

APPEAL FOR PEACE

Deeply concerned about the repressive and aggressive measures taken by the Government of Kosovo and the behavior of special police forces in the north of Kosovo that has the potential to escalate to unfathomable consequences for citizens' peace and security, and to destroy long-term prospects for reconciliation and co-existence between Albanians and Serbs in this area;

Condemning all forms of violence committed against citizens, journalists and members of security forces over the course of recent events, and underlining that political problems cannot and must not be solved through police actions but rather through constructive means and at the dialogue table;

Having in mind lessons learned from history that an institutional apparatus under the control of a single ethnic community cannot and must not govern the lives of other ethnic groups, because democracy in post-conflict and multi-ethnic societies demands a just division of power and competencies, as well as the respect of human rights and freedoms. It certainly does not entail aggressive behavior by security structures and public bodies controlled by the majority community towards ethnic minorities;

Underlining that co-existence between Albanians and Serbs can be built solely upon a foundation of trust and mutual respect, and not by repression, violence and dehumanization, to which the Serb community is subjected to on a daily basis, starting from statements made by high-ranking officials down to media reporting and negative social media campaigns;

Calling attention to the fact that Serbs in Kosovo, both as a community as well as its members, are daily exposed to attempts at delegitimization, dehumanization, finger-pointing, and criminalization. This occurs both during government officials' public appearances as well during meetings with international representatives, where the legitimate stances of the Kosovo Serb community are presented as being instrumentalized by the Government of Serbia, thereby attempting to discredit them in the eyes of international partners and the public;

Stressing that democracy is not built with elections held in mobile containers, or with those who hold public office yet have no popular legitimacy, but nevertheless intend to govern citizens belonging to other ethnic communities, with the power of the gun and police repression;

Underscoring that good governance and rule of law are not one in the same; while rule of law can be addressed by artificial intelligence, good governance is far more complex and delicate process that requires a talent for leadership;

Having in mind that the Government of Kosovo and its institutions violate the constitutionally guaranteed rights of the Serb community on a daily basis, fail to implement decisions handed down by the Constitutional Court, or fulfill its obligations undertaken during the dialogue process with Serbia;

Reaffirming not only our commitment to lead a dignified life in this area, to co-existence and mutual respect with Albanians and other ethnic communities, but also in our pride in ourselves, our history, our church, and cultural and religious heritage;

Wanting to believe in the sincerity of the statements made by representatives of the international community, especially those from the European Union and the Quint when they emphasize their support for multi-ethnicity and peaceful co-existence between ethnic communities in Kosovo;

We, the undersigned, members of the Serb community from all regions of Kosovo, are united in the demands that we are delivering to representatives of the European Union, United States of America, Germany, France, Italy, and Great Britain. We are directing our demands to them because we believe that they are the only actors that are capable of maintaining peace in Kosovo, and in applying pressure to the Government of Albin Kurti to carry out the measures outlined below, which are necessary for ensuring peace and creating the conditions for the implementation of the recently reached Agreement on Normalization:

- The withdrawal of all special police units from the north of Kosovo since their presence is in violation of Articles 128 and 61 of the Constitution of Kosovo and Article 9 of the Brussels Agreement signed in 2013. The behavior of the police generates fear and disturbance among the local population. The absence of an adequate reaction to their deployment in the north at violently and unjustifiably confiscated land, conveyed a negative message that the militarization of this area is allowed.
- For the political representatives of Kosovo Albanians, who have no democratic legitimacy to represent local communities here, to leave municipal and other public buildings in administrative centers in the north of Kosovo. Furthermore, we demand that current employees of local administrations be allowed unhindered access to their offices until the holding of new elections.
- For the deployment of KFOR and EULEX units in the north of Kosovo in the goal of maintaining peace until the unconditional return of local Serbs to the police, which must also include strong guarantees for the respect of the Regional Police Directorate's -North unique competencies which are defined by the Brussels Agreement, and which have been eroded by decisions issued by the Government of Kosovo starting from the end of 2021;
- The implementation of Article 7 of the Agreement on Normalization that guarantees the right to self-management of Serb communities in Kosovo and that formalizes the status of the Serbian Orthodox Church;
- The formation of the Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities in accordance with the Brussels Agreement signed in 2013 and the Basic Principles for the formation of Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities in 2015;

- After adapting the legal framework for the formation of the Association, the holding of democratic elections in municipalities in northern Kosovo and the establishment of conditions for the unhindered and unconditional return of Serbs to institutions;
- The implementation of the decision reached by the Constitutional Court in May of 2016 confirming the Visoki Dečani Monastery's ownership of 24 hectares of land;
- The resolution of all cases of attacks against Serbs and their property, including the illegal expropriation of land and recent incidents during which firearms were used by members of Kosovo's security forces, as well as the strengthening of security measures in Serb-inhabited areas in Kosovo;
- A stop to the demonization of the Serb community during public appearances by the President of Kosovo, Prime minister of Kosovo, and other high-ranking government officials from the Albanian community.

Those countries that have recognized Kosovo on the promise that they would work to build a multi-ethnic and democratic society and have spent years fostering the affirmation of its independence, have a historical and moral obligation towards the Serbs who live there. Our future depends on your resolve, and keeping peace in Kosovo depends on the swiftness of your actions. History will remember the course that you will now follow. We ask that you be accountable and faithful to democratic values in the diverse, multi-ethnic societies on which western civilization rests.

Signatories:

Name and Surname/ Institution, organization, or profession/ Location

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11. Professor Biljana Jaredić PhD / Zvečan
12. Momčilo Trajković / president of the Serbian National Forum / Gračanica
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15. Aleksandar Arsenijević / president of Civic Initiative Serbian survival / Zvečan

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49. Vladislav Đerković / administration of National Theatre of Priština in Gračanica/ Leposavić
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