



## Situation room

### **\*\* MONITORING EVENTS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS \*\***

**Period under review: from 1 November 2022 to 15 November 2022.**

[This report is based on publicly available sources to describe the situation, which may change rapidly.]

### **Tensions between Belgrade and Pristina:**

- **(1 November)** From midnight, the Kosovo Police started issuing warnings to drivers who have not re-registered their vehicles from Serbian to Kosovo license plates. Due to the situation in Kosovo, the Serbian army is on alert, says Serbian Defense Minister Miloš Vučević.
- **(2 November)** On Wednesday afternoon, units of the Serbian army neutralised a commercial drone that was moving from the direction of Kopaonik towards Raška on the territory of Serbia. Kosovo Defense Minister Armend Mehaj previously said that the drones that were spotted over Raška did not come from the territory of Kosovo. Mehaj wrote on Facebook that such claims are "just an excuse to increase the number of Serbian army soldiers along the border with Kosovo" and "a means of spreading panic among citizens."
- **(5 November)** Disinformation in the information environment additionally heated up the atmosphere. Serbian tabloids (Kurir and Informer) reported that Kosovo's Prime Minister Kurti wants war and that a column of ROSU special forces combat vehicles is moving towards Mitrovica. The spokesperson of the Kosovo police, Baki Keljani, denied for Tanjug that the ROSU special units are moving towards the north of the province and that they have entered Kosovska Mitrovica.
- **(5 November)** Representatives of the Serbs are withdrawing from Kosovo institutions. According to the president of the Serbian List, Goran Rakić, this decision will be valid until Pristina withdraws the decision on the re-registration of vehicles and starts forming a community of municipalities with a Serbian majority. The government in Pristina is not backing down from its decisions, despite diplomatic pressure from the US and the EU.
- **(6 November)** In the north of Kosovo, in Mitrovica, a protest took place, during which the Kosovo Serbs announced that they recognise only one state. The day before the protests, mayors and local councilors in four municipalities in the north of Kosovo resigned from Kosovo institutions. The protesters are demanding from Prishtina the cancellation of the decision to re-register vehicles from Serbian to Kosovo license plates and the start of the formation of the Community of Serbian Municipalities.
- **(6 November)** The chairman of the board of directors of the Forum for Ethnic Relations, Dušan Janjić, estimates that with the departure of Serbs from Kosovo's institutions, a vacuum is being created in the security sector - especially in the area of the security of residents, which has now fallen entirely under the responsibility of EULEX, but it is unprepared and does not have enough personnel, and KFOR is not qualified for this. He also estimates that this is a kind of prediction of the process that will lead to the independence of the north of

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Kosovo from the rest of the country, at least in a political and functional sense, which could later be used as part of a negotiation strategy.

- **(6 November)** In an interview with Pink TV on Sunday, Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić assessed that "major political, almost tectonic changes" are taking place in Kosovo. He also pointed out that "there is general euphoria and enthusiasm in the north of Kosovo due to the rebellion against Pristina by leaving the institutions." Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti: "The President of Serbia has lied and disappointed Americans and Europeans, he very often meets and coordinates with the Russian ambassador in Belgrade. Given that Serbia is not a democratic country, it is becoming a tool of the Kremlin".
- **(7 November)** Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti called on Serbs not to leave Kosovo's institutions and said that Serbia wants to camouflage the rejection of the Franco-German proposal for a final agreement between Kosovo and Serbia by withdrawing the representatives of the Serbian community from Kosovo's institutions.
- **(9 November)** So far, almost 600 police officers have resigned in the north of Kosovo. A unit of Italian Carabinieri has arrived in Kosovo to reinforce the EULEX police unit. KFOR has reported that they are carefully monitoring the situation and have called on both sides to return to the dialogue.
- **(11 November)** Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić and Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti held separate talks in Paris on the side lines of the International Peace Forum with the High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, Joseph Borrell, about the Franco-German proposal to resolve the issue of relations between Kosovo and Serbia. Kurti sees this proposal as a good basis for further talks, while Vučić claims that it is unacceptable for Serbia. The largest disagreements are focused on the formation of the Union of Serbian municipalities, which Pristina fears, as it believes that this could be the formation of a new Republika Srpska, which would make it impossible for Kosovo to function as a unified state.
- **(12 November)** After a meeting with High Representative Borrell, Kosovo Prime Minister Kurti says that there is a small group of Serbian extremists in the north of Kosovo with the support of Belgrade, which is putting pressure on the rest of the Serbs. He mentioned that reconciliation with Serbia will only be possible when Belgrade distances itself from Milošević and Putin. Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić expressed disappointment and accused Pristina of irrational behaviour. He also expressed disappointment with the European Union, saying that he expected it to put pressure on Kosovo to respect the Brussels Agreement, according to which the Community of Serbian Municipalities should have existed for almost a decade.
- **(15 November)** The President of Kosovo, Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu, announced extraordinary elections for the mayors of Mitrovica, Zubin Potok, Leposavić and Zvečan for December 18.

### **Montenegro:**

- **(1 November)** The Montenegrin Parliament adopted amendments to the Law on the President of the State, which would force the President of the country, Milo Đukanović, to appoint Miodrag Lekić, a former diplomat

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of the Milošević regime, as the new Prime Minister. The initiator of the amendment to the law is the pro-Serbian Democratic Front party. Representatives of Đukanović's Socialist Party describe the situation as a legal violence and a constitutional coup.

- **(2 November)** Several hundred citizens gathered in the centre of Podgorica to protest against the adoption of the law on the president. The inscriptions "Stop foreign influence" and "Stop the destruction of institutions" could be seen on the slogans. The European Commission expressed concern about the developments in the country.
- **(7 November)** Montenegrin President Milo Đukanović returned the Law on Amendments to the Law on the President of Montenegro to parliamentary consideration, with which the majority of MPs tried to force Đukanović to give the mandate to form a new government to Demos MP Miodrag Lekić.
- **(9 November)** The President of the Montenegrin Assembly called a meeting of the parliamentary parties due to the crisis in the country. Although the pro-Serbian Democratic Front party left the debate, the meeting still took place. The representatives of the parliamentary parties did not reach an agreement.
- **(10 November)** Montenegrin Foreign Minister Ranko Krivokapić and Defense Minister Raško Konjević, in the presence of their Croatian colleagues, unveiled a memorial plaque representing Montenegro's regret for the establishment of the camp in Morinje and the suffering of the Croats who were imprisoned there during the wars following the breakup of Yugoslavia. This sparked a diplomatic dispute between Serbia and Croatia. Serbia sent a note of protest to Croatia due to the presence of Croatian Foreign Minister Gordan Grlić Radman and Croatian Minister for Croatian Defenders Tom Medved at the unveiling of the memorial plaque. For Belgrade, the inscription on the plaque that the camp in Morinje was created during the Great Serbian aggression is also controversial. In its note, Croatia emphasized that Croatia and Montenegro are independent countries that regulate their own relations, in which Serbia interfered by sending a note of protest. In their note of protest, Zagreb also reminded that the Great Serbian aggression was also confirmed by its rulings by the International Court for War Crimes in the former Yugoslavia in The Hague.

### **Bosnia and Herzegovina:**

- **(1 November)** The Mayor of Sarajevo, Benjamina Karić, informed the public via Twitter that the BiH Prosecutor's Office has opened a case related to the documentary film Sarajevo Safari.
- **(2 November)** At a meeting exactly one month after the general elections, the BiH Central Election Commission unanimously confirmed the election results.
- **(2 November)** The opposition from the Bosnia-Herzegovina entity of the Republika Srpska organised the third protest after the October elections, where they demanded the annulment of the elections for the president and vice president of the Republika Srpska, but the appeals panel of the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina rejected all appeals. The opposition is convinced that electoral theft was committed in this entity.

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- **(2 November)** The UN Security Council extended the mandate of the EUFOR mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- **(3 November)** Funds for Milorad Dodik's cabinet are expected to increase by more than five times. The increased budget is said to amount to 55.9 million KM (around 28.8 million EUR), which is by far the largest budget of any of the presidents of the Western Balkan countries.

### **Serbia:**

- **(1 November)** A German government official has told Serbia that they will have to choose between the EU and Russia.
- **(6 November)** The editorial office of the opposition media outlet Danas received threats in connection with reporting on the situation in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro.
- **(7 November)** The leader of the parliamentary group of the People's Party, Miroslav Aleksić, caused tensions bordering on a physical incident with his appearance in the parliamentary debate in the Serbian Assembly.
- **(11 November)** The head of the service for combating organized crime, Ninoslav Cmolić, said that they arrested a group of 18 people from the criminal group "Vračarci" and two members of the police, who were planning to kill Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić.

### **Albania:**

- **(4 November)** Albanian Prime Minister Rama condemned the statements of the British Home Secretary about the invasion of Albanian migrants to Britain. He accused Britain of finding scapegoats to justify its misguided migration policy.
- **(12 November)** In Tirana, there was a large protest by opposition parties against Prime Minister Edi Rama. Several thousand citizens gathered in front of the prime minister's office and demanded his resignation. Former Prime Minister Sali Berisha and former President Ilir Meta blame Rama for the departure of young people from Albania, numerous affairs, and characterize his rule as anti-Albanian.

### **Croatia:**

- **(3 November)** One of the largest military ships in the world, the American nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS George H. W. Bush, entered the port of Split. Croatian Interior Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Davor Božinović said in his speech that he sees the arrival of the American aircraft carrier as a confirmation of the common values and efforts of the two countries.
- **(4 November)** Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenković said that the Arab investor who announced that he had bought a stake in Fortenova from the Russian state bank Sberbank neither sought nor received approval from the competent authorities of the European Union.

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## North Macedonia

- **(7 november)** The Prime Minister of North Macedonia, Dimitar Kovačevski, gathered the presidents of the parliamentary parties to a meeting. They discussed the European future of the country and the decisions that must be made with a wider social and political consensus, reports the Prime Minister's Office. In order to continue negotiations with the European Union, it will be necessary to change the constitution and include the Bulgarians in it, which is also a condition for Bulgaria to waive its veto on the start of negotiations between Skopje and Sofia with the EU.
- **(14 november)** As part of the intergovernmental meeting of North Macedonia and Albania in Skopje, the responsible ministries of the two governments signed 21 agreements and memorandums on cooperation in the field of European integration processes, defence, security, infrastructure, energy, culture, the fight against international crime, railway connections between the two countries, etc.

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