



Statement by Mr. Dušan Kozarev, Deputy Director, Office for Kosovo and Metohija of the Government of the Republic of Serbia
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Good morning, I am Dušan Kozarev, Deputy-Director in the Office for Kosovo and Metohija of the Government of the Republic of Serbia. My intervention in the Panel on Basic Human Rights is, regrettably, prompted by continuous violations of fundamental human rights of the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija, such as the right to life, right to move freely, right to belong to own ethnic and religious communities. The period since the previous OSCE Human Dimension meeting in Warsaw has been marked by intensified efforts to intimidate and pressure the Serbs to leave Kosovo and Metohija, and by deterring the expelled ones from returning to their patrimony. The Serbs have suffered some 50 ethnically motivated assaults.

In January 2018, in Kosovo Polje Municipality, school windows were broken and walls were littered with these graffiti: UCK, Kill Serbs, and Kosovo is Albania.



In February, a Serb sustained head injuries in an attack in the southern part of Kosovska Mitrovica. **In March**, there resumed the practice of arresting returnee Serbs upon false reports filed by persons usurping the property of the arrestees for years, unhindered by anyone, while true owners were forced to live in displacement and struggling to make the ends meet. In late March, in the City of Peć were arrested 5 lawyers from the EU-funded project of free legal aid for displaced persons, together with 3 RTS TV crew; all were apprehended while filming footage for TV show “Right to Have Tomorrow” focusing on usurped property and fraudulent transactions targeting the property of displaced Serbs, which is most commonly witnessed in this region of Kosovo and Metohija.

The roads of Kosovo and Metohija proved to be utterly unsafe for the Serbs. **Last April**, in the village of Suvi Do, a group of Albanians stopped a vehicle carrying a Serbian family with two small children. The family was verbally and physically assaulted, one daughter forcibly taken out of the car. A similar incident took place in **late May** in the village of Žač, where a dozen of Albanians stopped and attacked a vehicle owned by a Serbian Orthodox priest on the way home

from the morning liturgy in the Peć Patriarchate, also carrying priest's wife and five-year-old twins. The priest suffered insults, and the vehicle sustained multiple damages. This took place in front of the house of the Kelmendi family, none of whom is arrested in spite of dozens of criminal charges filed, and in spite of being known to the "Kosovo Police" in relation with the arms and drugs. Back in 2010, they fired shots at the Serb returnees in the village of Žač.

Also in May, in the village of Staro Gracko, several Albanians took to call names at two mothers strolling with their children, and this prompted the villagers to gather; eventually, in the presence of police officers, the son of the Police commander hit a Serbian boy, which triggered a fight. The tally was three injured Serbs, including a baby victim of an inadequate intervention of the "Kosovo Police" which used pepper spray on mother as she was holding her infant.

In the town of Orahovac, 4 Serbian houses were burglarized while an arson attempt was averted; in the City of Gnjilane, the Serbs suffered thefts of several vehicles and torching of ancillary premises. Since May 2018 increased the incidence of thefts of Serbian-owned cattle and agricultural machines and devices throughout Kosovo and Metohija. The wave of thefts did not spare health facilities. For two consecutive nights from 27 to 29 May, infirmary in Suvi Do has been stoned; on the next night was attacked infirmary in the village of Novake, where most medical records got burnt and inventory smashed.

In the village of Suvi Do, on **June 5**, a group of Albanians intimidated Serbian children playing in the schoolyard, by gestures depicting throat-cutting. The children fled, and the Albanians used clubs to break school doors and windows.



In the same village, on **June 25**, two Albanians hit a Serbian boy with pistol on his head and thereafter shot him in a leg. This boy's family is under unrelenting pressures to sell the property and move out.

In July, a group of Albanians stabbed a Serb in the village of Prilužje; **in August**, in the village of Žač, shots were fired at the house of a Serb returnee as the family with two children were in the front yard.

Observance of religious holidays in certain places in Kosovo and Metohija is still associated with risks. Repeating the years-long practice, the Albanians in Đakovica attempted to prevent the displaced Serbs to bring Christmas tree in the Monastery of Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos and celebrate Christmas Eve. The Monastery was blocked for several hours, and none was allowed to get in or out. The Association of IDPs was forced to cancel an organized visit to the Monasteri of Dečani. The same scenario was played out in August, too.

When some 30 returnees and displaced Serbs came to the village of Petrič near Kлина to celebrate Christian holiday of the Holy Trinity on May 28, the Albanians blocked the entrance to the church by vehicles, chanted ‘UCK’, insulted and stoned them, injuring three persons.



Besides the severely threatened Serbs’ freedom of movement on roads, on May 26 Priština authorities commenced the construction of a main road within the protected zone of the Lofty Dečani Monastery, which violates the Priština-adopted Law on Special Protected Zones. The works were halted thanks to the engagement of the international community including the OSCE, after which ensued statements of the Albanian officials who, contrary to the agreement, announced the resumption of the works in August.

This year witnessed an accentuated aggressiveness against the political officials of the Republic of Serbia and the political representatives of the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija. Serbian politician Oliver Ivanović was murdered last January. Belgrade offered its full assistance to investigation, but the “Kosovo Police” has been stubbornly rejecting collaboration while not attaining any results of its own.



Inferring from their modus operandi and brutality unleashed on March 26, the special units of the “Kosovo Police” carried out a terrorist act of arresting Marko Đurić, Director of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija and Head of the Team for Negotiation with Priština. On the same occasion, the gunstocks blows, kicking, stun grenades and teargas used by the “Kosovo Police” inflicted injuries to 32 more people, including a Serb political representative in the institutions in Priština.

There is no justifiable excuse for such action; moreover, the pretext stated by Priština proved to be false, being immediately discredited by verifiable arguments. Serbia responded in a poised and patient manner, aiming to maintain the peace and order. The international community shied away, either from criticism or response.

Only last week, the UCK veterans not only tried to foil the visit of Aleksandar Vučić, President of Serbia, by threats and intimidations, but also resorted to building barricades and burning tires to prevent entry into the Serbian-inhabited village of Banje. We are assured that the Kosovo Police was capable of avoiding this situation and that, instead, it has actually made such scenario possible with its inadequate response. President of Serbia made appropriate decisions guided by the peace and security of all citizens.



The cited events required engagement of KFOR, whose presence the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija perceive as the guarantor of peace. All this unmistakeably points to the conclusion that formation of any sort of so-called Kosovo security forces remains unacceptable, given that institutions in Priština failed to demonstrate either maturity or readiness to protect all citizens and to uphold their fundamental human freedoms regardless of their ethnic or religious affiliation.

Due to all presented instances of inclination towards political instrumentalization, the “Kosovo Police” should not be a part of Interpol as it aspires to become, since it would evidently abuse such membership to antagonise the Serbs.

We maintain that the overriding catalyst for the above-presented extremist processes is the failure to implement Priština’s commitments under the 2013 Brussels Agreement concerning the establishment of the Community of the Serbian Municipalities, since this Community was designed to ensure and guarantee a comprehensive mechanism for a safe and viable life of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija.

Serbia remains poised and patient, committed to peace, to a compromise solution of the centuries-long Kosovo-Metohijan knot, and to the improvement of the cooperation in the region.