



Situation room

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

Period under review: from 8 May 2024 to 4 June 2024.

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

Relations between Belgrade and Prishtina:

- **(9 May)** Kosovo's membership status will not be listed on the agenda of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which will meet on 16 May in Strasbourg.
- **(10 May)** Kosovo's Interior Minister Xhelal Sveçla stated that they began enforcing the decision to exchange driving licenses issued by Serbian institutions, which Kosovo considers illegal.
- **(13 May)** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora of Kosovo confirmed that it rejected the request of Serbian Patriarch Porfirie to visit Kosovo. The Kosovo authorities announced that such visits will not be allowed as long as "Serbia continues to violate the Brussels Agreement, will not allow the visits of our state officials to Serbia and, in addition, will not stop campaigns against the Republic of Kosovo in the international space, both in the process of integration as in the process of gaining international recognition".
- **(14 May)** Kosovo President Vjosa Osmani has accused Serbia of aiding Russia in what she says is a distraction from Moscow's war against Ukraine with the goal of opening a new front against the West.
- **(14 May)** After the expiration of a three-month period designated by the Central Bank of Kosovo as a transitional period, the euro is the only official currency in Kosovo.
- **(14 May)** Kosovo police found a large amount of weapons and military equipment in the municipality of Zveçani in the north of Kosovo. Sveçla the Minister for internal affairs stated that the weapons were intended to be used by terrorist groups to attack Kosovo institutions.
- **(16 May)** The Minister of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora of Kosovo, Donika Gërvalla, said that she informed the Council of Europe in a letter that Kosovo is preparing a draft statute to establish a mechanism for self-governance, coordination and cooperation of municipalities with the Serbian majority in Kosovo.
- **(19 May)** The announced vote on the membership of Kosovo in the Council of Europe was not included in the agenda of the meeting of the Committee of Ministers. This happened due to the lack of progress of the Kosovo authorities in forming the Community of Municipalities with a Serbian majority.
- **(21 May)** Authorities in Kosovo carried out a police operation against Serbian financial institutions in northern Kosovo, resulting in the closure of six facilities in four Serbian-majority municipalities in northern Kosovo. The US State Department stated it was disappointed that the Kosovo police carried out the operation. They added that the action was not coordinated with international partners and contributed to the escalation of tensions.
- **(23 May)** Prime Minister of Kosovo Albin Kurti stated that Serbia is intensifying cooperation with Russia, China and Iran, warning that there is a real danger of a new war in the region.
- **(27 May)** The NATO Parliamentary Assembly voted to upgrade the status of Kosovo from an observer to an associate member of the Assembly. The membership and status of a state within the Parliamentary Assembly do not reflect membership in NATO itself.
- **(28 May)** Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti stated in an interview for the Financial Times that the EU and the US have been too lenient towards Serbia and should set a deadline for the adoption of sanctions against Russia.
- **(31 May)** During the session of the Northern Mitrovica Municipal Assembly, members of the Self-Determination Movement led by Albin Kurti requested the implementation of the decision to open to traffic the main bridge over the Ibar River that divides northern and southern Mitrovica.
- **(31 May)** Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti began his official visit to Turkey. He met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and they discussed bilateral relations and the possibilities of deepening economic and defence cooperation. It is Kurti's second meeting with Erdogan in Turkey, after 2023.

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- **(2 June)** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora of Kosovo has condemned the arrest of a Kosovar national in Serbia, stating that he was arrested arbitrarily. At the same time, they called on the international community to assist in his immediate release.

Bosnia and Herzegovina:

- **(9 May)** At the "Immortal Regiment" march, a manifestation that has been held in Russia since 2007, and a few years ago also in Banja Luka, messages about the secession of the BiH entity Republika Srpska (RS) could be heard. The march was led by the pro-Russian president of the RS Milorad Dodik and Igor Kalabuhov, the ambassador of the Russian Federation in BiH. The "Night Wolves", bikers loyal to Vladimir Putin who are on the US blacklist, were also present.
- **(9 May)** Montenegrin Prime Minister Milojko Spajić said that Montenegro will vote for the UN resolution on the Srebrenica genocide because it is part of compliance with European foreign policy.
- **(12 May)** Serbian politicians from BiH, Serbia, and Montenegro organised a commemoration for the victims of the Jasenovac concentration camp in Donja Gradina at which they denied the genocide of Bosniaks in Srebrenica in 1995.
- **(13 May)** The US Deputy Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy Liz Allen arrived in BiH as part of a multi-day visit to the countries of the Western Balkans.
- **(15 May)** The German government has decided to continue to participate in the EUFOR Althea mission in BiH and to extend the cooperation for one year until the end of June 2025. The decision is now awaiting confirmation by the Bundestag.
- **(15 May)** Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Peter Szijjarto stated that Hungary will vote against the Resolution on the Srebrenica genocide at the United Nations General Assembly.
- **(15 May)** The High Representative in BiH, Christian Schmidt, stated at the UN Security Council meeting that the authorities in Republika Srpska, led by President Milorad Dodik, are actively undermining the state of BiH and its institutions, and thus the Dayton Agreement.
- **(16 May)** The Bosnian Deputy Minister of Defense, Aleksandar Goganović, an ethnic Serb, together with the Chief of the Joint Staff of the Armed Forces, Gojko Knežević, saluted in front of the monument in memory of the war criminal Ratko Mladić.
- **(17 May)** The Minister of Foreign Affairs of BiH, Elmedin Konaković, sent an open letter to the European Commissioner for Enlargement, Oliver Varhelyi, accusing him of: "publicly joining the propaganda of Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić regarding the Resolution on the Srebrenica genocide". On May 13, after the meeting with Vučić, Varhelyi stated that he absolutely disagrees with the stigmatisation of the Serbian nation when it comes to the resolution on genocide in Srebrenica.
- **(17 May)** Opposition parties in Republika Srpska rejected the call of the leader of the Bosnian entity Milorad Dodik to boycott the local elections scheduled for October, after the high representative of the international community imposed new provisions in the BiH Election Law.
- **(20 May)** The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro, Filip Ivanović, announced that with its position on the Resolution on the genocide in Srebrenica, Montenegro does not want relations with its neighbours to deteriorate, but to act as a "pacifier". He responded to the words of the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, regarding the amendments that the Montenegrin made to the text of the draft Resolution and declared that they were unfortunate and inappropriate. Vučić described the efforts as a disgusting game and a perfidious trick.
- **(23 May)** The UN General Assembly adopted a resolution declaring July 11 the International Day of Remembrance for the genocide in Srebrenica and condemning the denial of genocide and the glorification of war criminals. The resolution was supported by 84 countries, 68 countries abstained, and 19 were against.

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- **(23 May)** The Prime Minister of Republika Srpska Radovan Višković, announced, following a meeting of the government in Srebrenica, that in the next 30 days they will create an agreement that will be sent to the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, about the paths towards peaceful separation.
- **(24 May)** After the adoption of the resolution on the Srebrenica genocide, Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić declared victory, claiming that 109 countries were against the resolution, although only 19 countries out of 193 countries in the UN actually voted against the resolution. The resolution was supported by 84 countries, while 68 abstained. Vučić added up the votes against, abstained, and absent and declared that these countries were on the side of Serbia.
- **(27 May)** Hooligans in Belgrade beat to death Đorđe Mijatović, the brother of the Deputy Prime Minister of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- **(27 May)** After the adoption of the resolution on the genocide in Srebrenica, the Chairman of the BiH Presidency, Denis Bećirović, called on Vučić to "face the truth". He stated: "We didn't pay anyone \$500,000 to abstain," referring to media speculation that Serbia paid half a billion dollars to Honduras to rebuild a hospital in exchange for voting against the resolution.
- **(27 May)** The city of Sarajevo marked the 32nd anniversary of the so-called "bread line massacre", in which 26 people were killed and another 108 were wounded. The attack took place during the Siege of Sarajevo in 1992 and targeted people who were waiting in line to get bread.
- **(27 May)** Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić stated that if he is murdered, BiH Foreign Minister Elmedin Konaković will be responsible. Konaković invited the Serbian President to the UN General Assembly in New York on 11 July, as well as to Potočare, with the comment that "he can wrap himself in the flag, or he doesn't have to". In response Vučić claimed that Konaković *de facto* called for his murder.
- **(29 May)** President of of Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik announced that the Proposal for the Law on the Special Register and Publicity of the Work of Non-Profit Organizations was withdrawn from parliamentary procedure because, as he claimed, "Republika Srpska is committed to the European path".
- **(30 May)** The mayor of Srebrenica, Mladen Grujičić from the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats, Milorad Dodik's party, confirmed that municipal and party authorities are discussing an initiative to change the name of the municipality of Srebrenica.
- **(30 May)** Milorad Dodik told Belgrade's *TV Happy* that "no one died, no one was killed and there were no operations" in Srebrenica on 11 July 1995.
- **(31 May)** In Prijedor, innorthwest BiH, commemorations are taking place on the occasion of the White Ribbon Day. Those gathered will walk silently and with a white ribbon around their left arm from Ahmet Babić Street to the main town square, in memory of the 3,176 residents of Prijedor and the surrounding area who were killed, including 102 children. The Day of White Ribbons commemorates 31 May 1992, when the Prijedor Municipality's Crisis Staff under the leadership of the Serbian Democratic Party issued an order for the non-Serb population to mark their houses and apartments with white flags. Those who moved around the city had to wear a white ribbon.
- **(1 June)** Bosnians from the area of Zvornik in the east of BiH are commemorating the 32nd anniversary of the massacre of almost 700 men and boys in June 1992. In the town of Bijeli Potok, where Serbian forces separated them from their families, a monument to the fallen was discovered. This year there will be a burial of one identified victim while 240 people are still listed as missing.

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