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KOSOVO DISINFORMATION ALERTS

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DECONSTRUCTION OF THE DETECTED DISINFORMATION

Disinformation Alert 1

Headline: Opasno navikavanje na antisrbizam! Gujon objasnio kako Jevreji mogu da budu uzor Srbima [Dangerous habituation to anti-Serbism! Guyon explained how can Jews be a role model for the Serbs], **Sputnik Serbia, May 2nd, 2020**[1]

The article conveys the statement of Arno Gujon, the French founder of the organization "Solidarity for Kosovo", who claims that violence against Serbs in Kosmet does not stop even during the pandemic and curfew. He stated that there is an increasing number of frequent attacks against the Serbs, and that in the village of Banje, the locals had to sleep in a barn throughout the winter in order to protect their tractor from being stolen or destructed. Gujon believes that Jews can be a role model for Serbs, because they should not get used to anti-Serbism, in the same manner as Jews have never been used to anti-Semitism. According to him, despite the terror, Serbs don't leave their homes, because they were born there, their grandfather is there, and if they leave, they will be lost. Gujon believes that the Serbian presence there is important for the past, present and future generations of Serbs, because they "are proof of the continuity of the Serbian people from the Middle Ages to the present day."

[1] Nataša Milosavljević "Opasno navikavanje na antisrbizam! Gujon objasnio kako Jevreji mogu da budu uzor Srbima [Dangerous habituation to anti-Serbism! Guyon explained how can Jews be a role model for Serbs]," Sputnik Serbia, May 2nd, 2020, https://rs.sputniknews.com/analize/202005021122484832-opasno-navikavanje-na-antisrbizam-gujon-objasnio-kako-jevreji-mogu-da-budu-uzor-srbima-video/

Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

a) Gujon is the last person to talk about Jews

The founder of the so-called humanitarian organisation "Solidarity for Kosovo", Arno Gujon - a French citizen who holds a Serbian citizenship as well – is well known to Kosovo institutions and the wider public. He is considered a strong supporter of the far right ideological beliefs, as well as of anti-American, anti-Semitist, anti-nationalist and anti-Islamic stances that are also supported by Vladimir Putin throughout Europe. According to different sources he was also a candidate for the white supremacist group "Bloc Identitaire".[2] Disguised as a humanist, he has distributed for years, through the Serbian Orthodox Church, aid for the Serbian population in Kosovo.

It is paradoxical, ironic, and unacceptable that a person who is so well known for his anti-Semitism, is trying to misuse the tragedy of the Jewish people for political gains and propaganda. It is clear that Mr. Gouillon's real mission has been for years to lobby against the recognition of the state of Kosovo, and he is actually misusing aid to the Serbian population for achieving his political goals. He has tried in several occasions to come to Kosovo, and in 2018 he was questioned by Kosovo Police, after which he was not allowed to enter Kosovo.[3]

a) The Serbs are 'perpetrators,' rather than 'victims' in the Balkans

The article tries falsely to portray Serbs as victims in Kosovo and wider by comparing their situation with the tragic history of Jews. It is a well-known fact that Serbs have been the aggressor and caused the wars in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. During these

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[2] See for instance Samuel Bouron, "Studying the social conditions that make possible the militant commitment to the extreme right: Ethnography of the training camp of the "Identitaires" – France," Workpaper, The European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) General Conference, Montreal: August 2015.

[3] Periskopi, "Maskimi pas ndihmave për serbët i 'humanistit' francez që iu ndalua hyrja në Kosovë," Prishtina, 12 September 2018, https://www.periskopi.com/maskimi-pas-ndihmave-per-serbet-i-humanistit-francez-qe-iu-ndalua-hyrja-ne-kosove/

wars, Serbian military, police and paramilitary forces have committed genocide[4] and war crimes against Croats, Bosniaks and Albanians. In Kosovo alone, during the conflict of 1999, the Human Rights Watch report has documented "torture, killings, rapes, forced expulsions, and other war crimes committed by Serbian and Yugoslav government forces against Kosovar Albanians between March 24 and June 12, 1999." Moreover, the report has also revealed "a coordinated and systematic campaign to terrorize, kill, and expel ethnic Albanians of Kosovo that was organized by the highest levels of the Serbian and Yugoslav governments in power at that time."[5]

More concretely, based on different sources, the Report has concluded that "approximately 10,500 Kosovar Albanians were killed between March 20 and June 12, 1999, with a 95 percent confidence interval from 7,449 to 13,627." In addition, according to the report "the Yugoslav military and Serbian police and paramilitaries expelled 862,979 Albanians from Kosovo, and several hundred thousand more were internally displaced. These figures indicate that by early June 1999, more than 80 percent of the entire population of Kosovo and 90 percent of Kosovar Albanians were displaced from their homes."[6]

[4] The Srebrenica massacre in 1995 is considered an act of genocide and a war crime by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) since more than 7000 Bosniak men and boys where executed over the course of a couple of days by the Serbian troops led by Ratko Mladić. See Sabrina Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State-Building and Legitimation 1918-2005*, Washington, D.C.: Indiana University Press. 2006, pp. 459-460.

[5] For details related to war crimes in Kosovo during the war in 1999 see "Under Orders: War Crimes in Kosovo," Human Rights Watch Report, 2001, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/kosovo_full_low.pdf

[6] Ibid.

Disinformation Alert 2

Headline: Comment by the Information and Press Department on the politicization of war crimes in the Balkans, **The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, May 25th, 2020**[7]

The comment of the Russian Foreign Ministry expresses a "great concern" that "cultivating a biased politicised approach to the events of the 1990s conflict in Yugoslavia continues in the Balkans – with the extensive participation of supposedly independent non-profit organisations that have been, for decades, receiving funding from Western governments, which are also their clients. Among other things, the investigations by these bodies, which were established to investigate "war crimes," have taken on an openly anti-Serb bias".

Furthermore, the comment states that "it is indicative that there has been a simultaneous surge in this type of activity in Podgorica and Pristina. The underlying motives for the current events are clear: to label Belgrade as the source of evil during the breakup of the former Yugoslavia and to shift the blame from those who committed crimes against Serbs along the way. Sadly, Montenegro has now joined the discrediting of Serbia even though it stood by its northern neighbour during the years of those crippling ordeals."

In addition the comment emphasizes that, "It is with particularly cold cynicism that authorities in Kosovo are behaving – the authorities where senior posts are held by the people who were directly involved in egregious criminal acts, including kidnappings and murders for the purpose of illegal organ trafficking. Exercising justice with respect to these people has been undermined in every way; despite the abundance of evidence, The Hague has not been able to begin a single trial even though it has been almost ten years since PACE member Dick Marty exposed the horrendous practice in his report. Given the situation, these Western sponsors dutifully turn a blind eye to the anti-Serb ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, the killings of hundreds of civilians during

[7] "Comment by the Information and Press Department on the politicisation of war crimes in the Balkans," The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, May 25th, 2020, https://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/kommentarii_predstavitelya/-/asset_publisher/MCZ7HQuMdqBY/content/id/4138028

the NATO aggression against Yugoslavia in 1999 and the terrible long-term consequences of NATO aviation's use of depleted-uranium ammunition."

The comment concludes by stating that "the tendentious interpretation of the events of the past 30 years on the territory of former Yugoslavia, the misrepresentation, arbitrary designation of guilt and other notorious methods of influencing politics, run counter to the objective of transforming this region into a dynamic and trouble-free part of Europe".

Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

a) The questioning and changing of the narratives on the war in former Yugoslavia, and denying war crimes of Serbia

This comment of the Russian Foreign Ministry, first and foremost, aims to question and change the well-argumented and well-documented narratives on the war crimes in former Yugoslavia, by claiming that they have an anti-Serbian bias.

The Russian Foreign Ministry has to be reminded that the consequences of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina were devastating to the country in terms of human loses and ethnic cleansing that were predominantly caused by the Bosnian Serbs, supported heavily by Milošević. More than 100,000 people in total were killed, majority of whom were Bosnian Muslims; Bosnian Serbs had around 24,000 victims, 4,000 out of which were civilians.[8] On the other hand, the detailed data gathered based on 31,600 documents and presented in the publication "Kosovo Memory Book" (February 2nd, 2015), prepared by the Humanitarian Law Center based in Belgrade, confirm the death or disappearance of 13,535 individuals during the war in Kosovo and its immediate aftermath (January 1st, 1998 – December 31st, 2000). 10,812 of this number were Albanians, 2,197 were Serbs, while 526 victims were Roma, Bosniaks, Montenegrins, and other non-

[8] For further details see: Daria Sito-Sucic and Matt Robinson, After years of toil, book names Bosnian war dead, Reuters, February 15, 2013, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bosnia-dead/after-years-of-toil-book-names-bosnian-war-dead-idUSBRE91E0J220130215

Albanians.[9] Furthermore, according to UNHCR over 850,000 have been expelled, or left the territory in face of Serbian atrocities.[10]

b) Questioning the efforts for transitional justice in Kosovo

The Kosovo Specialist Chambers based in the Hague were established in 2015, as a response to the report of the member of PACE Dick Marty of January 7th 2010.[11] The very fact that there were more than 200 Kosovo citizens that have been interviewed until the end of the last year by the Prosecution of the Chambers,[12] is a clear evidence that the Chambers are not hushing up the alleged crimes. Furthermore, recently, the Specialist Prosecutor has started two proceedings, one in February and the other in April 2020.[13]

Furthermore, the Russian Foreign Ministry is not mentioning the fundamental fact, that from 1999 – 2018, the justice institutions of Kosovo for war crimes have indicted 111 individuals, namely 61 Albanians, 44 Serbs, 5 Montenegrins and 1 Roma. Out of 61 indicted Albanians, 34 were convicted, 23 released, 2 are on the run, and 2 are still in the judicial proceedings. Out of 44 indicted Serbs, 4 were convicted, 13 released and 24 are on the run.[14]

On the other hand, the Serbian Justice Institutions for the crimes committed in Kosovo have convicted so far 17 Serbs, who were soldiers or police officers during the war, but almost none

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[9] Humanitarian Law Center: 31,600 documents undoubtedly confirm death or disappearance of 13,535 individuals during war in Kosovo, Belgrade, January 6th, 2015, http://www.hlc-rdc.org/?page_id=14390&lang=de. The Data Base of the Kosovo Memory Book is online available at www.kosovomemorybook.org

[10] See for example: UNHCR, Kosovo Crisis Update, August 4th, 1999, https://www.unhcr.org/news/updates/1999/8/3ae6b80f2c/kosovo-crisis-update.html

[11] Kosovo Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutors' Office, Background, https://www.scp-ks.org/en/background

12 See for example: Gazeta Express, Mbi 200 persona të intervistuar nga Gjykata Speciale, a do të ndodhin arrestimet e para këtë muaj, https://www.gazetaexpress.com/mbi-200-persona-te-intervistuar-nga-gjykata-speciale-a-do-te-ndodhin-arrestimet-e-para-kete-muaj/

[13] Press Statement, Specialist Prosecutor initiates additional proceedings, Kosovo Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutors' Office, April 28th, 2020, https://www.scp-ks.org/en/specialist-prosecutor-initiates-additional-proceedings

[14] For further details see: An Overview of the War Crimes Trials in Kosovo: 1999 – 2018, Humanitarian Law Center, October 2018, http://www.hlc-kosovo.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/HLC-Kosovo-An-overview-of-war-crime-trials-in-Kosovo-1999-2018.pdf

of them belonged to the commanding hierarchy, while at the International Tribunal for War Crimes in Yugoslavia were convicted six Serbian high ranking representatives.[15]

Disinformation Alert 3

Headline: Will Germany's Kosovo policy shift back in Serbia's favor? **The Duran, May 18th, 2020**[16]

This article discusses the German parliamentary politics, and, among others, it states that, "Since Kosovo made its illegal declaration of independence in 2008, it has become a 'smugglers paradise' for heroin and a hub for human trafficking, organ harvesting and arms trafficking, all under the watchful eye of KFOR."

Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

a) The questioning of the legality of independence of Kosovo

First and foremost, there was not even a single UN resolution that explicitly assigned Kosovo to Serbia as such; the only one in force (1244), recognizes Kosovo as part of the non-existent Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Secondly, the declaration of independence was an outcome of the UN mandated negotiation process on the Kosovo status, led by the United Nations Secretary General Envoy, President Marti Ahtisaari, in which Russia was represented in the President Ahtisaari's team with its high-ranking diplomat Mr. Peter Ivancov. On February 2nd, 2007 President Ahtisaari

[15] Blakaj: Në Kosovë për krime lufte janë dënuar gjashtë serbë, në Serbi për krime të kryera në Kosovë janë dënuar 15 serbë [Blakaj [Bekim Blakaj, Director of the Kosovo Office of the Fund for Humanitarian Law]: In Kosovo for war crimes are convicted six serbs, in Serbia for war crimes committed in Kosovo were convicted 15 Serbs], Telegraf, March 15, 2019. https://telegrafi.com/blakaj-ne-kosove-per-krime-lufte-jane-denuar-gjashte-serbe-ne-serbi-per-krime-te-kryera-ne-kosove-jane-denuar-15-serbe-video/

[16] Will Germany's Kosovo policy shift back in Serbia's favor?, The Duran, May 18th, 2020, https://theduran.com/will-germanys-kosovo-policy-shift-back-in-serbias-favor/

presented the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement that envisaged a supervised independence for Kosovo,[17] which was supported by the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon[18] and Kosovo, but was rejected by Serbia.[19] Ultimately, on July 22d, 2010, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) delivered the advisory opinion confirming that Kosovo's declaration of independence of February 17th, 2008 has not violated the International Law.[20]

b) Presenting Kosovo as a criminal state and questioning the role of KFOR

The level of criminality in Kosovo does not differ from that of the other countries of the Western Balkans, including the trafficking and organized crime,[21] and KFOR is the most trusted security institution among all the communities in Kosovo.[22]

Disinformation Alert 4

> **Headline:** Упозорење ЕУ: Наговештај напада на Србе на Косову или брига због иницијативе Америке [Warning to the EU: Hints on the attacks against Serbs in Kosovo or concern due to the initiative of America], Sputnik Serbia,

The article claims that the "EU Office in Kosovo has stated that is concerned about incidents against non-majority communities, especially Kosovo Serbs. Is Brussels warning of the real danger

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[17] See the full text of the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement https://web.archive.org/web/20091015082628/http://www.unosek.org/docref/Comprehensive_proposal-english.pdf

[18] UN Report Recommends 'Supervised Independence' For Kosovo, Radio Free Europe, March 26th, 2007 https://www.rferl.org/a/1075514.html

[19] Reuters, Kosovo says Yes to U.N. plan, Serbia says No, February 2nd, 2007, https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL02151096._CH_.2400

[20] International Court of Justice. Advisory Opinion on the accordance with international law of the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo, July 22nd, 2010, https://www.webcitation.org/5rRB9e3bz?url=http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/141/15987.pdf

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

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

or are they trying to "show" that they also think of the Serbs before the negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina, because of the primacy that America took over from the EU in the process."

Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

This article is a pure disinformation, given that the European Union Office in Kosovo did not issue any statement whatsoever, which expresses its concerns over the alleged attacks against the non-majority communities, in general, and the Serbian community, in particular, in Kosovo.[23]

[23] See: European Union Office in Kosovo, Press Material, https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kosovo/search/site_en?page=2&f%5B0%5D=sm_specific_content_type%3Aeeas_press%3Aall&f%5B1%5D=im_field_regions%3A321&search_token=o723U8OfUGuClx6p-1rePhvLcUTgHe1WG3IBGatQGxA