

CSOs condemn hate speech against Albanians by Serbia's Interior Minister, Aleksandar Vulin

We, the undersigned civil society organizations from Kosovo and Serbia, strongly condemn the offensive and derogatory language by Serbia's Minister of Internal Affairs, Aleksandar Vulin, against Albanians. We urge the Serbian government, respectively the Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabić, to react and condemn the use of such hate speech by Minister Vulin and appeal against the use of the word 'Šiptar'.

On May 20th 2022 Minister Vulin used the word 'Šiptar' repeatedly to refer to Albanians, and his statement to the media has since been published on the official website of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Serbia. In 2018 the Serbian judiciary found the word 'Šiptar' to be offensive and it was labeled as hate speech. Despite this, Minister Vulin has actively and consistently used the word when referring to the Albanians, and continues to do so without any consequence to his public position. Public officials who use hate language have no place in government.

Hate speech undermines the diffusion of European values in our societies, including the normative framework on human rights, rule of law, and the functioning of a democratic and tolerant society. Additionally, when hate speech is used by senior government officials freely, to target a particular ethnic-group, it can have devastating consequences, as it fosters discrimination, ethno-political radicalization and potentially leads to violence. The rhetoric used by Minister Vulin in his speech is the same rhetoric media and officials used during the nineties to dehumanize the Albanian population and foster maltreatment, human rights abuses, and ultimately war crimes in Kosovo.

The use of hate speech by senior government officials, such as the case with Minister Vulin, emboldens those in our societies who work against peace and the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, and ultimately against a European future for all countries in our region.

Signatories

- 1. Aktiv**
- 2. The Balkan Forum**
- 3. Balkans Policy Research Group (BPRG)**
- 4. Belgrade Centre for Security Policy (BCBP)**
- 5. Civic Initiatives**
- 6. Center for Peace and Tolerance (CPT)**
- 7. Democracy Plus (D+)**

- 8. Foundation BFPE For a Responsible Society**
- 9. The Human Rights Council - Bujanovac**
- 10. InTER**
- 11. Jelena Lončar, Academic, University of Belgrade**
- 12. Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (QKSS)**
- 13. Kosova Democratic Institute (KDI)**
- 14. Kosovo Law Institute (KLI)**
- 15. Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights (YUCOM)**
- 16. New Social Initiative (NSI), Mitrovica**
- 17. Rahim Salihi, Civil Society Activist, Bujanovac**
- 18. Valon Arifi, Civil Society Activist**
- 19. Vjollca Krasniqi, Academic, University of Pristina**
- 20. Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians (VoRAE)**
- 21. Youth Initiative for Human Rights - Serbia (YIHR Serbia)**
- 22. Youth Initiative for Human Rights - Kosovo (YIHR KS)**