

Report of Xenophobia and Radical nationalism in Serbia, 2020-2022.

1. Changes (positive and negative) in the legislation affecting the interests of minorities including

migrants in the period under review:

- discriminatory legislation affecting minorities;**
- Legislation to combat Hate crime.**

Serbia first adopted a Law on Prohibition of Discrimination in 2009. It prescribes an integral system of measures, conditions and instruments ensuring the successful application of constitutional provisions relating to the prohibition of all forms of discrimination. The “Law on Prohibition of Discrimination” (the "Anti-Discrimination Law"), enacted by the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia during the 2009 spring session and published in the Official Journal of the Republic of Serbia, no. 22/09 dated March 26, 2009. It is interesting to mention that the initiative for enacting this law comes from the NGO-sector and dates back to 2004. The draft was finalized in 2008 in a joint effort by several NGOs (including the Belgrade-based CUPS which was behind the initial draft) gathered around a project called "Coalition against Discrimination" sponsored by the Swedish Helsinki Committee for Human Rights. The overall purpose of the Anti-Discrimination Law was to introduce a systemic law as a basis for integral and general anti-discrimination protection in all areas. The enactment of this law was also a pre-condition for Serbia's inclusion in the "White Schengen List" granting its citizens free movement within the countries of the European Union. Its adoption by the Parliament was heavily debated and a final draft was even withdrawn from the law-enactment procedure, which was followed by intense media and public debate. As a compromise to strong resistance from certain religious communities, the improved draft was reinstated into parliamentary hearing session whereby a reference to transsexuals was intentionally omitted from the final version of Article 21, which provides protection against discrimination due to sexual orientation. The Anti-Discrimination Law¹ is relevant in many ways to the reinforcement of democracy, tolerance, equality and equal and fair opportunities for all persons. The most important improvement is that this universal legislation provides enhanced mechanisms for protection against any kind of discrimination (including, without limitation, racial, gender, sexual orientation,

¹ The Anti-Discrimination Law recognizes two types of discrimination both of which are prohibited, namely: (i) direct discrimination occurring where an individual or a group of persons is put in less favorable position or is being treated less favorably on the grounds of personal characteristics and (ii) discriminatory impact/effect occurring where such less favorable position or treatment is based on an act, action or omission that is only apparently based on the principle of equality but actually has a discriminatory impact/effect (i.e. not justified by a lawful objective and/or deploying inappropriate and unnecessary means of achieving such an objective).

genetic, religious, cultural, invalidity, age, membership of political, labor union and other organizations, etc)²

The basis of anti-discrimination policy related to nationality or ethnicity is found in Article 21 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, which provides for the constitutional equality of citizens and their right to equal legal protection, without discrimination. Paragraph 3 of the same article prohibits any direct or indirect discrimination based on any grounds, particularly on race, sex, national origin, social origin, birth, religion, political or other opinion, property status, culture, language, age, mental or physical disability, while special measures which the Republic of Serbia may introduce to achieve full equality of individuals or group of individuals in a substantially unequal position compared to other citizens shall not be deemed discrimination. Article 76 of the Constitution guarantees to persons belonging to national minorities' equality before the law and equal legal protection, and prohibits any discrimination on the grounds of belonging to a national minority. Article 77 guarantees appropriate representation of members of national minorities in public administration at the central and local level (affirmative action), while Article 81 of the Constitution sets forth the Republic of Serbia's obligation to develop the spirit of tolerance in the fields of culture, education and information, through giving impetus to the spirit of tolerance and intercultural dialogue and undertaking efficient measures for enhancement of mutual respect, understanding and cooperation among all people living on its territory, regardless of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity. As regards the principles of access to justice and legal security of citizens in relation to protection against discrimination, Article 22 of the Constitution is also important, since it guarantees the right to judicial protection whenever human or minority rights are violated, as well as Article 32, which provides that everyone who does not speak or understand the language officially used in the court shall be guaranteed the right to free assistance of an interpreter. Article 13 of the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination stipulates that causing and inciting inequality, hatred and enmity on the grounds of national, racial or religious affiliation, language or other personal characteristics shall be considered to constitute severe forms of discrimination, while Article 24 prohibits discrimination against national minorities and their members on the grounds of the aforementioned characteristics. Judicial protection against discrimination is provided through civil, criminal and misdemeanor proceedings. As regards civil proceedings, it should be noted that anyone who considers that he or she has been harmed by discriminatory treatment has the right to protection before the court in accordance with the law. The complaint may include the following requests: prohibition of performing an action that constitutes a risk of discrimination, prohibition of further acts of discrimination, i.e. prohibition of repeating acts of discrimination, determination that the defendant treated the plaintiff or another in a discriminatory way, implementation of actions to eliminate the consequences of discriminatory conduct, compensation for material and non-material damage, and publication of the court decision rendered after considering the complaint. This procedure is regulated by relevant provisions of the

² Law on Prohibition of Discrimination (Zakon o zabrani diskriminacije), 03/26/2009,
URL:https://www.equalrightstrust.org/ertdocumentbank/395178321_5_PILI%20Project%20-%20Serbia%20Summary%20Template%20for%20National%20Law.pdf

Law on Civil Procedure,³¹ with certain exceptions prescribed by the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination. The exceptions are the rules concerning the burden of proof provided in Article 45 of the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination. First, if the court establishes that a direct act of discrimination has been committed, or if that fact is undisputed by the parties in litigation, the defendant may not be relieved of responsibility by supplying evidence that he/she is not guilty, and second, if the plaintiff proves the likelihood of the defendant having committed an act of discrimination, the burden of providing evidence that no violation of the principle of equality or the principle of equal rights and obligations has occurred shall fall on the defendant. This has led to different interpretations of the articles prescribing the burden of proof not only in the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination but also in the Law on Civil Procedure, which is applied in a subsidiary manner, which means that the courts in their decisions combined provisions on the burden of proof, unaware of which regulation they gave priority to. In fact, in most proceedings, judges gave priority to the provisions of the Law on Civil Procedure, thus derogating from the provisions of the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination and vice versa. The rules on the burden of proof have remained a problem in civil proceedings concerning antidiscrimination in which the courts do not establish that the plaintiff proved the likelihood of the existence of discrimination, but conduct the entire proceeding in accordance with the rules of ordinary litigation. This puts plaintiffs in a situation where they provide a large amount of material evidence during the entire proceeding, and only after the proceeding has terminated and the decision has been rendered can they find out whether they proved the likelihood of discriminatory treatment.³

Since the amendments to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia from 2012, the Serbian legal framework provides also for criminal offenses incriminating various types of terrorist acts: terrorism, public incitement to commit terrorist acts, recruitment and training for committing terrorist acts, use of a deadly device, destruction and damage to a nuclear facility, endangering persons under international protection, terrorism financing and terrorist association. In addition, the Criminal Code (CC) specifically incriminates the activities of foreign fighters through the criminal offenses of participation in war or armed conflict in a foreign state and organizing participation in war or armed conflict in a foreign state. All these changes came as a result of the impact of a series of universal and regional conventions (for example, the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism) that Serbia has ratified or that bind Serbia due to its legal nature (such as UNSC resolutions).

From a positive side, during the last two years, the actual government, since the start of full invasion of Russia to Ukraine gave the permanent status of refugees to people from Ukraine to take full rights in April 2022. Now it is extended for one other year.

Serbia adopted a Law on social entrepreneurship in February 2022, with the aim, among others, of increasing labor activation among Roma and other vulnerable individuals.

³ Roma in the Republic of Serbia: The Challenges of Discrimination Goran Bašić, 2021, URL: https://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/MRG_Rep_RomaSerb_EN_Mar21_E.pdf

From a negative side, the ‘passivation’ of the addresses of Albanian citizens in the South of Serbia or the loss of the status of citizens from Albanian origin constitutes an issue of concern. Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia made a report. Also other organizations. There is a grey area for the addresses of people. The procedure is not transparent. The minister of Interior is making an order on who is actually leaving there. Because of this grey zone assumptions are being made such as for the government itself that is denying the whole problem. The Albanian community in Southern Serbia is one of three minority communities (the other two being Bosniaks and Hungarians) and is territorially compact and located along the border (with North Macedonia and Kosovo). All three communities, especially the Bosniak and Albanian ones, have been subjected to various administrative measures (structural discrimination) aimed at reducing their numbers, as well as stifling demands for territorial autonomy. When it comes to the Albanian community, its position and actual status is closely linked to the status of Kosovo and the Serb community in Northern Kosovo. Therefore, in order to reduce the number of Albanians living in the south as much as possible, the state is conducting the process of so-called “Passivation of residence of Albanians” working abroad, either in Western Europe or in Kosovo. This “passivation” also targets citizens who permanently reside at their addresses. This measure is, in essence, a form of ethnic cleansing through administrative means. “Passivation” (mass and selective passivation of residence) leads to individuals losing their status of being a citizen of Serbia and, accordingly, all civil rights – the rights to vote, property, health insurance, pension, employment, etc. Since citizens are not informed about “passivation”, they usually lose their right to appeal, the deadline is for October 2022.⁴ The Helsinki Committee has received a number of complaints from Serbia’s citizens of Albanian ethnicity regarding the ongoing registration process, as they are unable to register because the “registration system” does not accept them. Individuals excluded from registration by the system are all of Albanian ethnic background. They live either in the country or abroad, but their residential addresses in Serbia have been made passive and most of them do not have any identification documents.

There were no developments regarding the draft law on same-sex partnerships, initiated by the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, nor on the Ombudsman’s recommendation to regulate legal gender recognition, as already planned in the previous antidiscrimination strategy. Difficulties remain, especially in smaller municipalities, in implementing the amendments to the Law on birth registry, which enable data on gender changes to be entered into the registry. The implementation of hate crime legislation, including on grounds of sexual orientation, remains inadequate. Centralized official data on hate crimes broken down by bias

⁴ ALBANIAN MINORITY ON HOLD Preševo, Bujanovac and Medveđa as hostages of the Serbia and Kosovo relations, 2021, URL:<https://www.helsinki.org.rs/doc/izvestaj%20presevo%20eng.pdf>

motivation is still lacking. Due to lack of trust in institutions, cases of violence and discrimination towards LGBTIQ persons are often unreported. Transgender persons are particularly vulnerable to violence, abuse and discrimination. Intersex persons remain invisible both socially and legally. The lack of adequate mental health services for LGBTIQ persons became particularly visible during the COVID - 19 pandemic and is still a concern. In May 2013, it was announced that a draft law on same-sex civil partnerships would be introduced to the National Assembly on 4 June. The law would allow hospital visitation and inheritance rights for same-sex partners, although it was not known whether this would be in the form of unregistered cohabitation or registered partnerships. The draft bill stalled and was never voted on.

In June 2019, plans were announced to amend the Civil Code to allow domestic partnerships between same-sex couples, providing some of the legal rights of marriage, including property rights and alimony. However, partners would not have been able to inherit, adopt or access fertility treatments. In July 2019, a lesbian couple from Novi Sad, Jelena Dubovi and Sunčica Kopunović, launched a legal challenge to establish legal recognition for same-sex couples. In November 2020, the Minister for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, Gordana Čomić, announced that a law on same-sex partnerships would be brought before Parliament in the first half of 2021. The draft law was presented for public consultation in February 2021. In May 2021, President Aleksandar Vučić said he would veto the bill if it were approved by the National Assembly: "I don't know what the Assembly is planning when it comes to the law on same-sex unions. But, as the President of Serbia, I am obliged to protect the Constitution and I cannot sign that law." Čomić responded that the bill does not regulate the institution of marriage nor adoption of children by same-sex couples, but other issues such as hospital visitations and inheritance.⁵

– ***improvement of anti-discrimination legislation:***

Serbia's legislative and institutional framework for upholding fundamental rights is broadly in place. Serbia adopted new strategies on anti-discrimination and Roma inclusion, as well as action plans on gender equality and Roma inclusion. Action plans, and related funding, in other areas were due in July 2021 (violence against women) and April 2022 (anti-discrimination; deinstitutionalization) and are now overdue. More efforts are needed to comply with the Law on the planning system, which requires that action plans are adopted within three months of the adoption of related strategies. Serbia needs to strengthen human rights institutions by allocating the necessary financial and human resources and by putting in place procedures to ensure compliance with the European Court of Human Rights' measures, including interim measures.⁶

A new national strategy for the prosecution of war crimes for the period of 2021-2026 was adopted in October 2021 and its first implementation report was published in June 2022. Armed conflicts in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia were characterized by grave, large-scale and systematic violations of international

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recognition_of_same-sex_unions_in_Serbia#Same-sex_marriage

⁶ COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Serbia 2022 Report, 2022, URL: https://www.mei.gov.rs/upload/documents/eu_dokumenta/godisnji_izvestaji_ek_o_napretku/ec-report-2022.pdf

humanitarian law. According to estimates by various organizations during the wars in Slovenia (June-July 1991), Croatia (1991-95), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-95), in Kosovo and Metohija and during the bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1999), as well as in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (February-August 2001) - more than 130,000 people lost their lives, with civilians accounting for the majority of them. More than 10,755 people are still missing. Investigations and prosecution of war crimes were also pursued by the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991 (hereinafter: the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia), which was established in 1993 by the Security Council of the United Nations. The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia had supremacy over the national judiciaries in the countries of the former Yugoslavia. After the adoption of Resolution 1503 in the Security Council of the United Nations in 2003, which announced the end of the mandate of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and called upon the successor states of the former Yugoslavia to strengthen their national capacities to prosecute war crimes, the Republic of Serbia adopted the Law on Organization and Jurisdiction of Government Authorities in War Crimes Proceedings (RS Official Gazette, Nos. 67/03, 135/04, 61/05, 101/07, 104/09, ⁷2014).

In addition to willful killing of civilians in these conflicts numerous cases were registered of enforced displacement of the civilian population, unlawful imprisonment, torture, sexual violence, inhumane treatment, as well as looting and destruction of property, economic assets, cultural and religious buildings on a large scale. War crimes were committed by all parties to the armed conflicts. Serbia has a case backlog of 1 731 pre investigative cases. The new national strategy for the prosecution of war crimes is an opportunity to honor commitments to the fight against impunity and promoting reconciliation, by increasing investigations and indictments in high-level cases and strengthen regional cooperation.⁸

Serbia adopted a new Law on the Ombudsman in November 2021, which notably introduced new competences for the Ombudsman as the national independent mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as the national rapporteur for trafficking in human beings.

In December 2021, following the recommendation of the Accreditation Subcommittee of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, the Ombudsman was re-accredited with 'A' status. The Subcommittee encouraged the Ombudsman to continue efforts to strengthen its institutional framework and effectiveness, intensify its cooperation with the widest range of CSOs and human rights defenders, and advocate

⁷ NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE PROSECUTION OF WAR CRIMES, 2015, URL:<https://www.mpravde.gov.rs/files/National%20Strategy%20for%20the%20Prosecution%20of%20War%20Crimes.pdf>

⁸ COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Serbia 2022 Report, 2022, URL: https://www.mei.gov.rs/upload/documents/eu_dokumenta/godisnji_izvestaji_ek_o_napretku/ec-report-2022.pdf, pg.26

for additional funding to carry out its wider responsibilities under the new law. The mandate of the Ombudsman expired in July 2022.

2. Law enforcement practices affecting minorities - examples in the period under review:

– **discriminatory practices;**

– **anti-discrimination practices, including government support measures for minorities;**

– **combating Hate crime:**

✓ **preventive measures directed against the spread of extremist views in society, against the financing of Terrorism, etc.**

✓ **criminal proceedings;**

✓ **guilty verdicts;**

– **law enforcement practices as a manifestation of the conflict between democratic values and security**

interests, if any;

A negative development is the ban of freedom of assembly on the occasion of Euro pride in Belgrade with a lot of violence. While legislation on freedom of assembly and association is generally in line with European standards, Serbia has yet to align further with ODIHR Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly. In September 2022, Euro pride was hosted for a first time in the Western Balkans, in Belgrade after Belgrade had successfully applied in 2019, supported by an endorsement letter of the Prime Minister on behalf of the government. The Europride route was banned, and the holding of the march was uncertain until the very last moment. The authorities claimed safety concerns related to threats by extreme right groups as the basis for their decision. An anti-Europride and, anti-Western demonstration was also banned. The organizers announced that they would appeal to the Constitutional Court which had, in two previous cases, overturned the authorities' decisions banning Prides as a violation of the constitutionally guaranteed right to freedom of assembly. Throughout this time, the authorities maintained contacts with the organizers to find a solution. Finally a march, via a shorter route took place on 17 September 2022, without major incidents. A high number of law enforcement officers protected it, nevertheless, some instances of violence against the participants were reported. The period prior to the march was marked by legal and political uncertainty. The communication of the authorities was contradictory, with high level announcements that the march would be banned altogether and a subsequent ban issued by the Ministry of the Interior on the route of the march. Other high level politicians addressed the Europride Human Rights Conference and held a reception before the march. While the authorities maintained

contacts with the organizers to find a solution, they remained non-committal about the parade going ahead with an official permit.⁹

The only procedure conducted so far against foreign fighters from Serbia, and defined as terrorist activity, refers to the seven Serbian citizens of Muslim faith. They were charged with terrorist association under Article 393a of the CC, terrorism financing under Article 393 of the CC, recruitment and training for committing terrorist acts under Article 393b and public incitement to commit terrorist acts under Article 391a of the CC.

When it comes to the proceedings against foreign fighters who fought for the pro-Russian side in Ukraine, it will not be possible to reveal their identity and thus it will not be possible to make a clearer connection between dozens of cases, given that the High Court in Belgrade anonymized all personal data of the persons convicted.

The Higher Court in Belgrade in December 2020 issued a final judgment against the police, which established that their mistreatment of a Romani couple was ethnically motivated. However, it should be noted that culpability of individual police officers was never established because prosecuting authorities and internal police mechanisms failed to conduct a proper investigation, but managed to charge the victims with ‘false reporting’, a groundless charge that was subsequently dropped. The couple complained of being abused by Belgrade police after reporting their car as stolen. They were held in custody for 13 hours, threatened with imprisonment and the removal of their children. The officers pointed a gun at the Romani man and put a bag over his head; would not allow the couple to call their lawyer; and coerced them into signing documents that they had not read and could not take away with them. According to the 2011 census, there were officially 147,604 Roma in Serbia, which represents 2.1% of the population. However, actual numbers are likely to be much higher, ranging from around 240,000 to 600,000. The average age of Romani people is 27.8 years old, compared with 42.2 years in the general population, and 41.5% are under 19 years old. Most Romani people live in South-East Serbia (about 39%), with a still significant population living in Vojvodina (29%) and a smaller proportion living in the Belgrade area (19%).⁷ Approximately 70% of Romani people in Serbia live in Romani majority neighbourhoods.⁸ 583 of these Romani majority neighborhoods are in some level of disrepair¹⁰

There is a case from the general prosecutor office and the court in Subotica in December 2021 a verdict on hate crime when a citizen of Croat nationality was attacked. The person was sentenced with regard to the article 15. After the Euro pride and after there were attacks, threat against LGBTQ community, there are 14 cases that persons were attacked and the prosecutor has done anything.

⁹ COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Serbia 2022 Report, 2022, URL: https://www.mei.gov.rs/upload/documents/eu_dokumenta/godisnji_izvestaji_ek_o_napretku/ec-report-2022.pdf

¹⁰ Justice denied: Roma in the criminal justice system of Serbia, 2023, URL: http://www.errc.org/uploads/upload_en/file/5468_file1_justice-denied-roma-in-the-criminal-justice-system-of-serbia.pdf, pg.5

A study from Kolavech about the regulation of the law for the foreign fighters found that the general prosecutor prosecute Bosniaks but not the citizens of Serbian nationality. The efforts of the competent judicial authorities to detect, prosecute and sanction Serbian foreign fighters in Syria were far much greater than the efforts invested in relation to Serbian foreign fighters in Ukraine.¹¹

From members of the Albanian national minority, residing tin the South of Serbia and abroad, concerns are raised about the way police were checking residence status in South Serbia. According to them, there is a need for the authorities to better explain to the public how these checks are being conducted.

Regarding the national strategy for the investigation and prosecution of war crimes that is an opportunity to honor commitments to the fight against impunity and promoting reconciliation, by increasing investigations and indictments in high-level cases and strengthen regional cooperation significant backlog of cases there is a number of Serbian political parties and figures, including at ministerial level, that continued to provide support to and public space for convicted war criminals. Convicted war criminals continue to spread hate speech in the public space. Certain politicians continue to deny the Srebrenica genocide without repercussions.¹²

There is a lack of any kind of reactions when minorities were attacked.

Pro-Russian demonstrations, as well as anti-war demonstrations, were allowed in the aftermath of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.¹³

A girl of Ukrainian origin, 20 years old together with her boyfriend were attacked in Belgrade from their neighbors. The girl now is under the procedure from the police for breaking peace and order, something paradoxical that she is under prosecution and not the attackers.

Serbia's interior ministry has published a video showing heavily armed police apparently raiding a makeshift migrant camp in the woods near the border with Hungary, confiscating phones and money, and escorting the migrants – most with their hands behind their heads – away from the camp.

The video shows Aleksandar Vulin, the Minister of the Interior, joining the operation, which was carried out early on October 5 by an operational strike group and members of the Serbian gendarmerie.

An interior ministry statement also published on YouTube said the police action was aimed at preventing the smuggling of irregular migrants, weapons and narcotics to Hungary, and preventing violent crime by migrants. According to the report, raids targeting people sleeping rough in the northern town of Subotica were carried out during March and into April, sometimes on a daily basis. In some cases, police were seen kicking individuals to force them into police vans, and some migrant's sustained

¹²COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Serbia 2022 Report, 2022, URL: https://www.mei.gov.rs/upload/documents/eu_dokumenta/godisnji_izvestaji_ek_o_napretku/ec-report-2022.pdf,pg.26-41

injuries such as broken hands and bruised eyes, which they said were a result of police violence during these evictions.¹⁴



At the end of 2022 during the heightened tension between Serbia and Kosovo, there are numerous cases. Specifically, the minister of interior, Vulin, who is also part of the Intelligence Services, PIA (Security Intelligence Service) as a director but in both capacities, minister of Interior and director of PIA, is using in their press releases inflammatory rhetoric towards the Albanians. They use the derogatory term ‘‘shqiptar’’ in press releases and statements.

In November 2021, the police banned the Youth Initiative for Human Rights’ rally in Belgrade, protesting against the glorification of convicted war criminal, Ratko Mladić, citing the possibility of a physical conflict with counter-demonstrators. A spontaneous public gathering that followed was blocked by the police. According to the Commissioner for Personal Data Protection, the police issued 1 782 misdemeanor warrants to participants in the environmental protests in November and December 2021 and initiated 211 misdemeanor procedures for violating the Law on safety of traffic on the roads. Masked and other individuals attacked some of the protestors. The Ministry of the Interior issued a public statement that, since the rallies were not registered, the police could not secure them and guarantee safety, and that the organizers would instead bear such responsibility. For example, the trial of activist Aida Corovic, accused of disturbing public order and breaching the peace for defacing a huge painting of Bosnian Serb wartime general Ratko Mladic on the wall of a residential building in Belgrade in November, started on Tuesday at the Misdemeanour Court in Belgrade.¹⁵

¹⁴ Serbia: Minister condemns migrants following police raid, 2022, URL:

<https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/43814/serbia-minister-condemns-migrants-following-police-raid>

¹⁵ Serbian Activist Tried for Defacing Ratko Mladic Mural, 2022, URL: <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/03/22/serbian-activist-tried-for-defacing-ratko-mladic-mural/>

Serbia extradited a Bahraini citizen on 24 January 2022, despite the interim measure imposed on 21 January by the European Court of Human Rights to refrain from extradition until after 25 February and until the completion of Court proceedings, which are still ongoing. This is contrary to Serbia's obligation as a party to the European Convention on Human Rights.

One of the famous paramilitary soldier, Deyan Beric, a fighter in 2014 in Donbass area and now is with the Russian army in Ukraine. He created a video and shared it to some TV channels as PR for other Serbian men can take part independently of the law of Serbia that prohibits this. The prosecutor has not reacted at all. ¹⁶

OSCs mechanism is examining the scale of mass violations of human rights in Belarus and Russia. Serbia was voting for that like other countries but there is no statement from the government that they support these actions. There is total silence regarding these and also the foreign fighters.

In the direction of money laundry and supporting terrorism there is an unresolved issue. In December 2020, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) expressed concerns regarding the allegations that Serbia had misused in July 2020 its law on the prevention of money laundering and the financing of terrorism with the aim to restrict or coerce civil society actors for their work and criticism of the government. It made a list of 37 organizations of civil society (NGOs) and against individuals connected to these organizations that they are laundering money. The ministry of Finance could order investigation, can block the Bank accounts, transactions etc. This, afterwards was cancelled but there is no investigation on who started this operation. In its plenary session of April 2021, the Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism of the Council of Europe (MONEYVAL) called on all members to ensure that the FATF Recommendations are not intentionally or unintentionally used to suppress the legitimate activities of civil society. Verbal attacks and smear campaigns against several CSOs and their financing continued in tabloid newspapers, as well as in Parliament even after a code of conduct was adopted there in December 2020. Organizations and individuals that criticize the authorities in developments related to the rule of law, and increasingly to environmental protection, are under particular pressure. ¹⁷

CSOs and human rights defenders continued to raise awareness about civil and political rights. This took place in a polarized environment. Verbal attacks and smear campaigns against several CSOs and their financing continued, including by high-level officials. Organizations and individuals that criticized the authorities were put under pressure, in particular in cases relating to the rule of law – such as protests against the glorification of war criminals - or environmental protection. During environmental protests in November and December 2021, masked and other individuals attacked some of the protestors. The Ministry of the Interior issued a public statement that, since the rallies

¹⁶Dejan Beric, URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dejan_Beri%C4%87

¹⁷COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Serbia 2021, URL:

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/669c1c96-30ea-11ec-bd8e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

were not registered, the police could not secure them and guarantee safety, and that the organizers would instead bear such responsibility.¹⁸

3. The attitude of the society towards immigrants, foreigners, ethnic, religious and sexual minorities:

– have sociological surveys or other studies been carried out in your country to determine the

motivation of public sentiment towards these groups? If yes, what are the results? What, in your opinion, had a decisive influence on the formation of this motivation (the activities of political parties and NGOs, the media, any events in the socio-political and economic spheres, government actions, etc.) - without a Pandemic and the war in Ukraine;

–how the general attitude of society towards immigrants, foreigners, other minorities has changed;

– describe negative social manifestations in relation to immigrants, foreigners, ethnic, religious and

sexual minorities, give examples;

–radical manifestations by minorities groups towards the majority of the population, if any. What are the reasons for these manifestations in your opinion?

The migrant crisis in Europe reached its peak in 2015, when more than 1.3 million people sought asylum in European countries.¹⁹ According to the estimates, about a million people²⁰ passed through Serbia in that period. In the course of the two following years, there was a sharp decline in the influx of migrants to European countries, as a consequence - among other things - of a series of measures many governments introduced in order to close illegal migrant routes and better manage migration flows. However, illegal migrant channels were never completely closed. Movement became difficult and slow, causing migrants to stay longer in the countries through which they pass.²⁰ In 2015, they stayed only a few days, while at the end of 2016 that period lasted between four and six weeks. Today, there are migrants who remain in Serbia for more than a year.²¹

¹⁸ COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Serbia 2022 Report, 2022,

URL:https://www.mei.gov.rs/upload/documents/eu_dokumenta/godisnji_izvestaji_ek_o_napretku/e_c-report-2022.pdf, pg 13-14

¹⁹ Pew Research Center, "Number of Refugees to Europe Surges to Record 1.3 Million in 2015," Pew Research Report (Pew Research Center), August 2, 2016, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2016/08/02/number-of-refugees-to-europe-surges-to-record-1-3-million-in-2015/>

²⁰ Bojan Stojanović, „Boravak u limbu: Balkanska ruta nakon zatvaranja granica, Vreme, December 2, 2022

²¹ Bodo Weber, The EU-Turkey Refugee Deal and the not quite closed Balkan route (Sarajevo: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Dialogue Southeast Europe, 2017). URL:<https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/sarajevo/13436.pdf>

Public opinion polls conducted in the last few years indicate widespread and growing anti-immigrant views of Serbian citizens. The BCSP survey from 2020 shows that citizens view migrants as the greatest external threat to Serbia's security, and that they also consider them one of the three main threats to internal security.²² In addition, about 75% of the respondents are concerned about "free movement of migrants in cities and villages".²³ For the sake of comparison, in the BCSP survey from 2017, migrants were fifth on the list of external threats, and eighth on the list of internal threats to the security of Serbia. The percentages were very small, as well. Also, the BCSP survey from 2021 shows that a significant percentage of citizens believe that migrants increase crime, pose a health risk, endanger Serbian values and customs, are terrorists, and were actually sent in to Islamise Serbia. Also, in the spontaneous responses of citizens about the biggest security threat in the community, migrants are second on the list, immediately after the security of one's home. Consequently, the number of respondents who would support anti-migrant protests and measures, such as limiting the number of migrants and expelling them from the country, has increased. Looking at last year's results of other surveys with similar questions, one can notice an increase in anti-migrant views among Serbian citizens.

The latest BCSP's public opinion polls have shown that citizens believe that the migrants' issue constitutes the highest external threat to Serbia's national security. At the same time, it is among the top three internal security threats. Also, around 75% respondents are concerned about the "free movement of migrants in towns and countryside."²⁴ Other researches show that Serbian citizens have many negative attitudes towards migrants, fraught with fear of them.²⁵ There is also strong support for the far-right irrespective of migration issues. Every fourth Serbian citizen supports the far-right groups' work, such as "1389" and "Naši ("Ours"), or the forbidden "National Alignment" and "Honor".

Other surveys indicate that as many as one in four respondents support the actions of one extreme right-wing organization or another, such as Leviathan or People's Patrol. This does not mean that all those who support the work of these organizations will be involved in their activities, or would vote for them in the elections if they should run, but it is still very worrying because it indicates that a significant number of citizens support the values inherent to an autocratic order. In fact, the worst consequence of the work of these organizations is not that they might attract more members or sympathizers, but that they contribute to making undemocratic attitudes and values acceptable to the citizens of Serbia. The BCSP survey showed that almost a quarter of the respondents think that democracy is desirable, but that in the current conditions we

²² Marija Ignjatijević, Bojan Elek, i Marija Pavlović, Boosting Armament to Fight Demographic Decline, Crime and Corruption (Belgrade Centre for Security Policy, 2020), 4

²³ Ignjatijević, Elek, i Pavlović, Boosting Armament to Fight Demographic Decline, Crime and Corruption, 8

²⁴ Marija Ignjatijević, Bojan Elek, and Marija Pavlović, Boosting Armament to Fight Demographic Decline, Crime and Corruption, (Belgrade Centre for Security Policy, 2020), 4-5, <https://bezbed-nost.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/naoruzanje-eng.pdf>.

²⁵ Jovana Bjekić, Marko Živanović, and Maša Vukčević Marković, Attitudes Towards Migrants and Refugees in Serbia, (Belgrade: Psychosocial Innovation Network, 2020), https://psychosocial-innovation.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Stavovi-prema-izbeglicama-i-migrantima_ENGL.pdf.

need a “firm hand”, while one fifth of them think that all regimes are the same. Among those who believe that all regimes are the same are most often young people, residents of Central and Western Serbia, and citizens with incomplete primary education.

Some of the most visible factors that make citizens more susceptible to radical ideas are economic exclusion and limited opportunities for social mobility.²⁶ Serbia has sufficient research on Islamist extremism, but lacks studies on the profile of extreme right- -wingers, i.e. the basic causes of the radicalization of right-wing ideas. Several interlocutors pointed out that members of extreme right-wing organizations and those who support them often come from poorer strata of society.

Serbia is characterized by a very bad socio-economic situation, which has been deteriorating in recent years and is reflected in the lack of employment opportunities, poverty, and the exodus of skilled and experienced labor (the so-called “brain drain”). Therefore, the low standard of living and inability to find employment have certainly affected the susceptibility of citizens to anti-migrant narratives. A special problem is youth unemployment, which in 2020 was 26.6%.²⁷ Public opinion polls show that young people have a very strong desire to leave the country, stating the economic situation as the main reason.²⁸ Given the current economic situation, it was easy for right-wingers to profit from the issue of migrants. Feelings of humiliation, hopelessness, as well as injustice caused by great economic difficulties create fertile ground for accepting extreme views, which can then lead to violent behaviour. Research on Islamist extremists in Serbia has shown that one of the main factors of extremism among young people is precisely poverty and lack of opportunities to advance on the social ladder. Also, people tend to look for culprits to explain the problems that plague them. The scapegoat theory explains this phenomenon by the tendency of people to find culprits for their own difficulties, caused by systemic problems, which is especially pronounced in periods of great crises.²⁹ Analyses conducted in European countries have shown that citizens’ attitudes towards migrants are greatly influenced by the country’s level of general economic development. Countries with a high level of GDP per capita and a low unemployment rate are generally more inclined towards migrants and do not perceive immigration as a threat. Although in Serbia, unlike in European countries, the narrative about migrants who came to take away jobs from the citizens of Serbia did not prevail, certain elements of this sentiment are still present. For example, one can often hear the argument that these are in fact “economic” migrants, which on the one hand reduces solidarity and compassion, while on the other hand causes the perception of economic vulnerability and victimhood. An illustrative example is the reaction of the local population to the fact that an Afghan citizen had opened a carpet shop. The population reacted negatively, complaining that migrants are in a better position and

²⁶ Centar za slobodne izbore i demokratiju, Istraživanje o pokretačima radikalizma i nasilnog ekstremizma među mladima u Srbiji (Beograd: CESID, 2016).

²⁷ Anketa o radnoj snazi u Republici Srbiji, 2020, (Beograd: Republički zavod za statistiku, 2021), <https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2021/Pdf/G20215671.pdf>

²⁸ „Loša ekonomska situacija glavni razlog odlaska mladih iz Srbije, Danas, March 6, 2020, <https://www.danas.rs/vesti/drustvo/losa-ekonomska-situacija-glavni-razlog-odlaska-mladih-iz-srbije/>

²⁹ Michael Savelkoul et al., “Anti-Muslim Attitudes in The Netherlands: Tests of Contradictory Hypotheses Derived from Ethnic Competition Theory and Intergroup Contact Theory,” *European Sociological Review* 27, no. 6 (2011)

that the state helps them more than it does its own citizens.³⁰ Also, it was noted that people believe that migrants have a kind of privileged status in relation to the citizens of Serbia. Anti-migrant right-wing accounts on social media often contain posts and comments that reflect the view that migrants are “protected like polar bears”, and that they “have a special status and are not held responsible for the same acts as the local population”. There are also questions such as “How long will we be treated as second-class citizens?”

In addition to economic factors, the very low level of citizens’ trust in institutions also contributed to their susceptibility to xenophobic narratives and helped strengthen the right-wing. According to a survey the BCSP conducted in 2020, the majority of citizens trust the judiciary and the police the least. Also, they have very little trust in political institutions, especially in the National Assembly and the local authorities. More than half of the population believes that the police do not protect citizens, but rather criminals who are in alliance with politicians and the state (23%), politicians who misuse state resources (19%) and financially powerful people (15%). Distrust in institutions is even more pronounced among young people. According to the latest report from the National Youth Council of Serbia, young people do not trust any institution, and are especially distrustful of political institutions such as the National Assembly, the Government, the President of the Republic and the local authorities. The trust of young people in the police has also been declining in the last few years. Distrust in institutions can be linked to the constant trend of democracy collapsing, capturing the state, and violating human rights. Many international institutions and organizations have noted a decline in democracy and the rule of law in Serbia in recent years.³¹

The People’s Patrol organization used the lack of trust in state authorities in charge of law enforcement to justify and promote its actions of patrolling and making civilian arrests of migrants. On its social networks pages, People’s Patrol often shares posts in which it criticizes the police and explains that they were forced to “take the law into their own hands” because of their passivity and lack of reaction. People’s dissatisfaction with the work of the police can also be noticed in the comments below such posts, which contain many negative reactions, such as that “the police are not doing their job”, that “the police are not the service of the people”, that “we pay them to ensure order and peace, but they don’t do any of that”, and that “the people started organising to protect themselves and their families, while the police arrest those that pay for their salaries. The police are incapable”³²

Overall, there is a strong nationalist government that shares antagonistic views on minorities, Western societies, and neighbors, Croats, fueled from Media. This is a

³⁰ Dr. James Dennison and Dr. Lenka Dražanová, Public attitudes on migration: rethinking how people perceive migration, Migration Policy Centre, European University Institute, Florence (2018), URL:https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/62348/MPC_OPAM_Public_attitudes_on_migration_study.pdf?sequence=1

³¹ Predrag Petrović et al., Security Sector in the Captured State (Belgrade: Belgrade Centre for Security Policy, 2020).

³² Comments under posts on the Facebook page of People’s Patrol group: <https://www.facebook.com/narodnapatrola>

central factor. At the beginning of 2023 there was a fake news that a mosque will be built. A countermovement was organized from extreme right parties. They made huge mobilizations against migrants. This is paradoxical situation because there was no reaction from the central institutions, no reaction from police. Also, according to the response of CSOs and media reports, discrimination against Roma by extreme right-wing organizations has increased in recent years. The Alliance against Discrimination pointed to violence against a Roma family by the organization Levijatan, which re-occurred in mid-2020. The motive for discrimination against Roma by the organization Serbian Honour was the protection of animals that were allegedly not taken care of. In all focus group discussions with Roma, the trend of increasing discrimination by far-right organizations and increasing fear among Roma were identified. In 2019, the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality (the Commissioner) conducted a second survey on citizens' attitudes towards discrimination (identical to the one completed in 2016). Over 50% of respondents said that they saw Roma as the most discriminated group, representing an increase of 12% from the 2016 survey.¹⁸ However, only about two thirds of respondents saw racist or stereotypical statements about Roma as a form of hate speech.¹⁹ 40% of respondents agreed (fully or mostly) with the opinion that it is easy to support Roma when they are not in your neighbourhood and 36% approved of the belief that Roma like to steal.²⁰ According to the survey, the "social distance index" (which broadly measures citizens' willingness to make connections with individuals from other social groups) with regards to different ethnic groups, the highest social distance was noted towards Albanian and Romani minorities, while Serbian citizens overall did not perceive discrimination as a major social issue.³³

A 2020 opinion poll published by the Civil Rights Defenders showed that 73% of Serbians supported hospital visitation rights for same-sex couples, 60% supported health insurance for same-sex partners, 59% supported allowing same-sex partners to inherit each other's assets at death, and 59% supported equal division of property. In total, 80% of Serbians supported granting same-sex couples some legal rights. 26% of respondents supported same-sex marriage, an increase from 11% in 2015.³⁴

Regarding the Roma community, it often face discrimination with restricted avenues to justice. Fears of retaliation or a lack of faith in the justice system often leave them with little choice but to simply accept it. According to the 2011 Census, there were 147,604 Roma in Serbia. However, their number is assumed to be higher, and other research data shows that at the beginning of the twenty-first century there was a total of 201,353 domiciled Roma and 46,238 Roma displaced from Kosovo. 4 According to a report, Roma most often face discrimination in their daily contacts with neighbors, colleagues at work, and while performing routine social activities. Although Roma focus group

³³ Justice denied: Roma in the criminal justice system of Serbia, 2023, URL: http://www.errc.org/uploads/upload_en/file/5468_file1_justice-denied-roma-in-the-criminal-justice-system-of-serbia.pdf, pg.9

³⁴ Attitudes towards LGBT+ RIGHTS AND ISSUES IN Serbia, 2015 vs 2020, URL: <https://crd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/ENGLESKA-VERZIJA-1.pdf>

participants pointed out various situations when they were insulted or belittled, faced aggression or hate speech because of their skin color or ethnicity, incidents of discrimination most often go unreported. Research found that Roma are in need of legal support since, in addition to their lack of knowledge of procedural matters, they are discouraged by the fact that the legal system is inefficient, the onerous process of proving discrimination, and the various barriers they encounter when reporting a case. As a result, only a small number of complaints are filed by Roma with the CPE or at a court. In 2021, 12.7 per cent of the total number of complaints were based on nationality and ethnicity, making it one of the top five grounds for discrimination, with the majority (77.1 per cent) of these cases reported by Roma. The report further states that the work of the CPE suggests that negative attitudes and prejudices towards Roma are frequently repeated, occurring in various local environments, for instance through graffiti on walls and via social networks.³⁵

4. COVID -19 Pandemic and its impact on the level of Xenophobia and the Radicalization of the Society.

The atmosphere of fear and uncertainty at the start of the pandemic served as fertile ground for spreading misinformation about migrants. The far-right is creating a ‘them against us’ narrative in the COVID-19 pandemic as a way to pick up followers and spread hate.³⁶ Thus, conspiracy theories about the secret plan to settle migrants during the lockdown curfew spread on social networks.³⁷

Restrictive measures drastically reduced the frequency of social contacts, which led to people’s greater isolation and loneliness. Concern for their health and employment, social isolation, and not knowing when the crisis would end drastically increased people’s fears, depression and anxiety. The combination of dissatisfaction, polarization among people, uncertainty and fear is always a fertile ground for spreading the influence of extremist groups, which, as a rule, offer simple solutions to complex problems. Stigmatization of others, “witch-hunts” and production of enemies are commonly integral parts of these quick fixes.³⁸ The fact that people were more focused on the online space during the pandemic was just an additional benefit for the activities of extremist groups, because they could now spread their ideas with much less effort and resources, reaching more people.

³⁵ Building trust in equality: Enhancing access to justice for Roma in Hungary and Serbia, 2022, URL: https://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/MRG_Rep_REILA_EN_Sept22.pdf, pg. 4

³⁶ Far-Right Exploiting Pandemic to Spread Hate, in the Balkans Too, Nermina Kuloglija and Azra Husaric Omerovic, December 3, 2021, URL: <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/12/03/far-right-exploiting-pandemic-to-spread-hate-in-the-balkans-too/>

³⁷ Marija Vučić, „Mržnja, laži i patrole: Srpska antimigrantska brigada se igra vatrom,” BIRN, September 21, <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/09/21/mrznja-lazi-i-patrole-srpska-antimigrantska-brigada-se-igra-vatrom/?lang=sr>

³⁸ Garth Davies, Edith Wu, and Richard Frank, “A Witch’s Brew of Grievances: The Potential Effects of COVID-19 on Radicalization to Violent Extremism,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (May 10, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2021.1923188>

They have joined protests against migrants and refugees and LGBT rights. Experts in violent extremism say that such groups are trying to exploit the anti-vax movement to as a means to disseminate hate.³⁹ According to a report commissioned by the European Commission and published in 2021, extremist groups are using conspiracy theories as a tool to recruit followers and spread radical agendas, abusing the insecurity, fear, socioeconomic problems and mental health issues of vulnerable individuals.⁴⁰ Posts on their BitChute page questioned calls for greater LGBT rights, while Cecura has compared so-called ‘COVID passes’, required in some countries for a person to use a range of businesses, to the ‘Aryan certificates’ required of all public sector employees in Nazi Germany. Some participants in the protesters as happened also in Germany carried the yellow star that Jews were required to wear in Nazi Germany as an expression of their opposition to vaccination, a gesture that critics say trivializes the Holocaust.⁴¹

“Extremist groups capitalized on the opportunity by offering simple solutions and answers to highly complex issues with the aim to advance their agendas and recruit followers,” the report said. A number of Serbian towns and cities have seen similar protests over the past month, with organizers using pictures of a Swastika with a line through it and captions that read, ‘No to COVID passport, no to dictatorship’.

Some rallies have been marred by violence, a turn of events Marija Srdic of the Antifascist Coalition of Serbia blamed on right-wing groups. “Last year, during an ordinary civil rally, violence escalated and in the midst of all that chaos, ordinary citizens and journalists also got kicked in the head,” Srdic said. Anti-vaccination protests in Serbia have been supported by the Anti-Globalists of Serbia and People’s Patrols, organizations whose members display far-right symbols. Both are hostile to the migrants and refugees trying to reach Western Europe via Serbia. Besides calling on their supporters to take part in protests against COVID restrictions, both organizations also use their social media channels to publish the locations of migrant and refugee accommodation. Leviathan, another right-wing group that ran in Serbia’s last parliamentary election, has also taken a prominent role in the protests. In both Belgrade and Sarajevo, protesters have been seen using the slogan “We won’t give you our children”, a variation on the phrase used by followers of the QAnon conspiracy theory in the United States.⁴²

The influence the extreme right can have on the views of citizens should not be underestimated; public opinion polls indicate that citizens inform themselves mostly

³⁹ Far-Right Exploiting Pandemic to Spread Hate, in the Balkans Too, Nermina Kuloglija and Azra Husaric Omerovic, December 3, 2021, URL:<https://balkaninsight.com/2021/12/03/far-right-exploiting-pandemic-to-spread-hate-in-the-balkans-too/>

⁴¹ German call to ban 'Jewish star' at Covid demos, 7 May 2021, URL:<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-57020697>

⁴² Far-Right Exploiting Pandemic to Spread Hate, in the Balkans Too, Nermina Kuloglija and Azra Husaric Omerovic, December 3, 2021, URL:<https://balkaninsight.com/2021/12/03/far-right-exploiting-pandemic-to-spread-hate-in-the-balkans-too/>

through the Internet and the social networks, and that they trust Internet portals and websites the most. The surveys also show that traditional media are losing the citizens' trust, and that voters who follow the right on social networks have less trust in traditional media in particular.⁴³ The extreme right therefore directs its activities to the Internet and social networks, where - with very few resources and good networking - it can reach a large number of people.

TV propaganda from controlled media was fueling hate. Examples are Pink Television, Happy TV, Preva, they have national frequency, so everybody can see them. Also cable TV that are controlled from the state, for example Tanjuk Television that is propagandistic machinery of government.

5. Armed conflict in Ukraine and its impact on the level of Xenophobia, Legislation and Law enforcement practice of the country, on the activities of radical groups.

Serbs have opened their doors to the Ukrainian brethren and condemned the violence in Ukraine, but painful memories of 1999 have made them wary of supporting sanctions.

"Poor, poor people," is the most frequent comment on the war in Ukraine you will hear from ordinary people in Serbia. Serbs insist that their expressions of sympathy are heart-felt exactly because people in Serbia know from their experience how Ukrainians feel right now in the bomb shelters.⁴⁴

Typically there are no restrictions for Ukrainians to mobilize and to make protests. However, practically, there were restrictions for some assemblies, associations from people coming from Ukraine as they tried to make antiwar protests. They were not allowed. Instead, other mobilizations for example from far right movements were allowed. So the freedom of expression and assembly is somewhat restricted for the Ukrainian people.⁴⁵

Serbia took slightly more than 1,000 Ukrainian refugees in the first two weeks of the war, according to its Commissariat for Refugees and Migration of the Republic, a small fraction of the 6,000 or so places it has available. However the picture is mixed when it comes from specific groups of people.

A local correspondent for the Danas daily in eastern Serbia, has faced death threats and other online abuse from a mostly anonymous digital mob since profiling a Ukrainian in his early 30s who found temporary shelter in Serbia after fleeing Lviv, in western Ukraine. The reporter received death threats for reporting on the Ukraine Russia war. He also said some insults against the Ukrainian include suggestions that he is "a Nazi and not welcome in Serbia, as Ukraine is a fascist country." Another journalist who has

⁴³ Društvene mreže ubedljivo prve za informisanje građana," Danas, Septembar 29, 2020, URL: <https://www.danas.rs/vesti/drustvo/drustvene-mreze-ubedljivo-prve-za-informisanje-gradjana/>

⁴⁴ Russia's war in Ukraine leaves Serbia stuck between a rock and a hard place, 2022, URL: <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2022/03/03/russia-s-war-in-ukraine-leaves-serbia-stuck-between-a-rock-and-a-hard-place>

spoken publicly of threats he has received via social networks is Stevan Dojcinovic, editor of the respected Serbian investigative portal KRIK. Dojcinovic said it was enough for someone on Twitter to condemn "Putin's destruction of Ukraine or criticize one of his puppets" to become a victim of "cyberbullying." He blamed individuals he suggested were loyal to the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), Putin, and the Russian war effort's supporters, who have adopted a "Z" in response to markings on Russian military equipment in Ukraine. "The army of Serbian Zputin bots is ready to [try to] seduce you," Dojcinovic tweeted. "SNS bots are funny this way."⁴⁶

Half of the population in Serbia see Russia as the main foreign policy partner and 2/3 have positive attitudes towards Russia, while the main source of the radical pro-Russian narrative is pro-government media with their narratives that are transported to the public according to a survey. Even though the geopolitical situation has changed in the world, perception in Serbia remains the same. Half of the Serbian population considers Russia the closest partner, putting China in second place. Moreover, the research further shows that NATO and the US are perceived as the greatest enemies, while the EU is perceived more hostile than before – as an actor driven by self-interest. Maja noted that messages crafted by the political elite, which are transferred through public broadcasters and pro-regime media, highly influence public opinion. Depending on which TV channel they watch, citizens are pro-Western or pro-Russian.⁴⁷

6. Activities of radical groups. Radical Right groups and parties:

–the emergence of new neo-Nazi and nationalist groups, movements, political parties and groups

(brief description);

–the main events of the far right in 2020-22;

–how the influence of neo-Nazis and radical nationalists on civil society, local and central legislative/ executive authorities has changed over the period;

The extreme right has been present in Serbia since the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia disintegrated during the war of the 1990s. During 1988/89, Serbia's intelligentsia, elites and politicians joined forces to encourage a national revolution to create a "unified Serbia" by appealing to socio-economical and national dissatisfactions of Serbs in the ex-Yugoslav republic. In the years that followed Serbia made significant EU accession reforms in the scope of the EU accession process, but the violent fall of Yugoslavia and its aftermath haunts Serbia to this day.

⁴⁶ In Serbia, Threats And Insults Are A Cost Of Reporting On Russia's Invasion Of Ukraine, 2022, URL: <https://www.rferl.org/a/serbia-russia-ukraine-invasion-threats-harassment/31756534.html>

⁴⁷ After the beginning of a war in Ukraine, citizens of Serbia still have positive attitudes towards Russia, 2022, URL: <https://bezbednost.org/en/after-the-beginning-of-a-war-in-ukraine-citizens-of-serbia-still-have-positive-attitudes-towards-russia/>

This difficulty to reconcile with the past combined with vulnerabilities, such as deep economic instability and uncritical media outlets, are exploited by right-wing extremists for radicalization. Wars during the 1990s were a catalyst in shaping Serbian far right by setting extreme nationalism high on the political agenda. The main narrative of Serbian far right is that Serb territories have been unjustly detached from the country during the 1990s wars and their primary goal is the unification of “Serbian lands and people” (BiH, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and North Macedonia). Its thematic backbone is based on Serbian nationalism and chauvinism, preserving the patriarchal family and opposing same-sex marriage, anti-globalism and strengthening ties with Russia.

Old far-right groups are resurrecting, and brand-new ones are emerging. Both are very political, active, and even aggressive in promoting their ideologies and goals. Of particular concern is that far-right groups have started exploiting prolonged migration crises to gain popularity and support, which wasn't the case in 2015 when there was a much higher number of migrants..

According to a 2018 study supported by Open Society Foundations and titled ‘Where Does Extremism Live?’ 23 far-right groups active.⁴⁸ But such groups represent only “the tip of the iceberg,” said Marija Srdic of the Anti-Fascist Coalition of Serbia. “They are the most visible to the public.” not all far-right organizations operating in Serbia had been identified.

Some groups, “are registered NGOs or associations of citizens”.

“So those organisations are legitimate and often supported by various funds and domestic and foreign institutions. They get so-called legitimate support for their activities.”

Srdic said that research conducted in 2018 painted a worrying picture in which far-right crimes in Serbia frequently go unpunished, suggesting authorities are turning a blind eye.

“By acting in such a way or, rather, not acting, crimes are left unpunished and a dangerous message is sent to society that spreading racial, national, religious hatred is acceptable and that such behavior is ‘normal,’” In Serbia, the law states that organizations that use “neo-Nazi or Fascist symbols” can be deleted from the official state register and that anyone displaying such symbols can be fined.

They are still now active in Serbia.⁴⁹ Far right ideologies are both mainstream and underground; they include identity-related, ultranationalist, neo-Nazi, Orthodox Christian extremist movements. Reports stress that violence and threats against migrants as well as attacks based on hatred and ethnic identity is part of their activity. According to Srdic, far-right ideologies in Serbia manifest themselves in two ways – in groups with a “Nazi or skinhead prefix” that Srdic says are part of a broader European

⁴⁸ <https://uploads.knightlab.com/storymapjs/052a67a1f32f0485ca11202764d2ae60/gde-spavaju-ekstremisti/index.html>

⁴⁹ Kuloglija et al., Balkan States Failing to Address Threat from Far-Right Extremism

context, and those “with a Serbian prefix”, which she said was “disastrous for Serbia”.⁵⁰ Organizations such as the 1389, Serbian Party Oathkeepers, and Serbian People’s Movement Nashi declaratively reject fascism, while Stormfront Serbia, Obraz (Honour), National Serbian Front, Blood and Honour and Serbian Action are either clerical-fascist or neo-Nazi. Blood and Honour Serbia and National Serbian Front openly advocate for white supremacy and National Socialism.⁵¹ Blood and Honour in Serbia is part a larger international group, which, alongside Combat 18, was banned in Canada in the wake of a gun attack in March 2019 by a white supremacist on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, in which 51 people died. Combat 18 was also banned in Germany in early 2020.

In Serbia, Blood and Honour is based primarily in the capital, Belgrade, and the northern city of Novi Sad and most often operates online, Srdic told BIRN.

The group has been known to organize concerts, under the radar, for its followers; the last one was planned for October 2020 but was cancelled after the event was made public by the Association of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia, SKOJ.⁵²

Far-right groups are even acting like parapolice - they are patrolling equipped with batons and dogs, stopping migrants, restricting their freedom of movement, and apprehending citizens. All these activities are filmed and distributed through their social media channels and communication applications (i.e., Telegram), accompanied by messages such as: “Stop shipping in migrants,” “Make streets safe again,” “When injustice becomes a law, resistance becomes a duty,” etc. Identity-related messages are communicated within the anti-migrant narrative as well – that migrants will settle down in Serbia and thus, with a high birth rate become majority Islamizing Serbia, which is only one step towards Islamization of the whole Europe.

Leaders of far right organizations are very influential on social networks. For example, the leader of the National Serbian Front– referred to as Führer – shares anti-Semitic and racist posts, which are often re-shared by other right-wing extremist leaders and organizations. Furthermore, Serbian Action is affiliated with National Serbian Front and has a hierarchical military structure, which facilitates skinheads’ gatherings.⁵³ The Serbian Party Oathkeepers, Dveri and People’s Freedom Movement are anti-establishment and base their narrative around religious conservatism. The Dveri openly promotes anti-LGBTQ+ narratives, while Serbian People’s Movement Nashi advocates Orthodox religious education to “protect” children from LGBTQ+ and

URL:<https://balkaninsight.com/2021/01/29/balkan-states-failing-to-address-threat-from-far-right-extremism/>

⁵¹Overview of research on far-right extremism in the Western Balkans Kelly, URL: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d309f7aed915d2fe9ea6aec/620_Western_Balkans_far_Right.pdf, pg. 6.

⁵² Kuloglija et al., Balkan States Failing to Address Threat from Far-Right Extremism URL:<https://balkaninsight.com/2021/01/29/balkan-states-failing-to-address-threat-from-far-right-extremism/>

⁵³ Young Patriots’: Serbia’s Role in the European Far-right, Vio, 2019, URL: <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/11/19/young-patriots-serbias-role-in-the-european-far-right/>

gender equality. Orthodoxy is at the core of Serbian far right. They all rely on religion and emphasize religious elements of the Serbian identity promoted by the Serbian Orthodox Church. The official narrative provided by the Serbian Orthodox Church in some cases offers the “master framework” in which these organizations operate, including pro-Russian, anti-EU, anti- NATO and anti-LGBTQ+ sentiments, the Kosovo status issues, unification of the “Serbian lands and people” and reification of war crime perpetrators. Some far right organizations are spreading conspiracy theories related to the pandemic, such as Living for Serbia that heavily spreads misinformation and uses pandemics as an opportunity to gain public attention. They are connected to Leviathan Movement, the far right organization that presents itself in public as an animal rights protection organization. Their violent activities are directed against the Roma, migrants and LGBTQ+. Leader of the Leviathan Movement Pavle Bihali is connected with the members of neo-Nazi biker gang MC Srbi. Various far right individuals and groups are more or less interconnected. For example, Damnjan Knezevic helped to found Oath keepers and is currently an important figure in People’s Patrols, predominantly an anti-governmental, anti-migrant, anti-LGBTQ+ and conspiracy theorist far right organization. People’s Patrols overlaps with (in) formal RWE groups, such as the Facebook group Stop censorship, and mostly utilizes online space for recruitment.⁵⁴ Some Serbian far right groups, such as Serbian Honor, operate as a humanitarian organization and have open ties with Russia. Although far right political organizations are marginal in the political decision-making process, they have a relevant impact on public opinion and some are closely connected or indirectly cooperate with political organizations that hold political power. Members of punk, metal and electric musical scenes are only a few examples of subcultural varieties that show support for far right in Serbia. Furthermore, ultras are known for their open support to far right that include Belgrade’s football clubs’ ultras – Red Star’s Delije, Partisan’s Grobari and Rad’s United Force. They use historical imagery of Serb nationalism and Orthodox Christianity and are prone to violence, but they also practice charity works. One of the main reasons for the lack of effective measures to counter far right⁵⁵ amongst ultras is important positions and relations to football clubs by prominent politicians who control them.

Serbia is attractive for some of the western right-wing extremists. They have become latched to the narrative and collective imagination that Serbia was a defender of Europe from Islamic invasion and that Kosovo constitutes an important issue in this battle.⁵⁶ A research project conducted within BIRN, focusing on understanding the far right in the Western Balkans and particularly the influence of Serbia’s far right regarding Kosovo, demonstrates how the Kosovo issue is still a point of vital importance for Serbian

⁵⁴ Hate, Lies and Vigilantes: Serbian ‘Anti-Vaxxer’ Brigade Plays With Fire, Vucic, 2021, URL: <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/09/21/hate-lies-and-vigilantes-serbian-anti-vaxxer-brigade-plays-with-fire/>

⁵⁵ European Commission Staff, Serbia 2021 Report, URL: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/serbia-report-2021_en, pg.48.

⁵⁶ Kosovo Issue Has Expanded Serbian Far-Right’s Global Reach, Vera Tika, 2022, URL: <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/10/19/kosovo-issue-has-expanded-serbian-far-rights-global-reach/>

national identity and for far-right mobilization, both in Serbia and in its international likeminded counterparts. Their influence stretches geographically till the northern, Serbian-dominated part of Kosovo.

Main political parties with parliamentary presence are Dveri, Zavetnici, and Democratic Party of Serbia. A report states that there are more than 200 extreme right groups. There is a state nationalism expressed by the government and also a nationalism outside it.

Migrants were not the topic of extreme right-wingers even during the “migrant crisis” of 2015 and 2016, when about a million refugees passed through Serbia. This changed three years ago, when the right-wing political parties Dveri and Dosta je bilo [Enough is enough] started to scare citizens by telling them that they would become a minority as a result of the mass settlement of migrants in Serbia. A number of extreme right-wing groups accepted this rhetoric, which soon grew into ‘civil arrests’, interception and intimidation of “illegal” migrants. Apart from the immediate consequences, such as harassment and intimidation of migrants, such activities of the extreme right have long-term, less visible consequences for society in Serbia, such as influencing the spread of views and values that are contrary to the democratic order.

The topic of migrants found itself on the agenda of right-wing organizations and parties at the end of 2019 and the beginning of 2020. Far-right parties used this topic to win points with voters, but also to criticize the government or simulate opposition actions. At the end of 2019, Dveri launched a petition against the government’s migrant policy, stating that the government has committed itself, by signing international agreements, to accepting migrants returned by European Union countries. At the beginning of 2020, the leader of Dveri, Boško Obradović, published a video with claims about the settlement of migrants in Serbia, which exploded on social networks and in the media. In that period, the leader of Dosta je bilo (Enough is enough), Saša Radulović, also promoted - on social networks and in the media - the story about the alleged secret plan to settle millions of migrants in Serbia. All extreme right-wing parties included this topic in their 2020 election programmes. For example, the political party Zavetnici talked about the plan to make Serbia a reception centre for migrants expelled from the European Union.⁷⁴ In 2021, migrant policies were not a priority for any of these parties, and they gradually moved from this topic to other politically opportune topics - Covid-19 and vaccines.

Extreme right-wing movements Leviathan and People’s Patrol, not only adopted the anti-migrant rhetoric, but also began to carry out actions directed against migrants. Members of these groups are now patrolling the streets and intercepting migrants, threatening and warning them to “respect the laws of Serbia”, expelling them from public transport, arresting them and taking them to asylum and reception centres. They are also getting in conflict with those who think differently. The backbone of the People’s Patrol movement is precisely their anti-immigrant activities, and for this purpose they have formed branches in Sombor, Bačka Palanka and Šid, i.e. in border towns on the path of a large number of migrants. Moreover, for members of certain extreme right-wing groups migrants have become such an important topic that they almost forgot about Kosovo. For example, members of the initiative “No Surrender of

Kosovo and Metohija” have established a People’s Patrol and focused their actions on defending Serbia from migrants.

The acceptance of anti-immigrant and Islamophobic policies was influenced also by improved cooperation and better connections between right-wing political parties across Europe. Better results in the elections bring these parties more funds, i.e. more money for improving cooperation with right-wingers from other countries. The most visible example is the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), which, after good results in the last five years, established its own foundation (Desiderius-Erasmus-Stiftung), through which it funds the extreme right in the Balkans.¹⁷ Taught by the success of right-wing political parties across Europe, many far-right movements thus also put the anti-migrant policy on their agenda

However, more important than the fact that some right-wing organizations and political parties have changed their topic is the fact that the state does not sanction their actions, or does it weakly, causing the citizens of Serbia to accept their activities and ideas as normal occurrences. Public opinion polls in recent years show that anti-immigrant views enjoy significant support from Serbian citizens, and that migrants have appeared on the list of greatest external and internal threats to Serbia’s security.

In recent period, there is a change between the relations of extreme right and the government because of the decision backed from the EU to normalize the relations with Kosovo. Now it is constituted the so called patriotic group of the extreme right that comprises Zavetnici, Dveri, DSS, united with some non-parliamentary organizations. On the other side there is the leading coalition. Both sides say that the other side is a traitor. Everyone now risks to be labeled as a traitor. Three professors were portrayed as traitors because they have common project with professors from Prishtina. There is no reaction from the police.

Zentropa, a neo Nazi organization created in August 2021 as a ‘citizens association’ in the Serbian Business Registry, the members-only Klub 451 is the latest manifestation of what critics say is a far-right drive to propagate hate under a guise of ‘civil society’ legitimacy.⁵⁷ Was created by former National Serbian Front member Marko Gajinovic that organizes graffiti and negative images. Registered in August last year only they publicized messages in social media outlets but no prosecutor investigated these threats. They have a neo Nazi café in an elite district of the Serbian capital, ‘Klub 451’ Belgrade. As a choice of reading material the book, the Manifesto of Revolutionary Nationalism, was written by François Duprat, one of the founders of the French far-right political party National Front. A notorious Holocaust denier, Duprat was killed in a car bomb in 1978. More than four decades later, in 2020, a Serbian translation of Duprat’s Manifesto became the first book to be published by the Serbian branch of the Zentropa network, a transnational forum of far-right movements. The Zentropa magazine, ZentroMag, which is also published in Germany, France and Greece. ‘Klub 451’ has echoes of La Citadelle, a club in the French city of Lille where members of the far-right Identitarian Movement meet and, according to a documentary by Al

⁵⁷In a Belgrade Bar, ‘Forbidden’ Books Fan Far-Right Flames, Igor Ispanovic, 2022, URL: <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/04/06/in-a-belgrade-bar-forbidden-books-fan-far-right-flames/>

Jazeera, discuss and plan activities, promote films and forge links with other extremists.⁵⁸

He invites neonazi bands mainly from Germany in 2022. No reaction from the Police.



The main events of the extreme right can be summarized as the following:

1. On 6 March 2022 there was a huge mobilization in favor of the war in Ukraine with the Z sign.
2. Attacks around the Europride.
3. Painting whole center of Belgrade with murals in favor of Mladic.

They have much more visibility now because they have strong parliamentary assistance from Zavetnici , Democratic party of Serbia, Dveri , the three parties that have parliamentary seats. Now the influence of the far right is much stronger. The government regime want to cut its ties with them but it is not easily. They do not know what the pattern of strategy would be appropriate for this situation. They created this monster previously, meaning the atmosphere where every violence was allowed. Because of the agreement Vucic needs new things.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ll2GbD4mrrk>

⁵⁹ BIRN Fact-Check: Did Serbia's Elections Signal a Further Tilt to the Right?, [Sasa Dragojlo, 2022., URL:https://balkaninsight.com/2022/04/08/birn-fact-check-did-serbias-elections-signal-a-further-tilt-to-the-right/](https://balkaninsight.com/2022/04/08/birn-fact-check-did-serbias-elections-signal-a-further-tilt-to-the-right/)

	2008	2012	2014	2016	2020	2022
Extreme nationalist parties' parliamentary seats	78/250	21/250	-	35/250	-	35/250
Percentage of votes of all extreme nationalist parties	29,46	15,93	10,5	14,58	12,6	17,6
Total number of votes of all extreme nationalist parties	1 219 436	623 680	380 463	551 163	372 816	664 559

SNS came to power

7. Activities of radical groups. Islamists.

- the emergence of new Islamist parties and groups (brief description);
- the main activities of the Islamists in 2020-22;
- how has the influence of Islamists changed over the period on Muslims in your country, as well as on local and central legislative/executive authorities;

Terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers in the USA and throughout Europe, as well as armed conflicts in Syria and Iraq when the Islamic State emerged and expanded across these two countries, made the fight against Islamist terrorism and (violent) extremism a top priority of many governments in the world.⁶⁰ Serbia wasn't an exception, even though the far-right has a much longer and violent tradition in this country. Greater focus on Islamist extremism in Serbia came with the acknowledgment that almost 1000 citizens of the Western Balkans countries had joined militants in Syria and Iraq.⁶¹ In Serbia, many experts had gloomy forecasts about violent Islamist extremism and terrorism in Serbia. Sanjak – the southwest region in Serbia populated by Muslim majority – was even dubbed Jihadist hotbed, as it was the center for further spreading ultra-conservative Salafism from the neighboring Bosnia and Herzegovina into Serbia, and a region where the recruitment of Syrian foreign fighters took place. Sanjak's Bosniaks have traditionally practiced a moderate Hanafi interpretation of Islam, inherent to the entire region of the Western Balkans. After the war in the 1990s, charitable organizations funding mosques and educational institutions from the Gulf states, started booming in the Balkans. Through those channels, dissemination

⁶⁰ Kundnani, Arun, and Ben Hayes. The Globalisation of Countering Violent Extremism Policies - Undermining Human Rights, Instrumentalising Civil Society. Amsterdam: SOURCE, 2018..

⁶¹ Vlado Azinović, Understanding Violent Extremism in the Western Balkans, (London: British Council, 2018), 3-4, https://www.britishcouncil.ba/sites/default/files/erf_report_western_balkans_2018.pdf

of the conservative, Salafi interpretation of Islam, started sowing its seeds in Sanjak as well.

Later on, after the regime change in 2000, several incidents happened, involving radical Wahhabi individuals or groups advocating the restoration of Islam in its pure and original form. They first became visible in Novi Pazar in 2002, when they handed out leaflets about pure Islam and urged Muslims not to celebrate Christian holidays.⁶ In the forthcoming years, these groups on several occasions intruded mosques and attacked believers during the service due to differences in rituals or habits or attacked those who do not show faith through adequate clothes or appropriate public behavior. In 2006, a group of Wahhabis interrupted a concert by a Belgrade-based band "Balkanika". Later in the same year, there was an incident involving shooting between a local mufti supporter and a Wahhabi movement representative in the Arap Mosque in Novi Pazar.⁸ Finally, in 2007, a group of Wahhabis was arrested in a village near Novi Pazar under the suspicion of planning terrorist activities. A few weeks before that, the police discovered a sort of a Wahhabi training facility in a mountain cave near Novi Pazar, full of weapons, ammunition, explosives, propaganda materials etc. The group was tried and sentenced to a total of 60 years in prison. In the forthcoming years, upon marginalization and condemnation from the rest of the community and harsh response by the state, these groups continued to keep a low profile. The Islamic communities' division is certainly an important event that enabled extremist ideas to thrive, since it created a rift within the Muslim public. Since 2007, there have been the Islamic Community in Serbia (ICiS) based in Novi Pazar, more inclined towards Sarajevo and, on the other hand, the Islamic Community of Serbia (ICoS) based in Belgrade. The parallel existence and activities of two different official religious institutions make it difficult to reunite the Islamic public, but it also additionally hampers efforts to tackle radicalization. All interlocutors agreed that the absence of a united Islamic community created a vacuum suitable for exploitation by alternative religious groups.

Since the early 2000s, a web of charity organizations coming from the Gulf States or supported by them, most prominent being Saudi Arabia, started spreading across the Balkans and Serbia was not an exception. These organizations provided funds to mosques and educational facilities, but also often granted scholarships for Bosniaks to study in the Middle East. Controversial organizations have also started disseminating the hard-line version of Islam through multiple channels. Over the years, several para-jamaats or underground mosques have been established in Sanjak. For instance, Furkan was established as a youth organization and, under that cover, it has attracted a great number of disillusioned youth. Out of the reach of official Islamic Communities, these places have become meeting points for radical indoctrination and recruitment of potential foreign fighters.

The emergence of Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (ISIS) once again spun the wheel of extremism in Sanjak, when a group of citizens rushed to the battlefields in Syria.⁶² Among the 49 Serbian citizens that left for Syria, around 9 have returned

⁶² Iado Azinović and Edina Bećirević, "A Waiting Game: Assessing and Responding to the Threat from Returning Foreign Fighters in the Western Balkans", Regional Cooperation Council, November 30, 2017

to Europe but only 4 to Serbia. It is considered that 12 were killed in the conflict zone whereas the rest are still in the Syria or on the run. Among them, around 20 are women while the number of children is unknown. In 2014, amendments to the Criminal Code introduced the criminalization of foreign fighting in Serbia. Prison sentence of 6 months to 5 years is envisaged for participation of Serbian citizens in foreign battlefields, while organizing participation in a war or armed conflict in a foreign country, is liable to a prison sentence of 2 up to 10 years.

In recent years, among the most influential militant Salafi leaders in Vienna who maintained contacts with ISIS there were individuals from Sanjak. It is reported that leaders and individuals from these settlements were well connected with several groups of extremists operating in masjids in Vienna. The main point of contact in Vienna was Muhamed Porca originating from Bosnia. Vienna had become a center for indoctrination and recruitment of foreign fighters, as well as for collecting money from the diaspora and funneling Saudi's funds to the Western Balkans. That is why the Austrian authorities had conducted several law enforcement operations, including the arrests of the preachers and members of these masjids until many of the groups were crushed.⁶³

However, despite these forecasts and the presence of both push and pull factors of violent extremism, Sanjak has proved to be very resilient to violent Islamist extremism. Compared to other countries in the Western Balkans, a relatively small number of people from Serbia (49 of them including women and children) joined militant Islamist groups in Syria. Only a few incidents involving militant Salafis and failed terrorist plots happened. People in Sanjak showed both resilience to violent extremism and to the spread of the ultra-conservative interpretation of Islam.

8. Activities of radical groups. Radical left groups and parties:

- the emergence of new ultra-left parties and groups (brief description);**
- the main activities of the ultra-left in 2020-22;**
- how the influence of the ultra-left has changed over the period on civil society, on local and central**

legislative/executive authorities;

While various anti-capitalist left-wing groups have been active continuously since the late 1990s and early 2000s, the New Left arose in the age of austerity after the economic crisis of 2008. They organized around local issues that stemmed from the implementation of neoliberal reforms and were coupled with corruption and clientelism or patronage links: the commodification of public spaces and urban mega projects (e.g.

⁶³RESILIENCE TO VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN SERBIA: Authors: Predrag Petrović Marija Ignjatijević RESEARCH REPORT / 4 THE CASE OF SANJAK,2022, URL: <https://www.prevex-balkan-mena.eu/resilience-to-violent-extremism-in-serbia-the-case-of-sanjak/pg.17>

NDBD), overblown utility bills (e.g. AMFT), and the protection of local ecosystems (the Say No to Mini Hydroelectric Power Plants initiative).

In organizational terms, the New Left mainly develops in the form of loosely organized, horizontal, grassroots groups based on the principles of direct democracy and deliberation. The Radical Left operates through a number of smaller cadre organizations with variable memberships and continuity. The third category, the Reformist Left, is still in the process of reorganizing in an attempt to constitute a political party. Most of the Radical Left groups reject the possibility of joint engagement with mainstream opposition parties and participation in political processes and institutions (such as elections). The Reformist Left (SDU), on the other hand, as the analysis follows on this party, does not reject the possibility of taking part in the work of political institutions, but rejected the possibility of joining the “mainstream” opposition.

The Social Democratic Union (SDU)⁶⁴ was registered on 13 May 1996. It was founded by former members of the Civic Alliance of Serbia, led by Žarko Korać, who opposed forming coalition with the right-wing Serbian Renewal Movement for the 1996 federal election. On 21 April 2002 the SDU merged with Social Democracy (SD) and founded the Social Democratic Party (SDP).

A year later, disenchanted members of the SDP, led by Žarko Korać, left and re-founded the SDU on 29 March 2003. Spokesman of the SDP Ljiljana Nestorović stated that this was due to almost all local councils supporting co-president Slobodan Orlić, former leader of the SD, in the upcoming party congress which was to be held in less than 20 days. In the 2014 election the SDU was again part of the coalition around Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) but the coalition failed to enter the parliament. It gained 3.36% of the votes, and did not reach the threshold of 5%. At the 8th Congress in June 2014, Korać stepped down and Miloš Adamović was elected president.

At the 9th Congress on 15 October 2016, Ivan Zlatić was elected president. In the 2018 Belgrade local election the SDU went as part of the Do not let Belgrade d(r)own electoral list which won 3.44% and failed to pass the electoral threshold. On 12th Congress SDU merged into Party of the Radical Left. Notable founders of the Party of the Radical Left include Ivan Zlatić, political activist and the last leader of the SDU and Jovo Bakić, recognized sociologist and a university professor. At the 12th regular Congress of the SDU, which had an electoral character, the party adopted the proposals for its new program and statute, changing the party's name to the Party of Radical Left. The twelfth Congress of the SDU represented the end of the process of uniting the various extra-parliamentary left-wing organizations gathered around the Social Democratic Union into a parliamentary struggle, which began with the invitation of the SDU in mid-2018. This process continued through joint actions of various Serbian leftist organizations and student initiatives from Belgrade and Novi Sad, against violent evictions, as well against the construction of mini-hydro power plants, during 2019 and 2020.

64 A New Party of the Left in Serbia

The Social Democratic Union's 12th congress in Belgrade marked its transformation into a new left-wing party—the Party of the Radical Left (PRL), Marko Kostanić, Ivan Velisavljević, 2020, URL: <https://www.rosalux.de/en/news/id/42955/a-new-party-of-the-left-in-serbia>

It voiced its support for the Roma Party in the 2022 general election. It was founded as a political initiative of workers, trade unionists, unemployed and students in Serbia. Like its predecessor, it regarded itself as the moral and ideological heir of the historical left-wing Serbian Social Democratic Party of Dimitrije Tucović, as well of Yugoslav Anti-Fascist Resistance Movement. The new party announcing the struggle to build a just economic system, protection of human and labour rights and the existential security of every member of the society, as well making a socialist and secular republic, based on equality, solidarity, freedoms, democracy, internationalism, anti-imperialism, anti-nationalism and anti-fascism, in which people will be more important than profit, with guaranteed free health care and education, gender equality and minority rights. The party has been profiling itself as the most vocal opposition to the SNS-led regime in Serbia, which has been in power since 2012 and is in favor of NATO withdrawal from Kosovo. Representatives of the party maintain cooperation with minor left-wing organizations and initiatives in Serbia, such as Marks21, as well as some leftist parties from the neighboring countries, including the New Left and the Workers' Front from Croatia and The Left from Slovenia, as well with the other European Left parties, GUE/NGL, Progressive International and Democracy in Europe Movement 2025 of Yanis Varoufakis.⁶⁵

There are no visible left ultra-parties. The government tries to make a propagandistic approach that the civil society is ultra-left and on the other side there is the government that is in opposition to them. Also, it declares that this needs to be regulated.

Leftist ideas in Serbia are compromised. Left nationalism of Milosevic and since then there are no mainstream leftist ideas.

9. Hate crime (statistics and summaries), law enforcement actions, criminal cases, racist attacks,

violence and terror over the period (data from government agencies and NGOs):

- vandalism in cemeteries, attacks on religious buildings;**
- interethnic clashes;**
- cases of violence on racial, ethnic, religious grounds, attacks on human rights activists and anti-fascists;**
- hate killings;**
- terrorist attacks based on radical nationalism and religious fanaticism.**

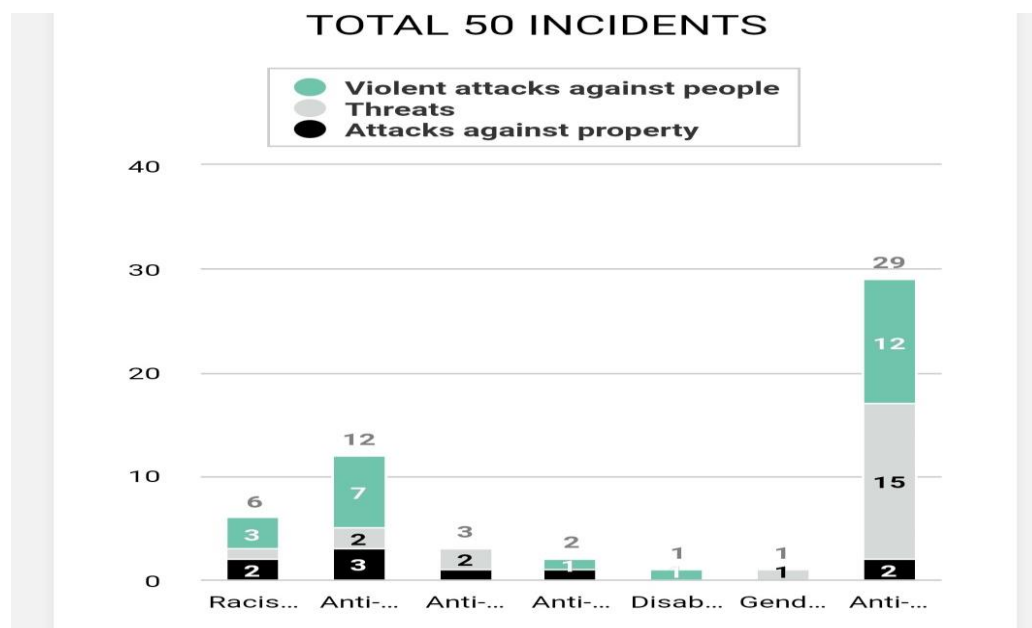
Serbia regularly reports data on hate crimes to ODIHR. According to the data of 2020 Violent attacks against people and property were registered. Analytically, on January 2020, an area around a building designated to host Afghan asylum seekers was targeted in an arson attack by members of a far-right group and police officers. In the process, tents and personal belongings were set on fire, some items were stolen, and a tire of the van used by the volunteers was damaged. The volunteers were also pushed and grabbed

⁶⁵Social democratic Union in Serbia, URL:[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Democratic_Union_\(Serbia\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Democratic_Union_(Serbia))

by police officers and hit by another perpetrator. This was one in a series of attacks by the same group targeting the shelter. In January, a group of LGBTI people at an LGBTI club, including one transgender person, was physically attacked with chains by a group of ten men wearing clothing with nationalist symbols. On February, Walls in the city were vandalized with anti-Semitic and racist graffiti containing a star of David and Nazi insignia. Also in the same month, four windows of a Croatian community center were smashed by bricks and the building's facade was vandalized with graffiti. Additionally, A building designated to host Afghan asylum seekers was targeted in an arson attack by a far-right group. Three volunteers were directly attacked, with one of them having gasoline thrown at her, and another victim had a small explosive thrown at her. The perpetrators also destroyed a volunteer's phone with a baton. After the incident, the volunteers were detained by police and expelled from the country. This was the second time over the course of two weeks that the shelter had been attacked by the same far-right group. In May, Residents of a migrant camp were targeted in a ramming attack by a man who entered the camp in his car while repeatedly shouting anti-Muslim and xenophobic insults. The perpetrator broadcast the incident live on social media. On November, a known male epidemiologist of Jewish origin was subjected to anti-Semitic death threats through graffiti spray-painted in public near a COVID-19 medical centre.

On December, several public places, including a billboard depicting a local synagogue, were vandalized with anti-Semitic graffiti including death threats during Hanukkah.

Regarding the Roma community, in June, a Roma woman was hit on a bus. The victim and two other Roma women with her were also subjected to anti-Roma insults and death threats. On the same month, Three Roma women were physically attacked on a bus by a drunk man. In August, four Roma persons were subjected to anti-Roma insults and beaten by a group resulting in bodily injuries. In September, A Roma man and woman were beaten with fists and kicked in the head by a neo-Nazi teenage boy. In October, A Roma child with a developmental disability was beaten by the teacher's husband in the classroom. The incident led to unrest in the local Roma community.



1. Racist and xenophobic attack
2. Anti Roma hate crime
3. Anti-Semitic hate crime
4. Anti-Muslim hate crime
5. Disability hate crime
6. Gender based
7. Anti LGBTI hate crime

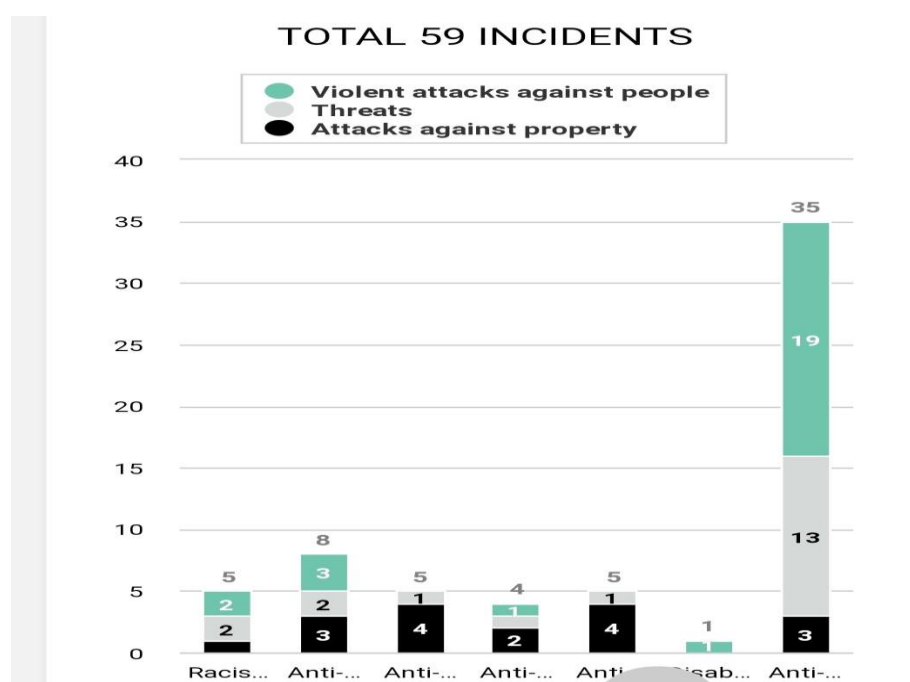
Hate crime recorded by Police

Year	Hate Crime recorded by Police	Prosecuted	Sentenced	✓
2020	66	5	4	✓

In 2021

Most records reported by the police, the prosecution services, and the sentencing figures include the offences of incitement to hatred, defamation, and discrimination or violation of equality.

Year	Hate Crime recorded by Police	Prosecuted	Sentenced
2021	109	11	11



8. Racist and xenophobic attack
9. Anti Roma hate crime
10. Anti-Semitic hate crime
11. Anti-Muslim hate crime
12. Disability hate crime
13. Gender based
14. Anti LGBTI hate crime

2021	Attacks against property		
City buses were vandalized with posters containing anti-migrant insults and threatening photographs.			
2021-06	Violent attacks against people		
A male doctor of a futsal team representing a region inhabited by Bosniak Muslims was subjected to racist insults and punched in the face by a fan from an opposing team during a game. Racist and anti-Muslim insults were also chanted by other fans.			
2021-08	Violent attacks against people		
A Croatian man was subjected to racist and xenophobic insults, threatened with death and beaten due to his nationality. The incident occurred in an area inhabited by Croats.			
2021-10	Threats		
Members of the Slovak community were threatened when a letter containing xenophobic insults and death threats was sent to a local Slovak Evangelical church. The community had previously received similar threats.			
2021-10	Threats		
Supporters of a handball team representing a city inhabited by Bosniak Muslims were subjected to xenophobic and anti-Muslim insults and threatened with violence by a group supporting an opposing team.			

Source: OSCE

2021	Threats	European Roma Rights Center (ERRC)	A Roma boy was subjected to death threats and anti-Roma insults by perpetrators in a city centre. The incident was captured on security cameras.
2021	Attacks against property	European Roma Rights Center (ERRC)	Residential buildings were vandalized with anti-Roma graffiti, including incitements to genocide.
2021	Attacks against property	European Roma Rights Center (ERRC)	A bus stop was vandalized with anti-Roma graffiti, including death threats.
2021-02	Threats	OSCE Mission to Serbia	A Roma boy was subjected to anti-Roma insults and death threats by a man in the street due to the victim's ethnicity.
2021-04	Violent attacks against people	European Roma Rights Center (ERRC)	A Roma family living in a Roma settlement was threatened and robbed of their dog by male members of a hate group. The perpetrators had previously entered the settlement to intimidate residents.

2021-05	Attacks against property	Federation of Jewish Communities in Serbia (SJOS) OSCE Mission to Serbia	A supermarket was vandalized with posters containing anti-Semitic insults and swastikas.
2021-10	Threats	Federation of Jewish Communities in Serbia (SJOS) OSCE Mission to Serbia	The Jewish community was threatened when two Jewish community organizations received death threats and anti-Semitic messages both online and via email over the course of several days.
2021-11	Attacks against property	Federation of Jewish Communities in Serbia (SJOS) OSCE Mission to Serbia	A chapel at the Jewish cemetery in Belgrade was damaged when an axe and a hammer were thrown through the windows on a date close to the anniversary of Kristallnacht.
2021-11	Attacks against property	OSCE Mission to Serbia	

The wall of a building was vandalized with anti-Semitic graffiti, including a reference to a doctor of Jewish origin who advised the government on the COVID-19 pandemic. The victim had previously been targeted in anti-Semitic incidents. Similar graffiti had appeared in the city before.

2021-11	Attacks against property	OSCE Mission to Serbia
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The house of a doctor of Jewish origin was vandalized with anti-Semitic graffiti. The victim - an advisor to the government on the COVID-19 pandemic - had previously been targeted in similar incidents.

Anti-Muslim hate attacks

2021-01	Attacks against property	OSCE Mission to Serbia
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The courtyard of a mosque located in an area inhabited by Bosniak Muslims was vandalized when urinated on by a Serb police officer known for his anti-Muslim hatred.

2021-06	Violent attacks against people	OSCE Mission to Serbia
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A male doctor of a futsal team representing a region inhabited by Bosniak Muslims was subjected to racist insults and punched in the face by a fan from an opposing team during a game. Racist and anti-Muslim insults were also chanted by other fans.

2021-06	Attacks against property	Center for education and research Nahla OSCE Mission to Serbia
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The walls of an Islamic Community building were vandalized with swastika graffiti.

2021-10	Threats	OSCE Mission to Serbia
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Supporters of a handball team representing a city inhabited by Bosniak Muslims were subjected to xenophobic and anti-Muslim insults and threatened with violence by a group supporting an opposing team.

Anti-Christian threats

2021-02	Attacks against property	Jehovah's Witnesses
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A place of worship and the adjoining apartments for Jehovah's Witnesses were pelted with stones by a group shouting anti-Christian insults. This was one of three similar incidents targeting the same property in a four-month period.

2021-05	Attacks against property	Jehovah's Witnesses
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A place of worship and the adjoining apartments for Jehovah's Witnesses were pelted with stones by a group. This was one of three similar incidents targeting the same property in a four-month period.

2021-05	Attacks against property	Jehovah's Witnesses
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A place of worship and the adjoining apartments for Jehovah's Witnesses were pelted with bottles and eggs by a group. This was one of three similar incidents targeting the same property in a four-month period.

2021-10	Threats	OSCE Mission to Serbia
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Members of the Slovak community were threatened when a letter containing xenophobic insults and death threats was sent to a local Slovak Evangelical church. The community had previously received similar threats.

2021-12	Attacks against property	Jehovah's Witnesses
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A place of worship and the adjoining apartments for Jehovah's Witnesses were pelted with stones by a group. Three similar incidents targeting the same property had occurred earlier in the year.

Anti-LGBTI

2021-01	Threats	Association Da se zna!
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A gay man was subjected to homophobic insults and death threats on social media.

2021-01	Threats	Association Da se zna!
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A transgender woman was subjected to transphobic insults and threatened on social media by her partner's ex-girlfriend.

2021-01	Violent attacks against people	Association Da se zna!
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A bisexual man was subjected to homophobic insults, threatened with violence and slapped by a friend's brother in private.

2021-02	Violent attacks against people	Association Da se zna!
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A lesbian woman was beaten by her father after he read a letter addressed to her from her girlfriend.

2021-03	Threats	Association Da se zna!
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A lesbian transgender woman was subjected to transphobic insults and threatened with violence on social media by a man after she told him of her gender identity.

Disability hate crime

2021-08	Violent attacks against people	Association Da se zna!
A bisexual woman with multiple sclerosis was physically assaulted by family members because of her sexual orientation. The perpetrators restrained the victim at home to prevent her from meeting her partner.		

Also, hate killings, femicide are on the rise in Serbia. A big amount of the cases. Weak economic and social rights, big traumas that are not healed from the war, patriarchal society, the prejudices against women.

10. Conclusions for the period

Since 2020 important developments have been recorded in Serbia as regards the far right phenomenon in general and in connection with the so called state nationalism promoted from the government of Serbia. On the occasion of the mural of Mladic, the Bosnian wartime commander involved in the genocide of Srebrenica we see the collaboration of the far right and the government. From then till the agreement of Serbia and Kosovo in March 2023, far right has been in unison with the government. But being an important issue, the Kosovo agreement has contributed to the splitting up of the connection.

11. Recommendations:

– General recommendations for adjusting the legislative framework

Serbia's legislative and institutional framework for upholding fundamental rights is broadly in place.

Serbia needs to: → strengthen human rights institutions by allocating the necessary financial and human resources and by putting in place procedures to ensure compliance with the European Court of Human Rights' measures, including interim measures; → start implementing the strategies on anti-discrimination, gender equality, violence against women and de-institutionalization; actively counter hate-motivated crimes and establish a track record of investigation and convictions; → demonstrate, through better data collection, tangible improvements across the country in the effective exercise of the rights of individuals belonging to national minorities, including reference to the targets set by the Poznan Declaration on Roma inclusion and by the future new action plan relating to national minorities.

Serbia has ratified the main international human rights instruments but has not yet ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, which it signed in 2004. Serbia's Council for monitoring implementation of the recommendations of the UN Human Rights Mechanisms changed its rulebook to allow for the allocation of two permanent seats for CSOs. In March 2022, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights published its concluding observations on the third periodic report from Serbia. Among other topics, it expressed concern about the 'narrow scope of labour inspections carried out by the Labour Inspectorate, which has led to situations such as the case of workers at the Linglong Tyre Plant, where violations of labour regulations were not detected despite a number of labour inspections being carried out.' Still regarding these workers, the UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants and the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms 35 of slavery urged Serbia to address allegations of human rights abuse.

From June 2021 to June 2022, the European Court of Human Rights delivered 19 judgments concerning Serbia and found that it violated the European Convention on Human Rights in 9 cases. This notably included violations of the right to a fair trial, the protection of property, the right to respect for private and family life, the right to liberty and security, and the general prohibition on discrimination. There were 3 091 new applications allocated to a decision body, bringing the total number of pending applications to 1 962 on 15 June 2022. Currently, there are 58 cases under enhanced supervision by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The procedure for executing the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, including the role of Serbia's Government Agent before the Court, needs to be regulated.

– General recommendations for executive authorities in the field of law enforcement, ensuring public safety and observance of human rights.

The flawed educational system in Serbia usually comes up among the principal drivers of radicalization in Serbia. The lack of critical thinking and lack of options to gain practical skills through education and extracurricular activities make young people less adequate for the job market and more likely to turn to radical ideas. The educational system is seen as inert and difficult to reform, thus it is not following the current needs of society.

State institutions, international community, and civil society should pay more attention to the right-wing extremism in Serbia. Serbian authorities should respond more decidedly by both prosecuting the far-righters' hate crime activities and publicly condemning their actions.

Civil society should establish better communication with citizens and engage in local initiatives and direct contacts and communication with citizens as much as possible. Since civil society isn't deeply involved in local political and other cleavages, it could play mediating role in social bonding.

Overcome political and other cleavages by improving social bonding within the community through continuous dialogue and achieving common goals.

Serbia needs to cooperate fully with the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT). This means fully accepting and implementing its rulings and decisions. Serbia continues to publicly challenge the judgments of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), including at the highest levels. Cooperation between the IRMCT Office of the Prosecutor and the Serbian Office of the War Crimes Prosecutor (OWCP) continued. Serbia's state of non-cooperation in relation to the arrest of people indicted for contempt of court had not been resolved by the time the IRMCT assumed the jurisdiction, rights and obligations of the ICTY in 2017. After the IRMCT eventually decided that the contempt of court case has to be heard by the IRMCT itself, it requested Serbia to execute the arrest warrants and related transfer orders in December 2020. This was not yet done.

Serbia needs to continue to pay particular attention to the full respect of fundamental rights, including protection of the most vulnerable groups, as well as to the non-discriminatory treatment of national minorities throughout Serbia, especially in the areas of education, use of minority languages, access to media and religious services in minority languages, and to actively pursue investigations and convictions for hate-motivated crimes.

Serbia needs to show a genuine commitment to investigating and adjudicating war crimes cases. This is a requirement to effectively deal with the legacies of the past and for fostering reconciliation. Serbia should prioritize complex cases and those involving high-ranking officials and provide a clear legal approach to resolving the issue of command responsibility. Serbia is expected to engage in meaningful regional cooperation and good neighborly relations in the handling of war crimes. According to the relevant data of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), 9 876 people were still missing as a result of the conflicts in the region by July 2022. Of these, 6 302 cases are related to the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1 953 to the conflict in Croatia and 1 621 to the conflict in Kosovo.

In December 2021, in its concluding observations on the third periodic report on Serbia, the UN Committee 36 against Torture expressed concerns that 'inadequate efforts are made to investigate the vast majority of criminal complaints lodged against police officers, prison staff and other State agents'. On the same topic, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) noted in its report published in March 2022 that 'the findings of [its] 2021 periodic visit demonstrate clearly that ill-treatment by the police remains a serious problem'. The CPT found that 'in too many instances, prosecutorial investigations [...] failed to comply with the criteria of effectiveness as set out in the Methodology on the Investigation of Cases of Ill-Treatment adopted by the Serbian authorities in 2018' and expressed 'concerns over the leniency of sentences imposed by courts on police officers convicted of ill-treatment'. A large number of CPT recommendations from the last, and previous reports, have yet to be addressed. The execution of the European Court of Human Rights' judgement from January 2021 in the case *Zličić v Serbia* - concerning inhuman and degrading treatment while in police custody and failure to conduct an effective investigation - is pending along with other similar cases. Serbia has yet to revise the May 2019 criminal code amendments which introduced life imprisonment without the possibility of conditional release for a number of crimes. This provision is

contrary to the European Convention on Human Rights and the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights. The CPT raised concern about this issue in its report of March 2022. Following the Ombudsman's findings in February 2021 on the lawfulness of the work of the Ministry of the Interior during the July 2020 citizens' protests related to the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, investigations were initiated. Some cases are ongoing while the cases concluded so far found no wrongdoing.

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion is constitutionally guaranteed and generally respected. However, the lack of transparency and consistency in the process for registering religious communities continues to be one of the main obstacles preventing some religious groups from exercising their rights. The Law on churches and religious communities needs to be aligned with international standards.

Serbia needs to address the recommendations contained in the fourth opinion of the Council of Europe's Advisory Committee for the Framework Convention. Among others, it still needs to set up a sustainable data collection framework and to revitalize inter-ethnic relations, taking into account the need to involve the majority in Serbian society in integrating and including national minorities.

Serbia has all the laws but lacks educational programs to address the problems.