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Disinformation Alerts – Russian Media Monitoring is a monthly report of the news containing disinformation and misinformation targeting Kosovo, published by Russian media in English and Serbian Language

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KOSOVO DISINFORMATION ALERTS

RUSSIAN MEDIA

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INTRODUCTION

Kosovo Disinformation Alerts: Russian Media Monitoring aims to counter disinformation that targets Kosovo, by monitoring on a monthly basis the preselected media outlets originating in Russia, in both, English, and Serbian languages. The preselected media in English language are Russia Today, Sputnik, Meduza, Russia Insider, TASS, The Moscow Times, Newsfront, Unz, The Duran, and Pravda Report, whereas in Serbian language is Sputnik Serbia. In addition, the Kosovo Disinformation Alert monitors news, documents, and statements related to Kosovo, published by Kremlin and the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

During July 2020, TASS has published 5 news, Russia Today 6, The Duran 4, Sputnik International 3, Newsfront 6, Russia Insider 3, the Moscow Times 1, whereas Sputnik Serbia has published 164 news related directly or indirectly to Kosovo. Meanwhile, Meduza, UNZ and Pravda Report have not published any news related to Kosovo. On the other hand, during this monitoring period, Kremlin had none, while the Russian Foreign Ministry had 4 postings related to Kosovo on their web-sites.

Due to large number of articles with disinformation content generated by these media, in this edition are analyzed only the articles with blatant disinformation content. The provided disinformation aims to undermine the legality of Kosovo's statehood, and to discredit Kosovo institutions and its leadership. In addition, the provided disinformation projects Kosovo as a failed state that does not respect human rights of Serbs and other non-Albanian minorities, and which undertakes discriminatory acts against Kosovo Serbian community. The preselected articles also aim at obscuring the past by de-facto denying crimes and atrocities of Serbia in Kosovo during the 90's, and by portraying Serbs as victims during the Kosovo war with the clear aim of equating the victim (Albanians) with the aggressor (Serbs) during the conflict in Kosovo in 1999.

DECONSTRUCTION OF THE DETECTED DISINFORMATION

Disinformation Alert 1

Headline: The Empire Bombed Serbia to Seize Kosovo in 1999, The Duran, 06 July 2020.¹

The article claims that US has bombed Serbia because of two reasons. Firstly, because the “American Empire” that was downsizing after the Warsaw Pact disbanded, needed a war to prevent “reduction in military spending and the closure of most military bases in Europe.” Secondly, because Serbia “openly resisted demands to open its economy to western banks and corporations and refused to join the European Union.” Furthermore, the article refers to Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) members as “Albanian immigrants in Serbia’s province of Kosovo” and claims that CIA shipped “arms to the Islamic KLA” and “transported hundreds of al Qaeda mercenaries to Kosovo to attack Serbs.” The article ends by stating that the Serbian soldiers were sent to Kosovo province in order to deter these Islamic invaders.

Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

a) NATO bombed Serbia to prevent humanitarian catastrophe and ethnic cleansing

The article presents false claims about the reasons for NATO bombing of Serbia during the conflict in Kosovo in 1999. After the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, the US was not downsizing, but was the only unchallenged superpower in the world. Since this period of 1990s is referred as the time of American hegemony, US certainly did not need a war to prevent “reduction in military spending and the closure of most military bases in Europe.” Also, NATO air campaign was certainly not undertaken because Serbia “openly resisted demands to open its economy to western banks and corporations and refused to join

¹ “The Empire Bombed Serbia to Seize Kosovo in 1999,” The Duran, 06 July 2020, <https://theduran.com/the-empire-bombed-serbia-to-seize-kosovo-in-1999/>

the European Union.” Rather, a fundamental fact is that the bombing campaign was a result of Milošević’s atrocities against Kosovo Albanians, and his refusal to sign the Rambouillet Agreement mediated by the U.S. Ambassador Christopher Hill, EU Envoy Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch, and Russian Ambassador Boris Mayorski.² It is important to stress here that prior to NATO intervention, the Yugoslav forces had already killed 2,000, detained over 1,200, and displaced around 300,000 Albanian Kosovars.³ All these facts become clear and obvious in the statement of March 24 1999, of the U.S. President Clinton, in which he emphasized that “We and our NATO allies have taken this action after extensive and repeated efforts to obtain a peaceful solution to the crisis in Kosovo,” and that the military strikes have had the following objectives: “to demonstrate NATO's resolve, to deter Belgrade from launching more offensives against Kosovo Albanians and to degrade Yugoslavia's military capabilities to carry out future attacks.”⁴

b) KLA was not an Islamist military formation

The conflict in Kosovo in 1999 was between ethnic Albanians living there and Serbian military, police and paramilitary forces. The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was a guerrilla military formation that was created with the aim of liberation Kosovo from the occupation of Serbia and for protecting Albanian civil population from atrocities committed by the Serbian military, police and paramilitary forces. The KLA members were neither “Albanian immigrants”, nor “Islamic invaders” as the article falsely claims. The KLA members were ethnic Albanians from Kosovo, and KLA has throughout the period of the armed conflict of 1998-1999 continuously emphasized only the Albanian ethnicity, and thus sought to prevent representation of the Albanian identity to the West as Muslim. Neither KLA, nor any other Kosovo Albanian political group or guerrilla has identified itself with religious affiliations. Thus, the ideology of KLA was almost entirely the one of Albanian nationalism, with emphasis on Albanian ethnicity, nationalist aspirations and culture.

² Rambouillet Accords: Co-Chairmen's Conclusions, February 23rd, 1999, https://web.archive.org/web/20070926234216/http://www.ohr.int/other-doc/contact-g/default.asp?content_id=3560

³ Eric Herring, From Rambouillet to the Kosovo accords: NATO'S war against Serbia and its aftermath, The International Journal of Human Rights, Routledge, October 2007

⁴ See: CNN: NATO Attack on Yugoslavia begins, March 24th, 1999, <http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/europe/9903/24/kosovo.strikes/>

Moreover, due to strong ethnic homogenization and mobilization of Albanians since 1989, the KLA was able to easily isolate itself from the foreign ideas of Islamic fundamentalists from Saudi Arabia who came to Kosovo in small numbers to infiltrate the KLA ranks.⁵ Such reality has among others been evidenced by the Newsweek journalist Stacy Sullivan who wrote “In the two years that I covered the conflict in Kosovo, never once did I see the mujahedeen fighters I saw in Bosnia, or hear KLA soldiers even allude to any kind of commitment to Islam.”⁶ Therefore, the article’s claim that CIA has “transported hundreds of al Qaeda mercenaries to Kosovo to attack Serbs” is also false.

Disinformation Alert 2

Headline: *New Kosovo Indictment Is A Reminder Of Bill Clinton's Serbian War Atrocities, Russia Insider, 23 July 2020*⁷

As shown by the title, the article states that the President’s Thaci indictment is a “reminder Of Bill Clinton's Serbian war atrocities.” It accuses President Clinton for promoting his “doctrine” according to which US presidents are “entitled to commence bombing foreign lands based on any brazen lie that the American media will regurgitate.” According to the article, a 78-day bombing campaign launched by Clinton administration which American media portrayed as a crusade against ethnic bias, in fact killed up to fifteen hundred civilians in Serbia and Kosovo. Therefore, according to the article “that war, like most of the pretenses of US foreign policy, was always a sham.” The article further states that Kosovo President Hashim Thaci was charged by an international tribunal in The Hague of being “criminally responsible for nearly 100 murders,” while at the same time saying that the indictment involved “hundreds of known victims of Kosovo

⁵ Henry H. Perrit, *Kosovo Liberation Army: The Inside Story of an Insurgency*, University of Illinois Press, 2008.

⁶ Michael J. Totten, “Kosovo's Moderate Muslims: The world's newest country is a model of tolerance,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 30 December 2008, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB123059201269240805>

⁷ James Bovard, *New Kosovo Indictment Is A Reminder Of Bill Clinton's Serbian War Atrocities*, *Russia Insider*, 23 July 2020, <https://russia-insider.com/en/new-kosovo-indictment-reminder-bill-clintons-serbian-war-atrocities/ri30959>

Albanian, Serb, Roma, and other ethnicities.” It also asserts that “KLA was heavily involved in drug trafficking and had close ties to Osama bin Laden.” According to the article, *The Guardian* has noted that Thaci’s inner circle allegedly “took captives across the border into Albania after the war, where a number of Serbs are said to have been murdered for their kidneys, which were sold on the black market.” Furthermore, it states that when “transplant surgeons” were “ready to operate, the [Serbian] captives were brought out of the ‘safe house’ individually, summarily executed by a KLA gunman, and their corpses transported swiftly to the operating clinic.” The article also accuses American and NATO forces for simply standing by as “the KLA resumed its ethnic cleansing, slaughtering Serb civilians, bombing Serbian churches and oppressing any non-Muslims. Almost a quarter million Serbs, Gypsies, Jews, and other minorities fled Kosovo.” According to the article, by 2003, almost 70 percent of the Serbs living in Kosovo in 1999 had fled and Kosovo was 95 percent ethnic Albanian.

Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

The article makes a number of false claims against President Clinton, US and NATO forces, as well as President Thaci and the KLA. It also contains several inconsistencies and contradictory claims. When referring to President’s Thaci indictment, the article states that he was charged for war crimes by an **international tribunal in The Hague**, though it is clear Thaci was indicted by the Specialist Prosecutor’s Office (SPO) of the Kosovo Specialist Chambers (KSC) that have been established by the decision of the Kosovo Assembly of July 3rd 2015.⁸ When citing the indictment, the article initially claims that President Thaci was charged of being “responsible for nearly 100 murders,” while later claiming that the indictment involved “hundreds of known victims.” The article also claims that by launching the bombing campaign against Serbia in 1999, President Clinton has committed war atrocities in Serbia. Furthermore, the article falsely claims that the bombing campaign that was portrayed by American media as a crusade against ethnic bias, was in fact a sham. Clearly, the author of the article ignores the fact that prior to NATO intervention,

⁸ Law on Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutor's Office, Official Gazette of Kosovo, <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=11036>

the Yugoslav forces had already killed 2,000, detained over 1,200, and displaced around 300,000 Albanian Kosovars.⁹ By questioning these human sufferings and labelling the NATO intervention a sham, the author evidently does not care for the lives of Albanian victims and the humanitarian dimension of NATO intervention, but instead accuses Clinton for war atrocities. Below are given some additional facts and figures that deconstruct the disinformation in this article.

a) Exaggeration of the presented number of casualties

The article falsely claims that a 78-day bombing campaign killed up to fifteen hundred civilians in Serbia and Kosovo. According to the detailed data gathered based on 31,600 documents, presented in the publication “Kosovo Memory Book” (February 2nd, 2015) which was prepared by the Humanitarian Law Center based in Belgrade, confirm that the NATO attacks killed a total of 754 people: 454 civilians and 300 members of the armed forces. Of those, the highest number were Albanian civilians (219), 207 civilians were of Serbian and Montenegrin ethnicity, 14 civilians were Roma, and 14 were of other nationalities. Clearly, the documented data show that the number of deaths during NATO Air Campaign was much lower than 1,500, as presented in the article.

b) The manipulation of the number of Kosovo Serbian community post-war refugees.

The article also falsely claims that after deployment of NATO troops, KLA conducted ethnic cleansing which resulted in almost a quarter million Serbs, Gypsies, Jews, and other minorities to fled Kosovo. In addition, it claims that by 2003, almost 70 percent of the Serbs living in Kosovo in 1999 had fled Kosovo. According to the report published by Kosovo Coordination Center of the Government of Serbia in February 2002, there were 129,474 Serbs living in Kosovo. On the other hand, according to the last Yugoslav census of 1991 there were 194,000 Serbs living in Kosovo,

⁹ Eric Herring, From Rambouillet to the Kosovo accords: NATO'S war against Serbia and its aftermath, The International Journal of Human Rights, Routledge, October 2007

with a very unlikely trend for that number to increase during the 90's.¹⁰ These figures project a number of, at most, 75,000 Serbs that left Kosovo after the war, which is certainly not even close to 70 percent, and is far less than 250,000 as claimed by the article.

c) There is no proof whatsoever about the human organ trafficking

The article falsely claims that Thaci's inner circle of KLA was involved in human organ trafficking during the war period 1998-1999. Such accusations were first mentioned in Dick Marty's Report that was published on 14 December 2010 and was presented to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 7 January 2011. The Report claimed "inhuman treatment of people and killing of prisoners with the purpose of removal and illicit trafficking in human organs in Kosovo by the members of the Kosovo Liberation Army. However, statement by Clint Williamson, the Chief Prosecutor of the of the European Union Special Investigative Task Force of 29 July 2014 states that in order to prosecute offenses related to human organ trafficking "requires a level of evidence that we have not yet secured."¹¹ On the other hand, the indictment to which the article is referring does not mention at all any accusations related to human organ trafficking. The statement by the Specialist Prosecutor's Office (SPO) of the Kosovo Specialist Chambers (KSC) of 24 June 2020 clearly states that "the crimes alleged in the Indictment involve range of crimes against humanity and war crimes, including murder, enforced disappearance of persons, persecution, and torture,"¹² but it does not mention human organ trafficking.

¹⁰ For further exploration see: The Lausanne Principle: Security, Territory and the Future of the Kosovo Serbs, European Stability Initiative, June 7, 2004, https://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi_document_id_53.pdf

¹¹ Clint Williamson, "Statement the Chief Prosecutor of the Special Investigative Task Force," Brussels, European Union, 29 July 2014.

¹² "Press Statement," Specialist Prosecutor's Office, Kosovo Specialist Chambers, 24 June 2020.

Disinformation Alert 3

Headline: Удружење: Отворити архиве „УЧК“, Кфора, ОЕБС-а (Association: Open the archives of the "KLA", KFOR, OSCE), **Sputnik Serbia, 27 July 2020.**¹³

The article states that families of abducted and killed Serbs in Kosovo have requested the opening of the archives of the KLA, KFOR, as well as the OSCE and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), in order to find out the locations of Serbs abducted in 1998 as well as the mass graves for all Kosmet victims during 1998, 1999 and 2000. It also transmits a statement of the Association of Families of the Kidnapped and Killed in Kosovo which states that the Hague Tribunal, based on their command responsibility, convicted only Serbian generals, while the KLA leaders were protected from justice. Furthermore, according to the statement, to Hague prosecutors evidence with the names of the kidnapers and criminals was given, but they kept such evidence as top secret, in order to protect the war criminals, such as Thaci, Haradinaj, Limaj, and Veseli. In addition, the statement claims that with such acts, the prosecutors have traded the lives of the kidnapped Serbs, in order to create in the heart of Europe the "Islamic state of the KLA ISIS Kosovo".

Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

The article makes a claim about the mass graves of the killed and abducted Serbs in Kosovo in an attempt to falsely portray the liberation war of KLA as one of war crimes against humanity. This part of an aggressive and well-orchestrated campaign that tries to portray Serbs as victims during the Kosovo war. While at the same time minimizing and hiding war crimes committed by Serbian military, police and paramilitary forces. In reality, data reported by reliable institutions such as the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) and the Human Rights Watch, clearly

¹³ “Удружење: Отворити архиве „УЧК“, Кфора, ОЕБС-а (Association: Open the archives of the "KLA", KFOR, OSCE),” Sputnik Serbia, 27 July 2020, <https://rs.sputniknews.com/vesti/202007271123089188-udruzenje-otvoriti-arhive-uck-kfora-oebs-kosovo/>

show that the huge majority of persons killed, kidnapped and missing during the conflict were ethnic Albanians, and not ethnic Serbs. Furthermore, reports by these institutions undoubtedly show that a bulk of these crimes were committed by Serbian military, police and paramilitary forces, and not the KLA. Finally, all mass graves that have been identified were of ethnic Albanians, and not even one of ethnic Serbs.

More concretely, it is estimated that more than 7,000 persons were missing during the conflict in Kosovo in 1999. As of July 2001, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) had exhumed approximately 4,300 bodies. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, as of April 2001, 3,525 people remain missing from the conflict - the vast majority of them Kosovar Albanians.¹⁴ On the other hand, according to the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), between 2001 and 2002, 840 persons were recovered from clandestine grave sites on the territory of Serbia. All of the mortal remains recovered in Serbia during 2001-2002 were those of Kosovo Albanians executed in 1999.¹⁵ According to ICTY and Human Rights Watch, main difficulty in finding the missing persons is the deliberate attempt of the Serbian and Yugoslav government to destroy evidence and remove bodies. There are documented cases where bodies were disinterred and removed from the crime scene, in an apparent attempt to conceal the killing. Moreover, a radio documentary broadcast on National Public Radio in the United States called "Burning the Evidence" claimed that Serbian and Yugoslav forces systematically transported the bodies of Kosovar Albanians to the mining complex at Trepca near Kosovska Mitrovica, where they were incinerated.¹⁶

The article also falsely claims that in the heart of Europe the "Islamic state of the KLA ISIS Kosovo" was created. As already explained, KLA has throughout the conflict of 1998-1999 continuously emphasized only the Albanian ethnicity and has sought to prevent representation of the Albanian identity to the West as Muslim. Neither KLA, nor any other Kosovo Albanian political group or

¹⁴ "Under Orders: War Crimes in Kosovo," Human Rights Watch Report, 2001, p. 7, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/kosovo_full_low.pdf.

¹⁵ See "The Situation in Kosovo: A Stock Taking," The International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), Sarajevo, 14 September 2010.

¹⁶ According to Serbian fighters and "a well-placed Serbian intelligence officer," between 1,200 and 1,500 bodies were destroyed at Trepca. See "Under Orders: War Crimes in Kosovo," 2001, p. 122.

guerrilla has identified itself with religious affiliations. Thus, the ideology of KLA was almost entirely the one of Albanian nationalism, with emphasis on Albanian ethnicity, nationalist aspirations and culture. Moreover, due to strong ethnic homogenization and mobilization of Albanians since 1989, the KLA was able to easily isolate itself from the foreign ideas of Islamic fundamentalists from Saudi Arabia who came to Kosovo in small numbers to infiltrate the KLA ranks.¹⁷ Such reality has among others been evidenced by the Newsweek journalist Stacy Sullivan who wrote “In the two years that I covered the conflict in Kosovo, never once did I see the mujahedeen fighters I saw in Bosnia, or hear KLA soldiers even allude to any kind of commitment to Islam.”¹⁸

Disinformation Alert 4

Headline: *Priština izbegava da preda ključni dokument za nastavak dijaloga sa Beogradom (Pristina avoids handing over a key document for continuation of the dialogue with Belgrade), Sputnik Serbia, 20 July 2020.*¹⁹

The article states that during the meeting of Pristina and Belgrade expert teams in Brussels, it might be possible that they will discuss finding ways to exchange data on the missing persons. Then it cites the political analyst Dragomir Andjelkovic, who expresses his doubts for swift resolution of the issue of the missing persons, because he believes that the Pristina side will not hand over to Belgrade the requested KLA archives, since that “would disrupt the created Western propaganda - that only the Serbian security system committed crimes in Kosovo.” Andjelkovic further claims that if Kosovo authorities would “now accept to provide locations and data, they would admit that it was not a spontaneous response to Serbian crimes, but a systematic Albanian

¹⁷ Henry H. Perrit, *Kosovo Liberation Army: The Inside Story of an Insurgency*, University of Illinois Press, 2008.

¹⁸ Michael J. Totten, “Kosovo's Moderate Muslims: The world's newest country is a model of tolerance,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 30 December 2008, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB123059201269240805>

¹⁹ “Priština izbegava da preda ključni dokument za nastavak dijaloga sa Beogradom (Pristina avoids handing over a key document for continuation of the dialogue with Belgrade),” *Sputnik Serbia*, 20 July 2020, <https://rs-lat.sputniknews.com/politika/202007201123040073-pristina-izbegava-da-preda-kljucni-dokument-za-nastavak-dijaloga-sa-beogradom--/>

effort to ethnically cleanse Kosovo." Moreover, according to Andjelkovic the number of Serb missing persons in Kosovo is 1,644, a number which is similar to the one mentioned by the Albanian side.

Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

Another article that tries to falsely portray Serbs as victims during the Kosovo war and minimize and hide war crimes committed by Serbian military, police and paramilitary forces during the conflict with the aim of equating the victim with the aggressor. The article cites political analyst Andjelkovic, who claims that the fact "that only the Serbian security system committed crimes in Kosovo" is only a propaganda created by the West. Andjelkovic ignores the fact that crimes committed by Serbian military, police and paramilitary forces against Albanians in Kosovo have been documented by reliable and renowned institutions. The Human Rights Watch report has during the conflict in Kosovo of 1999 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." The report has also revealed "a coordinated and systematic campaign to terrorize, kill, and expel the ethnic Albanians of Kosovo that was organized by the highest levels of the Serbian and Yugoslav governments in power at that time".²⁰ 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."

On the other hand, Andjelkovic falsely claims that the number of Serb missing persons is 1,644, a number which according to him is similar to the one mentioned by the Albanian side. Namely, until July 2001, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) had exhumed approximately 4,300 bodies. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, as of April 2001, 3,525 people remain missing from the conflict - the vast majority of them Kosovar

²⁰ For a 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

Albanians.²¹ In addition, according to the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), between 2001 and 2002, 840 persons were recovered from clandestine grave sites on the territory of Serbia. All of the mortal remains recovered in Serbia during 2001-2002 were those of Kosovo Albanians executed in 1999.²² Both ICTY and Human Rights Watch acknowledge that the main difficulty in finding the missing persons is the deliberate attempt of the Serbian and Yugoslav government to destroy evidence and remove bodies. There are documented cases where bodies were disinterred and removed from the crime scene, in an apparent attempt to conceal the killing. Most importantly, there is incontrovertible evidence of grave tampering and the removal of bodies by Serbian and Yugoslav troops, as the post-Milosevic Serbian government was beginning to confirm in summer 2001.²³

Disinformation Alert 5

Headline: *Вратите нам слободу! Једина жеља Срба на Косову пред преговоре у Бриселу (Give us back our freedom! The only wish of Serbs in Kosovo before the negotiations in Brussels),* **Sputnik Serbia, 07 July 2020²⁴**

The article states that the Pristina-Belgrade dialogue in Brussels means little to an ordinary Serb in Kosovo, if there is no peace in his home and he cannot cultivate his field, and he must send his children to central Serbia and Belgrade for schooling and for work. According to Zivojin Rakocevic, journalist and publicist from Kosovo, all problems in Kosovo come from the lack of freedom in which Serbs live. He then poses a number of questions: “when will they (Serbs) be equal citizens

²¹ “Under Orders: War Crimes in Kosovo,” Human Rights Watch Report, 2001, p. 7, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/kosovo_full_low.pdf.

²² See “The Situation in Kosovo: A Stock Taking,” The International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), Sarajevo, 14 September 2010.

²³ According to Serbian fighters and “a well-placed Serbian intelligence officer,” between 1,200 and 1,500 bodies were destroyed at Трепча. See “Under Orders: War Crimes in Kosovo,” 2001, p. 122.

²⁴ Бранкица Ристић, “Вратите нам слободу! Једина жеља Срба на Косову пред преговоре у Бриселу (Give us back our freedom! The only wish of Serbs in Kosovo before the negotiations in Brussels),” *Sputnik Serbia*, 07 July 2020, <https://rs.sputniknews.com/analyze/202007071122949305-vratite-nam-slobodu-jedina-zelja-srba-na-kosovu-pred-pregovore-u-briselu/>

in a society built by a democratic world, when will they be free from fear, when will they stop watching where they go and feel insecure, when will they have the right to make decisions and the right to decide about themselves, when will they exercise the right to use their language and script, ... ". Rakocevic also states that the Kosovo project cannot exist without basic human rights, and claims that "Serbs, are only asking for basic human rights, but no one is asking them about freedom, and this is the hidden essence of a failed project called Kosovo." The article also reminds the readers that in Kosovo, attacks on Serbs, especially on Serb returnees, have lately become more frequent. It states that their houses were set on fire, cattle and property were stolen, as well as tractors, cars, money...

Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

a) Kosovo is a multi-ethnic society with high respect of human rights for all non-Albanian citizens

The article claims that overall human rights of Serbs living in Kosovo are not respected and tries to portray Kosovo as a state that oppresses its minority ethnic communities. The article falsely claims that Serbs are not equal citizens in a society, since Article 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo clearly states that Kosovo "is a multi-ethnic society consisting of Albanian and other Communities, governed democratically with full respect for the rule of law through its legislative, executive and judicial institutions."²⁵ Furthermore, Article 22 states that along with other international human rights instruments, "Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities" is directly applicable in Kosovo.²⁶

In terms of the claim that Serbs do not have the right to use their language, Article 5 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo²⁷ designates Albanian and Serbian as the two official

²⁵ The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, Article 3, 15 June 2008, http://kryeministri-ks.net/wpcontent/uploads/2018/03/Kushtetuta.e.Republikes.se_.Kosoves-2.pdf

²⁶ The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Articles 22.

²⁷ The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Article 5.

languages, with equal status before the institutions. The Law on the Use of Languages also makes reference to the constitution and states that the Albanian and Serbian versions are “equally authoritative,” meaning that neither takes precedence over the other when it comes to interpretation.²⁸ The article also poses the question “when they will have the right to make decisions and the right to decide for themselves,” again falsely claiming that Serbs in Kosovo lack political representation. On the central level, Article 64 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo clearly states in the Assembly of Kosovo “twenty (20) of the one hundred twenty (120) seats are guaranteed for representation of communities that are not in the majority in Kosovo”.²⁹ On the other hand, Article 96 clearly states that “there shall be at least one (1) Minister from the Kosovo Serb Community and one (1) Minister from another Kosovo non-majority Community. If there are more than twelve (12) Ministers, the Government shall have a third Minister representing a Kosovo non-majority Community.”³⁰

At the local level, as part of the decentralization process, currently there are 10 Serb majority municipalities in Kosovo. In addition to the high degree of local self-governance that all municipalities enjoy, those with Serb majorities have additional powers over the appointment of local police commanders, religious and cultural heritage sites within their boundaries; some of them have competences over universities and secondary health which in non-Serb-majority municipalities are a matter for central government.³¹ All these provisions in the Constitution and local self-government clearly show the high respect of human rights of Serbs and all other non-Albanian citizens in Kosovo.

b) There were no ethnically motivated incidents in Kosovo during the first six months of 2020

²⁸ Law No. 02/L-37 on the Use of Languages, Articles 2 and 5, as promulgated by UNMIK Regulation No.2006/51, 20 October 2006.

²⁹ The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Articles 64.

³⁰ The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Articles 96.

³¹ “Organizimi dhe Funkcionimi i Vetëqeverisjes Lokale në Kosovë,” Qeveria e Republikës së Kosovës, Prishtinë, Gusht 2013.

Similarly to other media in Serbia, this article also claims that the number of incidents against the local Serbs in Kosovo has increased lately. The article states that Serbs' "houses were set on fire, cattle and property were stolen, as well as tractors, cars, money..." However, in most of the cases, without being officially confirmed by relevant institutions or independently from official statements by such institutions, the Serbian media always present Albanians as perpetrators. Because often it is not possible to find any news from other media than Serbian one about the alleged incident, KIPRED has in several cases contacted Kosovo Police (KP) and asked for their statement. According to the Information Office of the Kosovo Police, KP is a law enforcement institution and in all cases acts according to its legal duties and authorizations, in order to maintain public order and tranquility as well as equal and fair treatment of all persons without distinction. In addition, the Kosovo Police has provided an official information about the ethnically motivated violence in Kosovo during the period 01.01.2020 – 30.06.2020. According to their report, during this period there have been no initiated cases with interethnic motives when it comes to "Criminal Offenses against life and body".

Disinformation Alert 6

Headline: *Свет чека шок због страшног злочина над Србима: „Жетва“ би могла да пољуља творевину „Косово“* (World awaits shock over horrific crime against Serbs: "Harvest" could shake Kosovo's creation), **Sputnik Serbia, 27 July 2020**³²

The article discusses the film "Harvest" by the American director Paul Kampf, which will according to the article make many countries to withdraw their recognition of Kosovo, and that "this weird creation called "Kosovo" will simply burst like a soap bubble," once the world really sees on what it is based on. The movie is based on the novel "Serbian Heart of Johann" by Veselin Dzeletovic, which allegedly tells a true story of a rich German Johan who was transplanted with the heart of

³² "Свет чека шок због страшног злочина над Србима: „Жетва“ би могла да пољуља творевину „Косово“ (World awaits shock over horrific crime against Serbs: "Harvest" could shake Kosovo's creation)," Sputnik Serbia, 27 July 2020, <https://rs.sputniknews.com/analize/202007271123091672-svet-ceka-sok-zbog-strasnog-zlocina-nad-srbima-zetva-bi-mogla-da-poljulja-tvorevinu-kosovo/>

a Serbian victim of the "yellow house", and who comes to Kosovo in search of answers to essential questions. According to Dzeletovic, the novel is a story of Serbian suffering in Kosovo, a story that can change the bad images that have been created about Serbs around the world. He states that for him the most important part of the story is that the novel has influenced several countries to withdraw the recognition of Kosovo. The movie "Harvest," on the other hand is a film about crimes against Serbs in Kosovo. The article states that although Serbs are portrayed everywhere as bad guys, the truth is totally different. Further, it states that while the West has tried to portray the members of the Kosovo terrorist organization in a different light, in reality they can be described in one word - criminals. Dzeletovic claims that the sin committed by Albanians is so great, and that the world will find out how many Serbian hearts are beating around the world. According to him, there are "indications that up to 2,500 Serbs ended up as victims of organ trafficking, which is monstrous." According to film critic and theorist Božidar Zečević, the novel and the movie were inspired and are based on Dick Marty's report, which is "clear enough to anyone who wants to read and hear the truth."

Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

Another article that tries to falsely portray Serbs as victims during the Kosovo war, by exaggerating Serbian casualties and by minimizing and hiding war crimes committed by Serbian military, police and paramilitary forces. Clearly, the aim of the article is to equate the victim (Albanians) with the aggressor (Serbs) during the conflict in Kosovo in 1999. The main argument of the article is the false claim about the human organ trafficking of Serbs during the war in Kosovo. The article discusses the film "Harvest" that is based on the novel "Serbian Heart of Johann" which allegedly tells a true story of a rich German Johan who was transplanted with the heart of a Serbian victim of the "yellow house". Both the movie and the novel were inspired and are based on Dick Marty's report that first made accusations about human trafficking. The Report that was published on 14 December 2010 and was presented to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 7 January 2011. The Report claimed "inhuman treatment of people and

killing of prisoners with the purpose of removal and illicit trafficking in human organs in Kosovo by the members of the Kosovo Liberation Army. However, statement by Clint Williamson, the Chief Prosecutor of the of the European Union Special Investigative Task Force of 29 July 2014 states that in order to prosecute offenses related to human organ trafficking “requires a level of evidence that we have not yet secured.”³³ On the other hand, the indictment to which the article is referring does not mention at all any accusations related to human organ trafficking. The statement by the Specialist Prosecutor’s Office (SPO) of the Kosovo Specialist Chambers (KSC) of 24 June 2020 clearly states that “the crimes alleged in the Indictment involve range of crimes against humanity and war crimes, including murder, enforced disappearance of persons, persecution, and torture,”³⁴ but it does not mention human organ trafficking.

It is worth noting that the article claims that crimes committed against Serbs in Kosovo are monstrous, since there are “indications that up to **2,500** Serbs ended up as victims of organ trafficking.” Such number basically makes the entire article very doubtful since according to the detailed data gathered based on 31,600 documents, presented in the publication “Kosovo Memory Book” (February 2nd, 2015) which was prepared by the Humanitarian Law Center based in Belgrade, a total of 13,535 individuals were killed or disappeared during and in the context of the armed conflict in Kosovo. Of those, the total number of Serbs killed during the conflict was **2,197**, while 10,812 of this number were Albanians, and 526 victims were Roma, Bosniaks, Montenegrins, and other non-Albanians.

Furthermore, the article claims that around the world, bad images that have unjustly been created about Serbs, since the truth is totally different. According to the article, the West has tried to portray the members of the Kosovo terrorist organization in a different light, but in reality they can be described in one word - criminals. The author of the article does not refer to the Human Rights Watch which clearly shows that the huge majority of persons killed, kidnapped and missing during the conflict were ethnic Albanians, and not ethnic Serbs. Furthermore, the report undoubtedly shows that a bulk of these crimes were committed by Serbian military, police

³³ Clint Williamson, “Statement the Chief Prosecutor of the Special Investigative Task Force,” Brussels, European Union, 29 July 2014.

³⁴ “Press Statement,” Specialist Prosecutor’s Office, Kosovo Specialist Chambers, 24 June 2020.

and paramilitary forces, and not the KLA. More concretely, the Human Rights Watch report has during the conflict in Kosovo of 1999 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.” The report has also revealed “a coordinated and systematic campaign to terrorize, kill, and expel the ethnic Albanians of Kosovo that was organized by the highest levels of the Serbian and Yugoslav governments in power at that time”.³⁵

³⁵ For a 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