

**Question for written answer E-001781/2023**

**to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy**

Rule 138

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Subject: Recent escalation in tensions between Serbia and Kosovo

Fifteen years on from Kosovo's declaration of independence, the Balkans remain a hotbed of tensions. This has been demonstrated yet again by the recent clashes that have left 14 Italian soldiers serving in the NATO-led peacekeeping force KFOR with varying degrees of injury, some of them severe. The alleged pretext for these violent popular uprisings was the outcome of the local elections which recently took place in the majority-Serb municipalities of northern Kosovo. A mass boycott of the elections led to the election of Albanian representatives close to the Kosovo government.

The escalation in Kosovo's Serb-dominated north shows no signs of easing, not least because the Kosovo's Prime Minister, Albin Kurti, took it upon himself to install Albanian mayors close to him by forcible means.

Kosovo was expelled from the US- and NATO-led 'Defender 23' military exercise following the Prime Minister's refusal to remove the mayors from northern Kosovo.

In light of this, can the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission answer the following:

1. Bearing in mind the tensions seen in recent days, how does he view the situation in Kosovo, taking also into account the recent EU-facilitated agreement seeking to normalise relations between Belgrade and Pristina?
2. Does he consider that Kosovo is sufficiently committed to setting up the Association of majority Serb municipalities, one of the key points of the agreement?
3. What steps is the EU planning on taking to avoid a dangerous escalation that could have dire consequences?

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