



#### BASIC INFO:

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

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#### CONTACT:

Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development (KIPRED)

Str. Major Mehmet Bushi, H.III/1

10 000 Prishtina, Kosovo

Tel: +383 (0)38 542 778

Web-site: [www.kipred.org](http://www.kipred.org)

Email: [info@kipred.org](mailto:info@kipred.org)

## KOSOVO DISINFORMATION ALERTS

**SERBIAN MEDIA**  
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## INTRODUCTION

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

The monitoring of these media shows that during October 2020 a total of 548 news have been published by the preselected media outlets originating in Serbia, of which Tanjug has published 59, Informer 69, Novosti 87, Kurir 22, B92 198, Politika 38, and Naša Borba 18 articles related to Kosovo.

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

The aim of the disinformation generated in this monitoring period by the preselected Serbian media in relation to Kosovo indicates that it was focused on undermining Kosovo's statehood by referring to it as province of Kosovo and Metohija, discrediting its leadership and rule of law institutions, accusing them for not implementing certain agreements achieved in Brussels. In addition, some of the preselected articles aim at falsely portraying Kosovo as a state that is against the dialogue with Serbia and is planning to expel the remaining Serbs living in Kosovo through secrete military operation.

## THE DECONSTRUCTION OF THE MOST BLATANT DETECTED DISINFORMATION

### **Disinformation Alert 1**

***Headline: BEZ ZSO MOGUĆE DA SRBI NAPUSTE PRIŠTINSKE INSTITUCIJE! OVO JE UDAR NA VITALNE INTERESE SRPSKOG NARODA! (WITHOUT ASM IT IS POSSIBLE FOR SERBS TO LEAVE PRISTINA INSTITUTIONS! THIS IS A BLOW TO THE VITAL INTERESTS OF THE SERBIAN PEOPLE!, Informer, 13 October 2020.<sup>1</sup>***

The article transmits an announcement from the meeting of representatives of Serbs from Kosovo with Petar Petković, the Director of the Government Office for Kosovo and Metohija, according to which the representatives of Serbs from Kosovo and Metohija will leave Pristina institutions if Pristina unilaterally decides not to fulfill the obligation signed before the EU to form the ASM (Association of Serbian Municipalities). Petković stated that Pristina's refusal to discuss the ASM is a blow to the vital interests of the Serbian people, and endangers the collective political, economic and social rights of Serbs from Kosovo and Metohija. He pointed out that the formation of the ASM represents a strategic interest of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija and that ignoring the obligation to form it, with all the competencies that envisaged with the Brussels agreements, will be treated as an open attack on the acquired rights of the Serbian people. In addition, he claimed that Serbs agreed to participate in Pristina institutions precisely because they were given firm guarantees for respect of collective rights through the ASM, and therefore they agreed to establish local authorities and other institutions under the Pristina system. Finally, Petković said that "if Pristina unilaterally decides not to fulfill the signed obligations mediated by the European Union, the obligations of Serbs arising from the Brussels dialogue will cease, and the possibility of leaving all central institutions in Pristina and abolishing all Pristina institutions in Serb-majority areas in Kosovo and Metohija will be considered."

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<sup>1</sup> BEZ ZSO MOGUĆE DA SRBI NAPUSTE PRIŠTINSKE INSTITUCIJE! OVO JE UDAR NA VITALNE INTERESE SRPSKOG NARODA! (WITHOUT ASM IT IS POSSIBLE FOR SERBS TO LEAVE PRISTINA INSTITUTIONS! THIS IS A BLOW TO THE VITAL INTERESTS OF THE SERBIAN PEOPLE!, Informer, 13 October 2020, <https://informer.rs/vesti/politika/555573/petar-petkovic-kim-szo>.

## The Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

The article transmits several statements by the director of the Government Office for Kosovo and Metohija Petar Petković, who puts forward several false claims.<sup>2</sup> Petković claims that Serbs agreed to participate in Pristina institutions precisely because they were given firm guarantees for respect of collective rights through the Association of Serbian Municipalities (ASM), and therefore they agreed to establish local authorities and other institutions under the Pristina system. In fact, Serbs from Kosovo have been participating in different institutions of Kosovo, such as parliament, government and local institutions, long before the Brussels agreement about the creation of the ASM. It should also be mentioned that, on 5 April 2018, the then Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, announced the resumption of efforts to draft the statute of the association/community of Serb majority municipalities, to be completed within four months. The statute was supposed to be drafted by a managerial group in which four members were Serbs from the Serbian List in Kosovo. These Serb members characterized the proposal as “unacceptable,” stressing that the association/community should be established in accordance with the Brussels agreement of 25 August 2015, and not with the Kosovo Constitution.<sup>3</sup> They have requested that the statute of the Association should include competences in privatization, in the economy, preservation of the educational system with Serbia, as well as other competences. Some Serb members of the managerial group have even requested constitutional changes so that the Association is in accordance with the Constitution of Kosovo. Moreover, in all meetings of the managerial group, they used to refer to Kosovo as “Kosovo and Metohija.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See also a similar article “Kancelarija: ZSO mora biti formirana sa nadležnostima iz briselskih dogovora (Office: The CSM must be formed with the competencies from the Brussels agreements),” *Beta*, 16 October 2020, <https://beta.rs/vesti/politika-vesti-srbija/135219-kancelarija-zso-mora-biti-formirana-sa-nadleznostima-iz-briselskih-dogovora>.

<sup>3</sup> See “Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo,” United Nations Security Council, 01 May 2018, <https://unmik.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/s-2018-407.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> “Prapaskenat e 'Zajednicës', publikohet vetëm një procesverbal, statuti mbahet sekret (Behind the scenes of 'Zajednica', minutes from only one meeting were published, the statute is kept secret),” *Syri*, 12 October 2020, [https://www.syri.net/syri\\_kosova/politike-lajme/172799/prapaskenat-e-zajednices-publikohet-vetem-nje-procesverbal-statuti-mbahet-sekret/](https://www.syri.net/syri_kosova/politike-lajme/172799/prapaskenat-e-zajednices-publikohet-vetem-nje-procesverbal-statuti-mbahet-sekret/).

Therefore, the claim that Serbs from Kosovo have agreed to participate in Pristina institutions because of the guarantees to create the ASM is a false one.

Petković also claimed that “if Pristina unilaterally decides not to fulfill the signed obligations mediated by the European Union, the obligations of Serbs arising from the Brussels dialogue will cease, and the possibility of leaving all the central institutions in Pristina, and, thus, abolishing all the Pristina institutions in the Serb-majority areas in Kosovo and Metohija will be considered.” However, he and the article fail to mention a number of EU mediated agreements between Kosovo and Serbia, such as the ones on university diplomas, trade and energy operator in the northern municipalities of Kosovo, that have not been implemented by Belgrade.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the government of Serbia has blatantly stated that the dialogue is a tool to undermine Kosovo’s statehood and delay its international recognition.<sup>6</sup> In line with this, Serbia has exploited the dialogue to lobby against Kosovo’s independence and its membership in international organizations.

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<sup>5</sup> For a detailed explanation about the dialogue see “THE BRUSSELS DIALOGUE BETWEEN KOSOVO AND SERBIA: ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES,” Balkan Policy Research Group, September 2020, [https://balkansgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/BPRG\\_DIALOGU-I-BRUKSELIT\\_ALB\\_web2.pdf](https://balkansgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/BPRG_DIALOGU-I-BRUKSELIT_ALB_web2.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> See Agon Demjaha, “The Impact of Brussels Dialogue on Kosovo’s Sovereignty,” in David Philips and Lulzim Peci eds. *Threats and Challenges to Kosovo’s Sovereignty*, Program on Peace-building and Rights, Institute for the study of Human Rights, Columbia University and the Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development, New York and Prishtina, October 2018.

## **Disinformation Alert 2**

**Headline:** *Đurić: Hoti nije za dijalog, želi samo priznanje (Đurić: Hoti is not for the dialogue, he just wants the recognition), Tanjug, 6 October 2020.*<sup>7</sup>

The article transmits a press release of the Director of the Office of the Government of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, Marko Đurić, in which he stressed that Pristina is not interested for the dialogue, and that for them the normalization of relations only serves to secure the recognition. He further pointed out that the blackmailing strategy of (the Kosovo Prime Minister) Avdullah Hoti, in addition to disrupting the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, contains the message that Pristina is not interested in any normalization, but that normalization is only a means to extort recognition for Pristina. Đurić also emphasized that for Belgrade, the process of normalization of relations is not a means, but an end, because it is sincerely interested to gradually create an atmosphere in the region in which unresolved disagreements will not result in hostility and conflicts. He said that Belgrade will continue to be persistent in its efforts to resolve open issues at the negotiating table, but he warned European partners that “the situation in which Hoti brings us with his political insolence is becoming increasingly absurd, so I sincerely worry about the future of the dialogue.”

### **The Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures**

The article transmits a press release of the Director of the Office of the Government of Serbia for Kosovo, Marko Đurić, who puts forward several false claims about Kosovo and its Prime Minister Avdullah Hoti. Đurić claims that Kosovo representatives, in general, and Prime Minister Hoti, in particular, are not interested in dialogue and that, for them, the normalization of relations serves only as means to secure recognition. Đurić falsely accuses the Kosovo Prime Minister Hoti for

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<sup>7</sup> Đurić: Hoti nije za dijalog, želi samo priznanje (Đurić: Hoti is not for the dialogue, he just wants the recognition), Tanjug, 6 October 2020, <http://www.tanjug.rs/full-view.aspx?izb=595034>.

disrupting the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, and for utilizing the normalization between the two countries only as a means to secure Kosovo's recognition. Moreover, Đurić characterized Hoti's behaviour as "political insolence that is becoming increasingly absurd." While it is true that Prime Minister Hoti declared that the dialogue should end with mutual recognition, it was precisely he who revived the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue process which was frozen since November 2018. Namely, immediately after becoming the Prime Minister of Kosovo, he cancelled two decisions taken by the previous government that introduced and then expanded reciprocal trade measures with Serbia. These measures that were imposed by former Prime Minister Albin Kurti in February 2020 were heavily criticized by both, the European Union, and the US, and were the key impediment for continuation of the dialogue. In this context, Prime Minister Hoti underlined that such decision was taken in order "to remove all the barriers to the continuation of the dialogue." He also pointed out that the cancellation of these decisions was "a result of cooperation with our international partners and the pledges we have made to remove all the barriers to the dialogue."<sup>8</sup> In addition, in a ceremony that took place in the Oval Office of the White House, Prime Minister Hoti has on September 4<sup>th</sup> 2020 signed an agreement with Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić in the presence of the US President, Donald Trump. On the one hand, the agreement states that Kosovo will not apply for new memberships in international organizations for a period of one year. On the other hand, according to the agreement, Serbia should suspend all its efforts, both official and unofficial, encouraging other states to either not recognize Kosovo or to revoke existing recognition.<sup>9</sup> In principle, Prime Minister Hoti has continuously proved his commitment to the dialogue, and has repeated, on several occasions that the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia has no alternative.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> "Hoti government scraps reciprocity," *Prishtina Insight*, 6 June 2020, <https://prishtinainsight.com/hoti-government-scrap-reciprocity/>.

<sup>9</sup> For more details see "Marrëveshja Kosovë-Serbi në shqip (Kosovo-Serbia Agreement in Albanian)," *Koha*, 4 September 2020, <https://www.koha.net/arberi/236069/marreveshja-kosove-serbi-ne-shqip-dokument/>

<sup>10</sup> "Hoti in Brussels, The Dialogue has no alternative," RTK Live, 25 June 2020, <https://www.rtklive.com/en/news-single.php?ID=16876>.

### **Disinformation Alert 3**

**Headline:** *TAČI I DALJE TRGUJE LJUDSKIM ORGANIMA?! Šiptarski mediji objavili šokantne informacije (TAČI STILL TRADES WITH HUMAN ORGANS ?! The Shiptar media published shocking information), Informer, 30 October 2020.*<sup>11</sup>

The article cites the Pristina media, according to which at least 604 people have disappeared in Kosovo during the previous three years, and that the investigation suspects that a large number of people were abducted due to organ trafficking. According to these sources, only in the first eight months of 2020, 112 people were reported missing. As probable reasons for the disappearance, the Kosovo police, according to article, cites prostitution, but also organ trafficking, which is carried out by organized criminal groups. The article then cites the former lieutenant colonel of the Counterintelligence Service (KOS) Ljuban Karan, who believes that the trade of human organs has continued until today. According to him, Pristina media are now investigating this because obviously the victims are not only Serbs anymore, but Albanians as well. Karan insists that there is no other logical explanation for so many missing persons in such a short period of time. He considers that there is nothing strange about this, since the organizers of this creepy "business" are still free and have an ideal environment for their dirty work. According to him, this is not just about making money, but about preserving the human organ market, which is somewhere in the West and is measured in hundreds of millions of euros annually. The article also cites the retired general Božidar Delić who said that Shiptars must now kidnap their compatriots, because they have already killed and expelled most of the Serbs from the province. According to him, there are fewer and fewer Serbs in Kosovo, who still live in enclaves. On the other hand, Shiptars are devastated, they have no money and can barely survive, thus making it easier for them to fall prey to all kinds of offers for fake jobs. He underlines

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<sup>11</sup> "TAČI I DALJE TRGUJE LJUDSKIM ORGANIMA?! Šiptarski mediji objavili šokantne informacije (TAČI STILL TRADES WITH HUMAN ORGANS ?! Shiptar media published shocking information," *Informer*, 30 October 2020, <https://informer.rs/vesti/politika/559156/taci-dalje-trguje-ljudskim-organima-siptarski-mediji-objavili-sokantne-informacije>.



that for those involved in this business it means nothing who the victims are, because they only care about the profit.

### **The Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures**

The article makes a notorious false claim that Thaçi and his collaborators have continued with human organ trafficking in Kosovo up to the present day. It uses a derogatory language, by calling Albanians as “Shiptars.” To make its argument, the article cites the former lieutenant colonel of the Counterintelligence Service (KOS), and the retired general of the Yugoslav Army, who can hardly be considered as reliable and unbiased sources, and who have probably committed crimes in Kosovo during the conflict in 1999.

#### **a) No Kosovo media has reported about organ trafficking**

By using a sensational title, the article falsely claims that the organ trafficking is still ongoing in Kosovo. It falsely claims that “Shiptars media” have published such shocking information. In fact, the article rightly cites certain Albania media in Kosovo, that have reported about missing persons in the country. However, the article manipulates the informations of these media by falsely claiming that they have been reporting that missing persons were connected with organ trafficking in Kosovo, which is absolutely not true. A careful review has shown that while several Albania media in Kosovo have reported about missing persons in the country, none of them has stated that this phenomenon is linked with organ trafficking or that the investigation is suspecting on something like that.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> “Për 8 muaj, 112 persona të zhdukur në Kosovë (For 8 months, 112 missing persons in Kosovo),” *Telegrafi*, 25 October 2020, <https://telegrafi.com/per-8-muaj-112-persona-te-zhdukur-ne-kosove/>. See also “Për 8 muaj, u raportuan si të zhdukur 112 persona në Kosovë (For 8 months, 112 people were reported missing in Kosovo),” *Indeksonline*, 25 October 2020, <https://indeksonline.net/per-8-muaj-u-raportuan-si-te-zhdukur-112-persona-ne-kosove/>.

### **b) There are no proofs whatsoever about the human organ trafficking in Kosovo**

The article falsely claims that Thaçi and his collaborators have continued with human organ trafficking in Kosovo up to the present day. Accusations about human trafficking were first mentioned in Dick Marty's Report that was published on 14 December 2010 and was presented to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 7 January 2011. The Report claimed "inhuman treatment of people and killing of prisoners with the purpose of removal and illicit trafficking in human organs in Kosovo by the members of the Kosovo Liberation Army." However, statement by Clint Williamson, the Chief Prosecutor of the of the European Union Special Investigative Task Force of 29 July 2014 states that the prosecution of offenses related to human organ trafficking "requires a level of evidence that we have not yet secured."<sup>13</sup> 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,"<sup>14</sup> but it does not mention human organ trafficking. The accusations about human organ trafficking were the main reason why the international community insisted in creating the Kosovo Specialist Chambers, but it seems that, ten years after such accusations first appeared, they have just disappeared.

### **c) Missing persons during the conflict in Kosovo in 1999 are the key problem**

The article falsely claims that the human organ trafficking in Kosovo is still ongoing up to the present day. Such allegations are based on the allegedly high number of missing persons over the last three years in Kosovo. The key problem related to missing persons in Kosovo in fact are thousands of missing persons during the conflict in Kosovo in 1999. Data reported by reliable institutions such as the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) and the Human Rights Watch, clearly show that the huge majority of persons killed, kidnapped and missing during

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<sup>13</sup> Clint Williamson, "Statement the Chief Prosecutor of the Special Investigative Task Force," Brussels, European Union, 29 July 2014.

<sup>14</sup> "Press Statement," Specialist Prosecutor's Office, Kosovo Specialist Chambers, 24 June 2020.

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 by the KLA. Finally, all mass graves that have been identified were of ethnic Albanians, and not even a single 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.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> According to ICTY and Human Rights Watch, 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. 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 Trepça, near Kosovska Mitrovica, where they were incinerated.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> "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](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/kosovo_full_low.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> See "The Situation in Kosovo: A Stock Taking," The International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), Sarajevo, 14 September 2010.

<sup>17</sup> According to Serbian fighters and "a well-placed Serbian intelligence officer," between 1,200 and 1,500 bodies were destroyed at Trepça. See "Under Orders: War Crimes in Kosovo," 2001, p. 122.

#### **Disinformation Alert 4**

**Headline:** *HILJADU DANA OD UBISTVA OLIVERA: Milena Ivanović tvrdi da Priština zataškava istinu o atentatu (ONE THOUSAND DAYS SINCE OLIVER'S MURDER: Milena Ivanović claims that Pristina is covering up the truth about the assassination), Novosti, 01 October 2020.*<sup>18</sup>

The article transmits a statement of Milena Ivanović, the widow of the SDP leader, Oliver Ivanović, who was murdered in front of his office in January 2018. She expressed her disappointment that after so much time nothing has been done about the murder, and accused the authorities in Pristina for constantly returning to the beginning, and for obviously covering something. Mrs. Ivanović said that she expected something like this, because she doubted that the Kosovo authorities will use the murder of her husband in various “games” that might lead to the wrong traces. Still, she expressed her hope that the truth will be found out sooner or later, because it cannot be hidden forever. The article further states that Pristina has from the beginning refused concrete cooperation with Belgrade in this investigation, and that according to its information, there has been no communication between the two sides on that issue for one year and a half.

The article also cites the Serbian Prime Minister, Ana Brnabić, who said that it does not suit Pristina authorities to find out the truth about Ivanović's murder. In addition, the article says that according to unofficial information, the state authorities of Serbia came across indications, and even photographs that point to a person who could be the direct executor, and are still working on gathering evidence. Few months ago, President Vučić publicly asked about the possible involvement of Florim Ejupi and Lirim Zeka, who were in Mitrovica at the time of the murder. The article then explains that Florim Ejupi, who has on the time of murder come to Mitrovica from Germany has been earlier accused for the bomb attack on a civilian bus in a Serb-populated area near the town of Podujevo, in February 2001 that had killed 12 Serb civilians and injured 43

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<sup>18</sup> “HILJADU DANA OD UBISTVA OLIVERA: Milena Ivanović tvrdi da Priština zataškava istinu o atentatu (ONE THOUSAND DAYS SINCE OLIVER'S MURDER: Milena Ivanović claims that Pristina is covering up the truth about the assassination),” *Novosti*, 01 October 2020, <https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/politika/921991/hiljadu-dana-ubistva-olivera-milena-ivanovic-tvrdi-pristina-zataskava-istinu-atentatu>.

others. According to article, although he was arrested on the basis of DNA traces, he mysteriously escaped from the "Bondsteel" military base. The article then explains that the Kosovo Prosecutor's Office, has meanwhile prepared an indictment for Ivanović's murder, which mentions a group of Serbs, allegedly led by Milan Radojičić, although Radojičić himself has not been charged. According to article, the indictment is written confusingly because the allegations of murder are mixed with allegations of organized crime, and the accused are charged with aiding and abetting evidence, and not only for the murder. Radojičić was questioned in Belgrade, and Vučić then said that he was "not a flower," but that according to the information of the Ministry of the Interior and the BIA, it had nothing to do with Ivanović's murder.

## **The Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures**

### **a) The Investigation in Kosovo has progressed more than in Serbia**

The article is one of many that discuss the assassination of the SDP leader Oliver Ivanović, who was murdered in front of his office in January 2018.<sup>19</sup> In doing so, the article puts forward several false claims about the case. The article falsely claims that Pristina authorities are not interested to solve the case, and that they are deliberately trying to cover something. Firstly, it is important to mention that Albanians in Kosovo did have no motivation whatsoever to murder Oliver Ivanović. While Ivanović was once considered a hard-core nationalist, with time he evolved into a political moderate who advocated coexistence between Kosovo's Serb minority and Albanian majority. In the years prior to assassination, Oliver Ivanović was openly speaking up against organised crime in the North of Kosovo, and for reconciliation within Kosovo independence. He had also publicly criticized the Government of Serbia and ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SPP)

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<sup>19</sup> See, for instance, "SAMO MUK U PRIŠTINI, NISMO ZABORAVILI IVANOVIĆA: Premijerka Brnabić o istrazi zbog ubistva lidera kosovskih Srba (ONLY SILENCE IN PRISTINA, WE DIDN'T FORGET IVANOVIĆ: Prime Minister Brnabić on the investigation into the murder of the Kosovo Serb leader)," *Novosti*, 29 September 2020, <https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/politika/921570/samo-muk-pristini-nismo-zaboravili-ivanovica-premijerka-brnabic-istrazi-zbog-ubistva-lidera-kosovskih-srba>. See also, "ŠOKANTNO OKTRIĆE: Evo ko je pomogao ubici Olivera Ivanovića (THE SHOCKING DISCOVERY: Here is who has helped the murderer of Oliver Ivanović)", *Nasa Borba*, 02 March 2020, <https://nasaborba.com/sokantno-oktrice-evo-ko-je-pomogao-ubici-olivera-ivanovica/>

for favoring the Serb List over other Serbian parties in Kosovan local elections. In turn, Ivanović was fiercely criticised by the SPP during Kosovo's regional elections by labeling him as a "traitor" and anti-Serbian politician.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, as the article states, in December 2019, after almost two years of investigation, Kosovo's Special Prosecution has charged six people with participating in, or organising a criminal group, misuse of office, assistance in a murder, possession of illegal weapons, disclosure of official secrets, and misuse of evidence in relation to Ivanović case.<sup>21</sup> The Kosovo authorities have also named Milan Radoičić, the vice-president of the main Belgrade-backed Kosovo Serb political party, Srpska Lista, as one of the suspects. Radoičić is a local businessman, who is widely described as the real power-holder in the Serb-majority northern Kosovo. After avoiding arrest in November 2018, he moved to Serbia, where the authorities have asserted that he is innocent.<sup>22</sup> After the failed raid on Radoičić's home, Kosovo's President Hashim Thaçi had labelled him as the prime suspect in Ivanović's murder, and said that it was Belgrade's responsibility to take action to detain him. However, as explained in the article, Radoičić was initially questioned by Belgrade authorities, and the Serbian President Vučić declared that though Radoičić was "not a flower," according to the information of the Ministry of the Interior and of the BIA, he had nothing to do with Ivanović's murder.

In February 2020 has started a trial against nine Serbs accused for participation in the assassination of Ivanović. Six of them pleaded not guilty of all charges at the preparatory hearing before Pristina's Special Court, while three of them were on the run. In November 2020, a new indictment was filed, since the Court of Appeals in Prishtina had dismissed the previous indictment of the Special Prosecution, at the request of the defense, who appealed the decision. However, the preliminary hearing, based on the new indictment has so far been postponed twice,

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<sup>20</sup> Al Jazeera, "Kosovo: The mysterious murder of Oliver Ivanovic," 01 June 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/blogs/europe/2018/05/kosovo-mysterious-murder-oliver-ivanovic-180529144925924.html>

<sup>21</sup> Serbeze Haxhijaj, Maja Živanović and Ivana Jeremić, "Kosovo, Serbia Play Blame Game over Ivanović Assassination", Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, 15 January 2020, <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/01/15/kosovo-serbia-play-blame-game-over-ivanovic-assassination/>

<sup>22</sup> Perparim Isufi, "Kosovo Indicts Six for Serb Politician Ivanović's Murder," Balkan Insight, 02 December 2019, <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/12/02/kosovo-indicts-six-for-serb-politician-ivanovics-murder/>

and has not taken place yet.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, Serbia's Special Prosecution that is investigating the murder of Oliver Ivanović, after three years is still at a pre-investigation procedure. The above clearly shows that Kosovo authorities have engaged much more seriously in solving the case than their counterparts in Serbia.

**a) No evidence that Florim Ejupi has murdered Oliver Ivanović**

Instead of solving the case, authorities in Belgrade have repeatedly made false accusations against Albanian individuals for alleged murder of Ivanović. As stated in the article, Florim Ejupi was firstly accused for Ivanović's murder in July 2019 by President Vučić, and his statement accusing Ejupi was followed by additional accusations from the head of the Serbian government's office for Kosovo, Marko Djurić. However, no proof linking either Ejupi or Zekaj to Ivanović's killing has since been made public by Belgrade. After these accusations, the Prosecutor of the Kosovo Special Prosecution, Sylë Hoxha, has in July 2019 stated that the name of Florim Ejupi does not appear as a possible suspect involved in the murder of Ivanović in the investigations carried out by the Kosovo institutions. As already mentioned, prior to his assassination, Oliver Ivanović has also publicly criticized the Government of Serbia and the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SPP) for favoring the Serb List over other Serbian parties in Kosovan local elections. Thus, it is not surprising that in his reaction to President Vučić, the brother of Oliver Ivanović considers the mention of Florim Ejupi's name as a suspect in the case as Vučić's political action. Finally, Florim Ejupi has for false allegations reported President Vučić to the German police and "was allegedly told that he should not be upset about the case because the police were handling the Serbian authorities."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> "Vrasja e Oliver Ivanoviç/ Tre vjet, tre padi, por ende pa aktgjykim (Murder of Oliver Ivanovic / Three years, three lawsuits, but still without a verdict)," *Balkan Insight*, 16 January 2021, <https://www.balkanweb.com/vrasja-e-oliver-ivanovic-tre-vjet-tre-padi-por-ende-pa-aktgjykim/>.

<sup>24</sup> N1, "Kosovo Albanian reports Vučić to German police," 04 July 2019, <http://rs.n1info.com/English/NEWS/a497292/Kosovo-Albanian-reports-Vucic-to-German-police.html>

## **Disinformation Alert 5**

**Headline:** BEZBEDNOSNE AGENCIJE UPOZORILE: Pokrenuta tajna Albanska operacija pod imenom „ČAST“! (SECURITY AGENCIES HAVE WARNED: The Secret Albanian operation called "HONOR" launched!), **Naša Borba**, 09 October 2020.<sup>25</sup>

The article transmits that Serbian security services have forwarded a warning to the state leadership of Serbia that organized provocations and attacks by Albanians were being prepared. According to Serbian security services, "Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija, especially those in the enclaves, will be the target of organized provocations and attacks by Albanians in the coming days, all with the aim of creating instability that would lead to another stalemate in the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina and obstruction of cooperation with the Special Court in The Hague." The article states that based on the available information, the Albanian leaders in the southern province have been carrying out an action under the code name "Honor" since the beginning of September, in order to prevent the indictment against the president of the so-called Kosovo's Hashim Thaçi and his associate Kadri Veseli, for the murder of almost a hundred people, war crimes, persecution and torture, before the Special Court in The Hague. According to these sources, apart from the pressure and attempts to discredit the Court, which must make a decision on the indictments by October 24, their intention is for Pristina to stop negotiations with Belgrade again, because it does not want to discuss the formation of the Association of Serbian Municipalities, which is confirmed by Prime Minister Avdullah Hoti that "the issue of the ASM is over".

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<sup>25</sup> Tomislav Ivanović, "BEZBEDNOSNE AGENCIJE UPOZORILE: Pokrenuta tajna Albanska operacija pod imenom „ČAST“! (SECURITY AGENCIES HAVE WARNED: The Secret Albanian operation called "HONOR" launched!)," *Naša Borba*, 09 October 2020, <https://nasaborba.com/bezbednosne-agencije-upozorile/>.



## **The Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures**

The article uses a bombastic title to falsely warn about the alleged launching of the Secret Albanian operation called “HONOR.” Serbian media and Belgrade authorities in several occasions came forward with false claims about secret military operations of Albanians in Kosovo.<sup>26</sup> This article transmits a warning from the Serbian security services about the Secret Albanian operation called “HONOR,” but fails to provide any evidence to support such a claim. It further “justifies” such secret operation as a way to prevent the indictment against the President of the so-called Kosovo Hashim Thaçi and his associate Kadri Veseli before the Special Court in The Hague. The fact that the indictments by the Specialist Prosecutor of the Kosovo Specialist Chambers (KSC) against Thaçi and Veseli were meanwhile confirmed and made public, proves the false character of claims put forward by the article. The second false accusation of the article is that through the secret military operations of Albanians in Kosovo, Pristina intends to again stop negotiations with Belgrade. Such false claim has been in detail deconstructed as disinformation under “Disinformation Alert 2”.

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<sup>26</sup> See for instance <sup>26</sup> “VUČIĆ UPOZORIO: Sprema se novi 17. mart i pogrom Srba (VUČIĆ HAS WARNED: A new March 17 and pogrom of Serbs is being prepared),” Naša Borba, 25 September 2020, <https://nasaborba.com/vucic-upozorio-sprema-se-novi-17-mart-i-pogrom-srba/>.