



Genocide Watch
The Alliance Against Genocide

Country Report: Kosovo November 2020

Kosovo was an autonomous region of Serbia in Former Yugoslavia. Kosovar Albanians held leading positions in the economy and government. After Tito's death, Yugoslavia disintegrated and Slobodan Milosević became the President of Serbia. He stripped Kosovo of its autonomous status. As a result, thousands of Kosovar Albanians lost their jobs in government, police, media, and educational institutions to Serbians. In response, Kosovar Albanians established a non-violent separatist movement and began boycotting public institutions. Albanians built their own parallel political and social institutions, including schools and hospitals.

From 1995 to 1999, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), an ethnic Albanian paramilitary organization, fought the Serbian Army and militias for Kosovo's independence. Serbian forces used genocidal massacres of entire villages as a terror tactic to drive over 800,000 Kosovar Albanians into Albania. The KLA also committed war crimes and crimes against humanity against ethnic Serbs who lived in Kosovo. They abducted, murdered, and displaced many Serbs, Roma, and Kosovar-Albanians. The Kosovo War from 1998 to 1999 resulted in over 13,500 deaths.

In March 1999, NATO intervened with airstrikes targeting Serbia. Using force without U.N. Security Council authorization, NATO justified its action as a U.N. Charter Chapter 8 regional organization intervention to stop the genocide and forced displacement of Kosovar Albanians. Serbia quickly surrendered and the U.N. established an interim government in Kosovo after the Serbian Army was expelled.

The Republic of Kosovo declared its independence in 2008. Serbia still does not recognize Kosovo's independence, and tensions between the two countries remain high. Within Kosovo, relations between Serbs and Kosovar Albanians remain strained. 98 UN member states (50%) and 22 (80%) EU states recognize Kosovo.

Some of the atrocities committed during the Kosovo War by Serb perpetrators were tried by The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. In 2015, the Kosovo Specialist Chambers were established to try crimes committed by KLA leaders.

The European Union facilitated peace talks between Kosovo and Serbia until they faltered in 2018 when Kosovo placed a 100% import tax on Serbian imports in retaliation for Serbia's campaign to hinder Kosovo's international recognition. In 2020, the tax was lifted by Albin Kurti, who became Prime Minister, promising to foster EU-Kosovo relations. However, only two months into his term, a no-confidence vote in the Kosovo parliament dismissed Kurti from office.

In September 2020, U.S. President Trump brokered an "economic normalization" agreement between Serbia and Kosovo.

In June 2020, the President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaçi, and several other former KLA members were indicted by The Kosovo Specialist Chambers in The Hague. Thaçi resigned as President of Kosovo in November 2020 and went to the Hague, where he pled not guilty.

As a result of ethnic tensions in Kosovo and the potential risk for further conflicts, Genocide Watch considers Kosovo to be at Stage 6, Polarization.

Genocide Watch recommends:

- Serbia should recognize Kosovo as an independent state and open full relations with it.
- Kosovo and Serbia should be admitted as independent states by the European Union.
- Kosovo should adopt constitutional protections for minorities and enforce them.