



Situation room

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

Period under review: from 9 August 2025 to 9 September 2025.

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

Relations between Belgrade and Pristina:

- **(27 August)** EU Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue Peter Sørensen visited Belgrade and met separately with President Aleksandar Vučić, Foreign Minister Marko Đurić, and European Integration Minister Nemanja Starović, stressing the importance of normalisation for people on the ground. Vučić emphasised the fundamental importance of returning the dialogue to core principles, particularly the obligation to establish the Association of Serb Municipalities, and criticised attempts to ban Serb List participation in upcoming local elections as endangering basic rights and freedoms of political action for Serbs in Kosovo.

Serbia:

- **(17 August)** Anti-government protesters in Valjevo set fire to a ruling Serbian Progressive Party office and attacked City Hall and judiciary buildings during an eighth consecutive night of unrest across Serbia, with protesters demonstrating against alleged police brutality amid escalating violence. Interior Minister Ivica Dačić reported one injured policeman and 18 arrests in Valjevo, while riot police used tear gas to disperse protesters in both Valjevo and Belgrade. The latest wave of protests, marked by clashes between protesters, police and SNS members, intensified after reports of police brutality, including attacks on minors, with a 16-year-old reportedly seriously injured.
- **(1 September)** High school pupils led a commemorative march in Belgrade marking ten months since the Novi Sad railway station canopy collapse that killed 16 people and sparked mass protests, with organizers accusing the ruined system of degenerating further since nationwide demonstrations began. Media reports indicated that some school principals were dismissed ahead of the new school year for supporting strikes and blockades, while deans of ten teacher-training faculties warned of an alarming situation threatening complete educational collapse due to systemic problems and attacks on educators.
- **(3 September)** President Aleksandar Vučić met with Russian President Vladimir Putin during a visit to China to attend a military parade marking the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II, where Vučić thanked Putin for the hospitality during his May Moscow visit and support for preserving Serbia's territorial integrity. Speaking in Russian during the public portion of the meeting, Vučić justified Serbia's refusal to impose EU sanctions on Moscow despite being an EU candidate country, stating that Serbia has maintained its principled position and will fight to remain the only country in Europe that has not imposed sanctions on Russia. The meeting occurred amid the biggest political crisis in Serbia since Vučić came to power, with mass protests on-going since November 2024.

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- **(5 September)** Violence erupted in Novi Sad when riot police clashed with protesters demonstrating against police brutality, with confrontations beginning after police pushed people away from the Faculty of Philosophy. Local media and social media videos showed anti-riot police beating non-resisting protesters and extensively using tear gas and pepper spray. The government claimed police were attacked while protesters maintained they were peacefully demonstrating, with the Interior Ministry issuing a warning before the violence that participants intended to attack police stationed at university faculties.
- **(8 September)** Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić harshly criticised the military cooperation declaration signed between Croatia and Slovenia on September 5, claiming it was directed against Serbia and part of a broader military alliance including the March agreement between Albania, Croatia, and Kosovo. Vučić alleged these agreements were designed to trample over the Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo and announced Serbia would demonstrate its defence capabilities during a military parade on 20 September. Foreign Minister Marko Đurić echoed concerns about rising tensions, while Croatian Foreign Minister Gordan Grlić Radman rejected Serbian claims, stating Vučić was attempting to divert attention from domestic difficulties and that the NATO members' cooperation had nothing to do with working against Serbia.

Bosnia and Herzegovina:

- **(12 August)** The Bosnian state court accepted Milorad Dodik's proposal to convert his one-year prison sentence into a fine of 36,500 Bosnian marks (around 18,660 euros) for disobeying decisions of High Representative Christian Schmidt. Dodik was convicted of knowingly defying Schmidt's July 2023 decisions that blocked implementation of two Republika Srpska laws - one preventing enforcement of state-level Constitutional Court rulings in the entity and another amending legislation on publishing official acts. The Central Election Commission stripped Dodik of his mandate as the president of Republika Srpska following the verdict, though this decision can be appealed, with Dodik describing the ruling as just more problematic behaviour from Sarajevo and vowed to continue fighting.
- **(23 August)** The National Assembly of Republika Srpska voted in favour of calling a referendum asking people if they accept the state court's verdict convicting entity president Milorad Dodik, who was sentenced to a year in prison and given a six-year ban from holding office for not complying with High Representative Christian Schmidt's decisions. The referendum, scheduled for 25 October, just days before the expected new presidential elections, received 50 out of 83 votes but cannot be legally binding as it deals with an issue outside the entity's jurisdiction. Dodik rejected the authority of state-level institutions and refused to leave office, while the Central Electoral Commission revoked his mandate on 6 August, even though he paid a fine of 36,500 Bosnian marks in lieu of his prison sentence.
- **(28 August)** Families of victims, officials and members of the public laid flowers and read the names of the dead at the site of the Markale market massacre, marking the 30th anniversary of the wartime atrocity where 43 Bosnians were killed by a shell attack from Bosnian Serb Army positions on 28 August 1995.
- **(1 September)** The Logistics Consortium of Bosnia and Herzegovina launched a nationwide truckers' protest blocking roads and border crossings across the country, creating gridlock near Tuzla, Doboj, Prnjavor, Mostar,

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Sarajevo and at several international border crossings. The protesters are demanding an end to alleged discrimination against Bosnian drivers in the EU, enforcement of the European Agreement on the Work of Crews of Vehicles Engaged in International Road Transport, regulatory changes, financial relief for transporters, and faster border procedures. The protest significantly affected supply chains with cargo terminals border crossings being blocked.

Montenegro:

- **(2 September)** EU Enlargement Commissioner Marta Kos announced at the Bled Strategic Forum that Montenegro could achieve EU membership by 2028, contingent upon completing technical accession negotiations by 2026. Prime Minister Milojko Spajić addressed the forum by outlining Montenegro's strategic focus on three core pillars: European integration, economic development, and establishing equitable rule of law principles across all ethnic groups. Spajić reported significant institutional breakthroughs, including the unprecedented unanimous parliamentary approval of electoral legislation reforms and Constitutional Court amendments, marking the resolution of legislative deadlocks that had persisted for decades.
- **(5 September)** The EU Delegation to Montenegro voiced concern after a group of young men disrupted the screening of an Albanian-language film "Stork" during the Dzada international street film festival in Podgorica's Zabjelo neighbourhood. The EU Delegation, which financially supported the festival, stressed that freedom of artistic expression is an integral part of freedom of speech and essential democratic values. Police were informed but did not find the people responsible for the incident.

North Macedonia:

- **(2 September)** Prime Minister Hristijan Mickoski alleged that state security agencies conducted surveillance operations against him and his VMRO DPMNE party while in opposition, prompting organized crime prosecutors to announce an ongoing investigation into the claims. National Security Agency head Bojan Hristovski supported the allegations, stating that an internal review of agency operations between 2019 and 2024 revealed serious indications that a former ANB director and a small team misused their office. The opposition Social Democrats called for transparent procedures to determine the truth while maintaining their conviction that unlawful wiretapping ended with the fall of the VMRO DPMNE regime in 2017, following the massive wiretapping scandal that brought down former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski.

Albania:

- **(12 August)** International and local media organisations, including Reporters Without Borders and the European Federation of Journalists, criticised Albanian police operations that surrounded News 24 TV premises, cutting electricity and interrupting broadcasts while seizing journalists' computers and equipment during a property dispute with the Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation. Investigative journalists expressed concerns that confiscated computers containing sensitive corruption and crime files could compromise source protection and security, with media organisations questioning the legal grounds and proportionality of the heavy-handed police

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action. The Ministry defended the operation as legal and based on court decisions, claiming the media companies had failed to pay rent for the disputed property.

- **(2 September)** A Special Eurobarometer survey revealed that Albania demonstrated the highest support for EU membership among candidate countries at 91 percent, while Enlargement Commissioner Marta Kos emphasised that the results show citizens want a credible, value-based accession process driven by genuine reforms. Among EU citizens, Albania received support from 45 percent of respondents for its potential membership.

Kosovo:

- **(21 August)** Kosovo's Central Election Commission rejected the Belgrade-backed Srpska Lista party's application to compete in local elections on 12 October. Vetëvendosje commission members opposed certification citing alleged links between some Srpska Lista candidates and Serbia-run parallel institutions, prompting expressions of concern from Western diplomats including the OSCE Mission and US Deputy Ambassador Anu Prattipati about democratic representation for all communities. Belgrade strongly criticised the decision through Kosovo office head Petar Petković, who accused the CEC of acting under direct orders from Prime Minister Albin Kurti.
- **(26 August)** Kosovo authorities opened a new vehicle bridge connecting South and North Mitrovica over the Iber River, located just meters from the main bridge that remains closed to car traffic, despite objections from local Serbs and international community warnings. Prime Minister Albin Kurti announced the bridge construction took less than two months and declared it open for vehicles, while also announcing plans for a pedestrian bridge to be completed by autumn. Serbian authorities condemned the move as a security threat and escalatory action, with Kosovo office head Petar Petković calling it an unlawful opening that undermines peace and tramples on dialogue agreements, while the EU had previously urged Kosovo to refrain from uncoordinated actions regarding bridge construction in the ethnically divided town.
- **(26 August)** Parliament elected Dimal Basha as speaker with 73 votes in favour, ending a five-month deadlock after 57 interrupted sessions since April, though institutional paralysis continues due to the failure to elect a Serb deputy speaker, as constitutionally required. Basha became the fifth Vetëvendosje candidate proposed for speaker after previous nominees failed to secure sufficient support, while Belgrade-backed Srpska Lista's candidate Slavko Simić was denied a fourth nomination attempt under Constitutional Court rules limiting candidates to three tries. The ongoing crisis prevents President Vjosa Osmani from mandating Vetëvendosje leader Albin Kurti to form a new government despite his party winning February elections, as parliament remains formally uninaugurated without completing the deputy speaker elections.

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