

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

PC.DEL/733/23

1 June 2023

ENGLISH

Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MR. MAXIM BUYAKEVICH, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1425th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

1 June 2023

On the escalation of anti-Serb violence in Kosovo and Metohija

Mr. Chairperson,

We are deeply concerned about the latest surge in tensions in the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija (Republic of Serbia). The persecution and violence perpetrated by Kosovo Albanian radicals against the native Serb population has brought the situation to the brink of an uncontrollable hot phase, which threatens the security of the entire Balkan region. The Kosovo security forces' takeover of administrative buildings in the municipalities of Zvečan, Zubin Potok and Leposavić on 26 May went hand in hand with a brutal crackdown on Serbs who were peacefully protesting. Tear gas, truncheons, stun grenades and, later, on 29 May, even firearms were deployed. Dozens of Kosovo Serbs had to seek medical attention.

This round of escalation followed on from the pseudo-elections held on 23 April, which were ignored and boycotted by 96.5 per cent of voters. Yet, mayors "elected" by just over 3 per cent of the electorate, in reality self-appointed mayors, claim to represent the entire population of these municipalities. But the Kosovo authorities' patrons did not blink at such "democratic elections". The comments made – apparently just for show – by a number of Western governments were, in good old tradition, not taken on board by "Prime Minister" Albin Kurti.

Things came to a head on 29 May. In the morning, special forces from Priština in armoured vehicles blocked off the forcibly occupied municipal administration buildings. Efforts by the NATO Kosovo Force (KFOR) to prevent direct contact between the Kosovo "guardians of law and order" and the local civilian population proved unsuccessful. Exploiting the confusion, a Kosovo Albanian special forces soldier opened targeted fire from an automatic weapon, seriously injuring one of the Serbs, which incurred the demonstrators' rightful wrath. Thus, once again, a provocative step by the Kosovo Albanian security forces was the cause of the escalation of violence.

We call upon the Western countries that have an influence on the Kosovo authorities to take real, rather than feigned steps to make their charges see reason and to stop putting the blame for incidents in the province exclusively on the Serbs. Substantive action aimed at de-escalation is necessary. The main objective remains the establishment of a Community of Serb Municipalities. The Kosovo authorities signed

up to this obligation ten years ago under guarantees – as we recall – from Brussels. The international legal framework for finding a mutually acceptable and viable solution for a Kosovo settlement continues to be United Nations Security Council resolution 1244.

Thank you for your attention.