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

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# KOSOVO DISINFORMATION ALERTS

**SERBIAN MEDIA**  
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## INTRODUCTION

**Kosovo Disinformation Alerts: Serbian Media Monitoring** aims 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 February 2020, Tanjug has published 74, Informer 84, Novosti 87, Kurir 30, B92 77, Politika 70 and Naša Borba 27 articles related to Kosovo.

A careful review shows that the news published during this period by Tanjug, B92 and Politika did not contain any serious disinformation content. However, other preselected media outlets did have quite a large 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 is focused on denying war crimes committed by Serbian armed forces during the 1998-1999 conflict, on miscalculating the number of Serbian refugees who left Kosovo after the war, discrediting the leadership and security institutions of Kosovo, as well as the provided Western assistance, and projecting Kosovo and Montenegro as rogue states.

## DECONSTRUCTION OF THE MOST BLATANT DETECTED DISINFORMATION

### Disinformation Alert 1

***Headline:** Bio optužen za terorizam, prurušio se u ženu da bi napustio KiM, oženjen norvežankom ... Ko je Aljbin Kurti i kako je tekao njegov put od golobradog ekstremiste do novog premijera lažne države Kosovo?! [He was indicted for terrorism, camouflaged himself as a woman to leave KiM [Kosovo], married to a Norwegian ... Who is Albin Kurti and what was his journey from a beardless extremist to the new Prime Minister of the fake state of Kosovo?!] **Informer, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020<sup>1</sup>.***

The article says that in the late 1990s, the beardless extremist was also employed in the cabinet of Adem Demaçi, who was otherwise the political leader of the KLA. Kurti himself was also known as a political representative of the KLA with distinctly nationalistic ideas with a focus on secession of Kosovo from Serbia, which he proudly emphasized. He was in Kosovo during the bombing, and, as speculated, attempted to leave the southern Serbian province in 1999 camouflaged as a woman, but this did not succeed.

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

The aim of this article is to denigrate the personality of Albin Kurti. From August 1998 he used to be the secretary of the Office of the General Political Representative of the Kosovo Liberation Army, Mr. Adem Demaçi, a position that he held until April 27<sup>th</sup>, 1999, when he was arrested by the Serbian Police. He was never camouflaged as a women in an attempt to leave Kosovo. Kurti was transferred to the Požarevac prison on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1999 with the withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosovo.

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<sup>1</sup> Bio optužen za terorizam, prurušio se u ženu da bi napustio KiM, oženjen norvežankom ... Ko je Aljbin Kurti i kako je tekao njegov put od golobradog ekstremiste do novog premijera lažne države Kosovo?!, *Informer*, February 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020,

<https://informer.rs/vesti/politika/490620/bio-optuzen-terorizam-prurusio-zenu-napustio-kim-ozenjen-norvezankom-aljbin-kurti-kako-tekao-njegov-put-golobradog-ekstremiste-novog-premijera-lazne-drzave-kosovo>

On March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2000, The Nish District Court sentenced Kurti to 15 years of imprisonment. At the main trial session of March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2000, the Deputy District Attorney, due to the lack of evidence, amended the indictment by dismissing a previous one, charging Kurti with having committed an association with the goal of terrorism during the state of war. However, in the new indictment, he required punishment for a new crime of endangering the territorial integrity and independence of FR Yugoslavia. Throughout the trial, the prosecutor presented no evidence against Kurti, either to the court, or to the public. Prior to his sentencing, Albin Kurti stated that he does not recognize the court, the prosecutor and his defense attorney<sup>2</sup>. Kurti was released on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2001, as a result of international pressure on the Serbian Government that succeeded the Milošević's regime<sup>3</sup>.

## **Disinformation Alert 2**

**Headline:** *“To je isto kao kad bi ustaše tužile logoraše iz Jasenovca“: Vulin za "Novosti" o tužbi za genocid protiv Srbije koju najavljuje Kurti* [“It is like if ustašas would have sued detainees from Jasenovac“: Vulin for “Novosti” on the genocide lawsuit against Serbia announced by Kurti], **Novosti, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2000<sup>4</sup>**.

Commenting on the announcement of the “so-called government of Kosovo of Albin Kurti to file a genocide lawsuit against our country,” the Serbian Minister of Defense, Aleksandar Vulin

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<sup>2</sup> Fund for Humanitarian Law, Albin Kurti osuđen na petnaest godina zatvora [Albin Kurti punished with fifteen years of imprisonment], Belgrade, March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2000, <http://www.hlc-rdc.org/?p=13305>

<sup>3</sup> Kosovo Albanian Student Leader set free, UPI, Belgrade, December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020,

<https://www.upi.com/Archives/2001/12/08/Kosovo-Albanian-student-leader-set-free/8191007787600/>

<sup>4</sup> “To je isto kao kad bi ustaše tužile logoraše iz Jasenovca“: Vulin za “Novosti” o tužbi za genocid protiv Srbije koju najavljuje Kurti [This is the same as if the Ustashas were suing the arrested of Jasenovac“: Vulin for “Novosti” on the lawsuit against Serbia announced by Kurti], Novosti, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020,

<https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/politika/aktuelno.289.html:845290-To-je-isto-kao-kad-bi-ustase-tuzile-logorase-iz-Jasenovca-Vulin-za-Novosti-o-tuzbi-za-genocid-protiv-Srbije-koju-najavljuje-Kurti>, in the same line of disinformation declarations were given by the Deputy Speaker of the Serbian Parliament, Đorđe Miličević, Miličević reagovao na pretnje Kurtija: On ignoriše srpske žrtve na KiM i egzodus 250.000 Srba! [Miličević reacts on the threats of Kurti: He is ignoring the Serbian victims in Kosovo and Metohija, and the exodus of 250,000 Serbs], <https://informer.rs/vesti/politika/490527/milicevic-reagovao-pretnje-kurtija-ignorise-srpske-zrtve-kim-egzodus-250-000-srba>

declared for “Novosti” that “The sense of Shiptars<sup>5</sup> suing Serbia for genocide is as if Ustashas<sup>6</sup> were suing Jasenovac<sup>7</sup> detainees,” “Vulin recalls that ever since the arrival of the international community, more than 1,000 Serbs have been killed in Kosovo and no one has been held responsible, and more than 200,000 Serbs have been expelled”..., and that “Neither the attempt to create an army nor the genocide lawsuit will go unanswered by Serbia. The aim of Shiptars, who have established the Kosovo army with the tacit consent of NATO, was not to participate in peacekeeping operations. The army is built to wage war, and Shiptars will not attack Albania, Montenegro, or Northern Macedonia. Kosovo's military is a serious threat to the peace in the Balkans” - Vulin said, responding to the announcement of the introduction of compulsory military service, announced by Kurti.

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

The following goals are discernable in these statements of the Serbian Minister of Defense Aleksandar Vulin: Firstly, to call for ethnic hatred, by using the pejorative term “Shiptars” for the Albanians,; secondly, to deny the crimes of Serbia during the 90’s, as well as during the war in Kosovo, by presenting Albanians as Ustashas, and Serbia and the Serbian community in Kosovo as detainees in concentration camps; thirdly, to manipulate the number of Kosovo Serbian Community post-war refugees, and; fourthly, to present the Kosovo Army as a threat to Serbia. With the aim of deconstructing the disinformation we will discuss the three last goals.

#### **a) The denial of the war crimes in Kosovo**

The detailed data gathered based on 31,600 documents, presented in the publication “Kosovo Memory Book” (February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2015) which was prepared by the Humanitarian Law Center based

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<sup>5</sup> Pejorative labeling of Albanians by Serbian extreme nationalists and chauvinists.

<sup>6</sup> The Croatian Revolutionary Movement, which was ruling the Nazi controlled Independent State of Croatia during the Second World War.

<sup>7</sup>Jasenovac Concentration Camp was established by the authorities of the Ustashi ruled Independent State of Croatia. For further information see: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/jasenovac>

in Belgrade, confirm the deaths and disappearances of 13,535 individuals during the war in Kosovo and its immediate aftermath (January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1998 – December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2000). 10,812 of this number were Albanians, 2,197 were Serbs, while 526 victims were Roma, Bosniaks, Montenegrins, and other non-Albanians<sup>8</sup>.

Furthermore, from 1999–2018, the justice institutions of Kosovo have accused 111 people for war crimes: 61 Albanians, 44 Serbs, 5 Montenegrins and 1 Roma. Out of 61 accused Albanians, 34 were convicted, 23 released, 2 are on the run, and 2 are still in the judicial proceedings. Out of 44 accused Serbs, 4 were convicted, 13 released, and 24 are on the run.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, for the crimes committed in Kosovo the Serbian justice institutions have convicted so far 17 Serbs, who during the war were either soldiers or police officers, but almost none of them belonged to the commanding hierarchy, while at the International Tribunal for War Crimes on Yugoslavia were convicted six Serbian high ranking representatives<sup>10</sup>.

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

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, with a very unlikely trend for that number to increase during the 90's.<sup>11</sup> These figures project a number of, at most, 75,000 Serbs that left Kosovo after the war. Kosovo Serbs fled from Kosovo because of two major

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<sup>8</sup> Humanitarian Law Center: 31,600 documents undoubtedly confirm death or disappearance of 13,535 individuals during war in Kosovo, Belgrade, January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2015, [http://www.hlc-rdc.org/?page\\_id=14390&lang=de](http://www.hlc-rdc.org/?page_id=14390&lang=de). The Data Base of the Kosovo Memory Book is available online at [www.kosovomemorybook.org](http://www.kosovomemorybook.org)

<sup>9</sup> 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>

<sup>10</sup> Blakaj: Në Kosovë për krime luftime janë dënuar gjashtë serbë, në Serbi për krime të kryera në Kosovë janë dënuar 15 serbë [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/>

<sup>11</sup> 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](https://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi_document_id_53.pdf)

reasons, namely the fear from violent revenge by the returning Kosovo Albanians, as well as from the implementation of the NATO – Serbia Military Technical Agreement of June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1999<sup>12</sup>, which obliged the complete withdrawal of Belgrade’s security and military apparatus from Kosovo, at a time when not a small number of people in that apparatus were the Kosovo Serbian residents, who, as a consequence, very likely left with their families.

### **c) The projection of Kosovo Army as a threat to Serbia**

Kosovo’s Security Forces – “Kosovo’s Army” is the smallest in the entire region in terms of numbers of personnel, budget and weaponry. In this regard, it should be mentioned that Serbia’s manpower strength is 30,000 active and 50,000 in reserve, with military budget of 832,088,523 €<sup>13</sup>, in comparison to Kosovo that has manpower of 5,000 active and 3,000 corps in reserve, with the budget of 58,600,000 €<sup>14</sup>, at a time when Serbia also has an incomparable supremacy in airpower, armored weaponry and artillery, that Kosovo does not possess at all.

### **Disinformation Alert 3**

***Headline: “Majmun ušao u tenak”! Opasno ludilo u Prištini – Aljbin Kurti se sprema za rat protiv Srbije! [A Monkey has Entered the Stage! A Dangerous Insanity in Prishtina – Albin Kurti Prepares for the War Against Serbia], Informer, February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020<sup>15</sup>***

The Serbian Minister of Defense, Aleksandar Vulin declared that “Kurti now wants to force Serbs living in Kosmet [Kosovo] to join the army of Shiptar terrorists. This is not the first time, Ustashes

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<sup>12</sup> Military Technical Agreement between the International Security Force (“KFOR”) and the Governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia, June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1999, <https://www.nato.int/kosovo/docu/a990609a.htm>

<sup>13</sup> Serbia Military Strength (2020), [https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country\\_id=serbia](https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country_id=serbia)

<sup>14</sup> Law on the Budget of the Republic of Kosovo, 2019, <https://mf.rks-gov.net/desk/inc/media/D8042858-C783-42CF-BB4F-4AF0BF0E8E44.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> “Majmun ušao u tenak”! Opasno ludilo u Prištini – Aljbin Kurti se sprema za rat protiv Srbije!, Informer, February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020, <https://informer.rs/vesti/politika/490724/majmun-usao-tenak-opasno-ludilo-pristini-aljbin-kurti-sprema-rat-protiv-srbije>

have dressed the Serbian children as well in Ustasha uniforms,” and he continued “At the same time, Kurti has announced that he would introduce a mandatory military service and significantly increase the budget for the "Kosovo Army" and Police. His true intentions are perhaps best illustrated by the fact that he proposed for the “Defense Minister, Anton Quni, a KLA terrorist who was recently convicted of killing six Serbs.

In February 2016, Quni was sentenced by the Niš District Court for the 1998 murder of six Serb soldiers in Koshare [Kosovo–Albanian Border]. He, along with seven other Albanians who were members of KLA, were tried in absentia. Each of them was sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment.

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

#### **a) Projecting Kosovo Security Force – the Kosovo Army, as a terrorist organization of Shiptars [Albanians in pejorative terms].**

Minister Vulin compares Kosovo Security Force that was developed under the supervision and support of NATO<sup>16</sup> and its key member states, namely, the United States, Great Britain, France and Germany, with Nazi supported military of the Croatian Independent State during the Second World War, and calls it a terrorist organization, which tells a lot about the public discourse of the Serbian Government on Kosovo.

#### **b) Labeling of the Minister of Defense of Kosovo, Mr. Anton Quni as a KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army) terrorist**

The Minister of Defense of Kosovo, Anton Quni, was a high ranking KLA officer who was one of the commanders in the Koshare battle that started on April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1999, and effectively lasted until June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1999. In this battle there were 115 KLA fighters, and 108 Serbian soldiers, including a

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<sup>16</sup> See for example NATO Advisory and Liaison Team, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_144933.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_144933.htm)

number of officers and non-commissioned officers who were killed.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, Kosovo Liberation Army was not categorized by any international organization as a terrorist group, including the Resolution 1244 (1999) that provided for establishment of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo and deployment of the NATO-led peace enforcement force (KFOR)<sup>18</sup>. Thus, calling Minister Quni as a KLA terrorist, and his sentencing by the District Court in Niš, are a cheap propaganda that tells a lot about Serbian transitional justice.

#### **Disinformation Alert 4**

***Headline: Ubice sede u Prištinskoj vladi!! Vulin: Šta srbi da očekuju, kad je Kurti prvi dan na funkciji odao poštu teroristi? [Killers sit in the Pristina Government! Vulin: What should the Serbs expect when Kurti paid tribute to terrorists on his first day in office?], Informer, February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020<sup>19</sup>***

In an interview given to the Belgrade based TV Pink, parts of which were published by Informer, among other things, the Serbian Minister of Defense asked “what is the message send to the Serbs by a man [Prime-Minister AlbinKurti] who, on the first day of his post, paid tribute to Adem Jashari, a criminal, a man who killed members of his family because they wanted to surrender with their children, and not to die, because they were not terrorists.

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

The most celebrated KLA commander, Adem Jashari, together with his entire family were killed after a three days siege by the Serbian Military and Police forces, at their house in the village of Prekaz. In this fight twenty members of Jashari’s family were killed, together with other 30

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<sup>17</sup> Ispovest srpskih vojnika koji su se pre 20 godina borili na Košarama, Danas, April 9, 2019, <https://www.danas.rs/drustvo/ispovest-srpskih-vojnika-koji-su-pre-20-godina-borili-na-kosarama/>

<sup>18</sup> See: Resolution 1244 (1999) / adopted by the Security Council at its 4011th meeting, on 10 June 1999, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/274488?ln=en>

<sup>19</sup> Ubice sede u prištinskoj vladi! Vulin: Šta Srbi da očekuju, kad je Kurti prvi dan na funkciji odao poštu teroristi? Informer, February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020, <https://informer.rs/vesti/politika/491012/ubice-sede-pristinskoj-vladi-vulin-sta-srbi-ocekuju-kad-kurti-prvi-dan-funkciji-odao-postu-teroristi-video>

persons of his wider family and friends<sup>20</sup>. Adem Jashari was decreed as the Hero of Kosovo, on November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2004, by the Kosovo's President, Ibrahim Rugova.

Goran Radosavljević, the commander of the operation of Serbian Special Forces against Jashari's, declared that Adem Jashari used women, children and the elderly as hostages, whereas the only survivor, Adem's niece Besarta Jashari, the daughter of Hamëz Jashari, claimed that the policemen had threatened her with knife and ordered her to say that her uncle (Adem Jashari) had killed everyone who wanted to surrender<sup>21</sup>. Furthermore, in the year 2014, Goran Radosavljevic was appointed as a member of the Executive Committee of the Serbian Progressive Party of the Serbian leader Aleksandar Vučić, and he was banned from entering the United States by the State Department because of his alleged involvement in human rights violations in Kosovo<sup>22</sup>.

### **Disinformation Alert 5**

***Headline:** Srbi, čujte! Sprema se haos na Kosovu, cilj je spasavanje Mila! Evo dogovora Tačija i Đukanovića [Listen Serbs! Chaos is being prepared in Kosovo, the goal is to save Milo! Here is the deal between Thaçi and Djukanović], **Naša Borba, February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020**<sup>23</sup>*

This article claims that a part of the international community which does not want stability in the Balkans, will try again to open a new conflict in Kosovo and Metohija in the following period, in order to divert attention from Montenegro and from the great national unity. This is reportedly the plan of one from the most powerful countries in the EU, and it is suspected that the same

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<sup>20</sup> For deeper information see: Heike Krieger (Ed.), The Kosovo Conflict and International Law: An Analytical Documentation 1974-1999, Cambridge University Press, July, 2014

<sup>21</sup> Za Albance superheroj, za srbe zločinac, Serbedzija odbio da ga glumi, Ko je famozni gerilac iz Prekaza, March 3<sup>rd</sup>. 2019, Expreso.rs, <https://www.espreso.rs/vesti/kosovo/358503/za-albance-superheroj-za-srbe-zlocinac-serbedzija-odbio-da-ga-glumi-ko-je-famozni-gerilac-iz-prekaza>

<sup>22</sup> US Bars Serbian Ex-Commander Over Kosovo Crimes, Balkan insight, December 19, 2018, <https://balkaninsight.com/2018/12/19/usa-bans-entry-for-ex-serbian-commander-over-kosovo-crimes-12-19-2018/>

<sup>23</sup> Srbi čujte! Sprema se haos na Kosovu, cilj je spasavanje Mila! Evo dogovora Tačija i Đukanovića, Naša Borba, February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020, <https://nasaborba.com/srbi-cujte-sprema-se-haos-na-kosovu-cilj-je-spasavanje-mila-evo-dogovora-tacija-i-djukanovica/>

state persuaded Pristina to impose taxes on Serbia. Reportedly, much of this is being done, and the aim is to open up a new burning point in Kosovo and Metohija, in order to force Serbia to isolate itself from what is happening in Montenegro, and to try to break the Serbian Orthodox Church. That is why Kosovo and Metohija is ideal in their scenario of trying to weaken the influence of the SOC in Montenegro. By playing that card, they estimate that there may be a twitch in the Church itself, for wiping out the blade of the popular discontent in Montenegro through an artificial crisis.

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

The aim of this article is to spread fear through conspiracies that Kosovo and Montenegro are planning the weakening of the Serbian Orthodox Church, at the price of opening a new conflict in Kosovo, in order to shift Serbia's focus from Podgorica to Prishtina. The simple question to be posed in this case is: Which country will damage itself so badly, for causing internal problems to another country? Furthermore, the article claims that an EU country stands behind this plan, which is a non-sense, given that the efforts of the West in the region are focused on preserving peace and stability, and on fostering prosperity. Furthermore, the opening of a conflict in a place such as Kosovo, where the Western countries are involved so heavily in security and development, has nothing to do with the policies of EU and NATO, and is against their cooperative and integrative goals for the region.