



Serbia Country Report, August 2023 by Bekir Hodzić

Genocide has defined Serbia's modern history. During World War II, the Ustaše, a Croatian Nazi militia, committed genocide against [Serbs, Jews, Roma and other non-Catholic minority groups](#). Chetniks, a Serb nationalist resistance force, committed [genocide against](#) Catholic Croats and Bosnian Muslims. These ethnic armies massacred hundreds of thousands of Yugoslavs.

In [Yugoslavia](#) after Tito's death in 1980, Slobodan Milošević called for a "[Greater Serbia](#)" incorporating Serb populations in neighboring states. Serbia supported armed Serb militias to break away from Bosnia and join Serbia.

Slobodan Milošević [stoked hatred](#) between Yugoslavia's [national, ethnic, and religious groups](#). After [Croatia and Bosnia seceded](#), Serb paramilitary militias sought to "ethnically cleanse" them by [expelling](#) non-Serb populations from Serb areas, subjecting them to [crimes against humanity](#), including forced deportation, [mass rape](#) and [mass murder](#). At [Srebrenica](#) in July 1995, Bosnian-Serb forces committed genocide, murdering over 8,000 Bosnian-Muslim men and boys.

The Serbian Army invaded [Kosovo](#) in 1998 to defeat Kosovar-Albanian rebel groups fighting for Kosovar independence from Serbia. Serb forces [perpetrated war crimes](#) against ethnic Albanians, including massacres of over 10,000 Kosovars, forced deportations, and mass rapes. US War Crimes Ambassador David Sheffer declared on April 9, 1999, "[We point to indicators of Genocide.](#)" A NATO bombing campaign on Belgrade resulted in Serbia's surrender and Kosovo's autonomy. Yet Serbia still [refuses](#) to recognize Kosovo's independence.

[The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia \(ICTY\)](#) tried many Serbs for war crimes in Bosnia, resulting in [high-profile Serb convictions](#). But in Serbia today, convicted war criminals are [glorified](#) by the government and media. Belgrade even contains a [large mural](#) devoted to Ratko Mladić, who ordered and carried out the Srebrenica genocide. Convicted war criminals hold [prestigious political and social positions](#) following their release from prison.

Denial dominates political discourse. Serbia's president, Aleksandar Vučić, [denies Serb atrocities](#) in Bosnia and Kosovo. School textbooks inculcate [Serbian nationalism and incite](#) "[hatred toward neighboring nations](#) under the guise of patriotism."

[Media freedom](#) in Serbia is restricted. Dissenting voices on television are silenced and the right to public assembly is curtailed. [Recent protests](#) against mass shootings drew vitriolic condemnations by officials. Tensions in Kosovo between Serbs and Albanians have [flared again](#), with violent ethnic clashes, Serbian military mobilization, and fear of renewed civil war.

Genocide Watch considers Serbia to be at **Stage 6: Polarization** and **Stage 10: Denial**. Genocide Watch **recommends:**

- Serbia's EU membership must be conditioned on an end to official genocide denial.
- Serbia must cut ties with secessionist leaders in the Republika Srpska.
- Serbia must reform its educational system to stop inculcating ethno-nationalism.
- Serbia must recognize Kosovo's independence.