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Disinformation Alerts – Serbian Media Monitoring is a monthly report on the news related to disinformation and misinformation targeting Kosovo, published by media in Serbia

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KOSOVO DISINFORMATION ALERTS

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INTRODUCTION

Kosovo Disinformation Alerts: Serbian Media Monitoring, aim to counter disinformation through monitoring on a monthly basis of preselected media outlets originating in Serbia. The preselected media are Tanjug, Informer, Novosti, Kurir, B92, Politika and Naša Borba, which are known for producing news with disinformation content that is not limited only to Kosovo.

The monitoring of these media shows that during December 2020 a total of 360 news have been published by the preselected media outlets originating in Serbia, of which Tanjug has published 60, Informer 47, Novosti 45, Kurir 9, B92 118, Politika 26, and Naša Borba 14 articles related to Kosovo.

A careful review shows that the news published during this period by Tanjug, Kurir, Politika, B92, Politika, Naša Borba and Nin did not contain any serious disinformation content. However, certain other preselected media outlets did have a number of news and articles with disinformation content on Kosovo. Against this backdrop, KIPRED is focused on the deconstruction of the most blatant disinformation provided by the above listed Serbian media, which will be discussed in the following sections.

The aim of the disinformation generated in this monitoring period by the preselected Serbian media in relation to Kosovo indicates that it was focused on undermining Kosovo's statehood by discrediting its leadership and institutions. Some of the preselected articles aim at falsely portraying Kosovo as a mafia state that does not respect human rights of Serbs. The preselected articles also aim at obscuring the past by denying crimes and atrocities of Serbia in Kosovo during the 1990s and by exaggerating the number of Serb casualties.

THE DECONSTRUCTION OF THE MOST BLATANT DETECTED DISINFORMATION

Disinformation Alert 1

Headline: *DIPLOMATSKI SKANDAL U REŽIJI LAŽNE DRŽAVE: Predstavnicu Prištine u SAD se vratila u Vašington iako je dobila otkaz (DIPLOMATIC SCANDAL DIRECTED BY A FALSE STATE: Pristina's US representative returns to Washington even though she was fired), Novosti, 17 December 2020.*¹

The article states that Vlora Çitaku has returned to Washington as a diplomatic representative of Pristina in the United States, in despite of the fact that Hashim Thaçi signed a decree for her resignation from that position more than two months ago. According to the article after the decree on her resignation, Çitaku organized farewell meetings in Washington and returned to Pristina, but then went again to Washington, because the partners in the ruling coalition did not decide who would replace her. In addition, the article says that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Pristina has confirmed to the media that Çitaku will continue to represent Kosovo in Washington until the appointment of a new ambassador. According to the Foreign Ministry "consultations for the selection of new ambassadors are at the end", but Radio Free Europe claims that the process has stopped and that there will probably be no new appointments this year.

¹ "DIPLOMATSKI SKANDAL U REŽIJI LAŽNE DRŽAVE: Predstavnicu Prištine u SAD se vratila u Vašington iako je dobila otkaz (DIPLOMATIC SCANDAL DIRECTED BY A FALSE STATE: Pristina's US representative returns to Washington even though she was fired)," *Novosti*, 17 December 2020, <https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/politika/946083/diplomatski-skandal-reziji-lazne-drzave-predstavnicu-pristine-sad-vratila-vasington-iako-dobila-otkaz>.

The Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

It is not the first time that the Serbian media is falsely claiming that Kosovo's Ambassador to the US, Vlora Çitaku has been sacked from that position.² The article uses bombastic words like "diplomatic scandal" in its title, and then does not refer at all to it later, except that it falsely claims that Vlora Çitaku has returned to Washington although she was dismissed from that position. In fact, the former Foreign Minister Glauk Konjufca had asked for her return because of the end of her mandate. The former President, Hashim Thaçi, initially refused to sign a decree for her return, but later signed a decree for her resignation upon Çitaku's own request. The decree signed by the President also stated that Çitaku would continue to represent Kosovo in Washington until the appointment of the new Ambassador. Clearly, neither was Çitaku dismissed from her position, nor has any "diplomatic scandal" happened in this case. The fact that Ambassador Çitaku will stay in Washington until a successor is appointed represents a standard diplomatic procedure.

Disinformation Alert 2

Headline: *ONI KOJI GOVORE O PREDAJI POLAZE OD SEBE! Petković: Nekadašnja DS predala energetska sistem na KiM, vlast pokušava da to ispravi! (THOSE WHO TALK ABOUT SURRENDER START FROM THEMSELVES! Petković: The former DS handed over the energy system to Kosovo and Metohija, the government is trying to correct that!), Informer, 14 December 2020.*³

The article transmits a statement by the director of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija, Petar Petković, who stated that Serbia has not signed any agreement or committed itself to handing

² "PRIŠTINA ŠALJE NOVOG PREDSTAVNIKA U SAD: Tači razrešio Vlora Çitaku (PRISTINA SENDS NEW REPRESENTATIVE TO USA: Thaçi dismisses Vlora Çitaku)," *Novosti*, 07 October 2020, <https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/politika/923897/pristina-salje-novog-predstavnika-sad-taci-razresio-vlora-citaku>.

³ "ONI KOJI GOVORE O PREDAJI POLAZE OD SEBE! Petković: Nekadašnja DS predala energetska sistem na KiM, vlast pokušava da to ispravi! (THOSE WHO TALK ABOUT SURRENDER START FROM THEMSELVES! Petković: The former DS handed over the energy system to Kosovo and Metohija, the government is trying to correct that!)," *Informer*, 14 December 2020, <https://informer.rs/vesti/politika/571337/petar-petkovic-kim-kosovo-energetski-sistem>.

over the power system in the north of Kosovo to self-proclaimed Kosovo, as claimed by some opposition leaders. He said that in recent days, some opposition politicians have been trying to misinform the Serbian people in Kosovo by making incorrect claims that there will be no electricity in the north of the province, and that President Aleksandar Vučić and the Serbian government are allegedly handing over the power system in northern Kosovo to Pristina. Petković has shown the agreement from March 2001, signed by the then Minister of Mining and Energy, Goran Novaković, by which, the then government and ministry handed over the management of the electric power system in Kosovo to UNIMK. He also said that in 2004, UNMIK handed over that authority to the temporary institutions of self-government in Pristina, after the Pristina Assembly passed the Energy Law, which passes the management of the electricity system in both the north and south to the Pristina transmission system operator.

According to Petković, since 2012, the SNS government has tried to correct the inherited situation, and in 2013, after the signing of the Brussels Agreement, the Energy Agreement was concluded, which envisages the formation of two subsidiaries of EPS, which should deal with electricity trade and distribution. He insists that according to the EU conclusions from 2015, it was agreed that the two subsidiary companies would be called EPS Trade and Elektroserver. However, Petković claims that since the ASM has not been formed yet, Pristina refuses to register those companies and pointed out that, until they are formed, there is no reason for Serbia to change anything when it comes to electricity supply. He reiterated that Serbia did not sign anything or commit itself to handing over the energy system to Pristina, which, as he said, is proven by the letter from November 19, 2018 which UNMIK sent to the Electric Network of Serbia, and which states that the issue of property should be resolved within the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. Petković also reminded that the Pristina Operator of the Transmission System and Electricity Market of Kosovo (KOSTT) entered into a contractual relationship with the European Network of Transmission System Operators and received a control area, although Serbia opposed it.

The Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

During the month of October, several articles have discussed the electricity issue in the north of Kosovo.⁴ The article under discussion puts forward several false claims when writing about this matter. Firstly, it falsely claims that Serbia has not signed any agreement or committed itself to handing over the power system in the north of Kosovo to the self-proclaimed Kosovo. In fact, in June 2019, KOSTT signed an agreement with the European Network of Transmission System Operators for Energy (ENTSO) that entered into force on 29 September. The Agreement paves the way for KOSTT to integrate into the regional electricity market as well as to participate in the Albanian Power Exchange (APEX). Since 14 December, KOSTT operates as an independent body and controls Kosovo's energy borders. Kosovo's exit from the EMS regulatory bloc (Serbia, Montenegro and Northern Macedonia) and its inclusion in a bloc with Albania was based on the "Agreement on Energy" signed between Kosovo and Serbia in 2013 as part of the EU-facilitated dialogue in Brussels.⁵

Secondly, the article falsely claims that the Energy Agreement signed in Brussels envisages the formation of two subsidiaries of EPS, which should deal with electricity trade and distribution. While it is true that the agreement stipulates that Kosovo should allow Serbia's EPS to establish a power trade company in Kosovo, it also states that EPS needs apply to the Kosovo Business Registration Agency before the end of August 2015 as well as to the Energy Regulatory Office (ERO) for the necessary license to supply customers.⁶ The article also makes a false claim that since the Association of Serb Municipalities (ASM) has not been formed yet, Pristina refuses to

⁴ In addition to the article that is being analyzed see "DS predala energetska sistem na KiM, vlast pokušava da to ispravi (DS handed over the power system in Kosovo and Metohija, the government is trying to correct that)," *Tanjug*, 14 December 2020, <http://tanjug.rs/full-view.aspx?izb=613848>. See also "Kancelarija: Snabdevanje severa strujom neće biti ugroženo (The Office: Electricity supply to the north will not be compromised)," *Tanjug*, 04 December 2020, <http://tanjug.rs/full-view.aspx?izb=611139> and "Snabdevanje severa Kosmeta strujom neće biti ugroženo! (The supply of electricity to the north of Kosmet will not be endangered!)," *Informer*, 04 December 2020, <https://informer.rs/vesti/politika/568787/snabdevanje-severa-kosmeta-strujom-neze-biti-ugrozeno>.

⁵ See "Bilateral relations between Kosovo and Serbia regarding energy sector", Research Institute of Development and European Affairs (RIDEA), October 2019.

⁶ "THE BRUSSELS DIALOGUE BETWEEN KOSOVO AND SERBIA: ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES," Balkan Policy Research Group, September 2020, https://balkangroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/BPRG_DIALOGU-I-BRUKSELIT_ALB_web2.pdf.

register the EPS companies. In reality, according to KOSTT board member Nebih Zariqi, EPS has never applied to obtain a permit for such company. According to the agreement, the supply license for such company will be operational once KOSTT becomes a member of the ENTSO, and that in order to participate in the Kosovo's energy market, it needs to sign agreements with KOSTT. Further, the article points out that, until the company is created, there is no reason for Serbia to change anything when it comes to electricity supply. This also represent a false claim, since once the Kosovo energy system began to operate independently on 14 December, Serbia immediately stopped the transmission of 500 megawatts of electricity that Kosovo had imported from it.⁷

Otherwise, it should be mentioned that citizens living in the four Serb-majority municipalities in northern Kosovo have since the end of the war in 1999, not paid for their energy bills although they were supplied by Kosovo. It is estimated that the energy bill spent in these municipalities is around 12 million euros per year. During the period 1999 to 2017, citizens of Kosovo living in the south have paid for these bills. In addition, according to KOSTT officials from 2008 until now, the state of Serbia has illegally used the transmission network of Kosovo and has collected revenues of about 65 million euros.⁸

⁷ "Serbia ndërpret transmetimin e energjisë për Kosovën (Serbia cuts off the energy transmission to Kosovo)," Fakteplus, 15 December 2020, <https://fakteplus.net/serbia-nderpret-transmetimin-e-energjise-per-kosoven/>.

⁸ Ibid.

Disinformation Alert 3

Headline: *ALBANCI NISU SAMI TRGOVALI ORGANIMA: NATO je krvavim rukama upravljao OVK (ALBANIANS DIDN'T TRADE WITH ORGANS ALONE: NATO managed the KLA with bloody hands), Novosti, 11 December 2020.*⁹

The article transmits a statement by Goran Petronijević, a lawyer and former judge, who doubts that the case of human organ trafficking will be addressed by the Specialized Prosecutor's Office in The Hague because such an investigation would inevitably lead to the role of NATO in that. He claims that the KLA neither knew nor could independently organize organ trafficking. Petronijević says that this was done by parts of NATO with apparent consent of their top leaders. He believes that it was an organized criminal business by an organized criminal group in which representatives of the KLA participated on the one hand, and part of NATO on the other. Petronijević is convinced about this since NATO had the control in that area before 1999, and especially after, and that such thing could not be done without their consent or, as he claims - their participation. Petronijević has once reported in the media that ships-hospitals where organs were transplanted were stationed on the Adriatic. According to him, the evidence about trafficking was systematically destroyed, like the inexplicable crash of a Slovak plane over Hungary in 2006, which contained 42 members of the Slovak peacekeeping contingent who were returning home as well as three large aluminum coffins with evidence of human organ trafficking from a tomb near Podujevo.

⁹ "ALBANCI NISU SAMI TRGOVALI ORGANIMA: NATO je krvavim rukama upravljao OVK (ALBANIANS DIDN'T TRADE WITH ORGANS ALONE: NATO managed the KLA with bloody hands)," Novosti, 11 December 2020, <https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/politika/944254/albanci-nisu-sami-trgovali-organima-nato-krvavim-rukama-upravljao-ovk>.

The Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

Recently Serbian media have written extensively about the alleged human organ trafficking in Kosovo during the conflict in 1999. Accusations about human trafficking were first mentioned in Dick Marty's Report that was published on 14 December 2010 and was presented to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 7 January 2011. The Report claimed "inhuman treatment of people and killing of prisoners with the purpose of removal and illicit trafficking in human organs in Kosovo by the members of the Kosovo Liberation Army."¹⁰ These accusations about human organ trafficking were the main reason why the international community insisted on creating the Kosovo Specialist Chambers. However, while the statement by the Specialist Prosecutor's Office of the Kosovo Specialist Chambers (KSC) of 24 June 2020 clearly states that "the crimes alleged in the Indictment involve range of crimes against humanity and war crimes, including murder, enforced disappearance of persons, persecution, and torture,"¹¹ it does not mention at all human organ trafficking. It seems that precisely because of that, Serbian media are continuously making false claims about this topic. The article under discussion makes a notoriously false claim that human organ trafficking could not have been done without NATO's consent and participation. It cites Goran Petronijević, a lawyer and former judge, who falsely claims that organ human trafficking was an organized criminal business conducted by the representatives of the KLA and parts of NATO.

In defense of his false claims, Petronijević insists that the evidence was systematically destroyed, and mentions the crash of a Slovak plane over Hungary in 2006. Serbian media have written earlier¹² about this case and have falsely claimed that in the Slovak plane there were three large

¹⁰ Clint Williamson, "Statement the Chief Prosecutor of the Special Investigative Task Force," Brussels, European Union, 29 July 2014.

¹¹ "Press Statement," Specialist Prosecutor's Office, Kosovo Specialist Chambers, 24 June 2020.

¹² See "Otkriven tajni dokument: Avion sa dokazima o zločinima OVK namerno oboren; sve znao visoki diplomata EU? (Secret document revealed: the plane with evidence of KLA crimes deliberately shot down; a senior EU diplomat knew everything?)," B92, 18 August 2020, https://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2020&mm=08&dd=18&nav_category=640&nav_id=1720886. See also "OBOREN AVION SA DOKAZIMA PROTIV OVK? Skinuta oznaka o tajnosti s dosijea o nesreći iz 2006 (PLANE WITH EVIDENCE AGAINST KLA SHOT DOWN? Secrecy removed from the 2006 accident file)," *Novosti*, 18 August 2020, <https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/politika/910217/oboren-avion-dokazima-protiv-ovk-skinuta-oznaka-tajnosti-dosijea-nesreci-2006>.

aluminum coffins with evidence of human organ trafficking from a tomb near Podujevo. Such claims are not supported with any concrete fact, except alleged testimonies of soldiers who replaced the departing contingent and those of some of the family members of the killed soldiers. After the Slovak Ministry of Defense in July 2020 declassified the Report on the Investigation of the Aircraft accident, the state secretary of the Ministry of Defense has declared that he basically agrees with the conclusion from the expert investigation that the air accident has probably occurred due to a failure by a human factor.¹³

Finally, it is impossible to take seriously accusations against a renowned military alliance such as NATO from a person such as Petronijević. During Slobodan Milošević's rule, he was a judge of the District Court, and he was also a member of the court panel that tried NATO leaders for the bombing of FR Yugoslavia. During this trial, US President Bill Clinton, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, French President Jacques Chirac, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and nine other leaders of NATO and countries that participated in the bombing of FR Yugoslavia were accused. The Trial Chamber of which Petronijević was a member, sentenced all of them to 20 years in prison for committing criminal acts of incitement to aggressive war, violation of territorial integrity, attempted murder of the highest state officials, war crime against civilians and use of illicit means of combat.¹⁴ Afterwards, as a lawyer at the Hague tribunal, he represented former high-ranking JNA officer Veselin Šljivančanin, as well as the Bosnian Serb political leader during the war in former Yugoslavia Radovan Karadžić. In addition, he also represented some well-known public figures, such as the former head of the State Security Rade Marković, and one of the members of the notorious, criminal "Zemun clan" Saša Pejaković-Pelet, who was convicted in 2003 for the assassination of Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjić.¹⁵

¹³ "What happened in Hejce? The crash of the aircraft is attributed to errors in piloting," Tekdeeps, 31 July 2020, <https://tekdeeps.com/what-happened-in-hejce-the-crash-of-the-aircraft-is-attributed-to-errors-in-piloting-home-news/>.

¹⁴ "Ko je napadnuti Goran Petronijević? Sudio liderima NATO-a, zastupao Legiju (Who is the attacked Goran Petronijević? Judged NATO leaders, represented the Legion)," *Mondo*, 15 December 2020, <https://mondo.rs/Info/Drustvo/a1324297/Advokat-Goran-Petronijevic-napad-na-advokata-Petronijevica.html>.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Disinformation Alert 4

Headline: *KRVAVI TRAG VILIJAMA VOKERA: Kako je u El Salvadoru počela obuka režisera slučaja Račak (THE BLOODY TRACE OF WILLIAM Walker: How the training of the director of the Racak case started in El Salvador), Novosti, 22 December 2020.*¹⁶

The article states that the bloody traces of William Walker began in El Salvador in the 1980s, then his criminal mission continued in Kosovo, and ended with the shameless lies he told about Racak. It explains that Walker was the American ambassador to El Salvador from 1988 to 1992. The article explains that during the El Salvador civil war in the 1980s, the United States supported the so-called "Death Squad" of the El Salvador army, which killed thousands of political opponents, union leaders, activists, journalists, teachers, ordinary citizens across the country, including Catholic activists and officials. It says that the independent lawyer of the District Court of the USA, Lawrence Walsh, has accused Walker for setting up a fake humanitarian operation at the Ilopango air base in El Salvador. The article claims that in reality the base was secretly used to deliver rifles, ammunition and supplies to the Greens who were attacking Nicaragua. The article concludes that as such, Walker was "ideal" to solve the situation in Kosovo and Metohija, so he created lies about the Racak massacre, which was the reason why NATO bombed FR Yugoslavia in 1999.

¹⁶ "KRVAVI TRAG VILIJAMA VOKERA: Kako je u El Salvadoru počela obuka režisera slučaja Račak (THE BLOODY TRACE OF WILLIAM Walker: How the training of the director of the Racak case started in El Salvador)," *Novosti*, 22 December 2020, <https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/politika/947472/krvavi-trag-vilijama-vokera-kako-salvadoru-pocela-obuka-rezisera-slucaja-racak>.

The Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures.

The article makes a notoriously false claim that Racak massacre was in fact fabricated and represents a “shameless lie.” It tries to make a simplistic connection between William Walker’s career in El Salvador during 1980s and his involvement in Racak case as the head of the Kosovo Verification Mission. Without going into the analysis of the accuracy of the data related to Walker's career in El Salvador presented in the article, it should be emphasized that the denial of the Racak massacre represents an unprecedented lie. The Head of the Finish Investigation Team, Dr. Helena Ranta, was in charge of the investigation of the massacre of Reçak, committed by Serbian forces on 15 January 1999, when 45 villagers were killed. After the investigation was completed and forensic showed that 45 victims were unarmed civilians, she has called this act as a “crime against humanity”¹⁷. On the other hand, according to Human Rights Watch, although “the attack was possibly provoked by a KLA ambush that killed three Serbian policeman a few days before, government forces responded by shooting at civilians, torturing detainees, and committing summary executions.” The report also states that Racak massacre was well documented by the OSCE mission, and immediately condemned by the mission’s head, U.S. diplomat William Walker.¹⁸ All these proves the falseness and disinformation provided with the aim of denying the war crimes committed by Serbia in Kosovo.

¹⁷ Chris Bird, “Recak report finds Serbs guilty,” *Guardian*, 18 March 1999, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/mar/18/4>.

¹⁸ “UNDER ORDERS: War Crimes in Kosovo,” Human Rights Watch, 2001, p. 57.

Disinformation Alert 5

Headline: RAK RANA BALKANA! Evropski poslanik: Kosovo je MAFIJAŠKA DRŽAVA čije se metastaze šire Evropom! (BALKAN'S CANCER WOUND! Member of the European Parliament: Kosovo is a MAFIA STATE whose metastases are spreading in Europe!), **Informer, 10 December 2020.**¹⁹

The article transmits a statement by Thierry Mariani at the meeting of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, in which he criticized the report of the European Parliament's rapporteur for Kosovo, Viola von Cramon that supported visa liberalization for Kosovo. According to Mariani Pristina abolishes basic rights, the rule of law, the functioning of democratic institutions, and there is human organ trafficking. For him "Kosovo is a cancer wound of the Balkans today." Mariani also said that metastases are spreading in Europe, with mafia operations and weapons imported to France from Kosovo. He expressed his concern how the rapporteur and most political groups can support visa liberalization for Kosovo. Mariani pointed out that the EU is supporting the mafia state. The article also transmits Viola von Cramon's reaction after Mariani's speech, in which she said that she was surprised by his speech and that Kosovo is not a mafia state. She suggested that they visited Kosovo together in order to have the opportunity to talk to the residents there, get acquainted with the situation and assess whether, as she stated, Kosovo is a mafia state and a country that exports weapons.

Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

Mariani falsely claims that Kosovo is a mafia state that has abolished basic rights of Serbs, and is involved in human organ trafficking. Kosovo has declared its independence on 17th of February

¹⁹ "RAK RANA BALKANA! Evropski poslanik: Kosovo je MAFIJAŠKA DRŽAVA čije se metastaze šire Evropom! (BALKAN'S CANCER WOUND! Member of the European Parliament: Kosovo is a MAFIA STATE whose metastases are spreading in Europe!)," *Informer*, 10 December 2020, <https://informer.rs/svet/vesti/570495/kosovo-francuska-poslanik-evropski-parlament-mafija-mafijaska-drzava>.

2008, and its statehood has since then been recognised by more than 100 states, including 23 EU member states, USA, Japan and Turkey. It is also a full member of World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), FIFA, UEFA and many other international and regional organizations and initiatives. It has also signed a “Stabilisation and Association Agreement” with the European Union, which is certainly not something a mafia state would manage to achieve.

The reports of the U.S. State Department’s Overseas Security Advisory Council on Kosovo and Serbia of 2019 are also telling the opposite of what Mariani is trying to propagate regarding the crime in Kosovo. According to these reports the risk of crime in Kosovo’s capital Prishtina is considered as moderate,²⁰ while in the Serbian capital, Belgrade, it is considered as considerable, and they also state that “the considerable risk from crime [in Serbia] is due to the activities of Organized Crime (OC) groups, as Serbia is a main trafficking route from the east to Europe”.²¹ Furthermore, the level of criminality in Kosovo does not differ from that of the other countries of the Western Balkans, including the trafficking and organized crime,²² and KFOR is the most trusted security institution by all communities in Kosovo.²³

Furthermore, Mariani falsely claims that in recent years Kosovar authorities have undertaken discriminatory measures against the Serbian community in Kosovo, and there is not even a single evidence that can be found to prove such a claim. He refuses to acknowledge that it was Serbian military, police and paramilitary forces that have committed “the most monstrous crimes” against the Albanians in Kosovo, and not the other way around. In Kosovo Serbs were “perpetrators” and Albanians were “victims”. As already mentioned, the Human Rights Watch report has documented “torture, killings, rapes, forced expulsions, and other war crimes

²⁰ OSAC, Kosovo 2019 Crime & Safety Report, November 23rd, 2019 [https://www.osac.gov/Country/Kosovo/Content/Detail/Report/d0ff62ac-1d7b-45dd-84a4-15f4aeb9e219#:~:text=There%20is%20moderate%20risk%20from,influences%20crime%20rates%20in%20Kosovo.&text=According%20to%20Kosovo%20Police%20\(KP,of%20grievous%20thefts%20was%205%2C222.](https://www.osac.gov/Country/Kosovo/Content/Detail/Report/d0ff62ac-1d7b-45dd-84a4-15f4aeb9e219#:~:text=There%20is%20moderate%20risk%20from,influences%20crime%20rates%20in%20Kosovo.&text=According%20to%20Kosovo%20Police%20(KP,of%20grievous%20thefts%20was%205%2C222.)

²¹ OSAC, Serbia 2019 Crime & Safety Report, November 3rd, 2019, <https://www.osac.gov/Country/Serbia/Content/Detail/Report/452bd4dc-9d15-491b-b271-15f4aeb34077>

²² For further exploration see: HOTSPOTS OF ORGANIZED CRIME IN THE WESTERN BALKANS: Local vulnerabilities in a regional context, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, Geneva, 2019, <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Hotspots-Report-English-13Jun1110-Web.pdf>.

²³ See Faton Bislimi, Public Pulse 1, UNDP Kosovo, September 2013, https://www.ks.undp.org/content/kosovo/en/home/library/democratic_governance/-/.

committed by Serbian and Yugoslav government forces against Kosovar Albanians between March 24 and June 12, 1999.” The Report has also concluded that “approximately 10,500 Kosovar Albanians were killed between March 20 and June 12, 1999, while “the Yugoslav military and Serbian police and paramilitaries expelled 862,979 Albanians from Kosovo, and several hundred thousand more were internally displaced.”²⁴ Finally yet importantly, according to Kosovo Constitution, all communities living in Kosovo are guaranteed the highest level of minority rights compared to the entire Western Balkan region. Finally, Thierry Mariani as a member of far-right party “National Rally” (previously National Front) is well-known for his anti-Albanian and anti-Muslim views. In addition to referring to Kosovo as “a pseudo-state that shelters numerous mafias and possesses a concentration of drugs, human beings, and the traffic of arms,” he has also claimed that “Albania is a central point of Turkish influence in the region.” Mariani is also proven to have pro-Serb and pro-Russian views. When tensions increased between Montenegro and Serbia, Mariani has described Montenegro’s economy as heavily dependent on illegal activities.²⁵ On the other hand, he has been called a Kremlin’s “Trojan horse” since as a member of the National Assembly and vice-president of the French-Russian Parliamentary Friendship Association, Mariani has been publicly supportive of the Russian position on the Ukrainian crisis.²⁶ Based on everything mentioned above, Mariani can hardly be considered as an objective and unbiased person when talking about Kosovo.

²⁴ “Under Orders: War Crimes in Kosovo,” Human Rights Watch Report, 2001, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/kosovo_full_low.pdf

²⁵ Thierry Mariani, “Another Balkan policy,” *Brussels Morning*, 28 January 2021, <http://brusselsmorning.com/2021/01/28/another-balkan-policy/>.

²⁶ “The Kremlin’s Trojan Horses,” *Atlantic Council*, 15 November 2016, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/kremlin-trojan-horses/>.