



Situation room

** CURRENT EVENTS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS **

Period under review: from 21 March 2024 to 10 April 2024.

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

Relations between Belgrade and Pristina:

- **(21 March)** Bulgaria will strengthen its military presence in Kosovo, where it will send a contingent of 100 soldiers to join the KFOR forces.
- **(22 March)** Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti claimed that specialized units of the Serbian Armed Forces were spotted just a few meters from the border with Kosovo and posted the footage on *Facebook* and *X*. He highlighted that "Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić publicly threatened Kosovo a few days ago, saying that 'Serbia will wait for the best possible moment and take advantage of its opportunity'".
- **(24 March)** 25 years ago, NATO began a 78-day campaign of airstrikes against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), for war crimes and Serbian ethnic cleansing of the Kosovo Albanians. During the commemoration, Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić scolded the West by stating that "they have not finished their dirty work of dismembering Serbia and that they will never voluntarily recognize Kosovo." On Saturday, the ambassadors of the leading Western countries published a statement summarising the reasons for the start of the NATO airstrikes, which were carried out "to force Milošević, former president of FRY, to stop abusing the civilian population and to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe and enable the return of refugees."
- **(24 March)** On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the NATO bombing of the FRY members of far-right movements in Serbia protested in the centre of Belgrade. They carried banners reading "When the army returns to Kosovo" and "Pray to God and stick to Russia". In the past few days, the ultra-right unregistered organisation "*Narodna patrola*" called for the protest via *Telegram*.
- **(25 March)** The United Nations Security Council will not discuss NATO's bombing of the FRY. Three members of the Security Council, Russia, China and Algeria, voted for the proposed agenda, while the remaining 12 abstained. Nine votes are required for acceptance. France opposed the Russian proposal for a discussion. French Ambassador Nicolas de Riviere said that "Russia wants to use the NATO intervention in 1999 to justify the war in Ukraine, Crimea, Georgia" and that "Russia did not even consult with Serbia about this initiative".
- **(27 March)** The Committee on Politics and Democracy of the Council of Europe approved the report of the rapporteur for Kosovo, Dora Bakojanis, which states that Kosovo has fulfilled the conditions to become a full member of the Council of Europe.
- **(29 March)** In a conversation with the head of the European Union (EU) delegation in Belgrade, Emanuel Giofre, the President of the Assembly of Serbia, Ana Brnabić, said that she hopes that the recommendation on Kosovo's admission to the Council of Europe will be reconsidered.
- **(29 March)** Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić stated that Serbia's response to the possible admission of Kosovo to the Council of Europe will be strong.
- **(30 March)** Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti said that they are preparing to accuse Serbia of crimes committed during the war in Kosovo.

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- **(2 April)** EU spokesman Peter Stano stated that Kosovo must urgently implement the multi-year commitment to establish a Community of Municipalities with a Serbian majority and warned that it will face consequences on its way to the EU if it does not.
- **(3 April)** Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti visited four Serb-majority municipalities in northern Kosovo to discuss with local leaders how to improve relations with citizens, regardless of their ethnic or religious affiliation. Belgrade replied that Kurti was carrying out "destabilisation of the situation on the ground and causing tension".
- **(3 April)** A member of the Kosovo Border Police had his car set on fire in Northern Mitrovica, one of the four municipalities with a Serb majority in northern Kosovo. The officer is one of the few ethnic Serbs, who did not resign when Serbs from Kosovo began boycotting Kosovar institutions in November 2022. The deputy director of the Kosovo police for the northern region, Veton Elshani, stated that there is a suspicion of arson.
- **(4 April)** An agreement on finding a transitional solution for the implementation of the regulation of the Central Bank of Kosovo on the abolition of the use of dinars for cash payments has not been reached, confirmed the main negotiators of Belgrade and Pristina, who accused each other of a lack of will to find a solution.
- **(4 April)** Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić called for the formation of a team that will fight against Kosovo's membership in the Council of Europe. His call has raised questions on whether or not it represents a breach of the Ohrid agreement. Article 4 of the Ohrid Agreement states that Serbia will not oppose Kosovo's accession to international organisations.
- **(4 April)** The Minister of Justice of Kosovo, Albuljena Haxhiu, announced that 31 transport vehicles, which were seized by the Kosovo authorities last year in Banjska near Zvečani, were given to the Kosovo police for use. The vehicles were used on 24 September, when an armed group of Serbs carried out an attack on the Kosovo police, in which a Kosovo policeman was killed.
- **(4 April)** The Agency for the Management of Confiscated Assets in Kosovo confiscated two properties belonging to Milan Radočić in North Mitrovica and one in the municipality of Zubin Potok. The seized properties were allegedly connected to the attack by an armed group of Serbs on the Kosovo police in Banjska in September 2023.
- **(5 April)** Serbian List, the largest party of Serbs in Kosovo, which has the support of Belgrade, announced that members of the Serbian community will not participate in the census that began today.
- **(9 April)** European Commission spokeswoman Nabila Massrali said that the EU regrets the call by political representatives of Kosovo Serbs to boycott the census and the referendum on the dismissal of Albanian mayors of northern municipalities with a Serbian majority.
- **(10 April)** Acting President of the Government of Serbia and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ivica Dačić, called on the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to preserve its status-neutral approach in Kosovo.

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