



Situation room

**** CURRENT EVENTS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS ****

Period under review: from 10 April 2024 to 8 May 2024.

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

Relations between Belgrade and Prishtina:

- **(11 April)** Ambassadors of European Union (EU) member states supported the approval of visa liberalization for holders of Serbian passports from Kosovo, issued by the Coordination Administration of Serbia.
- **(13 April)** The Kosovo police arrested Srećko Sofronijević at the Brnjak border crossing during an anti-smuggling operation, for participating in the protests in 2021. At that time, there was a clash between the police and the demonstrators, in which several dozens were injured on both sides, including Sofronijević.
- **(16 April)** Deputies of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted, with a two-thirds majority, the report of the Greek MP Dora Bakoyannis, which recommends the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to accept Kosovo's request for membership in the organisation.
- **(17 April)** Serbian authorities stopped buses with Kosovo license plates on the border crossings with Croatia and Hungary. Authorities in Pristina have called this move a sign of revenge for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for Kosovo's membership in this organisation. Kosovar authorities urged citizens to avoid crossing through Serbia at all costs.
- **(17 April)** The EU warned that the blockade of Kosovo buses on Serbia's border crossings with Croatia and Hungary was a violation of the agreement on freedom of movement, and called on Belgrade to stop such unilateral actions.
- **(17 April)** Kosovo's Ministry of Internal Affairs announced that Serbian authorities are detaining the deputy director of the Kosovo Police and four other police officers. The ministry announced that Dejan Janković, the Serbian deputy director of the Kosovo Police, has been held in custody, without any explanation, since early morning.
- **(18 April)** Kosovo President Vjosa Osmani stated that the five Kosovo police officers are being held hostage" in Serbia. Later, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora of Kosovo (MPJD) announced that Dejan Janković, the deputy director of the Kosovo Police, was released from custody by the Serbian authorities and is returning to Kosovo.
- **(21 April)** The President of the Kosovo Central Election Commission, Krešnik Radoniqi, said that the initiative to replace the mayors of the northern municipalities in Kosovo failed because the required participation threshold of 50 percent plus one voter was not reached in the referendum. Albanian mayors, who are not recognised by the local Serb population, therefore remain in their positions in the four municipalities in the north of Kosovo.
- **(22 April)** The Kosovo government called on the EU to lift what it considers unfair sanctions against it, saying that they have fulfilled their obligations under the agreement with the EU to reduce tensions in the north of the country.
- **(22 April)** Kosovo President Vjosa Osmani said during the UN Security Council session, which was examining the situation in Kosovo, that Serbia is preventing the integration of Serbs into the institutions of Kosovo. She stated that Serbia is intimidating the Serbian community in the north of Kosovo, citing the recent arrest of Kosovo Serb policemen in Serbia as an example. Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić said at the meeting that the international

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community pays a lot of attention to the incident in Banjska in Kosovo, but not to the attacks on the Serbian minority. After the meeting, the Serbian President became involved in a minor diplomatic dispute with Slovenia. After the Slovenian Ambassador Samuel Žbogar had addressed the Council, the Serbian president stated that: "it is not known who is more disgusting, the Slovenians or the others".

- **(23 April)** Ukrainian MP Oleksiy Goncharenko said that Kosovo cannot be a "grey zone" in Europe and that Serbia should accept the fact that Kosovo is an independent country. He added that Serbia should abandon its imperial aspirations.
- **(25 April)** The meeting of the chief negotiators of Kosovo and Serbia on the issue of the dinar currency ended without an agreement.
- **(28 April)** Špela Vovk, the press secretary of the former Slovenian president Borut Pahor stated that, as part of his candidacy for the position of the EU special envoy for the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue, he is preparing a draft plan for the further successful implementation of the stalled dialogue-
- **(29 April)** The Director of the Kosovo Statistical Agency, Avni Kastrati, stated that members of the Serbian community in municipalities with a Serbian majority in the north are still "hesitating" about responding to the census, but that those living in municipalities in the south are participating.
- **(29 April)** Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić asserted that the adoption of the UN resolution on the genocide in Srebrenica is aimed at demanding war reparations from Serbia, and that the objective of Kosovo's entry into the Council of Europe is a lawsuit against Serbia.
- **(3 May)** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora of Kosovo confirmed that the head of the Office for Kosovo in the Serbian government, Petar Petković, was refused a visit to Kosovo. The Ministry did not provide a reason for the refusal.
- **(6 May)** Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti said at a meeting with representatives of the Quint (US, UK, France, Germany, and Italy) that the process of normalisation of relations with Serbia should not be linked to the issue of Kosovo's membership in the Council of Europe.

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Bosnia and Herzegovina:

- **(11 April)** In Banjaluka, the chairman of the Republican Electoral Commission, Oliver Blagojević, and four members of the commission submitted their resignations. They state that they made this decision following the decision of the Government of the Republika Srpska, which called on all members of all bodies responsible for conducting elections to resign.
- **(11 April)** Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić gathered in Belgrade the leaders of Serbia and Republika Srpska (RS) with whom he discussed a number of current regional topics, including the draft resolution on Srebrenica, which is set to be discussed at the UN General Assembly. The Serbian president announced a fight against the adoption of the resolution, but said that the chances of success in this fight are small. He also stated that Serbia will use political means to oppose all NATO countries. The President of the Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik, asked for support in the difficult decisions he is set to announce in May. At the press conference after the meeting, Dodik again denied the genocide in Srebrenica.
- **(11 April)** At a press conference in Belgrade, the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, insulted Denis Bećirović, the chairman of the BiH presidency, calling him a “nobody and nothing” and a “liar and forger.” This was seen as a response to recent statements in which Bećirović proclaimed that local and regional publics are slowly getting to know the “real” “face of Aleksandar Vučić”.
- **(12 April)** Following a meeting with Serbian President Vučić, French President Emmanuel Macron stated that France will be a co-sponsor of the Resolution on the Srebrenica genocide, which is set to be voted on in the UN General Assembly. The statement caused an outpouring of condemnation among Serbian politicians.
- **(12 April)** The US threatened the leader of the RS, Milorad Dodik, that they will not stand by while he implements secessionist policies, including the adoption of an electoral law in this entity.
- **(15 April)** The Police Administration of Foča confirmed that they had identified the body of thirty-year-old Drago Tanasković, a member of the armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Tanasković was reported missing on 28 March at the Čajniče Police Station, and around 100 members of the BiH Armed Forces were involved in the search for the missing young man.
- **(15 April)** The Assembly of the Srebrenica municipality adopted a decision to change the name of the streets in the village of Skelani. Bosniak councillors left the session before the vote. According to the new proposal, for example, part of “Marshal Tito Street” will be renamed “The Republic of Srpska Street”, while “Mihajlo Bjelakovića Square” was to be renamed “Republic of Srpska Square”. The OSCE mission called on the authorities in Srebrenica not to change the names of the streets.
- **(15 April)** North Macedonia's Foreign Minister Bujar Osmani said that North Macedonia has joined as one of the co-sponsors of the United Nations resolution on the Srebrenica genocide and called on Serbia to also support it.
- **(17 April)** The German embassy in BiH confirmed that German finances will not be included in the financing of further projects in Republika Srpska, as the last contract is set to expire-. The secessionist policy of the leadership of the BiH entity Republika Srpska was cited as the reason.
- **(18 April)** A rally of supporters of the ruling Alliance of Independent Social Democrats, the party of Milorad Dodik, the President of Republika Srpska, and other ruling parties in this entity took place in Banja Luka. The rally under the slogan "Serbia is calling you", which was formally organised by associations emerging from the war in the 1990s, was directed against the draft UN resolution on Srebrenica, which provides for the condemnation of

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genocide denial. The rally was supported by some Serbian officials, and there were also flags with the figures of a convicted war criminal, and the Russian president at the rally.

- **(29 April)** The Prosecutor's Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina filed the first indictment for denying the genocide in Srebrenica.
- **(30 April)** The working group in Bosnia and Herzegovina agreed on a list of reforms, which at the last minute enabled the country to draw around €1 billion allocated by the EU for the development of the Western Balkans.
- **(30 April)** The United Nations Security Council called for the Dayton Agreement to be respected and peace and stability to be maintained in BiH, with the US and other Western countries expressing clear support for High Representative Christian Schmidt.
- **(1 May)** The number of migrants who illegally entered BiH in the first two months of this year is almost 70 percent higher than in the same period last year, according to the director of the BiH border police, Mirko Kuprešaković.
- **(1 May)** The President of the UN General Assembly, Dennis Francis, received the final proposal for a resolution that would mark July 11 as a day of remembrance for the genocide in Srebrenica.

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