



## Situation room

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

**Period under review: from 9 June 2025 to 9 July 2025.**

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

### **Relations between Belgrade and Pristina:**

- **(22 June)** Kosovo's Prime Minister Albin Kurti urged US President Donald Trump to pressure Serbia to normalise relations, emphasising that a 2023 agreement exists but Serbia continues to violate its terms. Kurti outlined specific conditions for Belgrade including handing over Milan Radoičić, accused of killing Kosovo police officer Afrim Bunjaku, signing the Basic Agreement, and withdrawing a 2023 statement by former Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabić rejecting Kosovo's territorial integrity. Trump, now in his second term, has signalled his intention to re-engage in the Serbia-Kosovo dialogue after previously stating he prevented a fierce clash during his first presidency.

### **Serbia:**

- **(9 June)** Opposition representatives disputed the results of local elections in Kosjerić and Zaječar, citing irregularities including vote-buying, duplicate voter lists, and threats after the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) claimed narrow victories. In Kosjerić, the SNS won by just 51 votes with a turnout of 84 percent, while the Centre for Research, Transparency and Accountability reported that serious irregularities were recorded at 17 percent of polling stations in Zaječar, that do not reflect the free will of the voters.
- **(20 June)** The Serbian government appointed Dragoslav Bokan, a film director and former paramilitary unit leader during the Yugoslav wars, as president of the National Theatre's Board of Directors. The union of National Theatre employees expressed shock and deep concern over the appointment, stating that Bokan does not meet basic moral requirements to lead the board of an institution of national importance and could jeopardise freedom of cultural and artistic expression.
- **(23 June)** President Aleksandar Vučić announced that Serbia has halted arms exports to Israel following Israel's recent attack on Iran.
- **(29 June)** Over 70 people were arrested after protesters clashed with police following a student-led demonstration in Belgrade that drew tens of thousands calling for snap elections and the dismantling of a pro-government tent camp.
- **(2 July)** Belgrade Higher Court acquitted former Bosnian Serb Army Drina Corps commander Milenko Živanović of ordering and participating in the forcible relocation of the Bosniak civilian population from Srebrenica during the 1995 *Krivaja 95* offensive. The Belgrade-based Humanitarian Law Centre criticised the acquittal as legally unsustainable and a dangerous judicial precedent, describing it as a revisionist attempt to reinterpret judicially established facts about the Srebrenica genocide.

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- **(3 July)** President Aleksandar Vučić pardoned four ruling Serbian Progressive Party supporters who were being prosecuted for attacking student anti-government protesters in Novi Sad in January. The Ministry of Justice exempted the four individuals from criminal prosecution for causing serious bodily harm and violent behaviour after they attacked students who were drawing stencils on a bin in front of the party's premises. A female student was admitted to hospital after the incident.
- **(4 July)** Dozens of anti-government protesters were arrested as student-led demonstrations calling for snap elections continued blocking roads across Belgrade, Novi Sad, Niš and other towns in Serbia. Student organisers called for a total blockade and urged farmers, taxi drivers, bikers, and war veterans to join them in protests against a government they accuse of corruption and brutality. Police dismantled some roadblocks using riot police, with Interior Minister Ivica Dačić stating that authorities were allowing gatherings in locations not vital for traffic flow while ensuring key routes remained open.
- **(8 July)** US President Donald Trump imposed a 35-percent tariff on all Serbian exports to the US, effective from 1 August, citing the need for more balanced and fair trade due to the US trade deficit with Serbia. Trump's letter to President Vučić stated that tariffs would not apply if Serbian companies decided to build or manufacture products within the United States, with the US offering quick approvals within weeks.

### **Bosnia and Herzegovina:**

- **(9 June)** The president of the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) and mayor of Teslić, Milan Miličević, was arrested along with two others in an anti-corruption operation led by Republika Srpska authorities on charges of accepting bribes and trading in influence. The SDS condemned the arrests as politically motivated attacks by the ruling SNSD party, describing it as political intimidation and an attempt to dismantle democratically elected institutions.
- **(23 June)** The government of Republika Srpska voted in favour of legal amendments allowing the Serb entity to establish a controversial reservist police force, citing a need for more than 1,000 additional officers during emergency situations. Interior Minister Siniša Karan emphasised the force would be a reserve unit for emergencies like floods and fires, not a paramilitary formation, though the proposal drew criticism due to Bosnian Serb reservist police involvement in war crimes during the 1992-95 conflict.
- **(7 July)** Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik voluntarily appeared before the state Prosecutor's Office to be questioned as a suspect, surprising authorities after three-and-a-half months of evading a nationwide arrest warrant. Dodik had been wanted for reintroducing laws that obstructed state judiciary and police functions, threatening state judges and prosecutors, establishing parallel judicial and electoral bodies, using RS police to block detention attempts, and escalating the post-war crisis through secessionist actions.
- **(8 July)** The United States imposed a 30-percent tariff on all Bosnian exports to the US, effective from 1 August, with economic analysts warning that the defence industry will be hardest hit. The US accounts for just 1 percent

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of Bosnia's total foreign trade, though trade between the two countries has grown by 71 percent over the past decade.

### **Montenegro:**

- **(12 June)** Montenegro's parliament approved a request to send a non-combat military contingent to join the European Union's Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM) in support of Ukraine. The decision marks Montenegro's first military mission of this kind since the beginning of the war, with the mission aimed at strengthening the capacity of Ukrainian Armed Forces through training on EU territory.
- **(18 June)** The European Parliament adopted the annual report on Montenegro with 470 votes in favour, 102 against, and 77 abstentions, stressing that Montenegro remains the leading candidate in the EU enlargement process and calling for more swift and effective progress toward closing negotiating chapters.

### **North Macedonia:**

- **(13 June)** Prosecutors charged 34 people and three legal entities over the 16 March nightclub fire in Kočani that killed 62 people and injured almost 200, accusing them of grave acts against public security in what Chief State Prosecutor Ljupčo Kočevski described as a systemic collapse. The accused include the nightclub's owners, former mayors of Kočani, inspectors, security guards, former ministers, and state institution employees, with authorities determining that the fire was caused by pyrotechnics that ignited the easily flammable roof material in a building that did not comply with safety regulations.
- **(24 June)** The European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) adopted the report on North Macedonia, commending the country's commitment to European integration and stating that EU accession is ultimately a matter of political will in enacting reforms and adopting constitutional amendments. MEPs warned that political polarisation remains a key obstacle to reform implementation and called for constructive dialogue among all political parties to reach consensus that would strengthen the country's multi-ethnic character and accelerate EU progress.

### **Albania:**

- **(18 June)** A leaked EU Council document expressed concerns over political pressure on Albania's judiciary and warned that the country will not be able to close any accession chapters until it makes clear progress on fundamental issues. The non-paper criticized undue interference by public officials on the judicial system, particularly Prime Minister Edi Rama's criticism of prosecutors after the arrest of Tirana's Socialist mayor Erion Veliaj on corruption charges, and police failings to ensure security for court workers amid protests.
- **(24 June)** Migration activists condemned as illegal the deportation of five Egyptian migrants from the Italian-run Gjader camp in Albania back to Egypt. The Gjader Detention and Repatriation Centre, built under a 2023 agreement between Albania and Italy and costing around one billion euros, now only receives people who have

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received expulsion measures for repatriation. After a series of court challenges, the Italian judiciary limited its original intended function as a holding camp for all so-called sea migrants, who attempt to reach Italy by sea.

### **Kosovo:**

- **(8 July)** Kosovo's parliament remains deadlocked over its inauguration for the third month, with the Assembly failing to elect a speaker for 85 days across 43 attempts held every 48 hours since 15 April. The political stalemate the disparate personal and party interests, reflecting MPs' unwillingness to compromise.

Review prepared by: **Tara Miler**

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