



**KCSS**  
Kosovar Centre for Security Studies

# MULTIETHNICITY DESTRUCTION TENDENCIES

MASSIVE RESIGNATIONS OF SERBIAN MEMBERS  
FROM THE KOSOVO SECURITY FORCE  
AND SERBIA'S ROLE





**KCSS**  
Kosovar Centre for Security Studies

# MULTIETHNICITY DESTRUCTION TENDENCIES

MASSIVE RESIGNATIONS OF SERBIAN MEMBERS  
FROM THE KOSOVO SECURITY FORCE  
AND SERBIA'S ROLE

**Publisher:** Kosovar Centre for Security Studies

**Author:** Shpat Balaj and Taulant Boshnjaku

**Internal Review:** Donika Marku and Donika Emini

© All rights reserved by the Kosovar Centre for Security Studies. Intellectual property rights are protected by Law on copyright and related rights.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical or otherwise, without the written permission of the publisher.

Use for commercial purposes of all reports published by the Kosovar Centre for Security Studies is not permitted without the written consent of the Kosovar Centre for Security Studies. Please contact: [info@qkss.org](mailto:info@qkss.org) or +381 38221420

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The pressure on Kosovo Security Force (KSF) members of the Serbian community and their massive withdrawal constitute one of Serbia's most brutal interferences on Kosovo's state institutions. These interferences aim at destroying the multiethnicity and achievements made so far by the KSF. The results of our research show that the plan for the withdrawal of over 60 Serbian KSF members was conducted as part of a well thought military and psychological operation (psyops), arranged by members of military intelligence in Belgrade and Vranje. Blackmails against these KSF members have been used with this intention, with threats to terminate pensions of their immediate and extended family members in Serbia, block their entry into Serbia and label them as "traitors" and "janissaries".

These actions have resolved any dilemma that the Serbian political parties in Kosovo would ever support constitutional changes for the transformation of the KSF. The only remaining option is the KSF's transition within a transitional period through amendments of law.

### Key findings:

- Serbia has committed an aggression against the KSF institution by exerting violent influence for the withdrawal of almost 50% of Serbian members from the KSF, a percentage that is likely to grow in the coming months unless the appropriate measures are taken by the Kosovar institutions and international partners;
- Threats of terminating the salaries/pension schemes of close and extended family members residing in Serbia and prohibition of entry into Serbia were used as means of pressure against the Serb KSF members. Psychological pressure was exerted, and special methods were used, as these members were told that there would soon be a war between Serbia and Kosovo and that they would "end up fighting against their own brothers of the Serbian Army";
- In order to yield results, a special military-psychological operation was prepared by Serbian political leaders. President Vučić, the Defence Minister Vulin, the Head of the Parliamentary Committee for Kosovo Drecun, and members of the Serbian List party within the territory of Kosovo have played a direct role in the operation;
- The operation has mainly targeted Serb KSF members in the region of Anamorava, namely members of the 1st Battalion of the Rapid Reaction Brigade (RRB) in Gjilan/Gnjilane. These are the first KSF members from the Serbian minority community who have shown good results in their engagements;
- The damage caused by this operation is both political and institutional. Large investments put forward for the education, career development, wages etc. of these members have all been undermined.

## INTRODUCTION

The Kosovo Security Force (KSF) has become a topic of public debates due to ongoing efforts to upgrade its mandate. Confusion has spread among the public as it remains unclear whether those debates were just political calculations or whether the Kosovo institutions, in cooperation with international partners, are indeed taking concrete steps towards transforming the country. Controversial statements and interpretations of the matter by local and international stakeholders and the diminished debate for a short period of time have all contributed to the complexity of the situation. On the other hand, the Serb community of Kosovo is drenched in confusion more than anyone else is. Finding themselves between two opposing stands, the Serb community in Kosovo continues to face uncertainty. Being under external pressure from Serbia and dependent on their representatives in the Kosovo Parliament, the Serbian List, whose activity is conducted by Belgrade, the Serb community integrated in Kosovo institutions is gradually being forced to take steps back in their career and position in Kosovar society.

Lack of the Serbian community's trust towards the KSF, their lack of support for the upgrade of KSF mandate as well as the ongoing threats and direct assaults against the Serb KSF members have compelled over 60 members of the community to resign from the KSF in 2018. This wave of resignations has caused a wide debate in both Kosovo and Serbia, having negative implications and jeopardizing the dialogue on normalization of relations between the two countries. Assaults and threats against the KSF Serbian members, supported by the Serbian government, indicate deficiency of will of the latter to normalize its relations with Kosovo. These operations were condemned by Kosovo institutions; however, the failure to prevent the phenomenon has indicated the failure to extend their authority among the Serbian-majority municipalities in Kosovo.

This paper aims at analysing and summarising the sequence of events that have led to the resignations of KSF Serb members. It presents actions taken by KSF to ensure sustainable integration of the Serbian community in this institution and its future objectives in this regard. In addition, the paper offers several recommendations which would ensure sustainability in the process of integrating the Serbian community in the KSF, for the addressing of which a wider inclusion of various stakeholders has been envisaged.

## SERBIAN COMMUNITY AND THE KSF IN 2018

Ideally, diversity should not be a stand-alone plan. After all, diversity within the KSF should not be seen from the viewpoint of social justice, but rather that of quality improvement. The stance of the Serbian state and the Kosovo Serb community representatives in the KSF aims to create an unsuitable environment for the Serbian community individuals willing to become part of it. It implies an open tendency by the state of Serbia to diminish one of the already proven KSF values, namely the provision of equal opportunities and facilitations to all the communities to become an integral part of the Force. The KSF has been putting constant efforts to back what it stands for – ethnic diversity. For many years, the KSF leaders have considered the integration of the Serbian community as one of their top priorities and challenges.<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of 2018, the KSF numbered a total of 130 Serbian community members, who constituted the largest number of non-majority community members in the Force,<sup>2</sup> namely 55% of the total minority communities members. Such high level of representation of a minority community within the KSF is a big achievement, proving the will and the readiness of the institution to shape up the principles it was established upon.

The current legal framework guarantees equal access to the KSF for all ethnicities. Among others, in order to ensure a comprehensive inclusion, the KSF cooperates with the Office for Community Affairs (OCA), a governmental body operating within the Republic of Kosovo Prime Minister's Office. To facilitate the minority communities' integration process, particularly that of the Kosovo Serbian community, the KSF, unlike other security institutions (e.g. Kosovo Police), does not oblige its members to possess knowledge of both official languages in Kosovo (Albanian and Serbian) and all members enjoy the right to carry out their daily tasks in the language they speak.<sup>3</sup>

In 2017, the Ministry for KSF (MKSF) has adopted the "Recruitment Plan for the Active Part only for Non-Majority Communities" (hereinafter: the Plan), whereby KSF mobile teams have received applications from non-majority communities' members in areas where they reside.<sup>4</sup> Recruitments according to the Plan have enabled each KSF unit to reflect multi-ethnicity henceforth. In the same year, aiming to contribute to non-majority communities integration, the MKSF has drafted and adopted the "Strategy for Integration of Non-majority Communities (2017-2020) in the MKSF/KSF" (hereinafter: the Strategy) and the Action Plan for its implementation.<sup>5</sup> The adoption of the Plan and the Strategy for the non-majority communities integration demonstrates the KSF willingness to further develop the integration process.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ćeku, A. (2013). Minorities, KSF Challenge. Available at: <https://telegrafi.com/pakicat-sfida-e-fsk-se/>

<sup>2</sup> Shala, I. (2018). This many Serb members are in the KSF, of whom 40 have offered resignation. Available at: <http://lajmi.net/kaq-pjesetare-se-be-ka-ne-fsk-prej-tyre-40-kane-ofruar-doreheqje>

<sup>3</sup> Emini, D. (2014) "Inclusion or Exclusion - Minorities in the Security Sector in Post-Independence Kosovo". Available at: [http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/P%C3%ABr-fshirje\\_apo\\_p%C3%ABrjashtim\\_Minoritetet\\_n%C3%AB\\_Sektorin\\_e\\_Siguris%C3%ABn%C3%AB\\_Kosov%C3%ABn\\_e\\_Pas-pavar%C3%ABsis%C3%AB\\_8050\\_00.pdf](http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/P%C3%ABr-fshirje_apo_p%C3%ABrjashtim_Minoritetet_n%C3%AB_Sektorin_e_Siguris%C3%ABn%C3%AB_Kosov%C3%ABn_e_Pas-pavar%C3%ABsis%C3%AB_8050_00.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> MKSF Annual Report (2017). Gjendet në: [http://www.mksf-ks.org/repository/docs/Raporti\\_2017\\_MFSK\\_\\_\\_final\\_fare\\_26122017.pdf](http://www.mksf-ks.org/repository/docs/Raporti_2017_MFSK___final_fare_26122017.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

According to the Strategy, the main objectives in this regard are: 1) Increase of the communities' representation in the MKSF and KSF for up to 10%; 2) Representation of non-majority communities in the rank structure; and 3) Increase of the KSF visibility and activities among non-majority communities.

The MKSF so far was successful in implementing the Strategy. In 2017, the representation of non-majority communities has increased for over 10%, thus accomplishing one of the main objectives of the Strategy within a one-year period. The achievement of this success was rendered possible by integrating 61 Serb community members into the KSF in 2017 alone.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the implementation of the Strategy objectives is a strategic priority for the MKSF and KSF.

Over the years, apart from developing the legal framework and other mechanisms for the Serbian community integration into the KSF, the Force has also renewed its efforts to approach the community in general. The KSF has been close to them in various projects, which directly involved it addressing daily issues faced by the community. In order to evaluate the level of respect for their rights and that of potential challenges, as well as contribute to the development of a sustainable communication, the KSF has over the past three years held regular meetings with its minority communities' members as well as citizens of municipalities populated by these communities.<sup>7</sup> Among others, the KSF has participated in over five different projects in the Serb-majority municipalities in 2017 alone, contributing to the improvement of infrastructure by directly involving in road repairs and constructions, schools restorations and humanitarian activities for families in need.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> MKSF Annual Reports (2015, 2016 dhe 2017)

<sup>8</sup> MKSF (2017). Military Civilian cooperation FSK 2017. Available at: [http://www.mksf-ks.org/repository/docs/Revista\\_e\\_BCU\\_2017\\_\\_\\_Shqip.pdf](http://www.mksf-ks.org/repository/docs/Revista_e_BCU_2017___Shqip.pdf)



## THE WAY AHEAD AND CHALLENGES OF THE SERBIAN COMMUNITY INTEGRATION IN THE KSF

Integration of the Serb community has been one of the most challenging processes for the KSF. With the intensification of the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue and the approach of the date for reaching the so-called final agreement between the two countries, the challenges have increased over the past 12 months. Furthermore, the Belgrade efforts to diminish all the achievements made within this institution to date have become alarming. Such efforts include the abuse of the current Serb community in Kosovo, which is still found in the midst of demands and needs for integration into Kosovo institutions and on the other hand remains loyal to the Serbian state, which puts them in diametrically opposed positions. The chronology of events further shows that the Serbian government has used aggressive measures over the past year, such as physical threats and various blackmails, in order to force the Serbian members of the Force to resign from it.

By the end of 2017, the houses of two Serbian KSF members in Zubin Potok were attacked with explosive devices.<sup>9</sup> According to all assumptions, the attacks were related to their engagement in the KSF and the country's institutions have considered these as attempts to impede the democratisation and comprehensive approach of the Kosovar society, already reflected within the KSF.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, it was not by chance that these attacks happened in Zubin Potok, given that most Serb KSF members originate from this municipality. These are mostly members of this community who come from the municipality villages that have remained isolated and politically stigmatized due to their "disloyalty" to the Serbian List in Kosovo, a party operating as a puppet of the Serbian President's Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) in Belgrade.

Similar attacks that are part of the blackmails and attacks campaign against the Serb KSF members have occurred in 2018. Earlier this year, the KSF Serbs from Zubin Potok received another threat. A message signed by the so-called "Northern Army" (Severna Armija) warned them that KSF membership is a treason against the Serbian state and that Kosovo institutions will not be able to protect them from the consequences they will face if they continue to be part of the KSF.<sup>11</sup> The fact that these threats were signed on behalf of this phantom group shows that the northern part of the country, even after the integration of Serbs into local institutions, is still potentially run by various illegal structures aiming to challenge the rule of law in the country. Namely, they aspire to disable the security institutions from extending their authority upon Serb-majority municipalities, thus contributing to the creation of a negative image of local institutions being incapable of extending their power across the ent-

<sup>9</sup> KOHA.net. (2017). Police gives details on the attack of the Serbian community members of KSF in Zubin Potok. Available at: <https://www.koha.net/kronike/59752/policia-jep-detaje-per-sulmin-ndaj-pjesetareve-serbe-te-fsk-se-ne-zubin-potok/>

<sup>10</sup> MKSF. (2017). Attacks on the Serbian community members of KSF in the Northern part of Kosovo are punishable criminal acts . Available at: [http://www.mksf-ks.org/?page=1,708,2347#.W3QI\\_OgzaUm](http://www.mksf-ks.org/?page=1,708,2347#.W3QI_OgzaUm)

<sup>11</sup> Kallxo.com. (2018). Threatening messages addressed to Serbian community members of KSF in Zubin Potok. Available at: <https://kallxo.com/mesazhe-ker-cenuese-ndaj-pjesetareve-serbe-te-fsk-se-ne-zubin-potok/>

ire territory of the country.

Meanwhile, it is important to analyse the narration used in the threatening message, which was directly based on Serbia's narrative regarding rejection of the KSF. In it, the KSF is presented as a threat to the state of Serbia and Kosovo Serb citizens. The letter also draws a parallel between the KSF and the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), considering it a successor of the latter, which in the late 1990s had fought against the Serbian Army and paramilitary forces. This line of attitudes also appears to be present at the highest leadership levels in Serbia, where attitudes and approaches are the same with those of individuals or groups committing such criminal acts in Kosovo. In July 2018, the President of Serbia stated, *"I would not want a Serb to shoot at another Serb"*, referring to Serb KSF members.<sup>12</sup> Such intentional statements contribute to the isolation of an entire community in Kosovo, causing insecurity by distorting the true goals of Kosovo's institutions, and the KSF specifically. To add to the blackmails and the spread of fear, the Serbian officials stated that those who joined the KSF should be condemned by the Serbian state for their participation in foreign armed formations.<sup>13</sup> Following those statements, five Serb community KSF members were detained at the border with Serbia to be interrogated about their activities in the KSF.<sup>14</sup>

In 2018, continuous pressure upon Serb KSF members became unbearable for them, showing its first results. Consequently, only in the first part of this year more than 60 Serb KSF members have filed their requests for resignation from the institution. The MKSF considers that these members were well integrated and diligent at their work, and that their resignation comes only from continuous blackmail against them by the Serbian criminal circles within Kosovo and the state of Serbia.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, Serbia supported their resignations and encouraged new withdrawals, considering this as a direct obstacle for the formation of the Kosovo Army, which according to them, *"will only serve to incite conflicts"*.<sup>16</sup> While this group of Serb KSF members is being used for political gains, they themselves have been reluctant to make any personal statements on the matter. One of them, on conditions of anonymity, stated that it was a collective decision and that remaining out of such a decision was next to impossible. According to him, they were forced to leave the KSF due to constant pressure on the border with Serbia and frequent threats they faced.<sup>17</sup> Among others, their departure paves the path for socio-economic problems as well. Though there is no information about the financial status of the resigned members and their professional career outside the KSF, some of them have raised concerns about their lack of income and expressed scepticism about other employment opportunities.<sup>18</sup>

Following the withdrawal of 40 Serb KSF members, the Kosovo Police undertook an action

<sup>12</sup> KOHA.net. (2018). Vucic on Serbian community members of KSF: I would not want a Serb to shoot at another Serb. Available at: <https://www.koha.net/arberi/103984/vuciq-per-serbet-e-fsk-se-nuk-do-te-donim-qe-nje-serb-te-gjuante-ndaj-nje-serbi/>

<sup>13</sup> KOHA.net (2018). Gjuriq threatens Serbian community members of KSF with imprisonment. Available at: <https://www.koha.net/arberi/89344/gjuriq-ker-cenon-me-burgim-serbet-qe-sherbejne-ne-ushtrine-e-kosoves/>

<sup>14</sup> Gazeta Express (2018). Serbian minister: We did not arrest members of KSF, we only interrogated them. Available at: <https://www.gazetaexpress.com/lajme/ministri-serb-usharet-e-fsk-se-nuki-arrestuam-vetem-i-morem-ne-pyetje-530978/>

<sup>15</sup> Zeri.info. (2018). Belgrade forces Serbian community to withdrawal from KSF. Available at: <http://zeri.info/aktuale/206395/beogradi-i-detyron-serbet-te-largohen-nga-fsk-ja/>

<sup>16</sup> Telegrafi.com. (2018). Gjuriq: With the withdrawal of Serbian members of KSF we prevent the formation of Kosovo Army. Available at: <https://telegrafi.com/gjuriq-largimin-e-serbeve-nga-fsk-ja-pengojme-formimin-e-ushtrise-se-kosoves/>

<sup>17</sup> Telegrafi.com. (2018). Serbian member: I was forced to leave KSF. Available at: <https://telegrafi.com/pjesetari-serb-fsk-se-u-detyrova-ta-braktis-fsk-ne/>

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

arresting five Kosovo Serb nationals suspected of threatening and blackmailing the KSF members.<sup>19</sup> Immediately after their arrest, Serbia institution leaders lined up to defend their propaganda, demanding the immediate release of the detained. Though such a situation violates Kosovo's legislation and should be resolved within Kosovo, official Belgrade threatened to cease the Kosovo-Serbia talks if the arrested suspects were not released.<sup>20</sup> Kosovo's institutions, just like the resigned KSF members, facing pressure, succumbed to Serbia's demands and released the five suspects from detention.

However, the KSF seems to be committed to accomplishing its Strategy objectives. Working towards this aim, the KSF plans to replace the resigned members with others from the Serb community. According to them, many are interested to join, in spite of constant pressure they face.<sup>21</sup>

Kosovo's institutions should seek the support of the international presence in the country in order to prepare a strategy for further integration of the Serb community into the KSF structures and stipulate the measures to be taken to prevent any future mass resignations. On the other hand, given Serbia's approximation to the European Union (EU), the latter should be more decisive in their approach towards the problem. The EU should condition Serbia's membership with non-interference in Kosovo's institutions and support Kosovo in transforming the KSF, be this with or without any constitutional changes. However, in absence of such a support, the Kosovo Government must move forward with the KSF transition process, given that there are indeed no legal or constitutional barriers for its transformation.<sup>22</sup> Legal amendments that would make the transformation possible are a legitimate process in a democratic state and interfering with such a process can be deemed an intrusion of the citizens' will. The Kosovo government must be clear in promoting this positive process for the country, which benefits all its citizens and beyond, given it increases the security level in the country and the region.

The KSF transformation is going to highlight the need for capacity building. This must be done in compliance with the current budgetary restrictions, without damaging other processes and institutions and with a detailed planning for the coming years. Along with the need for capacity building and further professional development, we will have increased demands among the Serbian community to integrate in the institution. Thus, their level of representation within the KSF structures may see a much higher increase compared to the current situation. With the increase of the number of Serb KSF members, the level of Serb community trust in the institution would also increase inevitably.

The civil society could play a key role in this regard, by promoting the benefits arising from the transformation process and monitoring the process of eventual concessions. It is important that civil society organizations co-operate and support local organizations in Serb-majority municipalities and involve them in the process of monitoring and raising the community's awareness about the importance of their involvement in Kosovo's institutions.

<sup>19</sup> DW. (2018). Five Serbs from Kosovo were arrested and immediately released . Available at: <https://www.dw.com/sq/arrestohen-e-lirohen-pesë-serbë-të-kosovës/a-44603540>

<sup>21</sup> Klankosova.tv. (2018). Berisha: Withdrawn Serbian members of KSF will be replaced with other individuals from Serbian community. Available at: <http://klankosova.tv/berisha-serbet-e-larguar-nga-fsk-do-te-zevendesoheshin-me-serbe-te-tjere-11fe/>

<sup>22</sup> Muharremi. R. (2016) - Kosovo Security Force is an Army - Legal Arguments. Available at: [http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/KSFArmy\\_AL-B\\_664971.pdf](http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/KSFArmy_AL-B_664971.pdf)

Resolute address of the matter is indispensable for the proper functioning of institutions. External interference on Kosovo's institutions is a dangerous phenomenon for the state, as such, jeopardizes the state-building process. Kosovo should raise this issue at an international level and prioritise such issues in Kosovo-Serbia negotiations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Kosovo Government, in co-operation with the international presence in Kosovo, should design a plan to prevent further withdrawals of Serb KSF members;
- The Quint States should condition Serbia in the context of EU integration with regard to its on-going activities to the detriment of the KSF and other Kosovo institutions;
- The resigned KSF members should be subjected to KSF disciplinary procedures, given the contractual obligations of the KSF members;
- The MKSF should recruit new Serbian community members as a counter-measure to Serbia's actions and fill in the vacancies;
- The Kosovo government should focus on a KSF transition process by way of legal amendments, now that hopes that constitutional changes can be implemented have been lost;
- The Civil Society Organizations should, in coordination with central and local institutions, organize regular meetings and activities with the Serbian community on the security situation in the country;
- The Civil Society Organizations should support local community-based organizations in the Serb-majority municipalities and, in partnership with them, organize trainings and activities aimed at enabling individuals from the Serbian community to work in Kosovo's public institutions.

Katalogimi në botim – (CIP)  
Biblioteka Kombëtare e Kosovës“Pjetër Bogdani”

355.3:35(496.51)(048)

Balaj, Shpat

Multiethnicity destruction tendencies: massive resignations of serbian members from the Kosovo security force and serbia's role / Shpat Balaj dhe Taulant Boshnjaku . Prishtinë : Qendra Kosovare për Studime të Sigurisë, 2018. – 11 f. : ilustr. ; 21 cm.

1. Boshnjaku, Taulant

**ISBN 978-9951-679-82-4**



---

[www.qkss.org](http://www.qkss.org)

ISBN 978-9951-679-82-4



9 789951 679824