

# EMBASSY UPDATES

NEWSLETTER FOR U.S. CITIZENS IN KOSOVO



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## Section of the Month – Information Resource Management (IRM)

I, the author of the newsletter, am biased about this section; my husband manages it. It's a great section full of helpful people. They manage all the telephones, mail, computers, internet, and expediting at the Embassy. Through this period of working from home, they have given employees the tools to do it. No computer at home? Here's an embassy tablet and keyboard to access your email and files to get things done. Can't access a certain program you need? Let's fix that. Need a call routed? Our operators will help you. Even during the airport shut down, they managed to find other ways to get official mail in for Embassy employees and their families. (Sorry, mail service is only available for Americans under Chief of Mission authority, and they are not allowed to order stuff for you. Their own privileges would be revoked.) Every Embassy-issued phone and computer is set up by IRM professionals, who also work with employees when things go wrong. When an employee is entering or leaving the country on official business, an IRM expeditor picks him or her up, helps with bags and airport check in or out, and ensures the process goes smoothly. Without IRM, the Embassy would come to a standstill.



During last year's Embassy move, IRM broke down, moved, and set up over 500 computers during a single weekend, allowing the embassy to be fully functional on opening day. They did this through careful planning, 16-hour days, and a lot of help from their colleagues who flew in from other embassies. Not only did they do the computers, but they also set up the telephone system, set up servers and printers, and added all the peripherals, such as scanners, that people needed to work. It was a remarkable feat.

**The U.S. Embassy will be on maximum telework until further notice due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Should you have an emergency, please email [PristinaACS@state.gov](mailto:PristinaACS@state.gov) or call +381 338 59 59 30 01.**



IRM falls under the Management section, and includes the Information Service Center, the Information Programs Centers, the telephone operators, the mail room, and the telephone technicians. Consular owes a special “thank you” to this section: whenever we have a problem with the systems that allow us to issue visas and passports, IRM comes to our rescue!

## Christmas and New Year's Ideas

With COVID, we do not recommend gatherings or travel for the holidays. It makes many of us sad. Here are some things you can do to make the time more cheerful.

Cookies: Some cookie ingredients are hard to find here, especially brown sugar. Real brown sugar has been sighted at Viva Fresh, but if you want to try to make your own, here's a [guide](#) to some recipes without molasses. Baking powder can be hard to find, so try [these substitutes](#). And for shortening, try [this](#).



Christmas Crackers: Make your own, including the fillings. You may not be able to find the snaps, but they're not necessary. Here's a [video](#) to show you how.

Put up Christmas lights and add cheer to the whole neighborhood. Lights are available at several places in Kosovo. You can even [make an indoor tree](#) with them.

Follow a [new year tradition](#) to bring good luck. We can all use some!

Make a [time capsule](#). You may think this year has been unforgettable, but the capsule will help you keep your memories safe for future retrieval.

Connect to others by leaving small treats at the doors of your neighbors.



### [Give to charity.](#)

Cheer us up and tell us where you've seen beautiful holiday lights by emailing [PristinaACS@state.gov](mailto:PristinaACS@state.gov). Even better, include photos!



## Why We Are Limiting Services

Not being able to schedule appointments at the Embassy is frustrating. We get it. We want to help you, too, and we are also very frustrated. It's been a long time since we've been able to give you all the services and help you need as soon as you need it. But we have to limit our services to protect both you and our staff.



Some Embassies are doing more than us. Some are doing less. With each Embassy, the amount of services available are reviewed at least every two weeks, usually more often. What goes into the review process? Basically, it's the rate of infection in the country, the prevalence in the capital, how the hospitals are coping with the number of COVID cases, and how many Embassy employees are able to physically work in the building according to internal guidelines. When it's put that way, you can hopefully see why we can't currently offer non-emergency services.

We want to serve you and get back to normal. So wear a mask and isolate, and tell your family and neighbors to do the same. When infections go down, our services go up. Of course, we are always here to ensure that American citizens are able to

travel when necessary: if you need an emergency passport please contact [PristinaACS@state.gov](mailto:PristinaACS@state.gov) and we will make it happen.

## Mitigating COVID in Winter

You've been told all summer to stay outdoors, to social distance, and to get a lot of sunlight. Winter is here, however, and that just isn't reasonable. How can you help prevent COVID spread during winter months, when it's cold and the days are short?

1. Get a flu shot. While a flu vaccine won't prevent coronavirus, having the flu and corona at the same time is going to make it worse. There is also [some evidence](#) that the flu shot makes COVID cases less severe.
2. Boost air circulation in your home, and humidity, too. Keep your air conditioner running, but not cooling, but only if it exchanges air with the outdoors. Use an [air filtration machine](#). Get the air moving! Keep a window open.
3. [It's definitely not fun, but isolate](#). Don't go out, especially in crowds. Be with only people you know who are also isolating.
4. Wash your hands, watch your distance, and wear your mask.
5. Go home to the US if you're in a [high risk group](#) or feel unsafe in Kosovo. Kosovo's hospital system is unable to cope



with the current number of cases, and it could get worse. The Embassy has limited capability to assist when the problem is an overburdened medical system; we do not have our own medical facilities, nor does Camp Bondsteel. Make responsible decisions.

None of these things are guaranteed to keep you safe. However, they definitely decrease your odds of catching coronavirus.



## Virtual Christmas Fair

The Ideas Partnership held a virtual Christmas fair with several local artists. If you missed it, here is a list of artists who participated.

**Sapune** - Presentation by **Mergimare Berisha** email [sapune.ks@theideaspartnership.org](mailto:sapune.ks@theideaspartnership.org)

**Dor.handmade** - *dolls -teddy bear* - by **Doruntina Ukimeri**

**Krenare Rakovica** - *filigram jewelry silver* Rr. Garibaldi Nr.65, Pristina; email: [krenare.rakovica@gmail.com](mailto:krenare.rakovica@gmail.com)

**Il Art e Zanat** - *graphic, design* by **Ilire lepaja** No 112 RR Andrea Gropa, Pristina email [ilirelepaja@gmail.com](mailto:ilirelepaja@gmail.com)

**Arlinda Murtezi** - CD jewelry

**ImLu bags** *leather bags* by **Loreta Ukshini** No 17 St Gustav Mayer, Pristina email [imlu.bags@gmail.com](mailto:imlu.bags@gmail.com)

**Zanart** - *leather jewelry* - by **Arta Maliqi Shalq** No 17 St Gustav Mayer, Pristina

**Huume** - *Natural Cosmetics*- by **Arbërore Riza** N48/B3-1 Sheshi Nëna Terezë, Pristina

**Reusable bags** by Marcelle and Arlinda

**Dhe** art on clay- by **Granita Grezda lila** RR Adrian Krasniqi, Pristina email [ggranita@gmail.com](mailto:ggranita@gmail.com)

**Kashi Engraving Laser and Cutting** *art on wood and painting* by **Kashman** Rr Hamez Jashari, Pristina