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Kosovo's
institutional capacities
to resocialise and reintegrate
citizens affected by far-right extremism



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citizens affected by far-right extremism**

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Kingdom of the Netherlands

Introduction

In recent years, concerns have grown in the Western Balkans about how violent right-wing extremism poses a danger to the region. A report by the European Commission¹ in August 2022 states that Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia continue to be places that are perceived as politically unstable, with a history of violence stemming from ideologies and the (political) actions of the right wing.

A European Commission Report "Violent Right Wing Extremism in the Western Balkans" published in July 2022, defines extremism as following: "Violent right-wing extremism are acts of individuals or groups who use, incite, threaten with, legitimize or support violence and hatred to further their political or ideological goals, motivated by ideologies based on the rejection of democratic order and values as well as of fundamental rights, and centred on exclusionary nationalism, racism, xenophobia and/or related intolerance"².

In the context of Kosovo, the report concludes that a risk factor for Kosovo is the intersection of two currents — the Albanian extreme right and the Serbian extreme right.

Likewise, the 2021 Preventing Violent Extremism (PREVEX) report states that politically or ethnically motivated extremism poses a greater risk of violent actions than extremism with religious motives. A BIRN mapping project has identified at least eight organisations that have committed violent acts motivated by the extreme right. Many of them are motivated by nationalist narratives, but there are manifestations of other forms of right-wing extremism as well, such as anti-LGBTI movements.

Contextual analysis reveals that Kosovo has been challenged by various forms of extremism, including ethnonationalist, religious, political and extreme right-wing ideologies.³

Data and reports from various actors that monitor and report on these areas reveal that the factors driving radicalisation in the country continue to be evident. Correspondingly, Kosovar society is vulnerable to the dangers that comes from all forms of violent extremism and terrorism.

The main identified risks continue to be ethnonationalist extremism, primarily prominent amongst the two largest communities living in Kosovo, namely, the Albanians and the Serbs. On the other hand, political extremism derives more as a result of the polarisation of the political scene and wide societal divisions, as well as ongoing political instability, while violent religious extremism is more focused on Islamist extremism imported by foreign influences, especially from eastern countries. In recent years, there have been some indications that even extreme right groups are present in the region and in Kosovo.⁴

¹ Violent Right-Wing Extremism in the Western Balkans, July 2022, accessible at: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/whats-new/publications/violent-right-wing-extremism-western-balkans-july-2022_en

² Violent Right-Wing Extremism in the Western Balkans, July 2022, accessible at: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/whats-new/publications/violent-right-wing-extremism-western-balkans-july-2022_en

³ Prosecution File: The terrorist group planning attacks in Kosovo linked to ISIS, accessible at: <https://kallxo.com/lajm/dosja-e-prokurorise-grupi-terrorist-qe-planifikonte-sulme-ne-kosove-i-lidhur-me-isis>

⁴ The Special Prosecutor's Office of Kosovo investigates "illegal organizations" from Serbia, accessible at: <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/prokuroria-speciale-heton-organizatat-ilegale-nga-serbia/31995791.html>

A long process of promoting radical Islam was tolerated from 1999 to 2014. In this period, organizations, foundations, lecturers and preachers of radical Islam and people associated with terrorist organizations were tolerated to easily operate.

In addition to education, the difficult socio-economic situation of Kosovar society was also used to encourage people to join radical Islamist groups. Food parcels, residential houses, and even religious institutions were built with suspicious money that came through the foundations which, after 2014, were blocked by the prosecution.

The 14-year unhindered activities promoting radical Islam culminated in the involvement of over 400 Kosovars in the wars in Syria and Iraq. When compared to its population, Kosovo ranks with the largest number of foreign fighters who have joined ISIS in the war in Syria and Iraq. In addition, the Russian attacks in 2014 in Crimea and the full-scale occupation and aggression in Ukraine which started in February 2022, saw the divisions between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo deepening even further, with Albanians sympathizing and identifying with Ukrainians and Serbian citizens openly supporting Russia. There have also been reports that Serbs (allegedly), even those from Kosovo, have been joining the ranks of the Russian Army to fight in Ukraine⁵.

Even though significant acts of violence and activities by extreme-right groups have occurred on the ground, BIRN's research has concluded that Kosovo's institutions have focused their energies mainly on the rehabilitation and reintegration (R&R) of former religious extremists while largely treating other forms of extremism as ordinary crimes⁶. As a result, problems in the treatment of right-wing extremism can be broadly grouped as follows:

- **Kosovo's institutions have not planned concrete activities that address forms of extremism, other than religious extremism.**
- **Kosovo's institutions have not implemented comprehensive, multidisciplinary R&R programmes for all forms of extremism.**
- **The justice system lacks the necessary professional capacities to identify and deal with elements of other forms of extremism.**

Kosovo has developed R&R programmes for individuals and groups of violent extremists and terrorists arrested as part of extremist religious groups.

Data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) shows that activities in the prevention and fight against religious extremism have yielded results. Most returnees have not been involved in new crimes, while the number of people arrested for participating in foreign conflicts in Syria and Iraq has fallen over the years.

⁵ Putin is banking on his friends in the Balkans to help sustain his bloody war in Ukraine, accessible at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/sep/15/putin-balkans-war-ukraine-russia-serbian>

⁶ For the purpose of this analysis, definitions of other forms of extremism have been created in consultation with the Anti-Terror Unit of the Republic of Kosovo. They include: **Ethno-nationalism** - individuals or groups with specific ideas on how they want to see the nation look, usually one cultural group dominating and excluding other cultures, e.g. IRA; **Political Extremism** - including left wing extremism (e.g. environmental groups, or animal rights groups) and right wing extremism (neo-nazism) or other political ideologies; **Religious Extremism** - ISIS, Al Qaeda, Boko Haram (Islam), God's Army, Terror Against Terror (Jewism), and other groups; **Islamism** - is a set of ideologies based on the fact that Islam should be the way of social, political and personal life (political Islam).

However, the institutional focus on this element has created a vacuum in terms of other forms of extremism.

For example, political tensions in the north of the country have led to the re-emergence of extreme-right ethno-nationalist groups. Such developments, while new, also have to be understood within their historical context. Kosovo has faced the threat of violent extremism and terrorism since the end of the war in June 1999, with research showing that extremist nationalist groups continued their activities during the post-war power vacuum through the manifestation of violent acts in the streets and conflicts between different communities. During this period, thousands of citizens fled their homes and resettled elsewhere. Serbs moved from different areas of Kosovo to various places within Serbia and Kosovo, with many settlements in the north of Mitrovica and other areas in the north of Kosovo. Most Albanians were unable to return to the north of Mitrovica and other northern areas of Kosovo after the war, while Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians often moved within Kosovo or emigrated externally. In recent times, North Mitrovica has seen several violent acts against members of the Albanian and Serb communities that have been attributed to the re-emergence of extreme-right ethno-nationalist groups, while the south of the country has also witnessed an increase in ethnically motivated acts of violence and hatred.⁷ Meanwhile, the war in Ukraine has further caused divisions between communities. Serbs have mainly aligned themselves with Russia, while Albanians have aligned themselves with Ukraine.

In addition to ethnic tensions, there have also been public movements against the LGBTI community, as members of two political parties that are well represented in the Assembly of Kosovo have declared that they are against same-sex marriages.⁸

It is in this context that the European Commission and PREVEX reports state that push and pull factors for extremism continue to exist in Kosovo. Meanwhile, Kosovo's institutions have not yet begun to address forms of extremism other than religious extremism. This means that while several people have been arrested and prosecuted for crimes motivated by the extreme right in Kosovo in recent years, the data provided to BIRN shows that no R&R programmes have been developed for them. Nor have similar programmes been developed for the communities in which these people were radicalised.

Methodology

The data in this analysis was collected by conducting qualitative interviews, analysing strategic documents and data, and making statistical calculations. An important aspect of the research was also the analysis of Kosovo court judgments against the planners and perpetrators of terrorist acts with right-wing motives.

All existing strategic documents and action plans as well as MIA documents currently in the final drafting stage were reviewed.

⁷ Attacks on the police in the north of Kosovo "intentional tension", accessible at: <https://kallxo.com/lajm/sulmet-ndaj-policise-ne-veriun-e-kosoves-tensionim-i-qellimshem/>

⁸ The Assembly does not approve the draft Civil Code, accessible at: <https://kallxo.com/lajm/kuvendi-nuk-miraton-projekt-kodin-civil/>

Data on the R&R programmes carried out to date by MIA's Department of Public Safety was collected and analysed, and interviews were conducted with departmental officials.

Other data focuses on the justice system, including the prosecution and the judiciary. This was collected through semi-structured questionnaires sent to the courts and prosecution offices via the Kosovo Judicial Council (KJC) and the State Prosecutor. Data was also collected from the institution responsible for organising the training of judges and prosecutors, the Academy of Justice.

The aim of this analysis was to find out whether the institutional chain — from the country's justice system, its courts and prosecution offices, to the executive, MIA and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) — has the necessary capacities to identify and deal with different forms of violent extremism and terrorism.

Inadequate planning in addressing right-wing extremism

Kosovo's prevention and counter-terrorism strategies clearly state that right-wing extremism is the main threat to the country.

The National Strategy Against Terrorism and Action Plan 2018–2023⁹ lists nationalist extremism as the main threat to Kosovo due to tensions between the country's two largest communities, which are predisposed to use violence to achieve their political goals and to provoke inter-ethnic incidents, sometimes even with the support of third countries.

The Strategy on Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalisation Leading to Terrorism 2015–2020 also highlights the risk of violent extremism in northern Kosovo since the country's declaration of independence on February 17, 2008. These events have arisen in four municipalities with a Serb majority.

Radical groups that have operated, and continue to operate, in this area also have connections with Serbian political parties that have a radical orientation. There were positive developments towards reducing tensions with the reaching of several EU-mediated agreements between Kosovo and Serbia. However, this was a fragile calm, as shown recently by the complete withdrawal of Serb representatives from all security, justice and administrative institutions. This action was done under the pretext of dissatisfaction with a Government of Kosovo decision on vehicle licence plates¹⁰ recently, but also remains connected with the continuous inter-ethnic tensions since the end of the war in 1999 and the declaration of independence 2008.

In addition to such incidents, people have also been arrested, charged and convicted of crimes motivated by nationalist extremism in recent years. However, despite the assessment of the situation in the two strategic documents, these plans do not show concrete activities to rehabilitate and reintegrate people who

⁹ National Strategy Against Terrorism and Action Plan 2018–2023, accessible at: <https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Strategjia-Shteterore-kunder-Terrorizmit-dhe-Plani-i-Veprimit-2018-2023-narrative.pdf>

¹⁰ A week of boycott by Serbian officials: Unclear situation in the north of Kosovo, accessible at: <https://kallxo.com/gjate/nje-jave-bojkot-ngazyrtaret-serbe-situat-e-paqarte-ne-veri-te-kosoves/>

are part of groups that support such ideologies. An analysis of the action plans proves that most activities are focused on religious extremism, particularly returnees from the conflicts in Syria and Iraq.

The data obtained during this research illustrates that in education and prevention, the responsible ministries — including the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW) — have not yet designed programmes that address the issue of far-right extremism.

Even in law-enforcement institutions, such as the State Prosecutor and the courts, the research shows there have been no such initiatives. It also suggests a lack of capacity to develop professional investigations that would reveal whether hate crimes, such as those with a potential ethnic or sexual orientation dimension, were committed by right-wing extremists or people motivated by extreme right-wing narratives.

The problem continues even in correctional institutions that deal with the treatment of prisoners. The data shows that, in addition to those arrested for religious extremism, dozens of people have been arrested for crimes motivated by the extreme right in recent years, but they have not gone through special R&R programmes aimed at addressing the push and pull factors of right-wing extremism.

Limited institutional capacity to deal with other forms of right-wing extremism

To assess R&R programmes for people convicted of violent extremism forms other than religious extremism, BIRN analysed three cases that fall into this category. The data shows that the institutions responsible for carrying out R&R programmes have not conducted any activities to treat those arrested in these cases.

Case	MIA – Department of Public Safety Activities implemented?	MESTI Activities implemented?	MoJ – KCS Activities implemented?
Slobodan Gavriq ¹¹	N/d	N/d	No
‘Syri i Popullit’ ¹²	No	No	No

¹¹ Repentance of Convicted Terrorist, Slobodan Gavriq, available at: <https://kallxo.com/shkurt/pendimi-te-denuarit-per-terrorizem-slobodan-gavriq/>

¹² All KALLXO.com’s reporting on this case is available at: <https://kallxo.com/tag/syri-i-popullit/>

The killing of police officers in 2004 ¹³	No	No	No
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These three cases — one involving the preparation of a terrorist act and two where serious crimes were carried out with nationalist motives — are some of the biggest cases in post-war Kosovo. The analysis shows that those accused/convicted in these cases have not been included in R&R programmes, and their cases are not addressed in the country's prevention or counter-terrorism strategic documents.

Therefore, three of the country's largest criminal cases motivated by ethno-nationalism have passed along the institutional chain without those involved undergoing targeted R&R programmes while in detention or serving their sentences.

According to an EU report, Serbia's anti-terrorism strategy includes addressing RWE through motivations and separatist tendencies that can develop in terrorism.¹³⁶ There is often a perception of lack of political will to map V/RWE as a security threat. RWE activists and organisations are aware of the weak rule of law and lenient response to their activities. Legal, strategic and institutional reforms are needed to tackle V/RWE, for example for control of internet content from most influential activists and prohibition of numerous organisations that pose a threat to democracy and security, not only in Serbia but in the region as well. NGOs should be strengthened for the effective dissemination of counter-narratives on social media.

Furthermore, strategic documents of the Republic of Kosovo, namely the Strategy against Terrorism and Strategy on Prevention of Violent Extremism Leading to Terrorism have not addressed right-wing extremism and have not foreseen concrete activities or steps in the Action Plan. The current draft of the new Strategy looks into the issue of this type of extremism which reflects the increasing public discourse of local political leadership in the past several months, which have noted the risk that Serb right-wing groups in the north of the country pose to the national security¹⁴, whereas the presence and activity of these groups has become a point high on the agenda of discussions in key security mechanisms in the country¹⁵.

Programming by the Department of Public Safety

Currently, MIA's Department of Public Safety, and specifically its Division for Prevention and Reintegration of Radicalised Persons, exercises the leading role in R&R programmes.

¹³ The court hearing against Bedri Krasniqi and Alban Dizdar is postponed, available at: <https://kallxo.com/ligji/shtyhet-seanca-ndaj-bedri-krasniqit-dhe-alban-dizdarit/>

¹⁴ Svecla: There are exponents of the Serbian BIA and the Russian GRU in the north of Kosovo, available at: <https://kallxo.com/lajm/svecla-ka-ekspONENTE-te-bia-s-serbe-dhe-te-gru-se-ruse-ne-veri-te-kosoves/>

¹⁵ The situation in the north, the Security Council of Kosovo convene, available at: <https://kallxo.com/lajm/situata-ne-veri-mblidhet-keshilli-i-sigurise-se-kosoves/>

According to its mandate, this department is responsible for the treatment of all radicalised people, regardless of the form and method of radicalisation. The Division for Prevention and Reintegration in the scope of the Ministry of Internal Affairs is required to coordinate, monitor, assess and provide continuous oversight in efforts to ensure sustainable reintegration of all individuals under the R&R programmes. Under the auspices of the DPR, there is a functioning inter-governmental and inter-institutional body whose scope of work includes the definition and coordination of duties and responsibilities in the rehabilitation and reintegration of radicalised people. Among the key roles and responsibilities of the DPR are the cooperation with the inter-institutional team after the completion of the individual assessments conducted by experts from various areas, that include psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, teachers, theologists or religious preachers, other experts etc., and thus design individual interventions for these individuals based on the R&R programmes. These programmes reflect on and specify the activities generated from the strategic documents Kosovo has in place on the area of prevention of violent extremism, that also include local or central level representatives, as well as civil society organizations and other sectors of the society. However, those convicted or arrested who are associated with right-wing extremism have been left out of the R&R programmes.

These programmes have intervention elements, including socio-economic, psychological support, theological or ideological support, as well as family counselling, cultural and sporting activities and mentoring.

All such interventions must be individualised based on specific needs, but they must contain socio-economic and psychological support, while special attention must be paid to women and children to help in their rehabilitation and reintegration. This is also defined in the MIA's Plan for Reintegration and Rehabilitation, stipulating that the need and risks for interventions amongst women should be much more different than those targeting the men, and consequently the intervention approach when targeting the women must be very different and should bear in mind gender sensitivities. The latter should be well-known by the professionals dealing with this portion of the R&R programmes, whereas the plan notes that they need to also have capacities to deal with sexual violence, gender-based violence, parenting and the socio-economic empowerment of women.

R&R programmes in Kosovo target individuals who have committed violent extremism and terrorist criminal offences — including terrorist fighters in foreign conflicts — radicalised individuals who have not yet been involved in criminal offences but who support violent extremism, the family members of those who have been radicalised or involved in extremist behaviour and children who have been exposed to the ideology of violent extremism.

Participation in R&R programmes takes place mainly on a voluntary basis, or as a mandatory measure imposed by the courts in cases that have been prosecuted. More than 100 Kosovar fighters and their family members, women and children, have returned from foreign conflict zones through operations organised by the Government of Kosovo in April 2019 and July 2021¹⁶

¹⁶ Women returned from Syria are brought to court, available at: <https://ms-my.facebook.com/kallxo/posts/2133064213429715/>

The R&R programmes conducted to date have been described as effective and as having satisfactory results. However, the operation of these programmes can be improved by further detailing the standard operating procedures, including the role, duties and responsibilities of each of the actors involved, and in particular by including local actors in programme implementation.

One of the components of R&R programmes is the inclusion of children. In these instances, the programme must include social, educational and mental health mentoring elements, while always involving parents, other family members and the community.

Programming by the Ministry of Education

As one of the key actors in R&R programmes, MESTI focuses its own programming on training teachers in religiously motivated violent extremism.

In the scope of carrying out the objectives and activities arising from the Strategy, MESTI has designed and delivered training for teachers, pupils and support staff within the schools. MESTI has compiled the "Prevention of Violent Extremism" Guideline, and held information and training sessions with teachers. These trainings aimed to provide instructions for teachers on how to handle concrete challenges presented by violent extremism within the school environment. These trainings, which gathered teachers from 25 Kosovo municipalities, provided useful solutions and practical guidance on how to act, including demonstrations on how teachers could react appropriately towards challenging situations of professional, legal and pedagogical nature.

MESTI also carried the training programme entitled "Together with schools for safer communities", which aimed to raise the capacities of the teaching and support staff in identifying and managing cases of children with violent extremism behaviour within the schools, raising their awareness on their role in the prevention of violent extremism, identifying and managing violent extremism cases in pre-university educational institutions. This training cycle brought together over 2.200 teachers from all Kosovar municipalities.

Despite all these important activities that were carried out by MESTI, Ministry officials confirmed they have not held any specific programmes dedicated to other forms of violent extremism and terrorism.¹⁷

Programming by the Kosovo Correctional Service

The Kosovo Correctional Service (KCS) does not have specific programmes dedicated to the far right. It only has specialised programmes concerning religious extremism, whereas convicts of crimes motivated by other, far-right, extremism, undergo the same programmes as all other convicts of regular crimes.

According to the KCS, their R&R work is focused around three key programme formats:

- *A general rehabilitation programme for long-term convicts*
- *An "anger management" EQUIP programme*

¹⁷ BIRN interview with Aferdita Jahja from MESTI.

- *Specific individual programmes for people convicted of religiously motivated violent extremism*

Consequently, people who have been accused or convicted of crimes motivated by far-right extremism do not receive individualised programming.¹⁸

Limited capacities of the justice system to handle far-right extremism

The justice system plays a vital role in preventing and combating extremism. The courts and prosecution define the motive behind a crime, the type of sanction applied and the rehabilitation programme that must be carried out in each case. Criminal legislation sets out the various types of criminal offences, including hate crimes and acts of terrorism, that may be motivated by far-right extremism. Nevertheless, BIRN's research and monitoring has concluded that Kosovo's judges and prosecutors are not adequately equipped to identify crimes motivated by the far right.

Very few judges from the country's courts have participated in training on far-right extremism. BIRN requested relevant data from each court, and the data obtained shows a serious lack of capacities.

Table: Data obtained from Kosovo's courts on the number of judges trained on violent extremism and terrorism, and the number of hate crime cases

Court	Are judges trained on religious extremism?	Are judges trained on other forms of extremism?	Are any hate crime cases currently in process?	Do you believe judges need specialised training on other forms of extremism?
Prishtina	N/d	N/d	N/d	N/d
Mitrovica	N/d	N/d	N/d	N/d
Ferizaj	No ¹⁹	No	No	Yes
Peja ²⁰	Yes – 2	No	Yes – 1 (Inciting discord and intolerance)	Yes
Prizren	No ²¹	No	No	Yes
Gjakova ²²	No	No	No	No
Gjilan ²³	No	No	No	Yes

There are about 400 judges comprising the judiciary in the country whereas the data provided by the courts shows that only two judges, both from the Basic Court in Peja, have participated in training on

¹⁸ KALLXO Përime interview with Besar Gashi from KCS (broadcast on November 1, 2022), available at: <https://kallxo.com/lajm/a-ka-ne-burgjet-e-kosoves-te-denuar-per-pjesemarrje-ne-grupe-te-ekstremite-te-djathte/>

¹⁹ Written response via email, provided by the Basic Court in Ferizaj's spokesperson, Gentiana Hoxha.

²⁰ Written response via email, provided by the Basic Court in Peja's spokesperson, Tringa Zhuti.

²¹ Written response via email, provided by the Basic Court in Prizren's spokesperson, Marcel Lekaj, noting that no training has been held on violent extremism and terrorism since 2019.

²² Written response via email, provided by Basic Court in Gjakova's spokesperson, Lekë Muçaj, who did not provide an answer concerning the number of judges who had participated in training on religiously motivated extremism or other types of extremism, nor whether judges are in need of further training on this subject.

²³ Written response via email, provided by the Basic Court in Gjilan's spokesperson, Sabit Shkodra, who confirmed that training for judges on violent extremism motivated by religion has been held but did not provide concrete numbers.

religiously motivated violent extremism and terrorism, whereas no judges have been trained on other types of extremism.

Another problem identified is the lack of initiative to investigate some criminal incidents and judge them as crimes motivated by hatred.

In the Basic Court in Peja, there is just one ongoing case of inciting discord and intolerance, while there are currently no other such cases in any other Kosovo court.

Another very important finding is that most Basic Courts noted that their judges need additional training on forms of violent extremism and terrorism other than religious extremism.

Limited capacities of the prosecution to handle far-right extremism

Prosecuting the perpetrators of criminal offences is crucial to fighting and preventing far-right extremism. BIRN analysed the capacities of the State Prosecutor to handle far-right extremism through its prosecution offices around the country.

According to the law, the Special Prosecution has the exclusive mandate to handle terrorism cases in Kosovo. Within the Special Prosecution, there are three prosecutors who are responsible for investigating groups suspected of conducting terrorist activities.

Nevertheless, responsibility for handling far-right extremism cases does not lie exclusively with the Special Prosecution. Hate crimes, inter-ethnic crimes and crimes motivated by the sexual orientation or ethnicity of the victims also fall within the scope of the various Basic Prosecutions. Many of these crimes could be largely motivated by far-right ideologies.

Therefore, BIRN asked the Basic Prosecutions whether their prosecutors are adequately equipped and trained to investigate the motive or cause of crimes in such cases.

The data obtained shows very few prosecutors have participated in relevant training programmes.

Table: Data obtained from Kosovo's Basic Prosecutions on the number of judges trained on violent extremism and terrorism, and the number of hate crime cases

Prosecution	Are prosecutors trained on religious extremism?	Are prosecutors trained on other forms of extremism?	Are any hate crime cases currently in process?	Do you believe prosecutors need specialised training on other forms of extremism?
Prishtina ²⁴	Yes – 1	No	Yes – 3 (Inciting discord and intolerance)	Yes

²⁴ Written response via email, provided by Basic Prosecution in Prishtina's spokesperson, Laureta Ulaj.

Mitrovica ²⁵	No	No	Yes – 7 (Inciting discord and intolerance) ²⁶	Yes
Ferizaj ²⁷	No	No	Yes – 1 (Inciting discord and intolerance)	Yes
Peja	N/d	N/d	N/d	N/d
Prizren ²⁸	Yes – 1	No	No	Yes
Gjakova ²⁹	Yes – 1	No	No	Yes
Gjilan	N/d	N/d	N/d	N/d

The table above shows that only three prosecutors from across Kosovo have taken part in thematic training on violent extremism and terrorism and that there are only 11 cases of inciting discord and intolerance currently under investigation by prosecution offices.

Similarly to the courts, all Basic Prosecutions recognised the need for additional training on themes related to various forms of extremism and terrorism.

Needs to increasing professional capacities to handle far-light extremism

The Academy of Justice,³⁰ as the successor to the Judicial Institute of Kosovo, is an independent public institution, and its main function is to train judges and state prosecutors, as well as judicial and prosecutorial administrative staff. It can organise free professional training on various issues relating to the rule-of-law.

Furthermore, the Kosovo Judicial Council - KJC while noting that some training for judges on violent extremism have been carried out, they clearly emphasise the need for training programmes for other forms of extremism. They have noted that “When it comes to the religious extremism, the current specialised training programmes cover this area sufficiently, however when it comes to other forms of extremism (apart from religiously motivated extremism), the far-right extremism, political extremism or ethnonationalism for example, there is a crucial need to include these as specific topics of future training programmes, to learn more about other forms of extremism”.³¹

The prevention and fight against terrorism continues to be one of Kosovo’s strategic priorities and therefore also a key priority of the Academy of Justice.³² Recently, it has become a permanent part of the Academy’s

²⁵ Written response via email, provided by Basic Prosecution in Mitrovica’s spokesperson, Valon Preteni.

²⁶ Written response via email, provided by the Basic Prosecution in Mitrovica’s spokesperson, Valon Preteni. Cases of inciting hate have been presented for the period 2020-2022.

²⁷ Written response via email, provided by the Basic Prosecution in Ferizaj’s spokesperson, Vjosa Baftiu.

²⁸ Written response via email, provided by the Basic Prosecution in Prizren’s spokesperson, Fitore Mehmeti.

²⁹ Written response via email, provided by the Basic Prosecution in Gjakova’s spokesperson, Yllka Shehu.

³⁰ “About Us” section on the Academy of Justice’s website, available at: <https://ad.rks-gov.net/sq/rreth-nesh>

³¹ Written response of the Kosovo Judicial Council for BIRN.

³² “About Us” section on the Academy of Justice’s website, available at: <https://ad.rks-gov.net/sq/rreth-nesh>

training programme, as it has been assessed that it should be included in the specialised training framework, alongside training on organised crime and corruption.

According to the Academy of Justice, it is evident that, despite the training activities conducted to date, experience in this topic is still lacking, which increases the need for further training. This was confirmed through the training needs assessment process. In meetings held directly with relevant judges and prosecutors, the Academy was told that the investigation and trial of cases of this nature is challenging, especially because such crimes often go beyond national borders and Kosovo does not have access to international mechanisms and institutions such as Interpol.³³

Significant deficiencies were confirmed in the fight against the financing of terrorism and how to calculate the detention of fighters in Syria, as well as in other material and procedural issues.

The training provided by the Academy of Justice takes place in two sessions, across two days, and includes the following content:

Session I

- ✓ Understanding and confronting violent extremism and radicalism that leads to terrorism
- ✓ Prevention of terrorism, as a strategic focus of counter-terrorism efforts
- ✓ The National Strategy Against Terrorism
- ✓ Interconnections between organised crime and terrorism

Session II

- ✓ Techniques for investigating and proving criminal terrorism offences
- ✓ The strategic and institutional framework for cooperation in anti-terrorism issues
- ✓ Freedoms and human rights endangered by counter-terrorism actions
- ✓ Victims of terrorism and access to justice from the perspective of victims
- ✓ Criminal sanctions against perpetrators of terrorist criminal acts

During the training, case studies are introduced through individual and group tasks, thereby helping to address the challenging issues in solving these cases.

The tables below show data on the continuity of training activities since 2014. In addition to judges and prosecutors, professional associates, police officers, customs officials and other legal professionals from law-enforcement agencies dealing with the prevention and fight against terrorism have also participated in such training activities.

³³ Written response via email from the Academy of Justice.

As terrorism continues to be one of the main security threats in the country, it is imperative that the topic is part of the training programme and that this addresses all forms of manifestation so that such cases are dealt with in accordance with the law and resolved based on merit.

Table: Data from the Academy of Justice on the number of participants trained on themes related to violent extremism and terrorism between 2014 and 2019

Training Title	Training Dates	Participants	Judges	Prosecutors	Other	Males	Females	Albanians	Serbs	Bosnians	Other Minorities	Internationals
Terrorism and its forms of exposure	5/19/2014	10	3	4	3	8	2	10	0	0	0	0
Terrorism trials and investigations	2/10/2015	24	9	10	5	20	4	21	0	0	0	3
Money laundering and terrorist financing	5/19/2015	9	3	5	1	6	3	9	0	0	0	0
Money laundering and terrorist financing	11/23/2015	6	5	1	0	6	0	6	0	0	0	0
Combating terrorism (Presenting anti-terrorist legal provisions, practices and treatment of terrorism in France)	06/10/2016 07/10/2016	18	10	8	0	12	6	18	0	0	0	0
Investigations and trials of cases involving foreign fighters	17/05/2017 18/05/2017	16	7	2	7	12	4	15	0	1	0	0
Evidence issues related to the prosecution of terrorist acts. Analysis of specific cases and sharing of best practices on digital forensics, using the internet and turning the information discovered into evidence.	26/04/2018 27/04/2018	12	6	5	1	9	3	12	0	0	0	0
Terrorism	9/18/2018	19	9	4	6	16	3	19	0	0	0	0
Terrorism	24/09/2019 25/09/2019	18	3	1	14	8	10	18	0	0	0	0
Total		132	55	40	37	97	35	128	0	1	0	3

Data provided by the Academy of Justice shows that between 2014 and 2019, 132 participants — including 55 judges and 40 prosecutors — were trained on the theme of terrorism and its various forms.

Table: Data from the Academy of Justice on the number of participants trained on themes related to violent extremism and terrorism in 2021

Training Title	Training Dates	Participants	Judges	Prosecutors	Other	Males	Females	Albanians	Serbs	Bosnians	Other Minorities	Internationals
Specialized Training Program: Extremism, radicalism and terrorism - Session I	24.04.2021 28.04.2021	36	29	7	0	25	11	35	1	0	0	0
Specialized Training Program: Extremism, radicalism and terrorism - Session II	06.07.2021 07.07.2021	26	22	4	0	19	7	22	4	0	0	0
Specialized Training Program: Extremism, radicalism and terrorism - Session III	01.12.2021 02.12.2021	15	13	2	0	12	3	15	0	0	0	0
Specialized Training Program: Extremism, radicalism and terrorism - Session II	22.06.2022 23.06.2022	13	4	1	8	7	6	12	1	0	0	0
Total		90	68	14	8	63	27	84	6	0	0	0

In addition, data provided by the Academy of Justice for 2021 shows that 68 judges and 14 prosecutors participated in training related to extremism, radicalisation and terrorism.

When comparing the data provided by the Academy of Justice with the data provided by the courts and Basic Prosecutions, a discrepancy is noted. There is therefore a need for better coordination and the creation of a database to accurately record all the judges and prosecutors trained as well as all cases related to hate crimes or violent extremism, so that a clearer overview of the situation exists.

Recommendations

- The new National Strategy Against Terrorism and its action plan should include concrete activities for all forms of violent extremism and terrorism.
- The Ministry of Internal Affairs should include all forms of extremism in the scope of its rehabilitation and reintegration programmes.
- The Ministry of Justice, specifically the Kosovo Correctional Service, should develop individual plans for prisoners with concrete outputs addressing all forms of violent extremism and terrorism.
- The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation should train teachers to identify and refer to authorities the early signs of various forms of extremism, not only religious extremism.
- The Academy of Justice should develop specialised training modules for judges and prosecutors on the various forms of violent extremism (far-right, politically motivated, ethno-nationalist, etc.), not only religiously motivated extremism.
- The Kosovo Judicial Council should include as many judges as possible in all training activities organised by the Academy of Justice on the various forms of violent extremism, as well as similar training activities organised by donors and other stakeholders.
- The Kosovo Judicial Council and Kosovo Prosecutorial Council should include knowledge on the various forms of violent extremism and terrorism as part of their performance assessment of judges and prosecutors.
- Kosovo's courts and prosecution offices should collect accurate data on the judges and prosecutors who have participated in training activities on themes related to violent extremism and terrorism.
- The Kosovo Prosecutorial Council should include as many prosecutors as possible in all training activities organised by the Academy of Justice on the various forms of violent extremism, as well as similar training activities organised by donors and other stakeholders.
- The Kosovo Judicial Council and the courts should create a special database on hate crimes and other crimes that include extremist elements.



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