



Weekly Media Report

13 to 16 January

International Affairs

Ariel Sharon lauded at Israel state memorial service – BBC (UK), 13 January 2014

Mr Sharon, regarded by many Israelis as a great statesman but widely loathed in the Arab world, died on Saturday aged 85 after eight years in a coma. Speakers at the state memorial for Israel's former PM Ariel Sharon have described him as an "indomitable" man devoted to the security of his people.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-25708082>

Dozens killed in Iraq bomb attacks – BBC (UK), 15 January 2014

At least 41 people have been recently killed in a series of bombings in central Iraq, police and medical officials say. Sixteen died in an attack on Wednesday 15 January on a funeral for a pro-government Sunni militiaman in a village south of Baquba, the capital of Diyala province. Seven car bombs meanwhile exploded across Baghdad, killing at least 25 people and wounding dozens more.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-25742184>

The Leaders of the EU visit Latvia to congratulate it with the introduction of euro – Latvia.eu (LV), 15 January 2014

European Council President Herman Van Rompuy and European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso visited Riga on January 10 to welcome Latvia as the 18th member entrance in the Eurozone and meet with Latvian officials. Mr. Barroso said that Latvia's joining the Eurozone on January 1 was the best demonstration of the currency zone's resilience despite the recent predictions it would implode due to high debts and recessions in several member states. Also, he indicated that Latvia is a "shining example" of how an economy can reap benefits from painful reforms, reminding that Latvia is the EU's fastest-growing economy for the third consecutive year with an estimated GDP growth of 4,2%.

http://www.latvia.eu/sites/default/files/latvia_in_review_2014.01.13_issue_2.pdf

Rafik Hariri murder trial to begin at The Hague – BBC (UK), 16 January 2014

The trial of four men accused of murdering former Lebanese PM Rafik Hariri is set to begin at an unprecedented tribunal at The Hague. Hariri was killed by a massive car bomb in Beirut in 2005.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-25755568>

European Commission warns: ES citizenship is not allowed to sell – delfi.lv (LV), 16 January 2014

EU justice commissioner Viviane Reding has roundly criticised Malta for its EU passport sale scheme. "Citizenship must not be up for sale," she told MEPs in Strasbourg on Wednesday, noting that Malta is bound by the EU treaties to consider the impact of its actions on other EU countries. The difference between Malta and other countries introducing similar systems is that Malta is planning to sell 20.000 EU passports, while other countries – Cyprus, Latvia, UK and Portugal – are selling resident permits.

<http://www.delfi.lv/news/national/politics/es-pilsonibu-nedrikst-tirgot-bridina-eiropas-komisija.d?id=44043907>

Syrians escape war via Balkan countries – *Klan Kosova TV (Albania)*, 14 January 2014
Albanian Police in Gjirokastra have arrested 35 illegal immigrants in the outskirts of Lazarat, a city close to Greece. The immigrants, who were for the major part of Syrian nationality, had left Lazarat on board of a truck and were heading up north to Shkodra in order to cross the border Montenegrin border.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aCeZZY_5lqY

National Affairs

Thailand crisis: Protesters launch Bangkok 'shutdown' – *BBC (UK)*, 13 January 2014

Protesters are blocking roads in parts of the Thai capital, Bangkok, in a bid to oust the government before snap elections on 2 February. Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra has offered to meet protest leaders to discuss potentially delaying the polls. Protesters allege Ms Yingluck is a proxy for her brother, former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who was ousted by the military in 2006 and is currently in self-imposed exile.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-25708092>

Governments of Albania and Kosovo hold first joint meeting in Prizren – *Gazeta Shqip*, (Albania), 13 January 2014

The first joint meeting of the governments of Albania and Kosovo was held on Saturday, 11 January, in Prizren, Kosovo, where the Albanian League of Prizren was established in 1878. Kosovo Prime Minister, Hashim Thaçi, said this is an important moment to start a close co-operation between the two countries. Albania's Prime Minister Edi Rama went further stating that the meeting was the first step of a joint institutional co-operation for developing Albania and Kosovo, reinforcing the economy, deepening the bilateral ties, and enriching the cultural life of both countries.

<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/kosovo-and-albania-to-push-jointly-towards-eu-integration>

Religious harmony - Muslim families rebuild Catholic Church - *Gazeta Shqiptare* (Albania), 15 January 2014

Derven, Albania - More than a dozen of Muslim families have rebuilt the local Roman Catholic Church dedicated to St. Nicholas using their private economic resources. A number of them have also contributed with their manual work to the reconstruction, *Gazeta Shqiptare* reports. During the church's inauguration, representatives of the Roman Catholic Church in Albania have praised this generous gesture of the village's residents.

<http://www.balkanweb.com/gazetav5/>

Egypt: 95% of voters in favor of the new constitution – *Repubblica (IT)*, 16 January 2014

Around 42% of the population voted in the referendum. This result confirms the popularity and reinforces the position of Abdel Fatah Sisi, vice-Prime Minister and Ministry of Defence.

http://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2014/01/16/news/egitto_chiusi_i_seggi_annunciata_valanga_di_s_a_nuova_costituzione-76056161/?ref=HREC1-1

Economy

Albania scores 54th in Heritage Foundation's 2014 Index of Economic Freedom – *Gazeta Shqiptare* (Albania), 15 January 2014

The Washington D.C.-based Heritage Foundation has made public its 2014 Index of Economic Freedom. Albania score is 66.9, making its economy the 54th freest in the 2014

Index. According to the report, the problems affecting economic freedom in the country are the presence of corruption in the state bodies, as well as the unsolved property issue. The country's high ranking in the 2014 Index is a direct results of the reforms implemented by the government that were aimed at establishing a business-friendly environment and at increasing economic freedom in the country.

<http://www.balkanweb.com/gazetav5/>