

NOVEMBER, 2024

MONTHLY REPORT

METHODOLOGY

[New Social Initiative \(NSI\)](#) monitors media and social media in cooperation with [Pikasa Analytics INC](#), a data analytics company that develops and implements tools, software, and machine learning algorithms. The tool allows monitors to count the nominal number of articles on topics and see the level of audience engagement.

Engagements on websites are defined as news articles from each outlet's website shared on Facebook and the total number of likes, shares, and comments they have collected. Social media engagement encompasses likes, shares, and comments gathered from all social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, LinkedIn) for all posts, including photos, videos, and text. The assessment of engagement extends beyond the media outlets to encompass a variety of social media accounts, including those of politicians and opinion makers.

The tool aggregates articles, and the NSI monitoring team reviews them to identify potential disinformation and other information anomalies. However, the tool has several limitations. It is tailored, with Pikasa and NSI monitors handpicked for each observed account. Consequently, the total number of posts and articles includes only the observed accounts, excluding other accounts that may also be posting news. Engagement calculation consists of all shares, comments, and other interactions.

Moreover, private accounts can only be observed if officially designated as accounts of political leaders or fan pages. Consequently, some politicians' Facebook accounts may not be included in the analysis. Another limitation is related to access, as NSI can observe articles and posts published as far back as December 1, 2023.

Observed media that report from Kosovo in Serbian language

Alternativna, Gračanica online, Radio Kontakt Plus, Kosovo Online, KoSSev, Medija Centar, TV Most, Radio Kim, Radio Mitrovica Sever, Radio Televizija Gračanica, and RTK2

Observation period:

November 1 – November 30, 2024

The number of online media observed:

126 media reporting in Albanian and Serbian in Kosovo, 126 media reporting from Serbia, and 24 international media outlets

Monitoring goal:

Information disorders on the Internet and social media, including Websites, online news portals, Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram, in Kosovo, focusing on the Kosovo Serb information space.

Specific topics observed:

National Flag Day of Albania, sabotage of Ibar-Lepenac canal and ensuing investigations, and closure of Serbia-run institutions in Kosovo.

Key findings

- The Ibar-Lepenac canal explosion was the most reported cross-ethnic issue, with diverging narratives and accusations from both sides contributing to misinformation.
 - * Discrepancies in reported arrests related to the canal explosion were noted. Official statements clarified that only two suspects were detained, though earlier reports suggested higher numbers.
 - * Inflammatory language by political actors (e.g., comparisons of Serbia to Russia's actions in Ukraine) fueled negative stereotypes and hostility.
 - * Kosovo's Prime Minister accused Serbian criminal networks without concrete evidence, prompting retaliatory narratives from Serbian officials.
- Allegations of Serbian apartment allocations being linked to controversial groups in Kosovo highlighted the fragile social environment, further complicated by misreporting.
- The racial slur usage discrepancy (7 articles in Serbian media vs. 1 in Albanian media) reflects a broader trend of tension in media language.

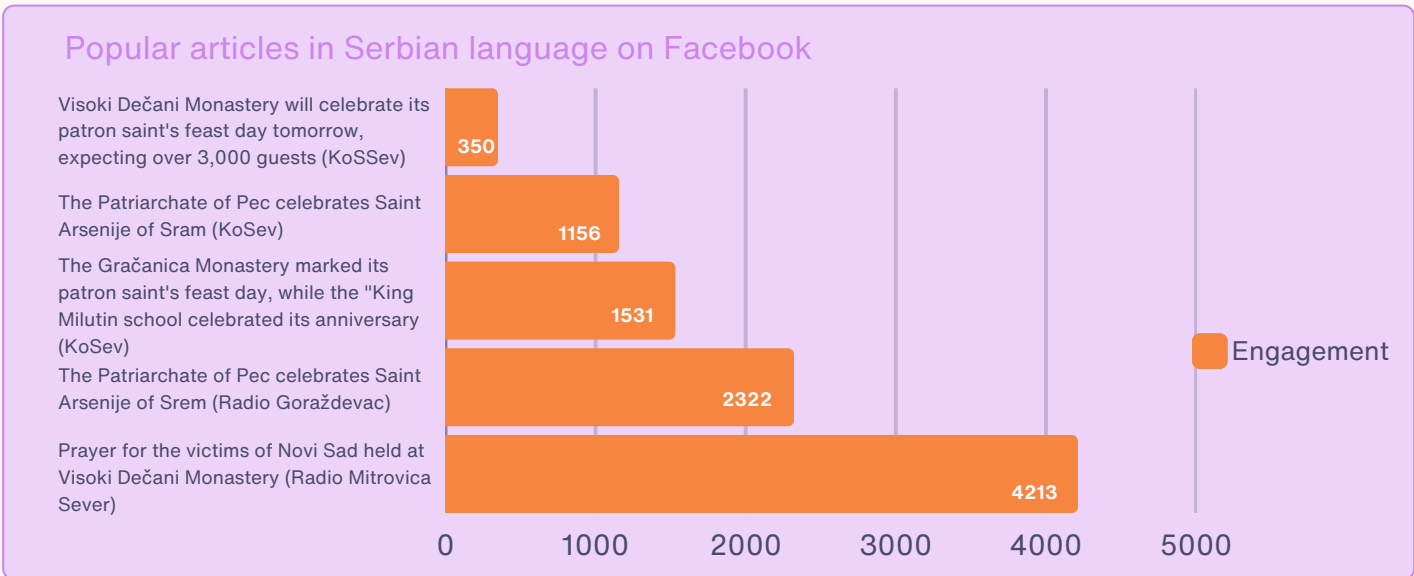
Monitoring results

During the reporting period, the most active media outlet reporting in Serbian language from Kosovo was Kosovo Online, which published 2752 articles with 33,583 engagements. The same website also recorded the most engagements on social media.

In the reporting period, Serbian-language media in Kosovo reported the most about the King Milutin Saints Fest Day (26 articles) and Saint Dimitrije Fest Day (19 articles). Other notable topics included the explosion at the Ibar-Lepenac hydro system (19 articles) and the Albanian Flag Day celebrations in the Serb-majority municipalities (18 articles). November was a rare month in which two of the most reported topics also made it to the audience favorites on Facebook. Religious holidays are a frequent audience favorite with media reporting in the

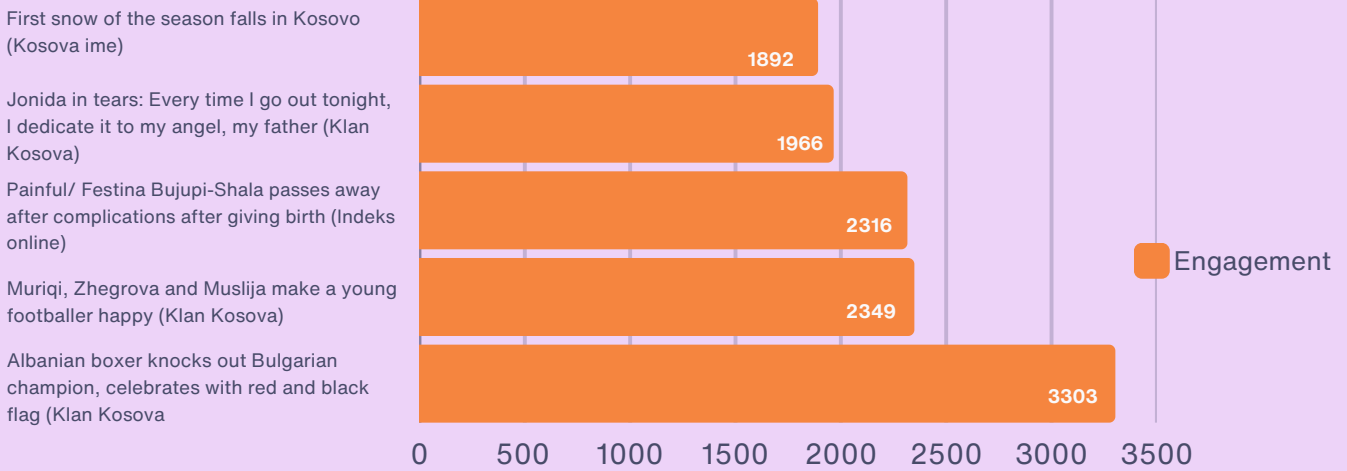
Serbian language from Kosovo. Still, November 2024 was the first month since December 2023 that all the top five most popular articles on the Facebook pages of the Serbian reporting media from Kosovo are related to celebrations of religious holidays.

Since May 2024, media reporting in the Serbian language has seen an overall decrease in engagement levels. August 2024 saw a slight increase in audience engagement on Facebook compared to July 2024. However, a new reduction in engagements was recorded in September 2024 compared to August. The declining trend continued in October when recorded engagements were considerably lower than those recorded in the first half of 2024. However, November saw a significant increase in Facebook audience engagement in the media reporting in the Serbian language from Kosovo.



There were overlaps in the most reported topics in Serbian and Albanian-language media in Kosovo. Expectedly, the Ibar-Lepenac canal explosion was the most reported topic in the Albanian language in Kosovo, with 746 articles written about it in November. The next most reported topic in the media that report in Albanian (417) was the double murder in Kline, followed by the parliamentary session for the adoption of the budget for 2025 (408), and 345 articles written about the joint session of Kosovo and North Macedonia Governments. The topics that were covered most did not garner the most audience engagement. When examining the most popular individual articles on Facebook, sports and entertainment articles piqued the audience’s interest.

Popular articles in Albanian language on Facebook



During the reporting period, the most active media outlet reporting in Albanian language from Kosovo was Bota Sot, which published 9,510 articles with 45,024 engagements. However, the website that recorded the most engagements on social media was Indeks online, with 183,325 engagements, on 4,721 published articles in November.

Kosovo supplies drinking water and cooling water for thermal power plants and supports agriculture in seven municipalities. The canal runs through Albanian- and Serbian-populated areas; however, the deliberate sabotage took place in the Serb-majority municipality of Zubin Potok in northern Kosovo. This incident has heightened fears of destabilization amidst ongoing political disputes between Kosovo and Serbia, triggering widespread condemnation from international observers. While investigations are ongoing, no party has been officially blamed by independent observers.

Despite the uncertainty, Kosovo's Prime Minister, Albin Kurti, held a press conference only a few hours after the explosion, directly accusing Serbia and Serbian criminal networks in Kosovo of perpetrating the attack. Kurti warned citizens of potential disruptions to water and electricity supplies, intensifying public anxiety. His swift accusations risked exacerbating inter-ethnic tensions, but any potential unrest was largely limited to hateful public comments by various actors.

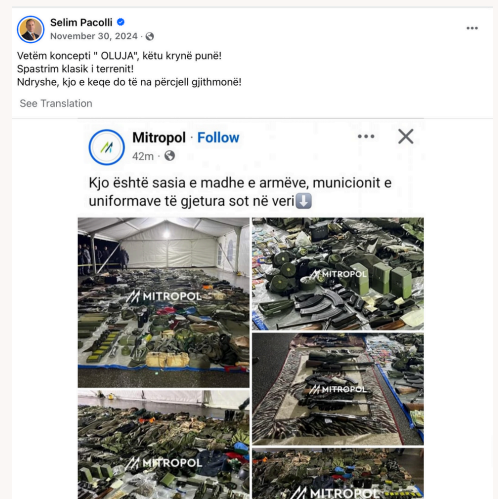
An example of such statements was the one made by Vigan Qorrolli, Kosovo's Deputy Minister of Justice. Qorrolli refers to Serbia as "morracake e djallëzore" (lousy and evil) and accuses it of orchestrating the sabotage, drawing parallels

¹ <https://nacionale.com/politike/kurti-sulm-terrorist-qe-vjen-nga-bandat-e-serbise-nje-njese-e-kosoves-rrezikon-te-mbetet-na-energji>

between Serbia's actions and Russian attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure. Such language is inflammatory and derogatory, labeling an entire nation with pejorative terms. This rhetoric can exacerbate ethnic tensions and perpetuate negative stereotypes, contributing to a hostile environment that hinders constructive dialogue between communities. This statement was carried by at least six ² different portals in Kosovo.

Similarly, Selim Pacolli's statement in the aftermath of the explosion, invoking "Operation Storm" (Oluja) and advocating for "clearing the field," is deeply concerning. Operation Storm was a Croatian military offensive in 1995 that led to the displacement of a significant number of Serbs from Croatia. By referencing this operation, Pacolli appears to endorse similar actions in Kosovo, which can be interpreted as an incitement to violence and a call for ethnic cleansing against the Serbian population in the region. Such rhetoric not only glorifies past atrocities but also poses a serious threat to peace and stability in the Balkans. Early in December, two criminal reports were filed against Pacolli for this and other consecutive statements, one by a Kosovo Serb politician, Aleksandar Arsenijević,³ and one by the Diocese of Raška – Prizren of the Serbian Orthodox Church.⁴

In contrast to September reports about alleged plans for mass dislocation of Kosovo Serbs to the Bosniak-majority region in Serbia, in November, Kosovo media claimed that keys to apartments built by the Government of Serbia are being handed out to alleged members of Civil Protection, a former organization Government of Kosovo has declared as still active and terrorist in nature. Again, in contrast to this claim, the Kosovo Prime Minister repeated in November a claim made ⁵ several times in the past – that this organization has been dismantled.



² <https://indeksonline.net/shperthimi-ne-iber-lepenc-qorrolli-serbia-morracake-e-djallezore-do-kapitulloje-njeher-e-mire/> and <https://klankosova.tv/shperthimi-ne-iber-lepenc-qorrolli-serbia-morracake-e-djallezore-do-kapitulloje-njeher-e-mire/> and <https://www.arbresh.info/lajmet/zv-ministri-qorrolli-thote-se-2sulmi-ne-zubin-potok-eshte-i-ngjashem-me-ate-ge-rusia-e-beri-ne-ukraine/> and <https://www.zeri.info/aktuale/558660/zv-ministri-qorrolli-thote-se-sulmi-ne-zubin-potok-eshte-i-ngjashem-me-ate-ge-rusia-e-beri-ne-ukraine/> and <https://www.vushtrionline.net/2024/11/shperthimi-ne-iber-lepenc-qorrolli-serbia-morracake-e-djallezore-do-kapitulloje-njeher-e-mire/> and <https://frontonline.net/shperthimi-ne-iber-lepenc-qorrolli-serbia-morracake-e-djallezore-do-kapitulloje-njeher-e-mire/>

³ <https://alternativa.com/26498-2/>

⁴ <https://alternativa.com/eparhija-raskoprizrenska-podnela-krivicnu-prijavu-protiv-seljim-pacollija/>

⁵ <https://nacionale.com/politike/kurti-prupet-kriminal-e-strukturat-paralele-jane-shpordhur-mund-te-kete-elemente-te-tyre-ende>

Other information disorders related to the sabotage were those around the number of suspects arrested in relation to the explosion. Prompted by the official statements of the police and the Minister of Internal Affairs,⁶ media reported about 8 to 10 arrested people, however, as latter clarified by the prosecution,⁷ only two people were arrested and detained for suspicion in the involvement in the explosion while others have been only brought to questioning and then consequently released. One more suspect was detained in the day after the explosion, but not in relation to the explosion.

In November 2024, the interim body of the Municipality of Zubin Potok, run by the Serbian Government, initiated the distribution of apartments intended primarily for socially vulnerable groups. The allocation process faced immediate criticism from Kosovo Serb opposition parties, who alleged a lack of transparency and inadequate criteria in selecting beneficiaries.

In response to these concerns, Kosovo authorities conducted inspections and cordoned off four apartment buildings in Zubin Potok, suspecting illegal construction and irregularities in the allocation process. Subsequently, the police questioned several individuals involved in the allocation process, including Miloš Perović, a prominent figure from the Zubin Potok Interim Body.

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The media that report in Albanian used the wrong surname of Perović but labeled him as a suspect in this case while, at the same time, claiming that one of the recipients of the apartments, also erroneously named, is a member of the Civil Protection who is suspected of attacking the police. While the person in question did spend 7 months in jail, he was accused of hooliganism and arson and was not officially connected to Civil Protection or any terrorist acts.

When it comes to the media from Serbia, November was marked with warnings about pending Serbian schools closures by Kosovo Government. For the better part of 2023 and 2024 the Government of Kosovo unilaterally shut down dozens of Serbia-run institutions. In mid-November, one of the headmasters of Serbia-run schools was questioned at the border crossing and the official stamp of the educational institution he runs were confiscated by Kosovo authorities who consider these institutions parallel and illegal. The event triggered numerous announcements of pending unilateral closure of Serbia-run schools. Given the importance of these institutions to the community, such announcements could induce panic, especially when they are not followed by presentation of viable

⁶ <https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/politika/1408286/vucic-sutra-18-saopstava-naciji-najvaznije-odluke-stolu-opcija-proglasenja-okupacije-dela-teritorije-srbije> and <https://www.kurir.rs/vesti/politika/4437323/kurir-saznaje-vucic-sutra-u-18-saopstava-naciji-najvaznije-odluke-na-stolu-i-opcija-proglasenja-okupacije-dela-teritorije-srbije>.

⁷ <https://www.danas.rs/vesti/politika/vucic-obracanje-javnosti-kosovo/> and <https://n1info.rs/vesti/aktivistkinja-iz-kosovske-mitrovice-najave-tabloida-o-okupaciji-zaludjivanje-javnosti-i-budalastina/>.

⁸ <https://www.alo.rs/vesti/politika/955637/vazno-srbija-ce-ponovo-uputiti-zahtev-za-povratak-1000-srpskih-vojnika-i-policijaca-na-kim-vest>.

⁹ <https://www.danas.rs/vesti/politika/biserko-i-canak-obavestili-kurtija-da-beograd-planira-preseljenje-srba-sa-severa-u-rasku-traze-mu-da-to-spreci/> and <https://www.danas.rs/vesti/politika/intervju-nenad-canak-informaciju-o-preseljenju-srba-sa-kim-u-sandzak-dobili-smo-sa-vise-strana/>.

contingency plans. In fact, several articles about this event, suggested school activities would have to be conducted in houses.¹⁰

One of the series of titles on this topic said: “KURTI SMACKS DOWN ON SERBIAN SCHOOLS! The headmaster of the elementary school from Gojbulja, detained in Jarinjje, Petković, made an urgent announcement: They took away his seals!”¹¹ another stated: “THE SITUATION IN KOSOVO AND METOHIJA IS EXTREMELY ALARMING: Kurti started a showdown with Serbian schools - children under the attack of a fake state”.¹²



The sabotage of the Ibar – Lepenac canal was also a promptly featured Kosovo-related topic in media in Serbia. While Kosovo officials accused Serbia of the sabotage without evidence, so did the Serbian authorities accuse Kosovo of the same. According to Serbian officials, the explosion was meant to give Kosovo an excuse to send Kosovo Security Forces to Serb-majority northern region, and continue persecution of the entire Kosovo Serb community. For escape, one title reads: ”TERRIBLE TERROR HAS BEGUN: Kurti's special forces are storming into Serbs' homes, arrests have been made following the canal explosion!”¹³



Similarly, the explosion on the Ibar-Lepenac canal was also used to bring into question reporting of the media in Serbia that are considered critical of the government. For example, Večernje Novosti¹⁴ accused N1 of bias and pointing of finger toward Serbia for simply reporting on the claims from Pristina.

On November 28, 2024, in Gračanica, Kosovo, several vehicles displaying Albanian flags and symbols associated with the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) drove through the town's center and near the monastery. The occupants honked horns and shouted slogans in celebration of Albanian Flag Day. This display caused distress among local Kosovo Serb residents, who viewed it as a deliberate provocation. The mayor of Gračanica, Ljiljana Subarić, condemned the act,

10 <https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/politika/1429704/kucama-nastava-nase-djake-srbi-kim-nemaju-izbora-ako-kurtijeva-vlast-udari-osnovne-srednje-skole> and <https://happytv.rs/uncategorized/srbi-nece-da-pristanu-da-im-deca-uce-po-nastavnim-programima-iz-pristine-moguca-nastava-po-kucama-za-nase-djake/787131/>
 11 <https://www.kurir.rs/vesti/politika/9493230/petkovic-na-jarinju-priveden-direktor-skole-iz-gojbulje>
 12 <https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/politika/1429088/situacija-kosovu-metohiji-krajnje-alarmantna-kurti-krenuo-obračun-srpskim-skolama-deca-udaru-lazne-drzave>
 13 <https://www.kurir.rs/vesti/politika/9511299/petkovic-o-eksploziji-na-kanalu-ibar-lepenac> and <https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/politika/1434922/nemojte-nam-hapsite-proganjate-narod-premier-vucicevic-situaciji-kim-ocekujem-odgovor-kfor>
 14 <https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/politika/1435001/n1-kurtijeva-televizija-solakovci-optuzili-srbiju-terorizam-kosovu-metohiji>

stating it was "unacceptable and unsettling, contributing only to heightened tensions between communities." She called on authorities to take measures to prevent such incidents and urged citizens to remain calm and avoid provocations. Residents too expressed their unease, emphasizing that such provocations are unnecessary, especially during tense times. The media from Serbia used the event to further the use of racial slurs to further fuel inter-ethnic tensions.



Overall, the racial slur for Albanians was observed in seven articles in the media in Serbia in November 2024. In contrast only one article containing racial slurs for Serbian people was observed in media from Kosovo in November 2024.

This report is prepared by New Social Initiative, a civil society organization from North Mitrovica to ultimately impact inclusiveness, trust-building, democratization processes and good governance in Kosovo. While doing so, NSI follows its vision of an inclusive society built on trust and appreciation among its communities, in which citizens from all ethnic groups actively participate in the society and its governance.