



PEN International **Writers for Peace Committee**

**Comité des écrivains et écrivaines pour la paix**  
du PEN international

**Comité de Escritores y Escritoras por la Paz**  
de PEN internacional

Odbor **pisateljev in pisateljic za mir**

## Western Balkans: PEN members renew call for peace

**30 April 2024** – The following call for peace in the Western Balkans has been drafted and endorsed by PEN members from the former Yugoslavia.

For more information about the situation in the Western Balkans, please see PEN International's report [Toxic Narratives. Silencing Expression in the Western Balkans](#), published in October 2023 and PEN International's 2023 [resolution](#) on threats to freedom of expression, peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia.

**The appeal is available in English and Bosnian below.**

As members of PEN International and writers from the former Yugoslav region, we are warning the world of a clear and present danger of armed conflict in the Western Balkans.

For years now, belligerent narratives of Serb nationalists, aided by the Belgrade regime and a part of the Serbian Orthodox Church, have been destabilising the region, and primarily Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Kosovo.

With the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, their aggressive rhetoric advocating for Greater Serbia has been gaining strength throughout the former Yugoslavia. The Belgrade regime and the regime in Banja Luka (the entity of the Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina) are not hiding their sympathies towards Russian imperialist appetites, nor their regard for the support they are receiving from the Kremlin regime.

In September 2023, armed escalation started with a terrorist attack in Banjska (Kosovo), and as a vote on the UN Resolution on the Srebrenica genocide approaches, secessionist threats of Milorad Dodik in the Republic of Srpska are gaining strength and should not be underestimated. The expected acceptance of Kosovo into the Council of Europe is another critical point because the regime of Aleksandar Vučić is showing no inclination to cooperation, peace, and compromise. On the contrary, by announcing Greater Serbia rallies, organised by the Serbian state and the Serbian Orthodox Church, the warmongering attitude of Belgrade is becoming clear and dangerous.

The aggressive Belgrade regime, which is openly arming itself, is the main cause of instability in the Western Balkans. In the past, an identical narrative from the same circles pushed us into a bloody ten-year war in the former Yugoslav region. We must not allow this to happen

again. We must recognise the danger and clearly raise our voices against armed conflict in the Western Balkans.

We hereby appeal to the Belgrade regime to accept reconciliation as the only possible political option in the region. We also appeal to the international community to react swiftly to this danger and do everything in its power to prevent the fires of war to flare up yet again in the Western Balkans.

We further state that this appeal is not aimed against the Serbian people; on the contrary, it seeks to also protect them from a regime that is trying to manipulate them into new regional conflicts. In addition to this, those who dare criticise the current regime in Serbia should be protected from threats and violence.

Concerned, we ask for cooperation and peace.

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Mi, članovi i članice Međunarodnog PEN centra, pisci i spisateljice s prostora bivše Jugoslavije, upozoravamo svjetsku javnost na jasnu i neposrednu opasnost od ratnih sukoba na teritoriji Zapadnog Balkana.

Godinama unazad agresivni narativi srpskih nacionalista, pomognutih od režima u Beogradu i dijela sveštenstva SPC, destabilizuju region, prije svega Bosnu i Hercegovinu, Crnu Goru i Kosovo.

S početkom ruske invazije na Ukrajinu velikosrpska agresivna retorika jača širom bivše Jugoslavije. Režim u Beogradu i režim u Banjoj Luci (entitet Republika Srpska, BiH) ne kriju simpatije prema imperijalističkim apetitima Rusije, kao ni to da uvažavaju podršku režima u Kremlju.

U septembru 2023. godine oružana eskalacija je započela terorističkim napadom u Banjskoj (na Kosovu), a kako se približava glasanje o rezoluciji UN-a o srebreničkom genocidu, prijetnje Milorada Dodika otcjepljenjem Republike Srpske jačaju i ne bi ih trebalo potcijeniti. Očekivani prijem Kosova u Savjet Evrope još je jedna kritična tačka jer režim Aleksandra Vučića ne pokazuje nikakvu spremnost na saradnju, mir i kompromis. Naprotiv, najavom velikosrpskih skupova u organizaciji države Srbije i SPC, ratnohuškački stav Beograda postaje jasan i opasan.

Agresivni beogradski režim, koji se neskriveno i otvoreno naoružava, glavni je izvor nestabilnosti na Zapadnom Balkanu. Jednom u prošlosti identičan narativ iz istih krugova gurnuo nas je u desetogodišnji krvavi rat na prostoru bivše Jugoslavije. Ne smijemo dopustiti da se to ponovo dogodi. Moramo prepoznati opasnost i jasno dići glas protiv oružanih sukoba na teritoriji Zapadnog Balkana.

Ovim putem apelujemo na režim u Beogradu da prihvati pomirenje kao jedinu moguću političku opciju na prostorima bivše Jugoslavije. Takođe, apelujemo na međunarodnu

zajednicu da hitno reaguje na opasnost i učini sve što je u njenoj moći da se ratni požar na Zapadnom Balkanu ponovo me zahukta.

Napominjemo da ovaj apel nije uperen protiv srpskog naroda, već, naprotiv, ima cilj da i njega zaštiti od režima koji ga gura u dalje sukobe u regionu, a naročito da zaštiti one koji se usuđuju da kritikuju postupke aktuelnog režima u Srbiji.

Zabrinuti, molimo za saradnju i mir.

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