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HATE SPEECH AND DISINFORMATION DURING THE 2025 ELECTION IN KOSOVO



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IMPRESSUM

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ACRONYMS

AAK	Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (Aleanca për Ardhmërinë e Kosovës)
AJK	Association of Journalists of Kosovo
AKR	New Kosovo Alliance
BIRN Kosovo	Balkan Investigative Reporting Network in Kosovo
CBK	Central Bank of Kosovo
CEC	Central Election Commission
DiA	Democracy in Action
ECAP	Electoral Complaints and Appeals Panel
EEAS	European External Action Service
ICK	Islamic Community of Kosovo
IMC	Independent Media Commission
IRDK	New Democratic Initiative of Kosovo (Iniciativa e Re Demokratike e Kosovës)
LDK	Democratic League of Kosovo (Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës)
LVV	Vetëvendosje (Lëvizja Vetëvendosje)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PCK	Press Council of Kosovo
PDK	Democratic Party of Kosovo (Partia Demokratike e Kosovës)
RTK	Radio Television of Kosovo
RTS	Radio Television of Serbia
SDU	Bosniak Social Democratic Union
SL	Serbian List (Srpska Lista)
UBO	UBO Consulting

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents BIRN Kosovo's findings based on the monitoring of broadcast content on 20 television and radio stations available in Kosovo, including two media based in Serbia and two in Albania as well as a review of over 4,000 online publications before, during, and after the 2025 parliamentary election in Kosovo.

The findings point to the widespread use of hate speech and disinformation throughout the electoral period. Kosovo's Election Complaints and Appeals Panel (ECAP) found political parties responsible for hate speech in 30 individual cases and levied fines of up to 35,000 euros. Nevertheless, some hate-speech content flagged by the ECAP remains accessible on party websites and digital platforms to this day. On election day alone, fact-checkers identified at least 100 instances of disinformation.

Throughout the campaign, baseless claims about an impending inter-ethnic crisis fuelled public anxiety. The Russian government further exacerbated tensions by accusing the West of backing incumbent Prime Minister Albin Kurti in instigating a new conflict in Kosovo.

Domestically, political adversaries resorted to dehumanisation and demonisation, labelling

opponents as animals, as mentally incompetent, or Serbian spies - rhetoric that mirrored Russia's own propaganda techniques.






Despite electoral reforms and other efforts to improve the situation, BIRN Kosovo finds that Kosovo failed to effectively safeguard the integrity of information during the campaign. Many media outlets gave a platform to unverified sources to issue dramatic and spurious claims against parliamentary candidates, including allegations of assassination plots and ties to shady interest groups, without offering any evidence or challenging the sources.

Analytical data shows that a significant number of politicians used information from unreliable sources, reflecting the results of research conducted by BIRN during the campaign in which approximately 20% of politicians surveyed failed to identify a fabricated news story as fake.

Overall, the 2025 election campaign was characterised by a lack of substantive discussion about the most pressing issues facing Kosovo. Though the election itself was peaceful and competitive, meaningful debate was drowned out by divisive, polarising rhetoric.

Based on the data collected, BIRN's key findings are:

Disinformation:

-  The Russian and Serbian governments crafted strategic disinformation messages aimed at undermining the credibility of the Kosovo election.
-  Russian-funded media disseminated disinformation narratives about Kosovo and the broader Balkan region.
-  Online media outlets shared content produced by Russian and Chinese state-funded media, without prior editing.
-  The security situation was exploited to raise tensions, often through false or misleading information.
-  Women, particularly those in influential positions, were disproportionately targeted with hate speech.



Disinformation concerning corruption, criminal activity, and government incompetence dominated domestic political discourse throughout the campaign.



AI was used to generate disinformation, primarily for dissemination via social media.

Dehumanising Language and Hate Speech:



Politicians were the primary source of dehumanising language, which was widespread throughout the election campaign.



Kosovo Serb political parties running against the Belgrade-backed Serbian List (SL) were subjected to demonising rhetoric and branded traitors to Serbia.



Anonymous platforms (accounts and pages) on social media were used extensively to amplify dehumanising language.



Decisions by the ECAP to sanction parties for hate speech had no meaningful impact on curbing its spread.

Notable Trends:



Political parties, including the Kurti-led Vetëvendosje (LVV), largely avoided being challenged in open debate, preferring to promote their positions through controlled channels such as rallies or videos, thus evading direct discourse and scrutiny.



Subtle narrative elements promoting right-wing extremism were used by some Kosovo Albanian parties to attack and vilify their political rivals.



Misogynistic rhetoric was notable during the campaign as female candidates for parliament were targeted with disinformation and hate speech.



The issue of European Union integration was largely sidelined, with debate focused on EU measures applied against the Kosovo government and the lack of a decision by the Council of Europe on Kosovo's membership.



While most political parties spoke in favour of NATO integration, Russian-promoted anti-NATO narratives were notable among Serbian-language media and social media channels.

Regulatory Bodies and Election Financing:



Media oversight institutions such as the Independent Media Commission (IMC) failed to enforce regulations for audiovisual broadcasters.



The Kosovo Assembly's failure to appoint new IMC members rendered the Commission unable to effectively fulfill its mandate as the key regulatory body for audiovisual content.



This oversight vacuum contributed to hate speech going unchecked and the proliferation of disinformation on television and radio.



Social media channels operating outside the oversight of national authorities were instrumental in creating and spreading disinformation.



In total, political parties spent roughly 400,000 euros on campaign content on Facebook/Meta, by far the largest sum ever spent on social media during an election campaign in Kosovo.



Television and online media provided little transparency concerning the money they received from political parties, for example in the form of paid ads or live coverage of campaign rallies.

CHAPTER 1: Context of the 2025 Election

The 2025 election for the Kosovo Assembly was the first regular parliamentary election in the country since it declared independence in 2008. All previous parliamentary elections were snap elections, caused by the fall of a government before the end of its mandate. In snap elections, the campaign lasts only 10 days. In the 2025 election, 2,075,868 people were eligible to vote¹, including 104,924 members of the diaspora. Twenty-eight political entities (parties, coalitions as well as independent candidates) from all communities were registered to take part; as in all previous elections, men were the majority on candidate lists.

According to the latest results, LVV won 42.3% of votes, followed by PDK on 20.95%, LDK on 18.27%, AAK on 7.06% and SL on 4.26%.²

Most parties met the requirement under Kosovo's Election Law for at least 30% of their candidates to be women, but fell short of the 50% requirement set by the Law on Gender Equality.³ None of the parties nominated a woman for the position of prime minister.

The underrepresentation of women was also evident in campaign events and television appearances. According to a report by the NGO CIKA, out of 606 election-related TV reports monitored, only 14% - or 86 reports - included female candidates.⁴

In terms of the Kosovo Serb community, one noteworthy development was Nenad Rašić's election to parliament as leader of the For Freedom, Justice and Survival party (Za Slobodu, Pravdu i Opstanak), a rival of the Belgrade-backed SL. Rašić has previously accused SL of voter-intimidation, an issue documented by EU observer missions in previous elections.⁵

The Central Election Commission (CEC), which manages elections, was criticised for its initial decision to bar SL from the election on the grounds that the party refers to Kosovo by the name used in the Serbian Constitution - 'Kosovo i Metohija' (Kosovo and Metohija). LVV's representative on the CEC voted in favour of this decision, which was criticised by [diplomatic representatives in Kosovo](#).⁶ The ruling was subsequently overturned by the [ECAP](#), allowing SL to participate.⁷

Under amendments to the Election Law introduced in June 2023, the 2025 election featured a number of significant new features.⁸ Security cameras were installed in polling stations to increase transparency; ballot processing was centralised in designated counting centres to minimise the possibility of misconduct; voters living abroad were allowed to cast ballots in the Kosovo embassies or consulates in their countries of residence; mail-in voting was regulated to facilitate the participation of the diaspora; and new restrictions were applied to political parties, notably limiting their campaign spending.

1 Voters List. <https://kqz-ks.org/sherbimet-per-votuesit/lista-votuese/>. Central Elections Commission, Last accessed on March 9, 2025.

2 Preliminary results. <https://kqz-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/1.Rezultatet-e-pergjithshme-sipas-subjekteve-politike.pdf>. Central Elections Commission, 15 March 2025.

3 Democracy for Development. comparison of the percentage of female participation in the lists of political entities for the 2019, 2021 and 2025 parliamentary elections, December 13, 2024. <https://d4d-ks.org/infografikat/krahasimi-i-per-gindjes-se-pjesemarrjes-se-grave-ne-listat-e-subjekteve-politike-per-zgjedhjet-parlamentare-2019-2021-dhe-2025/>

4 Electoral campaign characterised by low participation of women and hate speech. <https://qika.org/fushata-zgjedhore-pokarakterizohet-me-pjesemarrje-te-ulte-te-grave-dhe-gjuhe-te-urrejtjes/>. NGO CIKA, January 27, 2025.

5 EU Observers criticise pressure on Kosovo Serb Voters. <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/10/08/eu-observers-criticise-pressure-on-kosovo-serb-voters/>. Balkan Insight, October, 2019.

6 CEC does not certify Srpska Lista to participate in the elections – the US Embassy reacts. <https://www.zeriamerikes.com/a/7911339.html>. Voice of America, December 23, 2024.

7 ECAP orders the CEC to certify Srpska Lista for the elections, Radio Free Europe, <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/pzap-certifikim-lista-serbe-33252812.html>, December 25, 2024.

8 "The parliament approves the General Election Law through accelerated procedure", <https://kallxo.com/lajm/me-procedure-te-pershpejtuar-kuvendi-miraton-ligjin-per-zgjedhjet-e-pergjithshme/>, Kallxo.com, June 8, 2025.

The ECAP identified 149 campaign violations and issued a significant number of penalties:

	LVV €210,500 for 47 violations		PDK €144,000 for 28 violations
	LDK €136,000 for 31 violations		AAK €37,000 for 13 violations
	The Coalition for the Family €18,500 for 8 violations		SL €26,500 for 6 violations

Other non-majority community parties had 1 or 2 violations each.

The new Election Law foresees a more active role for the IMC in overseeing audiovisual media. However, the mandate of its members expired days before the election, rendering the IMC unable to effectively fulfil its mandate with regards to 28 complaints of ethics violations. Of these, 18 were forwarded to the IMC by the ECAP; the other 10 were submitted by members of the public. These complaints are still to be reviewed.⁹

The election was again marred by physical and verbal attacks on journalists. The Association of Journalists of Kosovo (AGK) recorded 16 separate incidents in which journalists and media outlets were threatened or attacked.¹⁰

In general, the election passed off peacefully, with no major incidents that might have required the closure of polling stations or any serious threats to candidates or their supporters.

Exceptions included an incident in [Skenderaj/Srbica](#)¹¹ when PDK supporters tried to disrupt an LVV rally; the [torching of a car](#)¹² belonging to a Serb member of the CEC in Ranillug/Ranilug; and the arrest of [Aleksandar Arsenijević](#)¹³, head

of the Serbian Democracy Party, for allegedly obstructing the police during a visit by Kurti to Mitrovica North.

The election campaign played out against a backdrop of tension over the government's decision, implemented by the police, to shut down some 30 offices of Serbian-run institutions in Kosovo, a decision criticised by the US and EU. On February 23, days after the election, police shut down a Serbian-run Social Work Office in Mitrovica North, alleging it had been used to exert pressure on Kosovo Serb voters. Its closure was also criticised by [diplomatic representatives in Kosovo](#).¹⁴

The governments of both Kosovo and Serbia were accused of trying to sway the election via welfare handouts.

Two weeks before the start of the campaign, the [Kosovo government](#)¹⁵ announced a €100 handout for pensioners and children up to 16 years of age, a move economists and opposition parties decried as an attempt to "buy votes" ahead of the election.¹⁶

9 Arsim Dresha, IMC spokesperson's written response to BIRN, March 6, 2025.

10 Database of attacks against journalists. <https://www.agk-ks.org/rastet-kerko/?keywords=&city=&ngakush=&gjinia=&year=2025&llojiimedias=&llojiincidentit=&ppublik=&gjyqesor=&pligjor=&search=1>, Association of Journalists of Kosova. Last accessed on March 21, 2025.

11 What happened in Skenderaj? <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/cfare-ndodhi-ne-skenderaj/33290920.html>, Radio Free Europe, January 27, 2025.

12 The car of a CEC member attacked with a Molotov cocktail in Ranillug/Ranilug, the prosecutor provides details. <https://kallxo.com/lajm/vetura-e-nje-anetareje-te-kqz-se-sulmohet-me-koktej-mollotovi-ne-ranillug-prokurori-jep-detaje/>

13 First arrested, then released, Arsenijević issued a fine for not complying with the order of a Police officer, Kallxo.com, January 2025. <https://kallxo.com/lajm/arrestohet-e-me-pas-lirihet-arsenijeviqit-i-shqiptohet-tikete-per-moszbaitim-te-urdhrit-policor/> Kallxo.com, January 12, 2025.

14 "The US Embassy in Pristine responds to the closure of four Serbian centers on social welfare in the north". <https://telegrafi.com/ambasada-amerikane-reagon-pas-mbylljes-se-zyrave-te-mireqenies-se-serbise-ne-kosove/>, Telegrafi.com, January 2025.

15 "The Government allocated EUR 100 to retirees and children under the age of 16", <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/krye-ministrit-i-kosoves-albin-kurti-konference-media/33248933.html>, Radio Free Europe, December 22, 2024.

16 Ibid.

For its part, Serbia's government allocated €170 each to some 5,000 Serbs living in Kosovo and who receive welfare benefits. [Democracy in Action \(DiA\)](#), an NGO that monitors elections, said this was another attempt to curry favour with the electorate on behalf of LS, an accusation also levelled at the Serbian government by Rašić.¹⁷

The precise impact of welfare handouts on the outcome of the election remains unclear. However, according to poll data collected by pollster UBO Consulting¹⁸ 14.1% of LVV voters were pensioners and thus recipients of the government handout.

The campaign was characterised by enduring public distrust of media outlets and their reporting. Candidates for the post of prime minister shunned public debate, reinforcing a trend in Kosovo politics of one-way communication with the audience.

LVV boycotted several television networks; party secretary Alim Rama cited "the use of toxic language, frequent insults and baseless accusations in these three studios coupled with biased and subjective reporting".¹⁹

LVV spokesperson Arlind Manxhuka told BIRN it was party policy not to appear on channels "owned by oligarchs" during the election.²⁰

LVV also, however, shunned political debates organised by civil society and fact-checking TV programme KALLXO Përnime, a co-production of BIRN and Internews Kosova broadcast on RTV Dukagjini, one of the channels LVV boycotted. The policy was criticised by 20 media and human rights organisations.²¹

For its part, the opposition party LDK boycotted debates on public broadcaster RTK, arguing it was controlled by LVV.²² As in previous elections, SL refused to participate in televised debates in either Serbian-language or Albanian-language media.

In Serbia, coverage of the election in Kosovo took a backseat to other issues, primarily the ongoing student-led protests in the wake of the deaths of 15 people when an outdoor canopy collapsed at a railway station in Novi Sad on November 1, 2024,²³. Public discourse in the region was also preoccupied with rising consumer prices and energy issues stemming from Russia's war in Ukraine.

In terms of independent media oversight, two certified fact-checking platforms - BIRN Kosovo's [Kallxo.com/Krypometri](#) publication²⁴ and [Hibrid.info](#)²⁵ - played a key role in building public trust and combatting the spread of disinformation by identifying over 200 election-related fake news stories. Additionally, TikTok included Kosovo in its "Third-Party Fact-check" initiative, conducted by Internews Kosova and designed to identify content that violates ethics rules.

Some 400 misleading or false posts were reported through fact-checking programmes on Facebook and TikTok. However, efforts to provide accurate information to voters were undermined by a lack of transparency about the funding received by political parties and overall financial support for election campaigns, an area which remains largely unregulated.

Very few political parties and media outlets responded to a BIRN survey concerning campaign financing; the IMC published a price list for advertising slots on television, but no accurate data is available concerning the total funds spent on online advertising and other campaign materials.²⁶

17 "The electoral campaign in Kosovo was characterised by hate speech and incitement of hate" <https://www.dw.com/sq/dnv-fushata-zgjedhore-n-c3%AB-kosove-me-gjuh-c3%AB-nxit-c3%ABse-dhe-urrejtjeje/a-71420570> Deutsche Welle, January 27, 2025.

18 UBO Consulting is a Kosovo-based research and analytical company that conducts surveys and opinion polls, including exit polls during Election Day. More details: <https://www.uboconsulting.com/about>

19 Response of Alim Rama from LVV to a public letter of 13 international organisations sent to PM Kurti. <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1021267743372809&set=a.294516586047932>

20 BIRN meeting with Arlind Manxhuka, spokesperson of LVV in early January 2025.

21 "Civil society organisations react to Vetevendosje boycotting 'Debat Përnime'. <https://kallxo.com/lajm/organizatat-e-shogerise-civile-reagojne-ndaj-vetevendosjes-per-bojkotin-e-debat-pernime/>. Kallxo.com, January 17, 2025

22 BIRN interview with Besian Mustafa, spokesperson of LDK. March 21, 2025.

23 "Protests in Serbia". <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c0qdyg8yn5yo>, BBC, November 22, 2024.

24 <https://kallxo.com/krypometer/>

25 <https://hibrid.info/>

26 Monitoring Reports, <https://kpm-ks.org/Page/114>. Independent Media Commission. Last accessed on March 9, 2025.

CHAPTER 2: Methodology

BIRN Kosovo was commissioned by the European Union in Kosovo to conduct a study of disinformation narratives²⁷ in the context of the February 9, 2025 parliamentary election. The study looked at disinformation before, during and after the election, with a focus on narratives targeting democratic institutions, Kosovo's alignment with the EU and NATO, ethnic and religious divisions, and far-right ideologies.

BIRN Kosovo centred its monitoring on three key areas: foreign influence, inter-ethnic relations, and religious and far-right narratives designed to exploit ethnic and religious divisions, polarise public opinion, and sow discord. Throughout the monitoring process, BIRN Kosovo observed widespread use of hate speech²⁸ and derogatory language with the aim of dehumanising²⁹ and demonising³⁰ political opponents. This trend led BIRN Kosovo to include these categories in the scope of the study.

The primary objective was to identify various types of narratives, including original³¹, supporting³², opposing³³, neutral disinformation³⁴ and divisive narratives³⁵.

The monitoring was conducted between January 11 and February 10, 2025, covering content from 20 national and local TV and radio stations, as well as TV channels from Serbia and Albania with significant audiences in Kosovo. The monitoring focused on primetime news broadcasts, political talk shows, and campaign debates.

Each TV source was monitored at least five times throughout the period to ensure comprehensive and consistent coverage. In total, BIRN Kosovo analysed approximately 250 hours of TV and radio content.

Additionally, BIRN Kosovo examined online platforms, particularly social media channels, to track the amplification and dissemination of disinformation narratives and hate speech.

Via extensive desk research, BIRN Kosovo also investigated narratives propagated in the days leading up to the official start of the campaign as well as the period to the end of February when votes were still being counted.

27 Disinformation is defined as “verifiably false or misleading information that is created, presented and disseminated for economic gain or to intentionally deceive the public, and may cause public harm”.

28 Hate speech is defined by the United Nations as “any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor”. <https://www.un.org/en/hate-speech/understanding-hate-speech/what-is-hate-speech#:~:text=To%20provide%20a%20unified%20framework,person%20or%20a%20group%20on>

29 Dehumanisation is defined “as the process by which individuals or groups are stripped of their humanity, often being treated as less than human. This can manifest in attitudes, actions, or institutional policies that deny a person or group of people basic dignity, empathy, and moral consideration”.

30 Demonisation is “the attempt to make someone or a group of people seem as if they are evil”.

31 Original narratives are defined as “disinformation messages originated or disseminated through the origin of disinformation”.

32 Supporting narratives are defined as “initiatives/information supporting the key narrative with evidence or alternative arguments”.

33 Opposing-narratives are defined as “narratives opposing the disinformation narratives”.

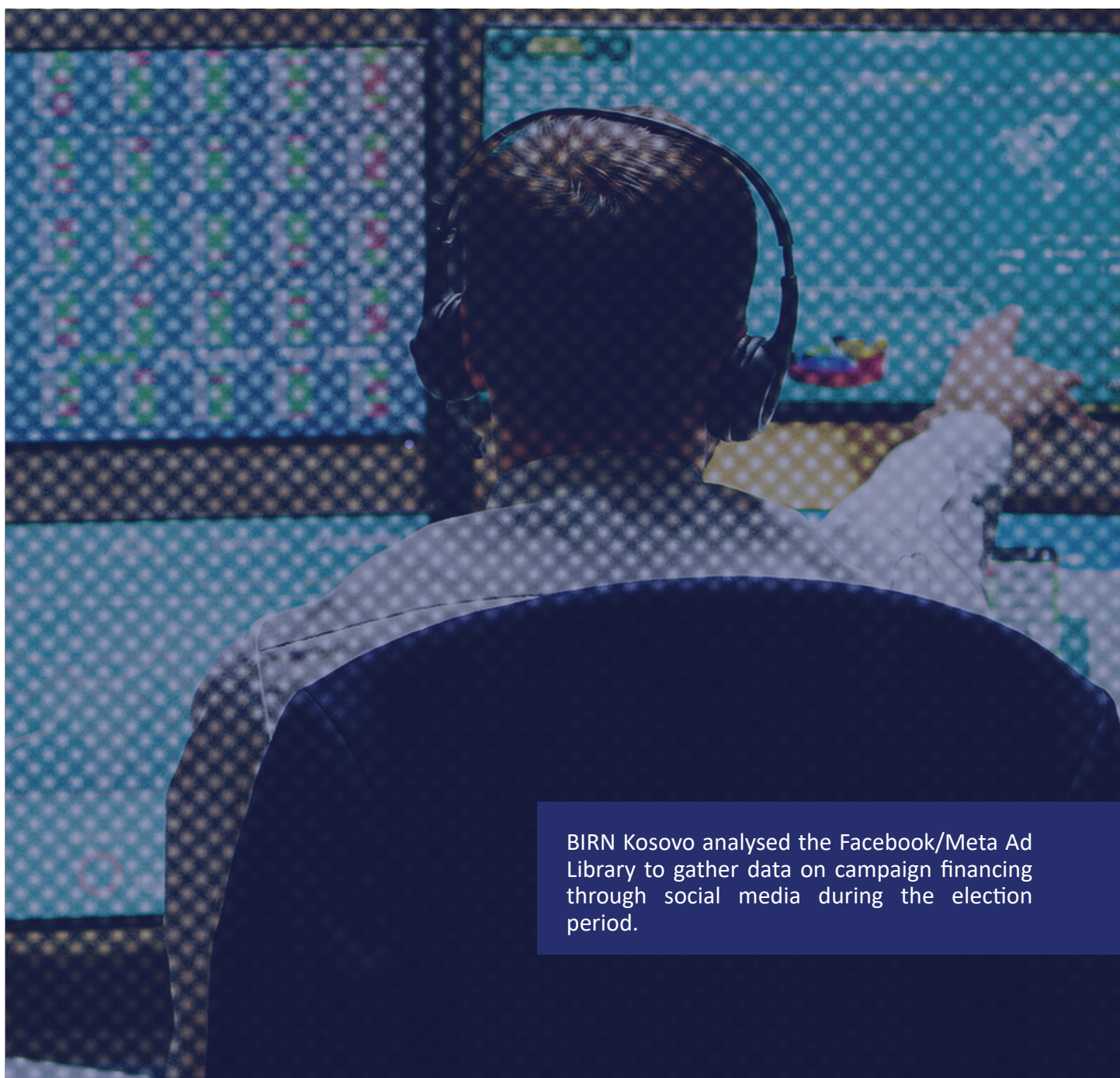
34 Neutral narratives are defined as “disinformation aimed to reflect neutral stances towards the topics by proclaiming they are not topics worthy of discussing”.

35 Divisive narratives are defined as “narratives constructed and repeated in the media by domestic or foreign influences (state actors, non-state actors or other factors) with the unfair aim of influencing the public opinion”.

The monitoring identified 45 narratives and key terms used to spread hate speech and disinformation. To track the dissemination of these messages, BIRN Kosovo utilised a number of tools, including the Pikasa.ai platform,³⁶ and analysed over 4,000 online articles to assess the spread and impact of these narratives.

BIRN Kosovo also conducted a social experiment involving 30 candidates running for parliament, presenting them with true and false information on current affairs to assess their susceptibility to disinformation narratives.

BIRN Kosovo analysed the Facebook/Meta Ad Library to gather data on campaign financing through social media during the election period. Additionally, 106 Freedom of Information (FOI) requests were sent to audiovisual media, 58 to online media and 28 to political entities, requesting information on their campaign financing practices. Furthermore, BIRN conducted interviews with 20 media experts, NGOs and politicians involved in monitoring the election campaign as well as party campaign management teams (including heads of campaigns/media offices and influential figures within political parties).



BIRN Kosovo analysed the Facebook/Meta Ad Library to gather data on campaign financing through social media during the election period.

³⁶ Pikasa.ai, founded by Norik Selimi in North Macedonia, delivers AI-powered real-time insights across 28 regions, analysing media and social platforms while ensuring GDPR compliance. <https://pikasa.ai/>

CHAPTER 3: Hate Speech and its Influence

The 2025 election was marked by a rise in hate speech, much of which originated from political parties and foreign actors. This rhetoric, often dehumanising in nature, significantly degraded public discourse, leaving limited room for meaningful discussion about issues of public concern, the performance of the outgoing government or the policies of political parties.

The monitoring conducted by BIRN Kosovo showed that political parties within Kosovo as well as foreign actors employed hate speech in attacking political opponents during the election period. Foreign actors - primarily from Russia - used hate speech targeting political candidates, including Serb parties not aligned with Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić.

Kosovo Albanian political parties employed dehumanising language and hate speech against their rivals. This rhetoric was widely amplified on social media, often through fake or anonymous profiles. These anonymous accounts played a key role in creating and further disseminating hate-filled, dehumanising messages portraying election candidates as donkeys, monkeys, or dressed in prison uniforms through falsified images and manipulated graphics.

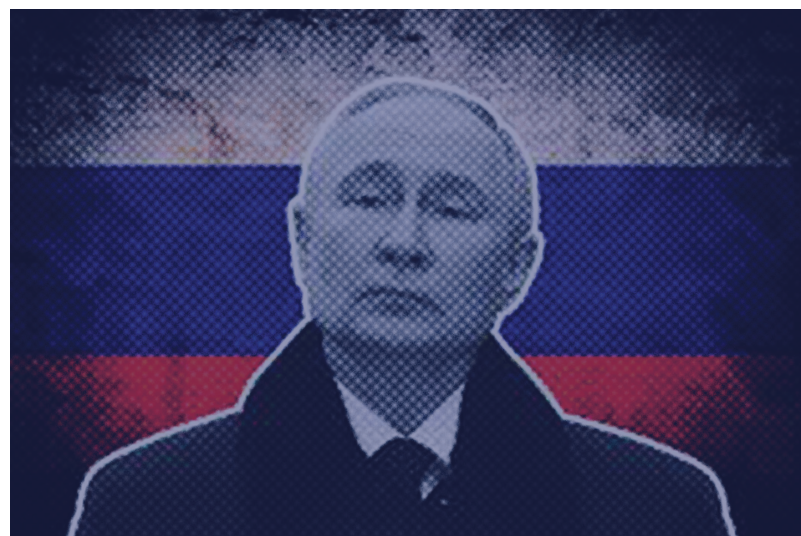
In its analysis of public discourse, BIRN Kosovo utilised the [EUvsDisinfo](#)³⁷ database of the East Stratcom Task Force of the European External Action Service (EEAS), which identifies dehumanisation, demonisation, and denial of existence, mirror accusation, and historical revisionism as techniques for spreading hate speech. BIRN used the EUvsDisinfo definitions of these terms to analyse public discourse during the election.

EUvsDisinfo states that hate speech as a method goes beyond disinformation, as its purpose is to attack and dehumanise the opponent, as seen in Russia's strategy against Ukraine.

Since launching its full-scale invasion in February 2022, Russia has likened Ukrainians to "rats" and Europeans to "monkeys". Russia has also described Europe as a "dying patient" and referred to Britain as an "overweight person".³⁸

3.1. Foreign-Orchestrated Hate Speech and Disinformation

BIRN Kosovo observed various forms of hate speech used by foreign actors - Russian and Serbian - to influence the 2025 election, targeting Kosovo's institutions and Kosovo Albanian political parties.



Monitoring the official pages of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, BIRN Kosovo identified 32 occasions when Kosovo was mentioned by Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov or ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova between September 2024 and March 2025. and the very existence was contested or its, Kosovo's sovereignty, statehood, and very existence were contested or its institutions accused of trying to ethnically cleanse Serbs from Kosovo with Western support.³⁹

37 EuvsDisinfo is a platform of the East Stratcom Task Force, bringing together a team of experts with a background mainly in communications, journalism, social sciences and Russian studies. <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/>

38 EuvsDisinfo.eu. Analysis: <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/how-russia-uses-ai-to-dehumanise-ukrainians/>

39 From 01/09/2024 - 08/03/2025 Russia talked about Kosovo 31 times, judging from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, https://www.mid.ru/en/search/?q=kosovo&date_range=&date_from=01.09.2024&date_to=08.03.2025§ion=&sort=date&order=desc&count=10&lang=en&exact=0, https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/2000674/ ;

Lavrov repeatedly claimed that the January 1999 Rečak/Račak massacre of 45 Kosovo Albanians by Serbian security forces was “staged” as “a pretext for the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia”.⁴⁰ This narrative was widely circulated by Serbian-language media around the anniversary of the massacre in January.

Zakharova accused the West of tolerating “criminal policies” that aim to “erase all vestiges of the age-old Serbian presence in Kosovo”.⁴¹ In the run-up to the election, Russia accused Kurti of planning to falsify the results to the detriment of the Belgrade-backed SL.⁴²

In Serbia, outgoing Prime Minister Miloš Vučević used hate speech against SL’s Serb rivals, referring to them as “fake Serbs”.

Petar Petković, the head of the Serbian government’s Office for Kosovo, called Kurti a “pyromaniac”, saying: “The militant policy of this pyromaniac is to set the entire Balkans on fire.”⁴³

SL leader Zlatan Elek and party candidate Srđan Vulović were each fined €4,000 by ECAP for using hate speech during a rally on January 31, 2025, when they branded Serbs running against SL as “traitors” and said they would “pay before the people and before God”.⁴⁴

Miodrag Milićević, director of the NGO AKTIV, which works with the Serb community in Kosovo, said Kosovo Serb opposition parties did not enjoy the same amount of airtime afforded to SL.⁴⁵ This disparity led one of the smaller Serb political parties to organise a protest in front of Serbia’s public broadcaster, RTS.⁴⁶

Despite the hate speech and the lack of a level playing field, SL’s rivals did manage to win one of the 10 seats reserved for Serbs in the Kosovo Assembly, a change to the last election when SL won all 10. That seat was won by Rašić, despite being vilified in Serbian and Russian media.

Sputnik Serbia, the most popular Russian state-sponsored media outlet in the region, came out firmly in favour of SL while promoting claims that Rašić, the only serious opposition to SL, was being used by Kurti as a pawn to undermine SL. Political analyst Luka Jovanovic was quoted on Sputnik as describing Rašić as a “circus bear” serving Kosovo Albanian interests.

The media campaign against Rašić in Serbia was reminiscent of the vilification of Oliver Ivanović⁴⁷, a Serb opposition politician in Kosovo who was assassinated in 2018.⁴⁸ Before he was killed, Ivanović told BIRN that local Serb power-broker Milan Radojčić had threatened him and his family; he described Radojčić as the “dark ruler” of Serb-majority municipalities in north Kosovo.⁴⁹

https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1998052/; https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1994830/; https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1993817/; https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1992681/; https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1989152/

40 Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov’s remarks at the Ambassadorial Round Table Discussion, “Ukraine crisis: Global information space,” Moscow. https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1984504/. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. November 29, 2024.

41 “The responsibility for the campaign of terror unleashed by Albin Kurti rests squarely with the Western countries that ostensibly disapprove of their puppet’s methods but in fact encourage his criminal policies and are implicated in efforts to erase all vestiges of the age-old Serbian presence in Kosovo. Doesn’t it ring a bell? Of course, it does!” Briefing by Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, Moscow, https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1992681/#09, January 23, 2025.

42 Briefing by Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, Moscow, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, January 23, 2025

43 Petar Petković, Director of the Office for Kosovo in Serbia <https://x.com/PetkovicPetar/status/1887066850627834347>, February 5, 2024.

44 ECAP decision. <https://pzap.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Anr.295.-Vendim.pdf>. Elections complaints and Appeals Panel. February 4, 2025.

45 Interview with Miodrag Milićević, NGO AKTIV on March 4, 2024

46 The opposition party “Srpski Narodni Pokret” holds a protest on January 31, 2024 in front of RTS building in Belgrade <https://www.rts.rs/lat/vesti/politika/5640940/konferencija-srpski-narodni-pokret-izvestavanje-rt.html>, RTS, January 31, 2025.

47 Cover up claims shadow unsolved murder of Kosovo Serb politician. <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/01/15/cover-up-claims-shadow-unsolved-murder-of-kosovo-serb-politician/>, Balkan Insight, January 15, 2021.

48 Kosovo Police believe Serb businessman organised politician’s murder. <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/03/04/kosovo-police-believe-serb-businessman-organised-politicians-murder/>, Balkan Insight, March 3, 2022.

49 Ivanović named Radojčić as North Kosovo’s ‘dark ruler’. <https://balkaninsight.com/2018/02/27/ivanovic-named-radoicic-as-north-kosovo-dark-ruler-02-26-2018/>, Balkan Insight, February 27, 2018.

On March 11, Rašić, who at the time of writing was outgoing minister of returns and communities under Kurti, also told BIRN that Radojičić - a former SL leader and a fugitive accused by Kosovo of leading an armed assault on police in September 2023 in [Banjska](#)⁵⁰ - had threatened him “through associates”.⁵¹

The claim was also made by Kurti in a March 10 post on X, when the PM wrote: “The current Kosovo Serb minister, Nenad Rašić, was directly threatened by US blacklisted [Milan Radojičić](#)⁵² and his associates”.⁵³ Radojičić has not responded to the allegation.

The same day, Kurti accused Serbia of “strong and direct interference” with the aim of “intimidating and threatening the Serbian community in [Kosovo](#)”.⁵⁴

Kurti alleged financial threats, blackmail, bribery, cyberattacks, and other forms of pressure, primarily targeting Serb parties seeking to challenge the dominance of SL and supporters of those parties.⁵⁵

Kurti also accused Serbia of bussing voters to Kosovo⁵⁶ and organising collective voting, saying voter coercion had been documented and acknowledged by the EU Election Observation Mission, which also collected evidence of a disinformation campaign orchestrated by Russian-backed media in Serbia. Serbia has not responded to these allegations.⁵⁷

On March 26, Kurti’s office issued a statement acknowledging an “unfortunate incident” in which he was duped into taking a video call with a Russian prankster pretending to be Latvian President Edgars Rinkēvičs. Moments before the statement, the Russian comic duo Vovan and Lexus published the 11-minute video on Rumble.

com.⁵⁸ In it, Kurti is seen complaining about a “hybrid war against our government from early on”, blaming “mainly” Serbia and Russia “and some of their elements within Kosovo”. Analysts and opposition parties immediately lambasted

Kurti for falling for the stunt.⁵⁹ In its statement, the PM’s office said the incident “reinforces what we have long known: Russia is obsessed with Kosova and continues to target our country”.

3.2 Hate Speech by Local Politicians

The 2025 election campaign was marked by a high level of hate speech, particularly among Kosovo Albanian political parties. BIRN identified a consistent use of dehumanising language by politicians who likened their opponents to animals, labelled them as traitors, portrayed them as dictators, or compared them to supporters of Nazism.

Election-related hate speech contained elements of dehumanisation and demonisation, as well as historical revisionism. More than 30 political party messages were identified by ECAP as containing hate speech.

An analysis of the rulings shows that the party most frequently fined for using hate speech against its political opponents was LVV - 19 times.

Kurti himself used dehumanising language to describe the LDK, saying: “When they say that the people love them, it is like a fly boasting that people are clapping for it. And you all know very well what those clapping hands are actually trying to do to that fly”.⁶⁰

50 Kosovo indicts 45 for deadly attack by armed Serb group in Banjska. <https://prishtinainsight.com/kosovo-indicts-45-for-deadly-attack-by-armed-serb-group-in-banjska/>, Prishtina Insight, September 11, 2024.

51 Interview with Nenad Rašić conducted on March 11, 2025

52 US imposes sanctions on controversial Kosovo Serb businessman. <https://prishtinainsight.com/us-imposes-sanctions-on-controversial-kosovo-serb-businessman/>, Prishtina Insight, December 9, 2021 and <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/12/08/us-imposes-sanctions-on-controversial-kosovo-serb-businessman/>.

53 Albin Kurti, post on X, <https://x.com/albinkurti/status/1899213094359818289>, March 10, 2025

54 Albin Kurti post on X, <https://x.com/albinkurti/status/1899213094359818289>, 10 march 2025

55 Ibid

56 “Voters were monitored near polling stations, and it was made clear that anyone who reported these actions to the police would have their families threatened”, <https://x.com/albinkurti/status/1899213094359818289> Albin Kurti twitter account, March 10, 2025

57 Ibid

58 Video Prank with Prime minister of Kosovo, Albin Kurti. Rumble, Vovan and Lexus Rumble account. March 26, 2025. <https://rumble.com/v6r7vic-video-prank-with-prime-minister-of-kosovo-albin-kurti.html>

59 Kosovo PM Pranked by Russians Pretending to be Latvia’s President, Prishtina Insight, March 26, 2025. <https://prishtinainsight.com/kosovo-pm-pranked-by-russians-pretending-to-be-latvias-president/>

60 “Kurti mocks LDK, compares it to flies”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKs32xOkaOU>, Klan Kosova, January 13, 2025

The remark triggered heated debate and was republished thousands of times on social media. According to the Pikasa.ai platform, 256 online articles were published in reaction - positive and negative - to Kurti's choice of language.

LDK leader Lumir Abdixhiku called for an end to the inflammatory rhetoric, while engaging in it himself. In a televised debate, he referred to Kurti as a [“political cringe”](#)⁶¹, while LDK candidate Hykmete Bajrami said Kurti had [“lost his mind”](#)⁶².

“In the last campaign, he spoke about national unification, and now he talks about flies and insects,” Bajrami said.

According to Pikasa.ai data, analysed and interpreted by BIRN Kosovo, analysts and commentators also participated in the discussion.

Dukagjin Gorani, an analyst and former MP, commented, “In all my years, I have never heard uglier language.”⁶³ [Activist Alban Krasniqi described Kurti's remarks as dangerous and an incitement to violence.](#)⁶⁴

ECAP also classified as hate speech a remark by Kurti in which he said the LDK “is not a league, but rather a fatigue”.⁶⁵

During an electoral rally in front of thousands of people, Kurti accused business moguls and brothers Blerim and Shkëlqim Devolli of stealing money from public telecommunications provider

Telecom,⁶⁶ of registering their business under Serbian legislation⁶⁷ and of engaging in corrupt and dishonest business deals. The broadcaster Klan Kosova,⁶⁸ which is considered close to the

Devollis, then ran a series of TV reports that were highly critical of LVV and contained serious and unsubstantiated allegations.

A search of the keywords “Kurti” and “Devolli” on Pikasa.ai identified 243 stories, 61 of which (25%) were produced by and broadcast on Klan Kosova.

Speaking on the Rubikon current affairs programme on Klan Kosova, hosted by Adriatik Kelmendi, Berat Buzhala, owner of the Nacionale portal and a former PDK lawmaker, accused Kurti of having “kill lists”.

“He prepared kill lists,” Buzhala said “Yes, and I am ready to face him in court. Three people were there. Let him sue me in court, and I will call the other two as witnesses to reveal who was on his kill lists.”⁶⁹

During the same show, pundit, owner of Paparaci portal and co-founder of Insajderi portal, Vehbi Kajtazi,⁷⁰ who has accused Kosovo's intelligence agency of spying on him,⁷¹ alleged that Kurti had told Fatmir Limaj and Ramush Haradinaj that “this country will not be liberated without bloodshed”.⁷²

61 “Abdixhiku calls Kurti a ‘political cringe’ after the insults he made comparing the LDK with flies” <https://klanKosovoKosovo.tv/abdixhiku-e-quan-kurtin-kringji-politik-pas-ofendimeve-qe-ia-beri-ldk-se-me-mizen/>, Klan Kosova, January 16, 2025.

62 Debat Plus. “Kurti lost his mind” Hykmete Bajrami: In the last campaign he spoke of national unity, now of flies and insects. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1244747159918944>, RTV Dukagjini, January 13, 2025

63 “Pressing” political debate programme <https://www.gazetaexpress.com/kurti-krahason-ldk-ne-me-mizen-gorani-qeto-vjet-i-bana-skam-pa-gjuhe-ma-te-shemtume/>

64 “Dangerous language, call for violence” – Albert Krasniqi on Kurti's language in the campaign, T7. January 13 2025. <https://democracia.com/gjuhe-e-rezikshme-thirrje-per-dhune-albert-krasniqi-per-gjuhen-e-kurtit-ne-fushate>, Demokracia.com, January 13, 2025.

65 ECAP decision to fine Vetevendosje. <https://pzap.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/6.-Anr.59-Vendim.pdf>, January 20, 2025.

66 Struggling Kosovo Telecom hit by 13 million arbitration ruling. <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/02/23/struggling-kosovo-telecom-hit-by-13-million-arbitration-ruling/>, Balkan Insight, February 23, 2022.

67 Ministry of Industry, Entrepreneurship, and Trade revoked the certificates of another 15 business entities, among them Blerim Devolli's company. <https://www.kosovo-online.com/en/news/politics/ministry-industry-entrepreneurship-and-trade-revoked-certificates-another-15-business>, Kosovo Online. August 9, 2023 and Blerim Devolli obtained documents of Serbia in 2021 in Kragujevac. <https://lajmpress.org/blerim-devolli-nxori-dokumente-te-shtetesise-serbe-ne-vitin-2021-ne-kragujevc/>, Lajmpress, August 3, 2023.

68 Media Ownership Monitor Kosovo, Klan KosovoKosovo, <https://kosovo.mom-gmr.org/sq/media/detail/outlet/klan-KosovoKosovo-3/>, accessed March 10, 2025

69 “Buzhala shocks everyone: Kurti made kill lists,” <https://klankosova.tv/buzhala-shokon-kurti-ka-bere-lista-te-vrasjes/>, Klan Kosova. January 13, 2025.

70 Vehbi Kajtazi is a regular pundit on ‘Rubikon’, a Klan Kosova current affairs programme and owns his own portal ‘Paparaci’ <https://kosovo.mom-gmr.org/en/owner/individual-owners/detail/owner/owner/show/vehbi-kajtazi-1/>

71 “Journalist Vehbi Kajtazi: I do not feel safe,” <https://kallxo.com/lajm/gazetari-vehbi-kajtazi-nuk-ndjehem-i-sigurt/>. Kallxo.com. October 31, 2025.

72 “Buzhala shocks everyone: Kurti made kill lists,” <https://klankosova.tv/buzhala-shokon-kurti-ka-bere-lista-te-vrasjes/>, Klan Kosova, January 13, 2025.

On another Klan Kosova programme, Kosova Today, Bedri Elezi, who presents himself as a 'security expert', made a similar claim, stating: "We have a case where the prime minister of Kosovo sought to secure a person to assassinate a politician from Kosovo's political parties." BIRN asked Kosovo's public prosecution whether any of these statements were investigated.⁷³ The prosecution did not respond by the time of publication of this report and there were no reports in Kosovo media suggesting those who made the claims were ever questioned.

After Kurti's allegations against the Devolli brothers, opposition politicians including AAK leader Haradinaj, a former prime minister, came to their aid.

Haradinaj accused Kurti of causing the loss of [2,000 Devolli jobs](#).⁷⁴ The claim could not be independently substantiated.

[Behgjet Pacolli](#), a multimillionaire entrepreneur, former Kosovo president and leader of the New Kosovo Alliance (AKR) party, also came to the brothers' defence, calling them serious businessmen who had adapted "to the climate and the times" of post-war Kosovo.⁷⁵ LDK leader Abdixhiku made a point of meeting the Devollis.

Other analysts and commentators drew attention to a donation the Devollis had made to LVV almost a decade ago.

Buzhala also posted on Facebook⁷⁶ about what he said was a donation by [Shkelqim Devolli](#) to a security fund set up by Kurti's government

in 2022 for contributions to the purchase of equipment for the Kosovo army.⁷⁷ Kurti "did not reject Shkelqim Devolli's half a million euros," said Buzhala. Donations to this fund are not public and it is therefore not confirmed if and how much money either of the Devolli brothers donated.

Former LVV MP⁷⁸ [Florin Krasniqi](#) and Klan Kosova analyst [Vehbi Kajtazi](#)⁷⁹ both promoted the narrative that LVV had received funds from the Devolli brothers while in opposition. Analyst Lirim Mehmetaj, owner of the recently established online portal Vox Kosova, claimed that LVV Deputy Minister of Infrastructure [Hysen Durmishi](#)⁸⁰ had granted Blerim Devolli's company a permit for more convenient access to a nearby highway.

Actor Cun Lajci, who was initially pro-Kurti at the start of the election campaign, also weighed in: "The Devollis feed thousands of families. We need employment, not migration,"⁸¹ [he said in a social media post](#).

Another popular allegation was of collaboration with Serbia.

Ramush Haradinaj used hate speech in accusing Kurti of being a "[spy](#)" and an "[agent of Serbia](#)".⁸²

In return, [Donika Gërvalla, Kosovo's foreign minister and LVV's No. 2 candidate for parliament](#),⁸³ described Haradinaj's family as "self-proclaimed commanders", a reference to the Haradinaj family's involvement in the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) during the 1998-99 Kosovo war. Her remark was mentioned in 629 media articles, according to the Pikasa.ai platform.

73 BIRN submitted requests for information to the Prosecution on March 11 and March 14, 2025, however no response was provided.

74 "Haradinaj: Because of Kurti, two thousand workers in Gjakova have lost their jobs," <https://gazetablic.com/haradinaj-per-shkak-te-kurtit-dy-mije-punetore-ne-gjakove-e-kane-humbe-vendin-e-punes/>, Gazeta Bli

75 Behgjet Pacolli, Public Reaction to Prime Minister Kurti's statements in Peja, Facebook, January 14, 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/252818562873709/posts/1137950981027125>

76 "Buzhala: Devolli gave him half a million for armaments, and Kurti didn't say he didn't want it," <https://mitrovicasot.net/buzhala-devolli-i-dha-jysme-milioni-per-armatim-e-kurti-si-tha-nuk-i-du/>, Mitrovica sot, January 16, 2025,

77 Albin Kurti facebook post on establishing the Security Fund. https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=500317718128627&set=a.469157147911351&type=3&ref=embed_post, Facebook, March 1, 2022.

78 Florin Krasniqi calls Kurti "a clown" who has "no humanity", <https://ballkani.info/florin-krasniqi-e-quan-palaco-dhe-pa-njerezillak-kurtin/>, Balkan Info, January 14, 2025

79 "Kajtazi speaks after Kurti attacks the Devolli's: Blerim Devolli financed the book "Wake Up" and the campaign "Love Yours," <https://mitrovicasot.net/kajtazi-pasi-kurti-sulmoi-devollet-blerim-devolli-ia-ka-financuar-librin-zijohu-dhe-fushat-en-duaje-tenden/>, Mitrovica sot, January 13, 2025

80 "Lirim Mehmetaj publishes the documents: Deputy Minister Hysen Durmishi grants permission to Blerim Devolli's company to connect to the national road," <https://veriu.info/mehmetaj-publikon-dokumentet-zevendesministri-hysen-durmishi-ia-jep-lejen-kompanise-se-blerim-devollit-per-kycje-ne-rwege-nacionale/>, Veriu.info, February 5, 2025,

81 "Çun Lajci speaks to Kurti: Like it or not, 'Devolli' feeds thousands of families. We need employment, not migration," <https://gazetablic.com/cun-lajci-kurtit-deshte-sdeshte-devolli-ushqen-mijera-familjie-na-duhet-punesimi-jo-migrimi/>, Gazeta Blic, unknown date in January, 2025

82 Ramush Haradinaj, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mIPMcH1znD4>, Minute 44:55, Debate on Politiko, Kanal 10, January 28, 2025

83 "Gërvalla knows no boundaries, calls Ramush Haradinaj a 'so-called hero' and a 'self-proclaimed general'" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AIN-THOzfak>, Balkan web, January 26, 2025

Haradinaj's brother and AAK MP Daut Haradinaj branded Gërvalla a "[common bandit](#)"⁸⁴ who does not know what she is talking about". Xhavit Jashari, head of the Association of Families of KLA Martyrs, accused Gërvalla of submitting evidence [against the KLA in The Hague](#),⁸⁵ in reference to the court established in the Dutch capital to try KLA fighters for war crimes. Gërvalla denied this.

In several cases, ECAP found that the language used by AAK supporters against Gërvalla contained elements of hate speech. Labinot Gjini, an AAK parliamentary candidate, was fined for hate speech for writing on Facebook: "[Belgrade thinks, Donika reports](#)."⁸⁶

AAK was also fined for messages from party supporters calling Gërvalla "shameless", "dishonorable", "immoral", and "spineless", terms that were also classified as hate speech.⁸⁷ AAK candidate Ardian Rama, who was also fined by ECAP,⁸⁸ said in a social media post: "[Haradinaj sacrificed everything, Donika Gërvalla is a shameless woman who throws mud at a legend](#)."⁸⁹

ECAP levied a total of five fines against AAK for hate speech. PDK was fined in six cases for hate speech by party members and supporters, including messages describing LVV supporters as "dogs" and one that stated: "PDK will tear you apart, we do not allow Albin whores and faggots in Skenderaj."⁹⁰

The LDK was found to have incited hatred in one case in which LDK parliamentary candidate Xheneta Syka shared a video produced by another platform and which compared Kurti to Hitler.⁹¹

In an example of how hate speech created a cycle of revenge, as results started trickling in, Kurti told an LVV rally that his opponents were 'hayvans'⁹² - idiots - only for the term to be turned against him in graffiti that appeared on walls in Prishtinë/Priština referring to Kosovo's 'Hayvan Prime Minister'.⁹³

Another party that was fined at least four times for hate speech was the 'Coalition for the Family'. The party was faulted for statements against people seeking gender transition and members of the LGBTQI+ community.

In a Facebook post, party leader Eman Rrahmani criticised the use of public funds for Anibar, the Animation Festival held in Peja/Peć. "The ministry and the municipality have given 300,000 euros to show the people of Peja and Haxhi Zeka what love is: a man marrying a man and a woman marrying a woman... Shame on you!"⁹⁴

Hate messages were also found among non-majority communities. Fridon Lala, a candidate from the New Democratic Initiative (IRDK), was fined by the ECAP for posting a message on Facebook in which he appeared to compare his opponent, Veton Berisha of the Egyptian Liberal Party, to a "rat". His post read: "Trap has been set to catch a rat".⁹⁵ Lala was widely understood to be referring to Berisha.⁹⁶

84 "Haradinaj harsh with Gërvalla: A common bandit who doesn't know what she's talking about," <https://telegrafi.com/haradinaj-ashper-gervallen-nje-bandite-ordinere-qe-se-di-cfare-flet/>, Telegrafi, unknown date in January, 2025

85 "Jashari reacts to Gërvalla: A bottomfeeder who filed false documents against the KLA," <https://paparaci.com/483644/jashari-i-reagon-gervalles-funderrine-qe-deponoi-dokumente-te-rrejshme-kunder-uck-se/>, Paparaci.info, January 28, 2025.

86 Facebook page of candidate of Labinot Gjini, <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=2371959559809167&set=a.2102226626782463>, January 29, 2025.

87 "ECAP fines political entities 75,500 euros in one day," <https://www.koha.net/lajmet-e-mbremjes-ktv/pzap-ja-per-nje-dite-gjobit-subjektet-politike-me-75500-euro>, Koha.net, January 31, 2025.

88 ECAP decision on Rama: <https://pzap.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Anr.224-Vendim.pdf>

89 "Rama: Haradinaj sacrificed everything, Donika Gërvalla is a shameless person who throws mud at a living legend," https://rahoveci24.com/rama-haradinaj-sakrifikoi-gjithcka-donika-gervalla-nje-e-pafytyre-qe-hedh-balte-mbi-nje-leg-jende-te-gjalle/?fbclid=IwY2xjawlpEfhlHRuA2FlbQlxMQABHZxIZ4VbeIAI7XNsakQ7i57kF7hkVWu733t1jdxvqWip6zHta-P0ePpOEhg_aem_PVPcejGxk8wPa5caOQMULA, Rahoveci24.com, January 27, 2025

90 "ECAP fines Sami Lushtaku 8,000 euros and Albin Kurti 3,000 on the same legal clause," <https://demokracia.com/pzap-me-te-njeitin-nen-e-te-njeitin-paragraf-denon-sami-lushtakun-8-mije-euro-e-albin-kurtin-vec-me-3-mije/>, Demokracia.com, January 22, 2025.

91 ECAP decision on Xheneta Syka, <https://pzap.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Anr.28-Vendim.pdf>, January 15, 2025

92 Hayvan means 'animal' in Turkish; Kurti used the word in the original Albanian language statement. It is used as a derogatory term to compare a person to an animal.

93 "Three graffiti appear on the Pristina-Gjilan road with the inscription 'Hayvan Prime Minister'," <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1140183514038371>, Kallxo.com, February 25, 2025

94 ECAP decision against the Coalition for the Family, <https://pzap.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Anr.235-Vendim.pdf>, January 30, 2025.

95 ECAP decision on Fridon Lala. <https://smaa.rks-gov.net/documents/46429.pdf>, February 7, 2025.

96 Interview with a member of civil society working with Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, March 10, 2025

BIRN Kosovo found that many hate messages were rebroadcast on television, either as topics for debate or in sponsored airtime without any editorial oversight, despite the fact that according to the Ethical Code of the IMC and Press Council of Kosovo (PCK), media outlets bear responsibility for the content they air or publish, regardless of whether the material is external or sponsored.

3.3 Dehumanising Messages on Social Media

Social networks played a significant role in amplifying hate speech and spreading dehumanising content targeting election candidates, the media, and political analysts - most prominently in posts focused on the candidates themselves. Derogatory references to animals were frequently used to describe politicians, who were likened to dogs, donkeys and monkeys.

Anonymous pages on TikTok and Facebook were used to create and amplify election-related hate speech. Through social media monitoring, fact-checkers identified over 30 false pieces of information spread on TikTok and Facebook. These messages were characterised by hate speech and disinformation aimed at influencing public opinion and polarising society; they targeted a range of political candidates.

Supporters of political parties used social media to construct false narratives. Most of the content came from anonymous sources. Fact-checkers identified a string of messages claiming that “the dogs of PDK, LDK, AAK, NISMA, and Pacolli are dead”. One rumour circulated online alleged Kurti was “suffering from mental illness resulting from his time in prison”.⁹⁷ Kurti was a political prisoner in Serbia between 1999 and 2001.⁹⁸

Another unsubstantiated rumour that did the rounds alleged Haradinaj had received his first military rank as a commander in Slobodan Milošević’s Yugoslav army.

On election day, fact-checkers identified false information published on TikTok and Facebook claiming that Kurti had signed a coalition agreement with the SL. A doctored photograph published that day portrayed LVV MP candidate Mimoza Kusari as drunk and referred to her as ‘Mimoza Simić’, using a common Serbian surname.⁹⁹

A post on Facebook, meanwhile, falsely accused PDK supporters of stealing hundreds of wallets at a rally.¹⁰⁰

Data from fact-checkers indicate that manipulated photos and videos were used throughout the election period to spread hate messages. A photo showing several members of the diaspora, one of whom appeared to be making a well-known three-fingered Serbian salute,¹⁰¹ was circulated with the claim that they were diaspora voters who had come to vote for Kurti. However, the image was later shown to have been doctored; none of the individuals in the original photo had made any such gesture. The doctored photo was published on the Facebook page of Klan Kosova, but the post was taken down following a public complaint by LVV spokesperson Manxhuka.¹⁰²

97 TikTok video: <https://www.tiktok.com/@newsilir/video/7464653193797045506>

98 “20 years since Kurti was released from prison in Nis,” <https://telegrafi.com/en/20-vjet-nga-lirimi-albin-kurtit-nga-bur-gu-nishit/>, Telegrafi.com, undated

99 In a BIRN interview with Arlind Manxhuka, spokesperson for LVV, conducted on March 21, 2025, he confirmed that Mimoza Kusari, head of LVV parliamentary group, was the LVV candidate most attacked with disinformation during this election.

100 Krypometer, Kallxo.com. Deklarata e rreme që i mveshet Baki Kelanit. <https://kallxo.com/krypometer/deklarata-e-rreme-qe-i-mveshet-baki-kelanit/>, February 9, 2025.

101 The three-fingered salute is commonly used by Orthodox Serbs to indicate patriotism but has also been heavily associated with the Serb nationalism that fuelled the wars of the 1990s during the collapse of Yugoslavia. see an example: https://www.rferl.org/a/With_Pale_School_Opening_Serb_Leader_Sends_Message_To_Bosnia/1819045.html

102 Arlind Manxhuka post, <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=10162870346393698&set=a.10151088612843698>, February 7, 2025.

CHAPTER 4: Foreign Influence and Anti-Integration Narratives

BIRN Kosovo's monitoring pointed to a strategic campaign of disinformation orchestrated by Russia and Serbia with the aim of undermining public trust in Kosovo's electoral process and calling into question the country's EU and NATO orientation. This strategy was initiated by politicians in Serbia and heavily supported by senior Kremlin officials. Russian-financed media amplified the narratives they employed.

Developments on the world stage, as well as direct messages from the Russian and Serbian governments, had an impact on public discourse in Kosovo. BIRN Kosovo observed, for example, that the result of the US presidential election and Donald Trump's inauguration prompted speculation about Washington's stance on Kosovo.

There were also, however, narratives promoting closer relations between Kosovo and the EU and NATO. A particular focus was placed on the desirability of good relations with Turkey, given its perceived military strength. These narratives revolved around Kosovo's agreement to buy Turkish 'Bayraktar' armed drones and announced plans for the construction of an ammunition factory in Kosovo using Turkish production equipment and expertise.

Such developments were not presented in a particularly negative or heavily positive light in the media or in public discourse, but as a matter of necessity in an environment where Europe in general is moving towards higher defence spending.

Among Serbian-speaking audiences in Serbia and Kosovo, disinformation claiming that the West continues to support Kosovo Albanians in an eventual war against Serbia was prevalent,

alongside allegations of NATO crimes against the Serbian population. Among Albanian-speaking audiences, disinformation circulated with regards to why Kosovo's application for membership of the Council of Europe was rejected and why the EU has yet to lift its measures against Kosovo.

4.1 Kremlin Disinformation and Influence

According to the [EUvsDisinfo](#) platform,¹⁰³ undermining trust in elections is one of the key objectives of Russian disinformation.

BIRN Kosovo identified a strategic disinformation campaign orchestrated by Russia and Serbia with the aim of damaging public trust in the electoral

Much of the campaign focussed on an LVV demand for the Belgrade-backed SL to be banned from participating in the election for statements such as "Long live Serbia" while omitting any references to Kosovo as a state.¹⁰⁴ The CEC indeed disqualified SL, but the decision was later overturned by [ECAP](#), allowing SL to run.

Serbia's Vučić accused Kurti of trying to expel Serbs from Kosovo with the help of its foreign allies. SL leader [Elek](#) said Kurti was "trying to root out the Serb people from (our) southern province".¹⁰⁵

Zaharova,¹⁰⁶ the Russian foreign ministry spokesperson, accused Kurti of seeking out "puppet" Serbs.

¹⁰³ The EuvsDisinfo is a platform of the East stratcom Task Force, bringing together a team of experts with a background mainly in communications, journalism, social sciences and Russian studies. <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/>

¹⁰⁴ "CEC rejects election certification for Belgrade-backed Kosovo Serb party," <https://prishtinainsight.com/cec-rejects-election-certification-for-belgrade-backed-kosovo-serb-party/>, Prishtina Insight, December 23, 2025.

¹⁰⁵ "Kosovo election authority bans main ethnic Serb party from parliamentary vote," <https://apnews.com/article/kosovo-serbs-election-srpska-lista-party-banned-e6528d0f7ee22b27513f9930ab18bc99>, AP news, December 23, 2024.

¹⁰⁶ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov's remarks at the Ambassadorial Round Table Discussion, "Ukraine crisis: Global information space," Moscow, https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1984504/, November 29, 2024

“Prime Minister Kurti is attempting to manipulate the election results so that the Assembly will be filled with puppet Serb deputies loyal to him, enabling him to change laws and achieve his ultimate goal: the ethnic cleansing of Serbs from Kosovo,” she said.

Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov condemned the move to ban SL as a violation of international law, according to a statement issued after he spoke by phone with Vučić.

Some Serbian politicians took aim at the election during meetings with Chinese officials.

Petković, the director of the Serbian government’s Office for Kosovo, promoted the narrative that the election lacked credibility during a meeting with China’s Ambassador to Serbia, Li Ming.¹⁰⁷

According to BIRN Kosovo’s findings, Russian state media - notably Sputnik Serbia and Russia Today - devoted considerable airtime to the issue.

Sputnik,¹⁰⁸ for instance, made the unsubstantiated claim that SL votes could end up being stolen by Rašić and that a lack of SL election observers could lead to ballot-stuffing with “ghost voters” in an effort to harm the party’s performance.¹⁰⁹

Russia Today also disseminated disinformation that the West was supporting a plan by Kurti to replace the SL with local Serb politicians who would support him.

The spread of disinformation by both outlets was systematic, promoting divisive rhetoric and a one-sided picture of the election. The coverage fell far short of professional journalistic standards by relying on selective reporting and unverified claims. Sensationalist headlines included: ‘Dangerous Game of Pristina: Targeting Srpska Lista but Aiming for Survival of Serbs’¹¹⁰ and ‘Kurti’s Only Election Strategy: Hatred Towards Serbs’.¹¹¹

By amplifying the allegations levelled by Serbian and Russian officials and depicting SL as under siege,¹¹² these outlets contributed to ongoing efforts to destabilise Kosovo’s political landscape and undermine trust in its democratic processes.

Sputnik Serbia and Russia Today Balkan ignored the activities of other Kosovo Serb political parties, presenting SL as the only credible representative of Serbs in Kosovo.¹¹³ Their reporting highlighted the perceived threats and obstacles facing SL while excluding any criticism or scrutiny of its actions.

On February 18, Petković was featured in a Sputnik Serbia article accusing Kurti of trying to undo SL’s electoral success and manipulate the political representation of Kosovo Serbs.¹¹⁴ The head of the Serbian government’s Office for Kosovo was quoted as accusing an unnamed German diplomat of favouritism towards Rašić; Sputnik Serbia tried to support its characterisation of Rašić as a tool being used to undermine SL by quoting political

107 “Petković with Chinese Ambassador Li Ming about the difficult situation for the Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija,” <https://sputnikportal.rs/20250227/petkovic-sa-ambasadorom-kine-li-mingom-o-teskoj-situaciji-za-srpski-narod-na-kim-1183076271.html>, Sputnik portal, February 27, 2025.

108 NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence: The Kremlin-sponsored Sputnik news website is recognised as one of the primary channels of Russian influence in the Western Balkan (WB) media space, and so a comprehensive analysis was conducted to learn about its content and way of operation. The Russian state-owned media group Rossiya segodnya launched its online news website, Sputnik, in November 2014. Since that time, the brand has expanded, and today it offers news reports in more than 30 languages worldwide... It is the most popular Russian state-sponsored media outlet in the region, and the content features a range of local and regional media outlets.

https://stratcomcoe.org/cuploads/pfiles/analysis_of_sputnik_serbia_30-04_v4-1.pdf. Last accessed on March 11 2025.

109 “Phantom voters, election engineering: Pristina is preparing a trap for Srpska Lista,” <https://sputnikportal.rs/20250121/fantomski-biraci-izborni-inzenjering-pristina-sprema-zamku-za-srpsku-listu-1181844931.html>, Sputnik portal, 19 January 2025.

110 “Dangerous Game of Pristina: Targeting Srpska Lista but Aiming for the survival of Serbs,” <https://sputnikportal.rs/20241219/opasna-igra-pristine-nisani-srpsku-listu-a-cilja-opstanak-srba-1180712787.html>

111 “Kurti’s Only Election strategy: Hatred Towards Serbs,” Sputnik Portal, December 19, 2024. <https://sputnikportal.rs/20250115/kurti-pokazao-da-mu-je-jedini-adut-za-izbore---mrznja-prema-srbima-1181627525.html>, Sputnik Portal, January 15, 2025

112 “Pristina’s sabotage of Srpska Lista: Kurti Wants to Install His Loyalists in Parliamentary seats,” <https://rt.rs/srbija-i-bal-kan/123402-srpska-lista-zabrana-ucesce-izbori-kosovo-metohija-analiza/>, RT Serbia, December 2024

113 “Our Option Means the survival and Presence of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija, Srpska Lista Representatives in Ranilug: United and strong for All 10 Mandates,” <https://sputnikportal.rs/20250204/srpska-lista-na-skupu-u-leposavicu-nasa-opcija-znaci-opstanak-i-ostanak-srba-na-kim-1182298695.html>, Sputnik Portal, February 4, 2024

114 “Petković on the statement of the German diplomat in Pristina: He has put himself in the position of Kurti’s spokesperson,” <https://sputnikportal.rs/20250218/petkovic-o-izjavi-nemackog-diplomate-u-pristini-stavio-se-u-funkciju-portparola-kurtija-1182770098.html>, Sputnik Portal. February 18, 2025.

analyst Luka Jovanović, who described him as a “circus bear” whose purpose was to create an illusion of Serb representation while in fact serving Kosovo Albanian interests.¹¹⁵

Russian officials also helped spread disinformation. At the end of January, foreign ministry spokesperson Zakharova claimed that Kurti intended to falsify the results of the election and accused Western powers of enabling “violent Albanisation” and “cleansing Kosovo of Serbs.”¹¹⁶ A day later, Sputnik Serbia published an article quoting Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandar Grushko as saying that the West was pressuring Serbia to recognise Kosovo’s independence while turning a blind eye to alleged anti-Serb actions in Kosovo. Russia’s ambassador to Serbia, Aleksandr Bocan-Kharchenko, reinforced this narrative, describing the situation in Kosovo before the election as a “high-risk situation”.¹¹⁷ The statement, made to RIA Novosti, was subsequently picked up by [Sputnik Serbia](#).¹¹⁸ Sputnik also reported that the [German far-right party Alternative für Deutschland](#) might advocate for Germany’s withdrawal of its recognition of Kosovo.¹¹⁹

RT Balkan mirrored Sputnik Serbia’s narratives, consistently attacking Kurti, defaming Rašić, and portraying SL as a victim of political oppression. In an article headlined ‘Completely Ungrateful Nation: How Kurti Lost the Elections in Kosovo and Metohija’,¹²⁰ RT framed Kurti as waging a campaign against Serbs while failing to secure the trust of Kosovo Albanians. A story titled ‘Operation Rašić: How to secure a Parliamentary Seat for Kurti’s Favorite Serb’¹²¹ accused Kurti’s government of manipulating the election to benefit Rašić. RT Balkan repeatedly relied on biased sources, including Serbian politicians¹²² and analysts sympathetic to Serbia’s government, while omitting context and background that would contribute to a balanced story.

4.2. The Trump Effect

International relations, in particular Kosovo’s relationship with the US, featured prominently during the election campaign. Trump’s return to the White House was frequently discussed in televised debates and on social media, while fact-checkers identified at least 10 examples of content misinterpreting statements made by US politicians. Between January 8 and February 8, more than 2,000 online stories focused on Kosovo’s relationship with the US. Most focused on statements claiming that the US continued to support Kosovo or that US support for Kosovo had declined under the outgoing Kurti government.



Fact-checkers found six examples of AI being used on TikTok and Facebook to falsely portray Trump as speaking highly of Kurti.

115 “Completely scattered in Kosovo and Metohija: Pristina’s goal - to find a “circus bear” among Serbs,” <https://sputnikportal.rs/20250212/kurtijeva-gimnastika--za-kradju-srpskih-glasova---1182575447.html>, Sputnik Portal, February 12, 2025.

116 “Moscow warns: Kurti intends to falsify elections in Kosovo and Metohija,” <https://sputnikportal.rs/20250123/moskva-upozorava-kurti-namerava-da-falsifikuje-izbore-na-kim--1181908180.html>, Sputnik Portal, January 23, 2025

117 “Bocan-Kharchenko: situation in Kosovo before the elections – a high-risk zone,” <https://sputnikportal.rs/20250207/ruski-ambasador-situacija-na-kim-pred-izbore--zona-visokog-rizika-1182424720.html>, Sputnik portal, February 7, 2025.

118 Ibid

119 “Even as a strong opposition can advocate for Germany’s withdrawal of recognition of Kosovo,” <https://sputnikportal.rs/20250117/afd-i-kao-jaka-opozicija-moze-da-se-zalaze-za-nemacko-povlacenje-priznanja-KosovoKosovo-1181719674.html>, Sputnik Portal, AFD, January 17, 2025.

120 “Completely Ungrateful Nation: How Kurti Lost the Elections in Kosovo and Metohija,” <https://rt.rs/srbija-i-balkan/129389-kurti-izbori-nacija/>, RT Serbia, February 10, 2025.

121 “Operation Rasic: How to secure a Parliamentary seat for Kurti’s Favourite Serb,” <https://rt.rs/srbija-i-balkan/129714-ra-sic-kurti-mandat/>, RT Serbia, February 12, 2025.

122 “Pristina’s sabotage of Srpska Lista : Kurti Wants to Install His Loyalists in Parliamentary Seats,” <https://rt.rs/srbija-i-balkan/123402-srpska-lista-zabrana-ucesce-izbori-kosovo-metohija-analiza/>, RT Serbia, December 2024.

Coverage of Trump's inauguration focused on which Kosovo politicians were in Washington for the ceremony. They included the AAK's Haradinaj; on his return, Haradinaj said US-Kosovo relations were not only at a critical point, "but even dangerous".¹²³ Rrahmani, who attended the inauguration, said his Coalition for the Family and Trump shared the same values, posting: "from the inauguration ceremony of President Trump. Our cause: Man and woman, only two genders, FULL STOP..."¹²⁴

Even The Guardian, in the UK, reported on how Trump's shadow loomed large over the Kosovo election, writing that fears of partition, which surfaced during Trump's first presidency, had re-emerged with his return to the White House.¹²⁵

Disinformation and divisive narratives concerning US-Kosovo relations gained even greater traction online, at campaign rallies and during television debates when US diplomat Richard Grenell, Trump's former envoy to Kosovo-Serbia talks, made two statements regarding LVV and Kurti. On February 3, 2025, he posted on X: "The Kurti Government was not trustworthy during Trump's first term, nor during Biden's term. Both Republicans and Democrats have criticized Kurti consistently for taking unilateral actions that destabilize the region. So has the EU and NATO. The international community is united against Kurti."¹²⁶

On February 7, he posted again to call Kurti "delusional",¹²⁷ writing: "Relations have never been lower. Albin Kurti has been condemned by the first Trump Administration, the Biden Administration, NATO, the EU, the U.S. Embassy, Anthony Blinken, etc..."¹²⁸

Grenell's posts became a central topic in televised debates.¹²⁹ Opposition parties and some analysts welcomed his statements. Others questioned Grenell's authority within the Trump administration and his influence with regards Kosovo.

Out of the 16 television stations monitored by BIRN, seven featured debates relating to Grenell's statements, including [Klan Kosova](#)¹³⁰, [ATV](#)¹³¹, [TëVë1](#)¹³², [KTV](#)¹³³, [RTV Dukagjini](#)¹³⁴, [T7](#)¹³⁵, [Kanal 10](#)¹³⁶. These debates included speculation about whether Grenell was trying to influence the election. Some portrayed Grenell's tweets as direct attacks against Kurti. Headlines on prime-time television programmes included: '[US attack](#)'; '[Is the U.S. becoming involved in the Kosovo elections?/GRENNELL ATTACKS KURTI, HARSH DISCUSSIONS](#)' and '[Report - US attacks Kurti - Do not be tricked by him](#)'.

123 Interview with Ramush Haradinaj, <https://klanKosova.tv/haradinaj-ju-siguroj-qe-marredheniet-me-shba-ne-jane-ne-faze-me-te-rrezikshme-se-qe-e-tha-grenell-video1/>, Klan Kosova, February 4, 2025.

124 Facebook post of Eman Rrahmani. <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/15eZwaxtE5/>, January 21, 2025

125 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/feb/09/kosovo-goes-to-the-polls-as-the-shadow-of-trump-looms-large>

126 Richard Grenell, <https://x.com/RichardGrenell/status/1886418809629884697>, X, February 3, 2025

127 Richard Grenell, <https://x.com/RichardGrenell/status/1887692571507650638>, X, February 7, 2025

128 Debat Plus, TV Dukagjini Will USA be involved in Kosovo Elections" (min. 8:17 Grenell's statement) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2x7Q49dr9g>, Debat Plus, RTV Dukagjini February 3, 2025

129 "Will the US be Involved in Elections?" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2x7Q49dr9g>, Debat Plus, RTV Dukagjini, February 03, 2025

130 "Rubikon with Adriatik Kelmendi – US strikes Kurti, Kurti strikes KEK," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTPFWLc-m6g>, Klan Kosova, February 3, 2025

131 "Will AAK accept the Association?" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=st0rZdXsZ8c>, ATV, February 3, 2025

132 "Debate Corner: Kurti Vs Grenell, Is US Interfering with Elections?" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mXZjadbsJT4>, TEVE, February 5, 2025

133 "The issue of the North, Grenell's accusations," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zJtc_EtVBd0, Elections in Koha, KTV, 3 February 2025

134 "Is the US Becoming Involved in Kosovo Elections?/Grenell Strikes Kurti, Fierce Discussion," Debat Plus on RTV Dukagjini, February 3, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2x7Q49dr9g>, "Dire situation, allies have no more faith in us, Kurti masked as a patriot," Ramush Haradinaj is harsh: He has a dangerous agenda (4:14 - 4:31), Haradinaj.R, TV Dukagjini, Debat Plus, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1867807990625085> Minute (4:14 – 4:31), February 8, 2025

135 "US Blow: Does Albania care about the February 9 elections?/Opposition's plan," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KrhJ3Ap48ds>, Pressing, T7, February 3, 2025

136 "US Strikes at Kurti, Don't be fooled by him," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUVQDEwIGck>, Kanal 10, February 3, 2025

Remarks made during these debates fed into television news bulletins. The EU Election Observation Mission's report also alluded to Grenell's posts,¹³⁷ writing: "The United States envoy for special missions, Richard Grenell, became involved in the campaign, criticising Prime Minister Albin Kurti for not being a reliable partner to the United States."

Online media devoted significant coverage to Grenell's positions. Data from Pikasa.ai shows that in the month leading up to the election, Trump and Kurti were mentioned in 1,665 articles and social media posts, which were shared 6,366 times and generated 77,000 engagements.

The issue featured in 1,200 social media posts and news articles by online media. Grenell's statements triggered a new wave of social media posts claiming, without evidence, that Trump was in favour of Kurti returning for a new term as prime minister. These posts contained fabricated statements attributed to Trump.¹³⁸ Some included deepfake videos in which Trump appeared to declare support for Kurti.

4.3 NATO and EU Integration

During the election, most political parties declared their strong commitment to NATO and EU integration, which was a topic of considerable discussion.

Many candidates expressed a sense of urgency about joining NATO because of a perceived risk that Serbia, encouraged by possible Russian advances in Ukraine, may invade Kosovo. Haradinaj promoted the idea of fast-tracking Kosovo's accession to NATO.¹³⁹ LVV, PDK, LDK, AAK and other parties said it was their goal to join the alliance as soon as possible.

All parties pledged to accelerate Kosovo's EU integration process. Opposition parties repeatedly blamed LVV for Kosovo's exclusion from NATO's 'Defender' exercise¹⁴⁰ and for the measures imposed by the EU against Kosovo. There were accusations that Kurti 'gave away' land around the Deçan/Dečane monastery and was to blame for Kosovo's failure to clinch membership of the Council of Europe. Kurti's government pointed out that the issue of the land in Deçan/Dečane was decided by the Constitutional Court in a ruling that preceded his tenure as prime minister and which previous governments had been reluctant to implement.



Pikasa.ai identified 95 news articles concerning the 2013 Brussels Agreement¹⁴¹ and 2023 Ohrid Agreement between Kurti and Vučić, setting out a roadmap to the normalisation of relations between Kosovo and Serbia¹⁴². LDK and PDK vowed to renegotiate the Ohrid agreement.

137 PRELIMINARY STATEMENT: Peaceful and vibrant election process despite harsh rhetoric reflecting deep divisions, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2025/Preliminary%20Statement_FINAL.pdf, EU Elections Mission, February 11, 2025.

138 Kallxo.com/Krypometer: "False claims that Trump spoke about Kurti." <https://kallxo.com/krypometer/pretendime-te-rreme-se-trump-ka-folur-per-kurtin/>, Kallxo.com, February 6, 2025

139 Ramush Haradinaj, AAK, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZ8m6XE54Mg>, Elections chronicles in RTK, January 24, 2025

140 "US penalises Kosovo after violent unrest," <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-65759214>, BBC, May 31, 2023.

141 "Under the April 2013 Brussels Agreement, Serbia did not recognise Kosovo's independence but agreed to co-operate in ways that would allow it to operate more like a sovereign state. Under the new deal, Serbs in northern Kosovo will have their own police and appeal court. Both sides also agreed to not block each other's efforts to seek EU membership." <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-22222624>

142 The 11-point agreement known as the Annex to the Implementation to the Agreement on the Path to Normalisation of Relations between Kosovo and Serbia demands that the sides maintain good neighbourly relations and recognise each other's documents such as passports and license plates. The new agreement came almost a decade after the initial agreement was signed in April 2013. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/belgrade-pristina-dialogue-implementation-annex-agreement-path-normalisation-relations-between_en

On the issue of national security, the Kosovo government used social media to heavily promote the military contracts it had signed, including the construction of an ammunition factory and the purchase of drones from Turkey and Black Hawk helicopters from the US.

4.4 Chinese Influence

During the election campaign, there was little debate among political parties in Kosovo concerning relations or trade cooperation with China, which does not recognise Kosovo as independent.

BIRN Kosovo's social media monitoring identified several articles put out by Chinese state-controlled media that were picked up by Albanian-language platforms, including some operating in Kosovo, and republished without any disclaimer about the original source. Headlines proclaimed China's military might, cooperation with Russia and efforts to fight corruption. Interviews conducted by BIRN Kosovo also underscored that Chinese state-affiliated media have published content critical of NATO and the US while focusing on their role in the Balkan region. The content made little

of inter-ethnic relations in Kosovo, emphasising instead geostrategic narratives such as the claim that NATO will withdraw from Kosovo.¹⁴³ An article headlined 'China prepares for a possible trade war after Trump's tariff threats' appeared on five Albanian-language sites. A story about the commissioning of China's first Type 054B Luohe warship appeared on six Albanian-language sites under the headline 'China launches into the sea the 40,000-ton monster'.

Other articles picked up by Albanian-language media focused on China-Russia relations, as well as reports claiming China is "waging an unwavering war against corruption" and "making efforts to stabilise the yuan and expand cross-border financing".

Chinese narratives often mirrored and amplified messaging initially disseminated by Russian outlets.

143 BIRN interview with a political analyst conducted on March 19, 2025.



CHAPTER 5: Disinformation to Sow Division

Disinformation about inter-ethnic relations in Kosovo was rife during the monitoring period. Narratives included rumours about the threat of war, accusations of treason, and historical revisionism. Some Serbian politicians portrayed the actions of Kosovo's authorities during the election as tantamount to ethnic cleansing; among Albanian-speaking audiences, Serbia was on occasion portrayed as a hostile neighbour. Kosovo Albanian politicians branded their rivals as collaborators with Serbia, while Serbian politicians portrayed Serbs running against SL as traitors.

5.1. Disinformation about Violence, War

The election period was marred by widespread speculation about the possibility of inter-ethnic incidents or confrontation between Kosovo and Serbia.

In December 2024, Kurti warned during a press conference that attacks on vital infrastructure or the incitement of inter-ethnic incidents by Serbia were “[expected to occur in the near future, especially before and after the New Year](#)”.¹⁴⁴

The following day, December [25, 2024](#), Russia's Zakharova said it was Kurti who was planning new incidents during the holidays and would seek to lay the blame on Serbia and Kosovo Serbs.¹⁴⁵

This narrative was supported by Kosovo Serb politician Boban Bogdanović who, [during a live appearance on Klan Kosova](#) on December 25, alleged that Kurti and Vučić may coordinate such incidents.¹⁴⁶ He provided no evidence but said he had received information from international sources.

Bogdanović claimed the incidents would occur in the days before the election.¹⁴⁷ In [another live appearance on Klan Kosova](#)¹⁴⁸ on January 20, 2025, Bogdanović speculated that Kurti and Vučić were planning incidents in northern Kosovo [later that month](#). He again produced no evidence, and no such incidents occurred.

Even after SL was cleared to run in the election, Kurti sought to link the Belgrade-backed party to the armed attack in Banjska,¹⁴⁹ describing it as “the [political wing of Milan Radoičić](#)¹⁵⁰ and [Serbian state terrorism](#)”. He blamed opposition parties for certifying the party to participate in the elections on February 9, 2025.¹⁵¹ It should be noted that Milan Radoičić was the vice president of SL on

144 “Kurti warns of other attacks in the North before and after the New Year,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w8jfWY-QsXXk>, KTV. December 2024.

145 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. comment by Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova on Western attempts to destabilise Serbia, https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1989152/, December 25, 2024.

146 “Attacks in 6 weeks, Bogdanovic shocks, reveals a secret agreement,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pqdoy96kX4o>, Kosova Today, Klan Kosova, December 25, 2024.

147 Ibid.

148 “Secret Kurti-Vučić meeting is taking place these days,” Bogdanović shares exclusive details. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=saDKmc34fg>, Klan Kosova, January 20, 2025.

149 The Kosovo authorities define the Banjska attack as terrorism and the armed group led by Radoičić as terrorists. Furthermore, the indictment filed by Kosovo Special Prosecution has qualified the attack as terrorism and charged the suspected perpetrators with terrorism. During the attack, gunmen led by Radoičić killed one Kosovo police officer and wounded two others in clashes near a Serbian Orthodox monastery in the municipality of Zvečan. Radoičić subsequently took full responsibility for the attack. For more details see: <https://balkaninsight.com/2024/08/15/kosovo-and-Serbia-trade-blows-over-deadly-banjska-attack-probe/>

150 Milan Radoičić was the deputy leader of Srpska Lista, a party closely linked to Serbia's ruling Progressive Party. He was sanctioned by both the US and the UK for corruption. He was also the ring leader of the armed attack on Banjska village in northern Kosovo on September 24, 2023 which left one Kosovo Police officer dead. See more details at: Prishtina Insight. “Who is Milan Radoičić, the shadow power of Kosovo Serbs?” <https://prishtinainsight.com/who-is-milan-radoicic-the-shadow-power-of-kosovo-serbs-mag/>, Prishtina Insight, September 28, 2023.

151 “Kurti on non-certification of Srpska Lista : Vetëvendosje's stance could not have been different,” [Zeri.info](https://zeri.info/aktuale/561143/kurti-per-mos-certifikimin-e-listes-serbe-qendrimi-i-vetevendosjes-nuk-ka-mundur-), 24 December 2024. <https://zeri.info/aktuale/561143/kurti-per-mos-certifikimin-e-listes-serbe-qendrimi-i-vetevendosjes-nuk-ka-mundur->

September 24, 2023, when the deadly attack in Banjska took place; he claimed responsibility, and Kosovo's Special Prosecution qualified the attack as an act of terrorism in its indictment against him. Radoičić later resigned from the party, but several of BIRN Kosovo's Serb interlocutors said SL continues to operate under Radoičić's direction.¹⁵²

Social media was full of disinformation regarding the security situation and the possibility of conflict. One false claim, for example, was that Trump had signed an executive order for the US to protect Kosovo for the next 150 years.

Fact-checkers also identified a video published on Telegram and X that falsely claimed NATO troops and Kosovo Police were preparing to attack Serbs in Kosovo. Additionally, a video of a house fire and a call for help for a Kosovo Serb family was falsely presented as the result of an inter-ethnic incident.¹⁵³ Fact-checkers also identified a TikTok post falsely claiming that US KFOR troops had attacked a "base" in Raška, on the Serbian side of the border with Kosovo. "Is war between Kosovo and Serbia happening now?" the post asked. There was no such strike by US KFOR troops.

Aleksandar Vulin,¹⁵⁴ Serbia's deputy prime minister, echoed Kremlin-sponsored disinformation that NATO's goal is to expel Serbs from Kosovo, stating that "the goal of those who bombed Serbia in 1999 is the ethnic cleansing of Serbs from Kosovo."¹⁵⁵ The statement was amplified on Telegram with false information alleging that Kosovo Police had increased its presence along the border with Serbia.¹⁵⁶

te-jete-ndryshe/

152 Interviews and meetings with over 10 Serb officials from municipalities led by SL in Kosovo held in late 2024 and early 2025

153 There is no evidence that the burning of a Serbian family's aid facility in Radava is ethnically motivated. <https://hibrid.info/nuk-ka-fakte-se-djegia-e-nje-objekti-ndihmes-i-nje-familjeje-serbe-ne-radeve-eshte-i-motivuar-etnikisht/> Hibrid.info, January 7, 2025.

154 "The goal of all those who bombed Serbia is the cleansing of the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija: Vulin on the new wave of terror that Kurti is carrying out against our people," <https://naslovi.net/2025-01-17/kurir/cilj-svih-koji-su-bombardovali-srbiju-je-ciscenje-srba-na-kim-vulin-o-novom-talasu-terora-koji-kurti-sprovodi-nad-nasim-narodom/38779522>, Naslovi.net. January 17th, 2025.

155 "The West is an accomplice of the ethnic cleansing of Serbs in Kosovo," <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/report/the-west-is-an-accomplice-of-the-ethnic-cleansing-of-serbs-in-kosovo/>, EU vs Disinfo, December 19, 2022.

156 Unfounded claim that Kosovo Police is assembling weapons in Jarinje in the presence of KFOR. <https://hibrid.info/pretendim-pa-fakte-se-policia-e-kosoves-po-monton-armatim-ne-jarinje-ne-prezence-te-kfor-it/>, Hibrid.info, February 11, 2025.

157 Konjufca. G, Elections Chronicle from the rally in Gjilan. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EuXWywwl6QA&t=65s> (minuta 1:05- 1:18), KTV, January 23, 2025

158 "Razumem" is the Serbian language word for "I understand"; Vučić asked Hoti if he spoke any Serbian, Hoti said in Serbian 'Razumem' (I understand) and was ridiculed in Kosovo for appearing like a puppet PM that bows down to a Serbian PM by 'understanding' his language.

159 Central News Headlines, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIVml2TBkbY> -Minute 16:30 , TëVë, February 4, 2025

5.2 Divisive Narratives

One of the most common patterns that emerged during the monitoring period was the labelling of political opponents as traitors and their comparison with dictators. A divisive narrative, also rooted in inter-ethnic discourse, was noted when leading LVV MP candidate Glauk Konjufca gave a speech in the municipality of Gjilan/Gnjilane, during which he framed the election in stark, polarising terms by stating: "Will Albanianism or Albanian nationalism rule in Kosovo after February 9, or will it be ruled together with Belgrade? This is the dilemma."¹⁵⁷

This statement was broadcast on KTV and circulated online. By presenting an either/or scenario, the statement polarised political debate and posited that any compromise or cooperation with Belgrade naturally undermines Albanian national identity.

The LVV's Kurti, Gërvalla, and Albulena Haxhiu, along with certain opposition candidates, consistently labelled the opposition as collaborators with SL, Radoičić, and Serbia.

Accusing former LDK leader Avdullah Hoti of being too passive in negotiations with Belgrade when he was PM, Kurti said: "There is no 'razumem' (Serbian for 'I understand')¹⁵⁸ with a bad neighbour! When you have a bad neighbour, you must keep your morale high and your weapon well loaded!"¹⁵⁹ For their part, some in the opposition tried to portray Kurti as being in awe of assassinated Kosovo Serb politician Oliver Ivanović, who had been accused of war crimes during the 1998-99 Kosovo war but was widely perceived as a moderate on the Kosovo Serb political scene. During the election, 43 posts were

identified recalling Kurti's statement in which he acknowledged Ivanović's positive role in the Serb community, citing his opposition to SL.¹⁶⁰

BIRN Kosovo's monitoring of television broadcasts found that in several cases statements made by politicians or paid television pundits could be classified as conspiracy theories and disinformation.¹⁶¹ The AAK's Haradinaj, for example, repeatedly accused Kurti of having ties to Serbia, branding him "[an agent of Serbia and Russia](#)"¹⁶² and "a Trojan Horse among us".¹⁶³

Some political analysts repeatedly resorted to negative messaging, misleading information, and personal attacks that contributed to the divisive inter-ethnic narrative.

For example, during the TV programme "D Plus" on RTV Dukagjini, analyst Lirim Mehmetaj claimed Kurti was "working for Serbia" and "anti-nationalist". The LVV, he said, opted to launch its campaign in Gjakovë/Đakovica because it was the "birthplace of Rado", a reference to Radoičić.¹⁶⁴

The claim met with a backlash among those connected to the Gjakovë/Đakovica region, which suffered heavily during the war and is still searching for many of its missing persons.

Statements initially made by politicians at election rallies or in television studios accusing their political opponents of links to Serbia, collaboration with Kosovo Serb politicians and specifically with Radoičić were later turned into social media campaigns. Out of 163 false claims identified by fact-checkers on Facebook and TikTok, 64 were posts portraying political opponents or parliamentary candidates as pro-Serb, collaborators with Serbia, or Serbian spies.

There were posts on Facebook and TikTok accusing all major parties and their prime ministerial candidates of ties to Serbia; AI was used to depict

Kosovo Albanian politicians in traditional Serbian hats.

Radoičić was the primary bogeyman used by Kosovo Albanian politicians to attack their rivals.¹⁶⁵

Certain TikTok profiles and pages of unknown ownership and administration waged a campaign portraying Kurti as a collaborator of Radoičić, an heir to former Serbian strongman Slobodan Milošević, a Serbian spy, and a traitor to the KLA cause.

Similar claims were made about Bedri Hamza, the PDK candidate for prime minister, portraying him as a friend of Radoičić; Hamza was accused of awarding public road-building contracts to Radoičić's companies and of taking a boat ride on Ujman/Gazivoda Lake with Radoičić.

Lumir Abdixhiku, the LDK candidate for prime minister, was frequently referred to in online comments as 'Ljubomir', a common Serbian first name, in an apparent attempt to portray him as submissive to SL.

The AAK's Haradinaj was also portrayed as a friend of Radoičić and accused of helping him avoid jail.

Conspiracy theories also circulated on social media claiming that videos filmed in Radoičić's villa would surface, showing Kosovo Albanian politicians present. No such videos ever emerged. A false statement attributed to Radoičić, claiming that he would return to invest in Kosovo if the opposition won the election, was debunked by Kallxo.com/Krypometër.

Narratives concerning inter-ethnic relations were all over Serbian language media in Kosovo and in Serbia. There were also instances of false information, disinformation, conspiracy theories, and false statements. The SL was frequently presented as the only genuine option for Kosovo Serbs. Igor Simić from SL claimed "the regime in Pristina will use everything to reduce the number of votes that should go to the SL, as well as to weaken the strength of the Serbian people, so that after these elections, some Serbs with no

¹⁶⁰ Data analysis provided by Pikasa.ai.

¹⁶¹ Ramush Haradinaj's Mission, Minute 44:55, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mlPMCh1znD4>, Politiko, January 28, 2025

¹⁶² Ramush Haradinaj's Mission, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mlPMCh1znD4>, Kanal 10, Politiko, January 28, 2025

¹⁶³ Interview with Ramush Haradinaj, [Ramush Haradinaj dhe kush po rrokartet në fushatë | PREssING | T7](#) minutes 26:25, Pressing, T7, January, 13, 2025

¹⁶⁴ Debat Plus, Lirim Mehmetaj, minute 2:06:13 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QssthKFil6A>, TV Dukagjini, 11 January 2025,

¹⁶⁵ Radoičić is accused by the Special Prosecution of the Republic of Kosovo of leading a terrorist group that attacked [Banjska](#) and is wanted by [INTERPOL](#). Radoičić, just a few days after the attack, in a [letter](#) read by his lawyer, took responsibility for the attack, its organisation and logistics, further stating that after this incident he was resigning from his position with SL. In the attack in [Banjska](#), armed Serbs killed Afrim Bunjaku, a sergeant of the Kosovo Police (KP), while the PK killed three terrorists. Some of the people involved in the [attack](#) in Banjska were [arrested](#), but [most](#) fled to Serbia.

legitimacy among the Serbs in the Kosovo and Metohija region will again be in power in Pristina, and they will 'blindly obey' everything the regime in Pristina wants to hear".¹⁶⁶ TV Pink editor Predrag Jeremić claimed: "Kurti wants to push his [Kosovo] Serbs, who are loyal to him, and in that way to keep himself in power and - as much as he can - bring the question of Kosovo independence to a *fait accompli*."¹⁶⁷

The highest state officials in Serbia also promoted divisive narratives. Prime Minister Vučević, who resigned in early 2025 amid student-led protests, argued that SL is the only legitimate option in Kosovo, and that "each of the 10 guaranteed mandates for Kosovo Serbs represents a battle to prevent Kurti from forming a government or from easily gaining the power to do so in Priština with fake Serbs".¹⁶⁸

President Vučić insisted "Srpska Lista is the only guarantee that Kurti will not expel the Serbs from Kosovo. Srpska Lista is the only list that wants to fight for the interests of the Serbian people and that Kurti cannot bribe in any way. Neither Kurti, nor those from the world who are with him".¹⁶⁹

Some post-election narratives portrayed SL as the true winner of the election in spite of the "horrible and most brutal and dirty campaign"¹⁷⁰ allegedly waged by Kurti. Among the loudest was Vučić, who argued that SL "earned the greatest trust of Serbs"¹⁷¹ despite threats and pressure from Kurti and the Quint countries (US, France, Germany, Italy and the UK). Vučić claimed it was Kurti's intention to destroy the Serbian people, another common narrative: "Those results are almost incredible, especially considering everything Kurti did to destroy the Serbian people and Srpska Lista, everything that many foreigners did to destroy Srpska Lista secretly and publicly by helping everyone else against the strongest Serbian representatives," he said.¹⁷²

Serbian Foreign Minister Marko Đurić also weighed in against Kurti, saying: "Our people have hardly seen worse days in Kosovo and Metohija since World War II than what we see today under the regime of Albin Kurti."¹⁷³

166 Igor Simić, member of the Srpska Lista presidency, news, TV Most, January 14, 2025

167 Predrag Jeremić, editor at New Morning show, TV Pink, January 15, 2025

168 Milos Vučević, Prime Minister in Technical Government, RTS News, February 9, 2025

169 Aleksandar Vučić President of Serbia, RTS Morning News, February 9, 2025

170 Zlatan Elek, president of Srpska Lista, TV Pink News, February 10, 2025

171 Aleksandar Vučić President of Serbia, TV Pink News, February 10, 2025

172 Aleksandar Vučić President of Serbia, TV Pink News, February 10, 2025

173 Marko Djurić, Serbian Foreign Minister, RTS News, January 13, 2025

174 Petar Petković, head of the Serbian government's office for Kosovo, RTV Most, News Edition, February 2, 2025

175 Several news programmes, Petar Petković, head of the Serbian government's office for Kosovo, RTS, January 21, 2025

176 "Serbs enact a plan to sabotage Kosovo," <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/7260283.stm>, BBC, February 23, 2008

This narrative was further reinforced when Petković, head of Serbia's Office for Kosovo, wrote in an op-ed for the Serbian Politika daily that "in Kosovo, everything Serbian is threatened due to the unreasonable policies of the authorities in Pristina, but the victory of the Serbian people embodied in the Srpska Lista will be the best response and the defeat of such anti-Serbian policies represented by Albin Kurti and his lackeys".¹⁷⁴

Kurti faced criticism from Serbian officials at the end of January when several Serbian institutions were closed. Serbian public TV claimed, without evidence, that Kurti's primary objective was to "expel Serbs and create an ethnically cleansed Kosovo".¹⁷⁵

Opposition parties in Kosovo also faced unsubstantiated accusations on social media. Some were accused of collaborating with Bratislav Živković, a leader of the Serbian nationalist 'Chetnik' movement who was killed in January while fighting on the side of Russian forces against the Ukrainian army in the Kursk region.¹⁷⁶

5.3 The Impact of Fake News

Media monitoring identified a large number of fake news stories on topics of interest to the Kosovo public and aimed at influencing voter perceptions, discrediting parliamentary candidates and affecting the result of the election.



When the US administration of Joe Biden - before leaving office - expanded sanctions against certain individuals and entities in the Western Balkans, there were misleading news reports implying that [Daut Haradinaj](#), [Ramiz Lladrovci](#), [Fatmir Limaj](#), [Sami Lushtaku](#), [Azem Syla](#), [Rexhep Selimi](#) and

[Rrustem Mustafa](#)¹⁷⁷ had been added to the US list for alleged corruption, when in fact they were sanctioned years ago not for corruption but for wartime activities such as arms smuggling.

The disinformation campaigns also included baseless allegations against candidates: LDK candidate Hykmete Bajrami, for example, was [falsely](#) accused of stealing €2.1 million from the state Treasury.¹⁷⁸ A similar claim had been circulating on the Internet for some time before it was republished by the 'Mërgata me Kryeministrin' (The Diaspora with the Prime Minister)¹⁷⁹ page and was then reshared by several groups - open and closed - on Facebook.

PDK prime minister candidate Hamza was the target of unsubstantiated claims that he was involved in the misuse of €53 million of government highway funds, the subject of an [indictment filed by the Special Prosecutor's Office](#).¹⁸⁰

Hamza was also accused without evidence of involvement in the theft of €1 billion from the Central Bank of Kosovo (CBK). Former CBK Governor Hashim Rexhepi dismissed the claims, some of which were falsely attributed to him by anonymous TikTok and Facebook pages and profiles. This content was subsequently reshared across various social media groups and circulated further through comments on other unrelated posts.

On Facebook and TikTok, disinformation campaigns were uncovered claiming that Rifat Jashari, the brother of revered KLA commander Adem Jashari, had thrown Hashim Thaçi (former PDK leader and Kosovo president) out of his home in 1999. A [video](#) - which has been circulating online for years - of Thaçi visiting the Jashari home was widely re-shared during the electoral campaign along with a misleading description of the encounter.

Old videos from the previous election campaign in 2021 were also recycled to falsely accuse Kosovo President Vjosa Osmani of campaigning on behalf of LVV and Kurti. As president, Osmani is legally prohibited from being part of a political

party or participating in parliamentary election campaigning, but in 2021 she ran for parliament on the same ticket as Kurti, before becoming president later that year.

Data concerning defence spending, economic growth, and migration was also manipulated and fact-checkers identified multiple cases of AI being used to manipulate videos and images.

On February 7, Klan Kosova Television published an article under the headline "[Decision Made! Electricity Prices to Increase by 35% starting April 1, 2025](#)". This information was classified as [false by Kallxo.com/Krypometër](#)

5.4 Recognising Fake News

Politicians in Kosovo were identified by the majority of BIRN Kosovo's interviewees as both sources and disseminators of disinformation. During the research, instances were observed in which politicians appeared to unintentionally spread false information. Interviewees noted that politicians are often exposed to a large volume of information, and in some cases they unknowingly incorporate inaccurate or misleading content into their public statements.

During the campaign, BIRN Kosovo produced [DebatPernime](#), a series of televised debates between candidates that employed internationally-accepted [fact-checking standards to verify their claims](#).¹⁸¹



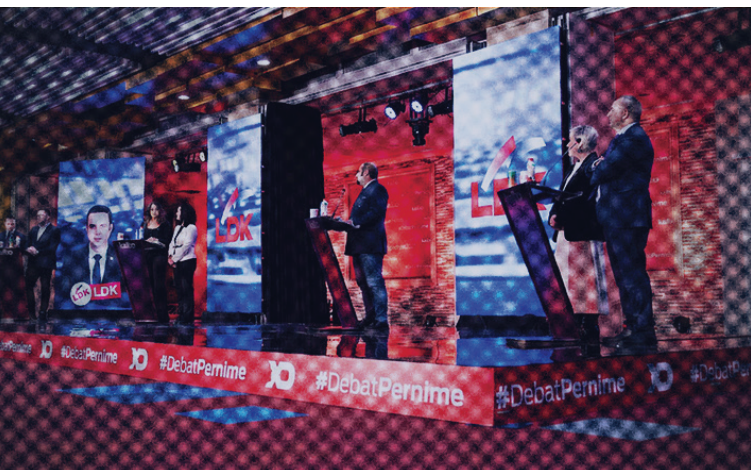
177 "The sanctions campaign against those who risk peace and stability of the Western Balkans begins," Koha.net., January 9 2025. <https://www.koha.net/arberi/zgjerohet-fusha-e-sanksioneve-ndaj-atyre-qe-cenojne-paqen-dhe-stabilitetin-ne-ballkanin-perendimor>

178 False claim that Hykmete Bajrami stole 2 million euros. <https://kallxo.com/krypometer/pretendimi-i-rreme-se-hykmete-bajrami-ka-vjedhur-2-milione-euro/>, Kallxo.com, 28 shkurt 2025.

179 Diaspora with the Prime Minister Facebook page: this thief of 2 million euros has gotten a lot of money. <https://archive.ph/mlm6l>

180 "Details from the indictments of Pal Lekaj and others," <https://kallxo.com/lajm/detaje-nga-aktakuza-ndaj-pal-leka-jt-dhe-te-tjereve-per-53-milioneshin/>, Kallxo.com. February 20, 2022.

181 Fact-checking Kosovo's Election Debates: Politicians, <https://prishtinainsight.com/fact-checking-kosovos-election-debates-politicians-claims-debunked-in-prime-time-mag/>, Prishtina Insight. 7 February 2025.



During these debates, BIRN identified at least four instances during which parliamentary candidates cited inaccurate information concerning Kosovo's use of coal, the size of its population, emigration, and prisoners' health. The candidates publicly admitted they were misinformed on these topics when they made their statements.

When confronted live by fact-checkers about the inaccurate information, the politicians acknowledged their errors and apologised.

Previous BIRN Kosovo research has shown that government officials are ill-equipped to identify disinformation narratives.¹⁸² For this research, BIRN Kosovo tested the ability of 30 parliamentary candidates to recognise fake news. Twenty-four candidates were given a fake news article to evaluate and six were asked to review a real news article.

¹⁸² "The story of our Lies", <https://kallxo.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/THE-STORY-OF-OUR-LIES-FINALE.pdf>, BIRN Report published in November 2023



Of the 24, five fully believed the fake news articles and said they would share the information publicly and use it in policymaking.

Of the six given a genuine news article, one believed it was false despite its use of verified sources.

The social experiment demonstrated that some parliamentary candidates are at risk of making misguided decisions based on false and unverified information.

CHAPTER 6: Religious and Far-Right Narratives

BIRN Kosovo also monitored the prevalence of far-right narratives in the public and the possible impact of religious messages on the parliamentary election.

6.1 Conservative and Far-Right Messages

All political parties in the 2025 election publicly declared their commitment to uphold democratic values and their rejection of far-right or far-left ideologies.

Even candidates who have spoken publicly against the LGBTQI+ community refer to themselves¹⁸³ as conservatives, rejecting the label of ‘far-right’ or ‘extremist’. BIRN found that during television debates and public discourse, political parties did not accuse each other of promoting far-right narratives.

The monitoring of candidates’ public appearances did turn up some homophobic messages and ethno-nationalist rhetoric. BIRN Kosovo found that far-right messages were widespread on social media, in both comments and content.¹⁸⁴ These messages mainly consisted of calls for violence, ethnically motivated acts of revenge, hate speech, and derogatory messages targeting the LGBTQI+ community.

Far-right narratives in Kosovo mostly fall under the category of “nativism”,¹⁸⁵ a belief in the dominance of one ethnic group over others. No messages calling for centralised power under a single, authoritarian leader were identified.

A key topic for conservative candidates in these elections was the civil code and the rights of the LGBTQI+ community.

BIRN Kosovo found that most political parties espoused conservative positions on the question of same-sex marriage. Social media campaigns were observed targeting politicians who supported LGBTQI+ rights.

Kurti, the outgoing prime minister, publicly stated that he would support the civil code, which allows civil registration of same-sex marriages. “I will personally build a parliamentary majority to enable civil unions for same-sex couples,”¹⁸⁶ Kurti said last year, triggering a furious backlash.

On election day alone, fact-checkers identified at least four separate online campaigns depicting Kurti as a fervent supporter of the LGBTQI+ community. Misleading headlines - such as: “Albin Kurti has more pictures with the rainbow flag than with Kosovo’s flag” - were widely circulated on TikTok and Facebook.

Social media monitoring also uncovered fake images of male parliamentary candidates doctored to make them look like they were dressed as women. One such TikTok video, for example, targeted LDK candidate Arben Gashi.

The Coalition for the Family, made up largely of former LVV MPs, and AKR of Behgjet Pacolli, were among the most vocal opponents of LGBTQI+ rights, speaking out against same-sex marriages and financial support for LGBTQI+ initiatives.^{187 188}

183 Facebook page of Eman Rrahmani, leader of the Coalition for the Family, <https://www.facebook.com/emanrrahmanii/posts/pfbid0Tfiq3t8hVyQwYhWHfK5bDYqGjgEKPbRkaXk5KVw71FyZ2v87wy16VsM7PPjtbT1I>, January 21, 2025.

184 “Public discourse in Kosovo with no filters preventing far-right extremism,” <https://kallxo.com/gjate/diskursi-publik-ne-kosove-pa-filtra-qe-parandalojne-ekstremizmin-e-djathte/>. Kallxo.com, December 31, 2024.

185 Mirza Buljubasic and Balsa Lubarda. Mapping the Extreme-right in the Western Balkans. <https://balkaninsight.com/extreme-right-organisations/Mapping-the-Extreme-Right-in-the-Western-Balkans.pdf>, Balkan Insight, September 2022.

186 “Kurti in Germany: I will personally build a parliamentary majority to make civil unions of the same sex possible,” <https://kallxo.com/lajm/kurti-ne-gjermani-personalisht-do-te-ndertoj-shumice-parlamentare-per-te-bere-te-mundur-bashkimin-civil-te-te-njejt-es-gjini/>, Kallxo.com, April 26, 2024.

187 Visar Korenica, [studio debate – Elections 2025 20.01.2025](#) minutes 17:02 - 20:00. Election Debate, RTK, January, 20, 2025.

188 Eman Rrahmani, Debat Plus, RTV Dukagjini, January 18, 2025 “There is no marriage between man and man,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=boKyefLEEPY> minute 1:33:53, January 18, 2025.

“[The Ministry of Culture paid](#) €10,000 for a photo of two girls kissing, but no funds were allocated for photos of massacres,”¹⁸⁹ was one of the many messages shared by coalition leader Rrahmani, in apparent reference to a performance of HAVEIT, a group of female artists whose Valentine’s Day performance on a central square in Prishtinë/Priština featured women kissing each other.¹⁹⁰

In two separate cases, ECAP ruled that the language used by the Coalition for the Family against the [LGBTQI+ community](#)¹⁹¹ constituted hate speech. However, BIRN Kosovo observed that even after these rulings, hate campaigns against the LGBTQI+ community continued on social media, with anonymous pages - primarily on Facebook and TikTok - spreading dehumanising messages and images. Duda Balje, from the Bosniak Social Democratic Union (SDU), also used dehumanising language when she stated in an interview: “We now have people who declare themselves as cats or dogs.”¹⁹²

It should be noted that none of the parties that built their political agenda around opposing LGBTQI+ rights managed to pass the electoral threshold to enter parliament.



6.2 The Influence of Religion

Kosovo is a secular state in which religious communities are prohibited from running for election. That did not stop religious communities from intervening in the campaign or political parties from playing the faith card.

Fact-checkers Kallxo.com/Kryptometri and Hibrid.info found that disinformation narratives used the names of several influential imams to spread their messages.

On January 8, the [Islamic Community of Kosovo](#) sent a written message to all its officials instructing them not to engage in the election campaign or comment publicly on the vote.¹⁹³

The ECAP fined LVV for including in a social media video advertisement footage of a meeting between Kurti and an imam. Kurti also attended a traditional dinner with Osman Musliu, an imam from Glogoc/Glogovac, despite the Islamic Community’s directive [prohibiting imams from meeting](#) with politicians during the election period.¹⁹⁴

Social media was flooded with disinformation that an LVV rally in the village of [Majac/Majance](#)¹⁹⁵ had been held inside the local mosque. LVV clarified that the location was not a mosque but rather a [public space used for memorial services](#).¹⁹⁶

Some disinformation campaigns tried to portray the Islamic Community as unsupportive of the Coalition for the Family, which identifies as a conservative party with strong ties to Muslim leaders. Fact-checkers also identified a disinformation campaign targeting Shefqet Krasniqi, one of Kosovo’s most influential imams via fake news reports circulated on social media falsely claiming that Krasniqi was against the Coalition for the Family.¹⁹⁷

189 “Eman Rrahmani: This government from the Ministry of Culture paid 10,000 euros for a photo of two girls kissing,” <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1564451520870681>, N’Kosovë show, January 19, 2025

190 We are an Artists collective belonging to the streets. <https://www.europehouse-kosovo.com/we-are-an-artists-collective-belonging-to-the-streets-haveit-at-the-euicc/>, Europe House, July 9, 2018.

191 “Why was the coalition for the Family fined by ECAP?”, <https://kallxo.com/gjate/per-cka-u-gjobit-koalicioni-per-familjen-nga-pzap/>, Kallxo.com, January 31, 2025.

192 “Duda Balje, [Are there more than two genders? Fierce debate at Zanat | ZANAT | T7](#)” minutes 15:39 - 15:45, Zanat, T7, January, 25, 2025

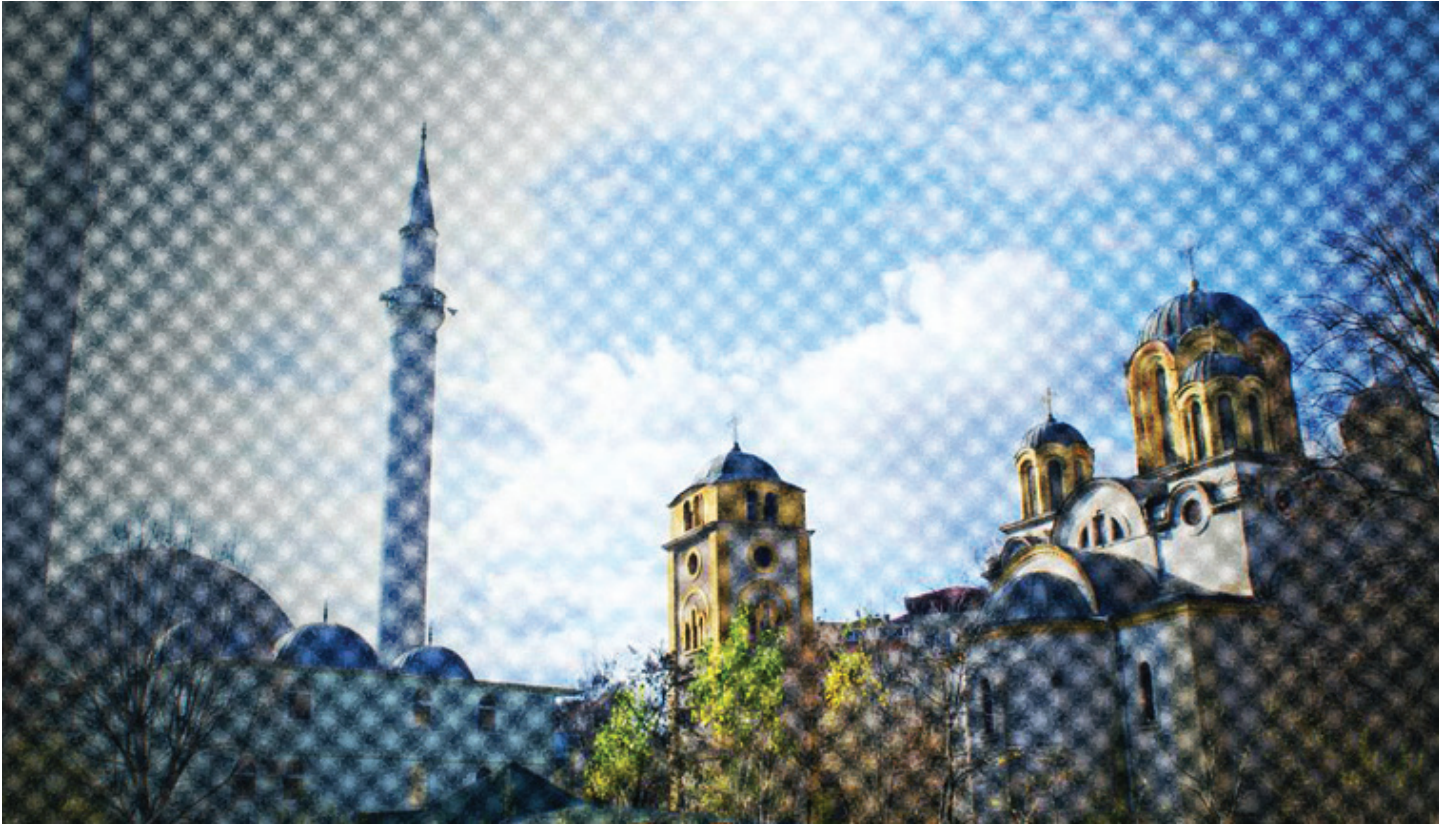
193 “Islamic community of Kosovo prohibits its employees from participating in political campaigns,” <https://kallxo.com/lajm/bashkesia-islame-e-kosoves-ua-ndalon-nepunesve-te-saj-pjesemarrjen-ne-fushata-politike/>, Kallxo.com, 9 January 2025.

194 Facebook page of Albin Kurti. Dinner in Drenas, hosted by Mulla Osmani. 27 January 2025. <https://www.facebook.com/albini2017/posts/pfbid0iHxQRXt2U5wnWrrqKR8ZashHBzBuKDLmxyjfyPDDcbABP6bYrv6eF6gs8oWTW4LI>

195 “VV holds a rally in the old mosque of Majac in Podujeva,” <https://klanKosova.tv/vv-ja-mban-tubim-ne-xhamine-e-vjeter-te-majacit-te-podujeves11/>. Klan Kosova, February 6, 2025.

196 “VV issues a response following news that it held a rally in a mosque,” https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1043352294476220&id=100064043782702, Breaking News, KorrektPress. February 6, 2025.

197 False claims on the alleged statement of Shefqet Krasniqi regarding the Coalition for the Family. <https://hibrid.info/>



Within the Orthodox community, civil society members interviewed by BIRN Kosovo interpreted a statement¹⁹⁸ from the Serbian Orthodox Church regarding the election as a form of endorsement for SL.

Dušan Radaković, who runs the NGO Advocacy Centre for Democratic Culture (ACDC) in Mitrovica

North, said that “the Serbian Orthodox Church issued a statement during the campaign, not saying directly ‘vote for Srpska Lista’, but when you read the text, between the lines, it says ‘vote for Srpska Lista’ - somebody who gives you support, prosperity for your future life”.¹⁹⁹

[pretendim-i-rrejshem-per-deklarate-te-shefqet-krasniqi-per-listen-per-familje/](#) Hibrid.info, 27 January 2025.

198 Appeal of the Metropolitan of Raška and Prizren before the upcoming elections in Kosovo and Metohija. <https://eparhija-prizren.com/sr/saopstenja/apel-mitropolita-rashko-prizrenskog-pred-prestoje-e-izbore-na-kosovu-i-metohiji/>

199 Interview with Dušan Radaković, Executive Director of Advocacy Centre for Democratic Culture (ACDC) conducted on 5 March 2025, referring to this Appeal of Metropolitan Teodosije of Raška and Prizren on 06/02/2025 <https://orthodoxtimes.com/appeal-of-metropolitan-of-raska-for-the-smooth-conduct-of-the-elections-in-kosovo-and-metohija/>

CHAPTER 7: Sources of financing

During the election campaign, fact-checkers identified disinformation spread across 200 different online channels, primarily on Meta/Facebook and TikTok.

The social media pages and profiles behind the dissemination are not registered as official pages of political parties. They are mostly anonymous accounts, lacking addresses or affiliation with media outlets registered with the KPC. According to publicly available data on Meta, some of these pages are managed by individuals located outside of Kosovo, mainly in EU countries.

Social media experts say their registration abroad may reflect an attempt to profit from monetised advertisements on social networks, with greater revenue coming from outside Kosovo. According to social media expert Granit Mavriqi, hosting the platforms abroad and avoiding registration as political entities is also a tactic used to evade detection by Meta's transparency tools.²⁰⁰ Aurora Kingji, another social media expert, told BIRN Kosovo that tracking such fake pages is difficult because the system does not classify them as political and the pages lack transparency about their sources of funding.²⁰¹

By analysing Meta/Facebook data, BIRN Kosovo found that political parties and candidates spent a total of 400,000 euros in political promotion on this platform. In contrast, there was relatively little investment in promotion via traditional media beyond paying for the prime-time broadcast of campaign rallies. However, there has also been little transparency about the sums spent on airing these events.

None of the political entities registered to take part in the election responded to a BIRN Kosovo request for information on how much they paid broadcasters for campaign airtime. There was also no transparency on the sources of financing for party websites or their social media platforms. CEC spokesperson Valmir Elezi told BIRN Kosovo that, under the law, political entities have 45 days

following the certification of results to submit their campaign finance reports.²⁰²

BIRN Kosovo submitted Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to all 106 television and radio stations licenced in Kosovo, requesting data on the funds they received from political parties for paid advertising or anything similar. Only around a fifth replied.

Of the broadcasters with national frequencies, only RTV21 and RTK provided any financial data. RTV21 reported earning 11,222 euros from political parties in the form of advertising for political videos (without stating from which parties), while RTK reported receiving approximately 15,000 euros in total. The majority of RTK's earnings - 10,330 euros - came from LVV. The PDK accounted for the rest. ATV confirmed airing some sponsored content, without specifying how much it was paid.²⁰³ Monitoring showed that the majority of LVV's prime-time rallies were broadcast on KTV but the broadcaster did not disclose how much LVV or any other party paid for airtime.

Of the regional media outlets within Kosovo, Radio Alba reported receiving 470 euros from parliamentary candidates. TV Prizreni declared receiving 400 euros from LDK and 300 euros from PDK. The remaining audiovisual broadcasters did not provide any information regarding payments from political entities during the electoral campaign.



200 BIRN Interview with Granit Mavriqi, social media expert on March 18, 2025.

201 BIRN interview with Aurora Kingji, social media expert March 21, 2025.

202 BIRN interview with Valmir Elezi, spokesperson of CEC on March 21, 2025.

203 Written responses provided to BIRN by RTK and ATV in March 2025.

The following TV stations did not respond to BIRN's request for information regarding political party financing during the electoral period:

TV BESA	TV DUKAGJINI	TV ILIRIA
TV MIR	TV PULS	TV ZOOM
TV HERC	KTV	Klan Kosova
TV MOST	TV OPINION	TV SYRI VISION
	TV VALI	

The following radio stations said they had not received any funds from political entities:

Radio Plus	RadioCapital FM	Tv Mitrovica
Radio Ylberi	Radio Peja	Radio Kim
Radio Tema	Radio Romano Avazo	Tv Liria
Radio Dodona	Radio Urban FM	Radio Omega 3 Prizren
Radio 21	Radio Okarina	Radio Fontana
Radio Gjakova	Radio Kent FM	Radio Club FM
	Tv Festina	

BIRN Kosovo also filed FOI requests to 58 online media registered as members of the PCK.²⁰⁴

Five members (Betimi per Drejtesi, Bota Sot, Botapress.info, Buletini Ekonomik, Kosovo 2.0, Qika) said they did not receive any funds from political parties; two - Telegrafi and Veriu.info - reported receiving 25,400 euros and 2,000 euros respectively. None of the other 51 responded.

BIRN Kosovo also reviewed data available on the website of the IMC. While certain pricing details were available for some of the TV stations, there was no information on the actual amounts received by these stations from political parties.

In the 2021 parliamentary election, political parties reported spending less than 120,000 euros on media advertising. It emerged later that they had significantly underreported their spending.²⁰⁵

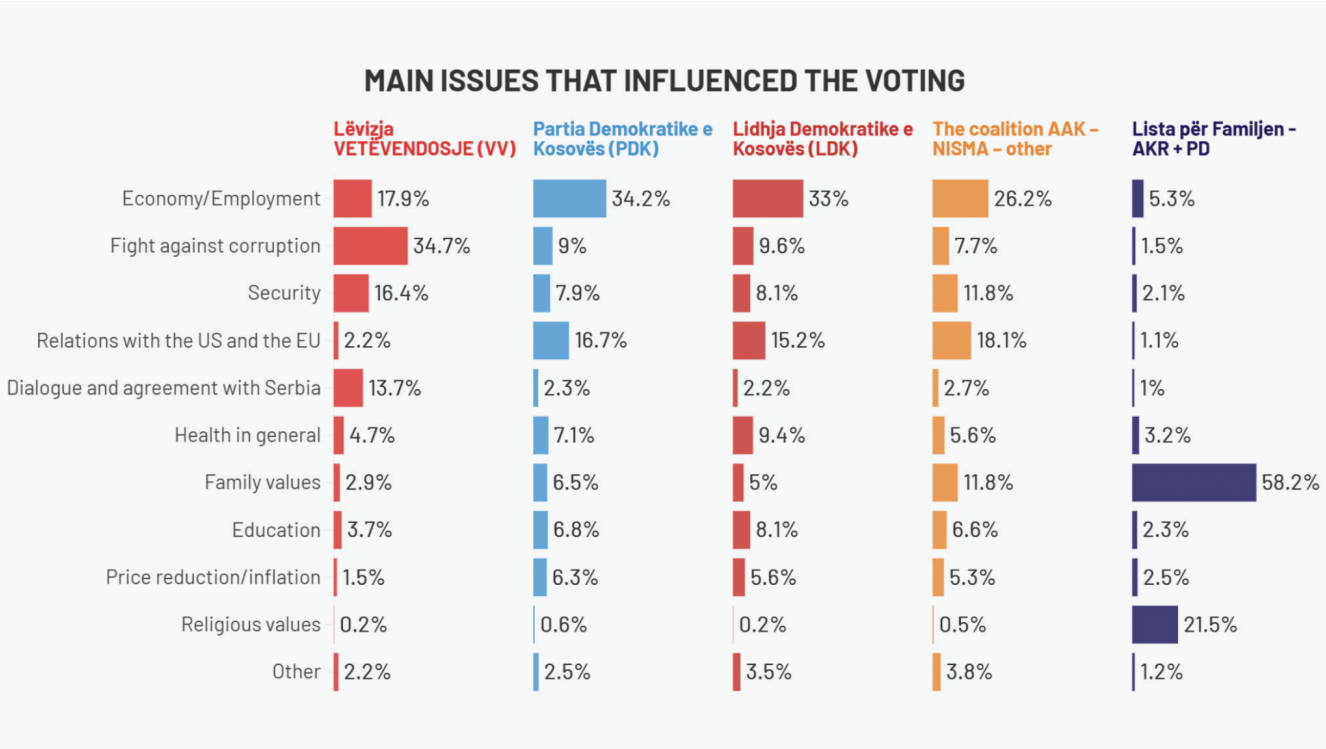
²⁰⁴ Some reports claim there are 200 news portals in Kosovo but there is no accurate number <https://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/kosovo-ethical-media-audits-guidelines-quality-journalism>.

²⁰⁵ How much money did political parties spend in advertising, representation and conferences?, KALLXO.com, October 24, 2024. <https://kallxo.com/lajm/dokument-sa-para-harxhuan-partite-politike-ne-reklama-reprezentacion-dhe-konferenca/>

CHAPTER 8: Impact of Divisive Narratives

Exit polling conducted by UBO Consulting and broadcast on RTV Dukagjini indicates that the majority of voters had already decided how they would vote before the election campaign even began. A significant minority, however, made up their minds in the course of the campaign: 11.6% of eventual LVV voters, 16.7% of eventual PDK voters, 18.2% of eventual LDK voters, and 14.5% of eventual AAK voters.

The chart above illustrates how specific topics influenced voters from different parties. For instance, it was observed that the most decisive topics for LVV voters were the fight against corruption, security, employment, the economy, and relations with Serbia. The research also indicates that parties that focused on the economy and employment gained significant support from constituents.



UBO consulting exit poll during Election Day, February 9, 2025.

Relations with the US and the EU were particularly important for voters who backed the AAK, LDK, and PDK, all of which highlighted the issue during their campaigns. For voters of the Coalition for the Family, the top issue was the preservation of so-called ‘family values’.

The UBO data shows that relations with Serbia, the US and the EU were highly important for voters, a fact reflected in BIRN Kosovo’s own findings that these issues were major targets for disinformation campaigns.

To learn more about the influence of disinformation on the election, BIRN Kosovo also conducted in-depth interviews with representatives of political parties, media and civil society organisations that work with a range of communities in Kosovo.

In general, the interlocutors stated their belief that hate speech, polarisation, and dehumanising messages significantly influenced the election. They specifically mentioned the harm done by external actors, particularly from Russia and Serbia.

Eugen Cakolli of the Kosovo Democratic Institute said the election was marked by an unprecedented level of aggressive rhetoric.²⁰⁶ According to Cakolli, statistical analyses indicated that just over a quarter of campaign-related activities involved instances of either disinformation or hate speech.²⁰⁷ This discourse was not confined to political rallies or traditional media but was actively disseminated through social media platforms, amplifying its reach and impact. Cakolli emphasised that this not only shaped public debate but also reinforced political divisions and served to deepen mistrust between communities.

Rezarta Krasniqi of the Kosovo think tank Democracy for Development (D4D) echoed these concerns, saying: “Third parties spread a significant amount of hate speech and defamatory language, primarily targeting women candidates.”²⁰⁸ In this context, third parties refers to individuals or groups aligned with political parties, mainly supporters. Krasniqi noted that much of this hate speech was gendered; female candidates were disproportionately targeted with defamatory narratives, personal attacks and online harassment.²⁰⁹ Some of the female candidates targeted in this manner nevertheless won enough votes to enter parliament.²¹⁰

Radaković of ACDC in northern Kosovo said the six Serb political parties that took part in the election traded accusations and insults, with allegations of corruption mainly levelled at the Belgrade-backed SL. SL, on the other hand, deployed a “fearful discourse claiming that we [Serbs in the north] will have to leave if Kurti comes to power as he will arrest us,” said Radaković.²¹¹

Muharrem Nitaj of the AAK said disinformation was primarily spread via sham social media profiles, and that some fake videos were generated using AI. “These disinformation campaigns aimed to shape public perception, whether against opposing political parties or specific individuals, ultimately creating an electoral advantage for their own political force,” said Nitaj.^{212]}

206 Interview with Eugen Cakolli, Project Manager at Kosovo Democratic Institute, March 5, 2025

207 Ibid

208 Interview with Rezarta Delibashzade Krasniqi, executive director of NGO D4D, March 5, 2025

209 Ibid

210 Ibid

211 Interview with Dušan Radaković, Executive Director of Advocacy Centre for Democratic Culture (ACDC) conducted on March 5, 2025

212 Interview with Muharrem Nitaj, Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, AAK, February 28, 2025

CONCLUSIONS

The 2025 parliamentary election in Kosovo was marked by a number of significant developments, challenges, and areas of concern that impacted the electoral process and its outcome. The key findings of the BIRN Kosovo monitoring point to limited progress but also significant setbacks that need to be addressed in future election cycles.

BIRN Kosovo notes that the widespread use of hate speech, foreign disinformation narratives, AI-generated content, the lack of transparency in campaign spending, and limited fact-checking capacities severely undermined the integrity of information during the election, with a direct impact on how votes were cast and the resulting make-up of the Kosovo Assembly.

Disinformation, Hate Speech and Dehumanising Language:

- 1** **The rise of hate speech**, particularly via social media, played a significant role in deepening polarisation within the electorate. Political discourse was increasingly dominated by divisive and dehumanising language, which not only poisoned public dialogue but also undermined party campaigning. These persistent attacks pushed parties into defensive positions, limiting their ability to promote their policies. These parties told BIRN Kosovo that they spent a significant portion of their time responding to and countering false narratives.
- 2** **Disinformation played a significant role in shaping public opinion during the campaign.** A high volume of false narratives, including manipulated images, videos, and fake news, was circulated with the aim of influencing voters. The widespread use of social media platforms, particularly Facebook and TikTok, facilitated the rapid spread of these disinformation campaigns, which further polarised the electorate. False narratives, particularly those concerning ethnic and national security issues, were used to discredit political rivals and manipulate voter perceptions.
- 3** **Kosovo Serbs who ran for parliament not on behalf of SL were subjected to disinformation and targeted smear campaigns.** Three candidates from Kosovo Serb opposition parties told BIRN Kosovo that the election campaign was unfair, citing the spread of disinformation and external interference as major obstacles.
- 4** **Kosovo's public institutions lacked a clear strategic plan to counter disinformation narratives**, which were aimed at undermining the role and importance of elections in Kosovo. The CECs response to these campaigns lacked any meaningful impact.
- 5** Despite efforts to establish a legal framework aimed at ensuring the integrity of information during the elections, implementation fell short. **The IMC failed to take effective action to prevent the spread of hate speech and disinformation** in audiovisual media after the mandates of its members expired.
- 6** **Fines levied by the ECAP against political parties for the use of hate speech had no tangible effect on curbing its spread.** Despite being penalised, in many cases parties have failed to remove the offending statements from their online platforms.
- 7** **Women continued to face discrimination in the media.** Misogynistic narratives and disinformation targeting female candidates were a recurring feature of the campaign.
- 8** **Hate speech used by political parties against journalists, media outlets, and fact-checkers** contributed to a hostile environment that fuelled attacks on journalists and amplified hate speech directed at them.

9

Media outlets registered as members of the PCK failed to conduct fact-checking before amplifying messages delivered by political parties during televised debates. As a result, dozens of disinformation narratives originating on television were widely reproduced across online media channels.

10

The public in Kosovo was ill-equipped to recognise AI-generated content, which garnered millions of clicks and was widely shared. Currently, Kosovo lacks legislation regulating the use of AI in media and information dissemination.

Foreign Influence and Anti-Integration Narratives:

11

Foreign Influence in the Electoral Process: Foreign actors, especially from Russia and Serbia, actively promoted disinformation and divisive narratives to undermine the credibility of Kosovo's democratic processes. Russian-backed media outlets, such as Sputnik and RT, played a central role in spreading disinformation about Kosovo's electoral integrity and fostering tensions between Kosovo and Serbia. This external interference undermined the independence of Kosovo's electoral processes and fuelled a narrative of Kosovo as illegitimate in the eyes of the Serbian population.

12

Kosovo institutions lacked a clear plan and strategic communication framework to counter disinformation campaigns initiated by Serbia and Russia, aimed at undermining the legitimacy of candidates running against the Belgrade-backed SL.

13

Some media outlets fell short of editorial standards for reviewing content produced by Russian and Chinese state-funded media. During the monitoring period, instances of unedited articles being copy-pasted by media outlets were identified.

Financing

14

Media coverage was highly polarised, with some media outlets exhibiting bias toward specific political parties. A lack of transparency concerning campaign spending, particularly with regard to social media ads and traditional media sponsorship, raises concerns about the potential for undue influence on voters. To date, political parties and some media outlets provided inadequate financial disclosure, leaving the public and observers without a clear understanding of the funding behind election campaigns.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To Kosovo's Institutions and Political Parties:

- Kosovo's public institutions should ensure they have fully operational capacities in place to effectively respond to disinformation prior to the start of an election campaign.
- Platforms such as Facebook and TikTok should be more closely monitored for disinformation and hate speech during election season. Kosovo authorities should work with social media companies to ensure more rigorous enforcement of rules against disinformation, with clear consequences for violations.
- The CEC and other relevant election bodies should establish dedicated teams to both analyse the sources of disinformation and actively respond to disinformation campaigns throughout the electoral process.
- The Kosovo Assembly should promptly appoint members to the IMC so it can once more function properly and establish a legal framework that ensures its work will not be paralysed again in the future.
- Political parties should adopt and implement clear standards requiring the removal of content identified as hate speech or disinformation from their platforms.
- While the ECAP issued fines for campaign violations, it is essential to further strengthen the enforcement of electoral laws. In decisions identifying hate speech, ECAP should include a mandatory requirement for political parties to remove the offending materials from all online platforms.
- Political parties should organise training programmes for their candidates and individuals involved in the electoral campaign to promote respectful public discourse and prevent the use of hate speech during the election period.
- The Kosovo Assembly should initiate legislative procedures for regulating the use of AI, in order to ensure ethical standards, protect the rights of individuals, and prevent the misuse of AI technologies.

To Media and Media Regulatory Bodies:

- Media outlets should adhere to transparency standards by publicly disclosing financial data related to political advertising and sponsorship during the election campaign.
- The CEC and the IMC should establish and enforce rules and regulations that require media outlets to be transparent with the public regarding any financial income received from political parties.
- Audiovisual and online media should implement editorial policies for sponsored content that actively filter and prevent the dissemination of hate speech.
- Media outlets should establish clear editorial policies for reviewing and publishing content, including content produced by media outlets sponsored by or affiliated with China and Russia, ensuring alignment with professional journalism standards and safeguarding against disinformation.

ANNEX I

BIRN Kosovo extends its gratitude to the following individuals for agreeing to be interviewed and for sharing their valuable insights:

1. Aleksandar Arsenijević, leader of “Srpska demokratija” party
2. Arlind Manxhuka, LVV spokesperson
3. Asdren Bytyçi, MP candidate from Coalition for the Family
4. Aurora Kingji, social media expert
5. Besiane Musmurati, PDK MP candidate
6. Besian Mustafa, LDK spokesperson
7. Dusan Radaković, Director of NGO ACDC
8. Dibran Istrefi, editor in chief of TV Dukagjini
9. Elbert Krasniqi, New Democratic Initiative of Kosovo, IRDK
10. Ermal Sadiku, pundit/analyst at Klan Kosova
11. Eugen Cakolli, project manager at NGO Kosovo Democratic Institute, KDI
12. Granit Mavriqi, social media expert
13. Ivan Miljković, journalist at news portal “Riznica”
14. Leart Hoxha, anchor of TV political debates at ATV
15. Miodrag Milićević, activist of NGO Aktiv
16. Muharrem Nitaj, AAK spokesperson
17. Nebojsa Milić, spokesperson for Narodna Pravda
18. Nenad Rašić, leader of “Za slobodu, Pravdu i Opstanak”
19. Rezarta Krasniqi, Executive Director at D4D, Democracy for Development
20. Valmir Elezi, CEC spokesperson
21. Valmir Klaiqi, PDK spokesperson
22. Valon Canhasi, social media expert

