing the citizens. Information should be done also on difficulties that this institution is facing.

Based on the experience of different states, despite that during a calendar year does not occur any emergency case for which respective authorities should react, it would be a good solution if the civil protection institutions organize a press conference in order to inform the community on what is being done in this direction, to increase confidentiality and improve the society image.¹⁶

It is very less done on awareness about the emergency number 112. In general among the citizens still exists the feeling that for every risk police or another service should be called or alarmed. This is a consequence of not informing the citizens about the importance of 112. To simplify this, it is necessary to promote the 112, as it is done in other EU countries. Truly, DEM should have at least one active official who deals with public relation issues.

Another concerning fact is the lack of citizen awareness. There should be necessarily organized programs or trainings regarding the measures for prevention of crisis. This because the damaged caused by fires come as a result of carelessness of human factor.¹⁷ The more ideal way would be the incorporation of lectures and trainings on awareness, starting from the lowest school levels.

A good case and sample to inform and notify the Kosovar opinion was the comprehensive exercise in country level “Eagle 7” where more attention was paid by the Medias. We think that this practice should exist in the future as well.

International cooperation

No country can rely only on its own capacities. Especially, based on the high scale disasters probability as well as the nature of asymmetric threats it is necessary the need for mutual support.¹⁸ NATO and EU in its objectives have accepted that the natural disasters already do not respect the state borders.

¹⁵ The exercise was called “Eagle 7”, in May 2008

¹⁶ Civil Protection, *Training and Education*, f.27

¹⁷ According to the assessments, during the fires in 2007, nearly in 90 % of cases was the factor human.

¹⁸ Backgrounder, *NATO's role in civil emergency planning*

Until now, Kosovo is completely missing the agreements with the regional countries for help in case of disasters. Based on difficulties, lack of capacities and resources, necessarily should be initiated cooperation agreements. There is no reason not to initiate the agreement with Albania. Because of the closeness, agreements with Macedonia and Montenegro are unavoidable. Truly, due to political reasons such agreements with Serbia can not be achieved for the moment, which could interfere eventual emergency reactions, especially in fire cases.¹⁹

These agreements should include mutual supports in cases of: fires, floods, environment pollution, slides, radioactivity, offering hospital services etc. The latest case in the region is the immediate support that Italy offered to Albania and Greece, in Gerdec case, as a result of prior agreements.

Conclusions

The research showed gaps and weaknesses emphasized in the field of civil emergencies. Kosovo Government should consolidate the Kosovo Security Council as soon as possible, in order to immediately initiate the drafting of a national security strategy. Parallel to this, considering the numerous risks, lack of threat and risk assessments in Kosovo is unjustifiable. Kosovo needs a comprehensive assessment on threats and risks because this determines the strategic policy of planning, as well.

The weak and unclear coordination presents a problem itself. It is not known “task division” between the central and local level regarding the civil emergency issues. A more centralized system is recommended where civil emergencies in local level would directly respond to one authority as well the definition of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) in country level by the Kosovo Government.

Information is one of the main pillars. Citizens are not well informed about the existence of emergency number 112. Awareness of citizens about the risks, especially those coming from fires, floods, slides, environment pollution, etc, should be one of the priority tasks of DEM.

A concerning fact is the lack of equipment, resources and especially the condition of the Emergency Clinic. Until the basic infrastructure exists, there are modern equipments missing which are necessary. Considering these difficulties, there should be as soon as possible initiated cooperation agreements with surrounding states. These agreements would enable help and mutual support in this field.

¹⁹ Especially in fire cases in 2007 among border lines with Serbia where fire brigades services and KPC were hampered to intervene.

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