



Situation room

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

Period under review: from 9 April 2025 to 9 May 2025.

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

Relations between Belgrade and Pristina:

- **(9 April)** The European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) adopted reports on Serbia and Kosovo, urging both sides to continue the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue on normalisation in good faith. The reports stress that the dialogue has fallen short of expected outcomes and call on both countries to implement the Brussels and Ohrid agreements. Key points include establishing the Association/Community of Serb-Majority Municipalities, lifting Serbia's opposition to Kosovo's membership in international organizations, and avoiding unilateral actions that might undermine the dialogue process.
- **(25 April)** Serbian Foreign Minister Marko Đurić met with EU Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue Peter Sorensen to discuss plans for reviving the dialogue at the technical level. Đurić emphasized Serbia's commitment to the normalisation process but expressed concern over "unilateral actions by Pristina" and "politically motivated legal proceedings against Serbs," which he claimed create "an atmosphere of legal and existential insecurity" for the Serbian population in Kosovo.

Serbia:

- **(11 April)** The Higher Court in Novi Sad returned the indictment charging 13 people over the deadly Novi Sad railway station canopy collapse to prosecutors for further investigation, stating that further clarification is necessary to assess its merits.
- **(11 April)** Police entered the Faculty of Medicine in Niš to check student IDs and issue summons in what students called intimidation, as authorities intensified pressure on protest supporters. Meanwhile, columnist Dejan Ilić was detained for allegedly causing panic and disorder over TV comments about the need for a transitional government, as President Vučić publicly raged against judges as paid thugs.
- **(14 April)** Serbian Prime Minister-designate Djuro Macut proposed his new 30-member cabinet to parliament, with only eight new faces while the majority are ministers from the previous government continuing in the same roles.
- **(16 April)** Around 80 Serbian student protesters completed a 13-day, 1,400-kilometer bicycle marathon from Novi Sad to Strasbourg, where they met with European Parliament members and Council of Europe officials. European Parliament members Irena Joveva and Gordan Bosanac pledged to bring their demands before the Parliament, which include publishing all documents about the Chinese-led renovation of Novi Sad station, prosecuting those who attacked protesters, and increasing education funding.
- **(23 April)** Serbian Orthodox Patriarch Porfirije has drawn criticism for telling Russian President Vladimir Putin during an official visit to Moscow that Serbia is experiencing a 'colour revolution' orchestrated by 'centres of power from the West'.

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- **(25 April)** Serbian students began a relay ultramarathon from Belgrade to Brussels, covering nearly 2,000 kilometres through eight countries over 18 days. The runners, who plan to arrive in Brussels on 12 May, aim to deliver letters to the European Parliament about the political situation in Serbia and the ongoing five-month protests against President Aleksandar Vučić's government.
- **(26 April)** Serbian President Vučić announced on Instagram that the United States had postponed sanctions against the Russian-majority owned Oil Industry of Serbia (NIS) until 27 June, thanking American partners for understanding Serbia's position in the complex geopolitical situation.
- **(29 April)** Serbian students ended their two-week blockade of the public broadcaster RTS after parliament's Culture and Information Committee agreed to scrap and restart the competition for members of the Council of the Regulatory Body for Electronic Media (REM).
- **(30 April)** The European Court of Human Rights issued an interim measure regarding the alleged use of sonic weapons at the 15 March protest in Belgrade, instructing the Serbian government to prevent the use of such devices for crowd control, though the Court emphasised it had not taken a position on whether sonic weapons were actually used.
- **(3 May)** Serbian President Vučić terminated his visit to the United States after falling ill. A cardiologist from the Military Medical Academy, where Vučić was admitted after returning to Serbia, reported that the president experienced severe chest pain caused by high blood pressure.
- **(6 May)** Student protesters in Serbia have called for snap parliamentary elections, claiming the current government is too corrupt to function properly after months of ignoring concerns over the Novi Sad railway station tragedy that killed 16 people in November.
- **(8 May)** Serbian President Vučić met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow during celebrations marking the 80th anniversary of victory over fascism, stating their 9 May talks would cover gas agreements and the Oil Industry of Serbia. The European Union expressed deep regret over the visit, warning it raises questions about Serbia's strategic orientation toward the EU, while Vučić acknowledged expecting harsh reactions but insisted Serbia would continue its European path.

Bosnia and Herzegovina:

- **(8 April)** European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas warned, during her official visit to Sarajevo, that the leadership of Republika Srpska is undermining the constitutional order of the country and emphasised that the European Union will not tolerate any threats to the territorial integrity, sovereignty, and constitutional order of this country.
- **(24 April)** Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik intensified secessionist threats after RS police prevented Bosnia's State Investigation and Protection Agency (SIPA) from delivering him an arrest warrant in East Sarajevo. Dodik called Bosnia's State Court, Prosecutor's Office and SIPA "an occupying force".

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- **(24 April)** Bosnia's High Representative Christian Schmidt suspended public funding for Milorad Dodik's party and its ally, referencing what he deemed as attacks on the constitutional order. Dodik responded by threatening to arrest Schmidt if he appeared in Republika Srpska.
- **(3 May)** Reporters Without Borders published its 2025 World Press Freedom Index, showing Bosnia and Herzegovina fell to 86th place. The problems are most severe in Republika Srpska, where public-interest journalism is challenged by the re-criminalisation of defamation and rising influence of Russian propaganda.
- **(5 May)** Bosnia marked a day of remembrance for the children killed during the siege of Sarajevo. Relatives expressed anger that direct perpetrators remain unpunished three decades later, despite the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia convicting Bosnian Serb leaders for the campaign of terror against civilians.
- **(6 May)** Bosnia and Herzegovina's Federation entity launched a Special Department for Corruption, Organised and Inter-cantonal Crime at the supreme court and prosecutor's office in Sarajevo. The new anti-graft body will take on approximately 400-450 complex cases involving organised crime, corruption, terrorism, and offenses against the judiciary, with seven judges already appointed.

Montenegro:

- **(25 April)** Opposition parties have called for the resignation of Parliament Speaker Andrija Mandić after his nephew and bodyguard, Danilo Mandić, was arrested on suspicion of shooting and injuring two people in Podgorica on April 19.
- **(29 April)** President Jakov Milatović returned a proposed law on cooperation with the United Arab Emirates to parliament, refusing to sign the agreement that would enable development of an untouched 12-kilometer beach in Ulcinj. Milatović stated the deal puts Montenegro at a disadvantage and cited concerns about deviations from constitutional provisions concerning free competition, suspension of Montenegrin legislation on public procurement and state property, lack of transparency, and potential issues with Montenegro's EU accession path.
- **(3 May)** Metropolitan Joanikije of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro stated that the leader of local fascists during World War II, Pavle Djurišić, was "a great hero of invincible character." Bosniaks and the opposition in Montenegro have described such statements as unacceptable. Djurišić was said to have been involved in the killings of 8,000 Muslim civilians during World War II.

North Macedonia:

- **(9 April)** Finance Minister Gordana Dimitrievska-Kochoska announced that North Macedonia plans to cut tariffs on US imports to zero and ultimately pursue a free-trade agreement with the US after the Trump administration imposed a 33-percent tariff on imports from the country.
- **(30 April)** Tatjana Dimitrovska, head of North Macedonia's Anti-Corruption Commission, has refused to resign despite being accused of sharing official secrets with a defendant in a major corruption case.

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- **(2 May)** Reporters Without Borders published its 2025 World Press Freedom Index, showing North Macedonia declined six places to 42nd position. Widespread disinformation and lack of professionalism contribute to diminishing public trust in media, while government officials often display poor attitudes toward journalists.
- **(7 May)** North Macedonia signed a contract for the construction of a gas interconnector with Greece, with completion expected by 2027. Energy Minister Sanja Božinovska stated the interconnector will provide an alternative natural gas entry point, offering greater choice and supply security, with local company Rapid Build winning the tender with a bid of €59.9 million.

Albania:

- **(9 April)** Albania's cyber security authority is using Deep Packet Inspection technology to enforce a one-year TikTok ban, raising privacy concerns as the tool can monitor online activity in detail. Three rights groups have challenged the ban in Constitutional Court, while opposition politicians suspect the government's real motive is to block their popularity on the platform ahead of 11 May parliamentary elections.
- **(11 April)** The Italian navy ship *Libra* arrived in Albania with 40 migrants after Italy changed rules on its detention centre to function as a repatriation hub. The facility, established under a 2023 agreement between Albania and Italy and costing around one billion euros, can now detain migrants for up to 18 months while awaiting repatriation, despite criticism from rights organizations about creating what they called a regime of extreme isolation.

Kosovo:

- **(17 April)** The trial began in Pristina Basic Court for three Serbs charged with terrorism and endangering the constitutional order of Kosovo over the September 2023 armed attack in Banjska that left one police officer dead.
- **(23 April)** Kosovo authorities closed several Serbian-operated institutions, including the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund, National Employment Service, and Republic Health Insurance Fund in Leposavić. Kosovo considers these institutions, which operate within Serbia's system, illegal and parallel.
- **(1 May)** Kosovo's parliament remains un-constituted after eight failed attempts, with Srpska Lista, the main Serbian party that won 9 of 10 reserved seats for the Serbian minority, finding itself politically isolated.
- **(2 May)** Reporters Without Borders published its 2025 World Press Freedom Index, showing Kosovo experienced the sharpest decline in the Balkans, falling 24 places to 99th position. Media freedom is threatened by politicised regulation, gag suits, insufficient access to public information, and serious safety risks for journalists.
- **(3 May)** For the tenth time since the 9 February elections, Kosovo MPs have failed to constitute the new parliament. The winning party Vetëvendosje attempted to initiate a secret vote for the Speaker of Parliament, but the proposal received only 54 votes in the 120-member parliament. 61 votes are required for a majority. Vetëvendosje wants the current Justice Minister Albulena Haxhiu to become the Speaker of Parliament, but does not have the support of the opposition.

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- **(8 May)** The opposition Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) filed 17 lawsuits against outgoing Prime Minister Albin Kurti and his ministers for maintaining their government roles despite resigning last month.

Review prepared by: **Tara Miler**

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