

# Balkan States Find Prosecuting Terrorism a Challenge

*Evidence in terrorism cases is proving difficult to find, while experts warn that the reintegration and rehabilitation of foreign fighters is an even greater challenge.*

By Haris Rovcanin, Fatjona Mejdini, Samir Kajosevic, Xhorxhina Bami, Sinisa-Jakov Marusic

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## **Abstract**

The baseline analysis presented highlights the current situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Albania, North Macedonia, Kosovo and Montenegro of trials and states' efforts to fight radicalisation, prevention and de-radicalisation mechanisms of foreign fighters and ex-combat-ants.

BIRN journalists used several journalistic methodologies to collect the relevant information: sending requests for information to the state prosecutors' offices and state courts; court reports from terrorism trials in the aforementioned countries; analytical data available in analysis and papers of relevant civil society organisations and opinions of relevant experts in the field dealing with the terrorism and extremism. For presenting the findings, a comparative method was used at the beginning of the analysis, later followed by demonstration of the data for each country separately.

The countries have different definitions of and sanctions for terrorism acts inside the country and departures to foreign battlefronts with additional differences present when handling departures to Syria and Iraq, and Ukraine.

The countries also differ in the level of transparency in submission of data, which is particularly aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic caused by the novel coronavirus.

This baseline analysis of the legal regulations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Albania and North Macedonia related to terrorism and foreign terrorist legal coverage, and the number of persons sentenced under these provisions, was done by BIRN Hub and BIRN Bosnia and Herzegovina.

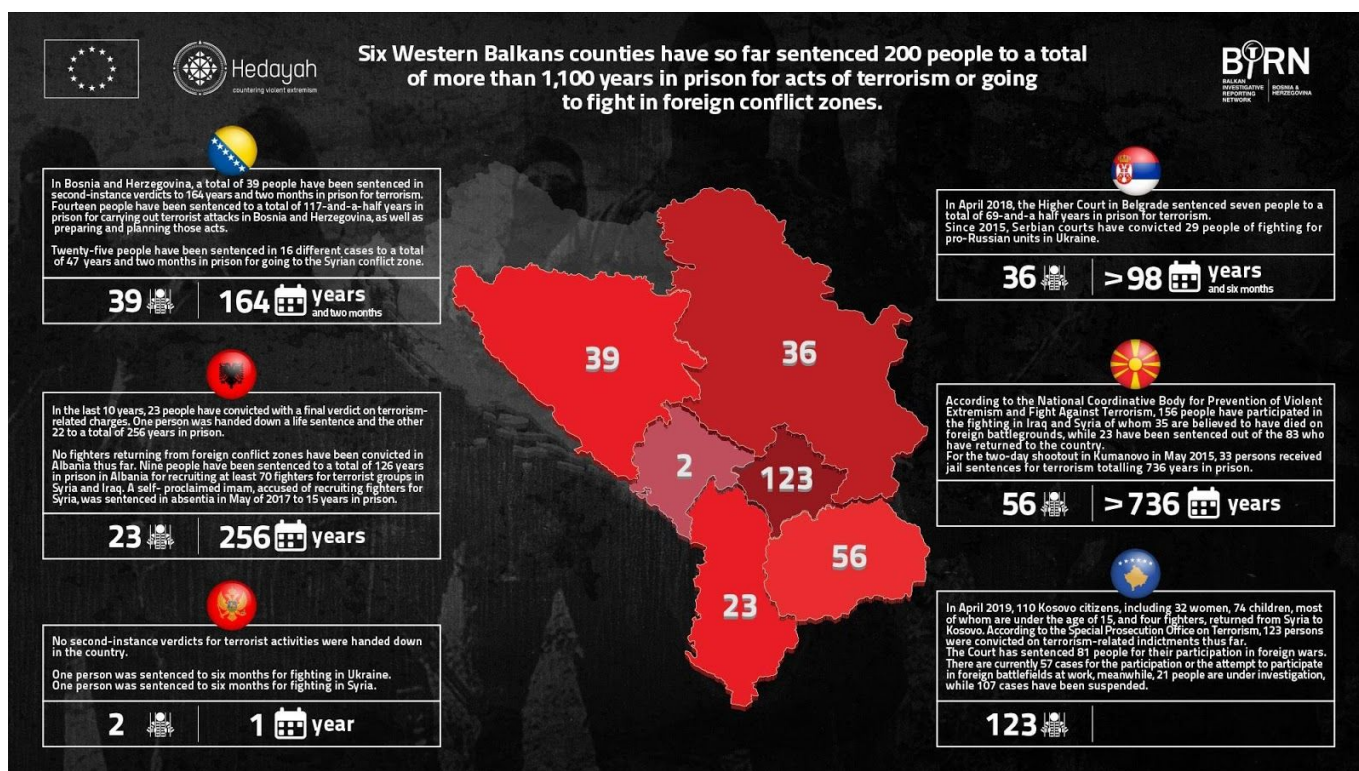
It was done as part of a project, "Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism – STRIVE Global – Support to Civil Society initiatives to build the capacity of journalism sector to Prevent/Counter Violent Extremism in Central Asia and Turkey, MENA, South Caucasus and Western Balkans region".

As part of this project, BIRN Hub and BIRN BiH will also develop a multimedia database of all convictions in the Western Balkans region, which will be available on [www.balkaninsight.com](http://www.balkaninsight.com) and [www.detektor.ba](http://www.detektor.ba) in English and BHS.

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*Evidence in terrorism cases is proving difficult to find, while experts warn that the reintegration and rehabilitation of foreign fighters is an even greater challenge.*



Since the mid-1990s, more than 200 people have been sentenced to more than 1,100 years in prison in six Western Balkans countries for terrorist acts, or for leaving to fight in a foreign war, according to BIRN analysis.

But their record of sentencing is uneven, and experts interviewed by BIRN say each country faces significant challenges in dealing with foreign fighters and their families who have returned, or are expected to return.

More than 160 fighters have been jailed for joining the conflicts in Syria and Ukraine, part of a wave of foreign fighters from the Balkans that prompted Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Montenegro to outlaw such actions in 2014 and 2015.

Kosovo and Serbia have sentenced the largest number of foreign fighters, while Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia have had the most convictions for domestic terrorism. Albania has yet to convict any returning foreign fighter in the second instance. There have been no final verdicts for domestic terrorism in Montenegro, according to BIRN's findings.

Anes Cengic, a former head of counter-terrorism in Bosnia, said securing a conviction is one thing, but reintegrating foreign fighters is another.

"As a former policeman, I don't think the work has been finished by pronouncing a sentence and sending the person to serve it," Cengic told BIRN.

Comparing the much longer sentences in EU countries than in the Western Balkans for joining foreign terrorist groups, the US based security analyst, Adrian Shtuni, said Balkan courts need to rethink their approach.

"Sentencing practices in the Western Balkans in cases involving terrorism offences may need some rethinking and possibly be more closely aligned with sentencing practices in European Union countries," he said.

He quoted from a study from 2019 showing the differences in average prison sentences in the Western Balkans. The average sentence in EU countries in 2018 was twice as long as in the Western Balkans – by seven years – he added.

However, he continued, "longer prison sentences are not a solution in themselves but should be matched with meaningful rehabilitation, supervision, and reintegration programmes."

Bosnia sentenced foreign fighters to less than two years in prison on average. In Kosovo, the average prison sentence for terrorism-related offences was three-and-a-half years, Shtuni said, adding that, as of early 2020, the average sentence in Kosovo had decreased further.

In Serbia, sentences vary between convictions for fighting in Ukraine and in Syria. While fighters returning from Ukraine mostly received suspended sentences or house detention, sentences for joining Islamic State, ISIS, ranged up to 11 years.

“What caused the considerable disparity observed in the sentencing approach to the similar criminal offences illustrated above is not very clear,” Shtuni said.

Fighters coming back from Ukraine, he noted, had joined ultranationalist and white supremacist groups, “motivated by ideologies that promote hate and violence”.

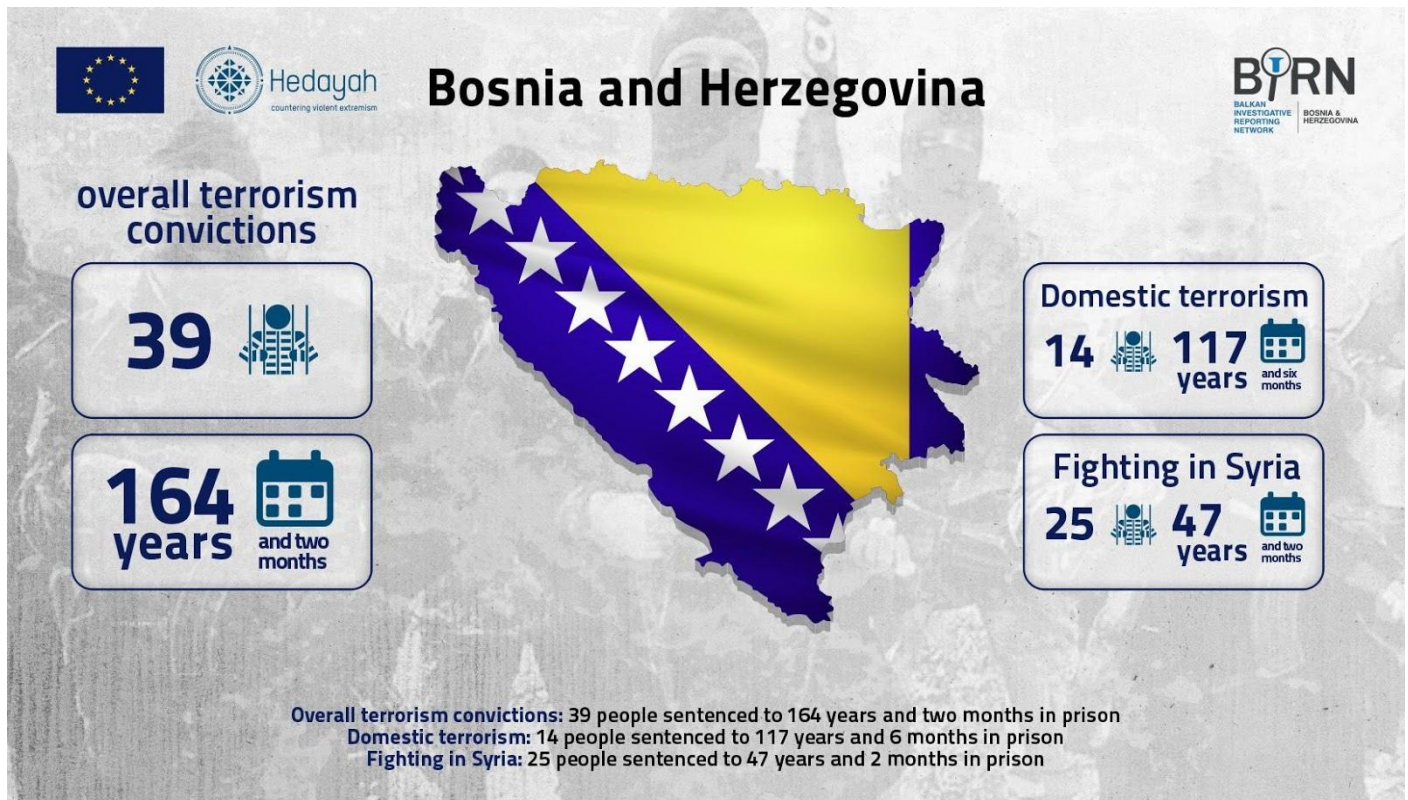
Those returning from the ISIS conflict in Syria presented a different set of challenges, he said.

Countries lack the capacities and specialised expertise to rehabilitate and reintegrate them into society, as the networks that funded and aided their Islamist radicalisation were still active in a different ways.

“These networks represent the ideological and logistical backbone of the militant jihadi movement in the region,” he said.

“As such, they will continue to represent a significant national security risk to the counties of the Balkans and beyond for the future. This is especially so following the return of a rather large number of foreign terrorist fighters from Syria and Iraq, and their gradual release from prison.”





## Bosnia: proving guilt has become a challenge

Acts of terrorism are defined by two articles of the criminal code. The minimum penalty for acts of terrorism is five years and in cases that end in the death of one or more persons, the minimum jail penalty is eight years.

If the perpetrator intentionally deprives a person of life, he or she faces prison terms of not less than ten years.

Those who prepare the means for committing terrorism acts face sentences of one to ten years in prison.

In 2014, an amendment to the law was sent to parliament under which taking part in a foreign war became a criminal offence.

Courts in Bosnia have sentenced 39 people to a combined total of just over 164 years in prison for travelling to foreign battlefields and for committing, planning and preparing terrorist acts. They have acquitted three.

Meanwhile, 14 people have been sentenced to just over 117 years for domestic terrorism within the country.

Munib Ahmetpahic is one of only a few people in the Balkans to stand trial for both domestic terrorism and fighting abroad, in his case, in Syria.

In 2013, courts acquitted him in the second instance of destroying evidence after another suspect, Mevlid Jasarevic, fired shots at the US embassy in Sarajevo in October 2011, for which Jasarevic was jailed for 15 years.

But in April 2019, Ahmetpahic was sentenced to three years in prison for joining Islamist militants in Syria and Iraq between 2013 and 2018.

The longest sentence handed down by Bosnia's courts so far for terrorism was to Haris Causevic. In 2010 he was jailed for 35 years for a gun attack on a police building in the central town of Bugojno in which one officer died and another was wounded.

His convicted accomplice, Adnan Haracic, was sentenced to 14 years in prison under a plea bargain.

Bosnia's state court has issued second-instance verdicts in 16 cases, sentencing 25 people to a combined total of just over 47 years either for fighting in Syria, for trying to get there or for recruiting others to do so.

Each was sentenced to between one and seven years in prison; the longest sentence was given to Husein Bosnic in June 2016, for recruitment and incitement to terrorism.

Of those convicted of activity on a foreign battlefield, Mehmed Tutmic received the heaviest sentence – four years, in 2017.

In nine cases concerning fighting in Syria, eight defendants each received a sentence of one year after pleading guilty.

Currently, only one trial in Bosnia for fighting in Syria is ongoing – that of Ibro Cufrovic. He was sentenced in the first instance to four years. Both the defence and prosecutors have appealed.

Seven Bosnian citizens flown back to Bosnia from Syria in December 2019 remain in custody.

A spokesman for the state prosecution said that, concerning terrorism, criminal complaints were currently being processed against 46 people in 25 separate cases, while 31 other people in 30 cases were under investigation.

Bosnian law does not classify fighting in Ukraine as a terrorist act, unlike fighting in Syria, where the United Nations has designated ISIS a terrorist organisation.

Armin Krzalic, of the Sarajevo-based Centre for Security Studies, said terrorism charges are hard to prove in general, hence the number of plea bargains.

“Finding material evidence is a problem,” he said. “That’s why they [courts] have concluded agreements with certain individuals.”

Vlado Azinovic, a Political Sciences professor in Sarajevo, highlights that Bosnia was the first country in the region to outlaw going to a foreign battlefield, but agreed that proving guilt had proven hard, and would be a future challenge.

“Prosecuting persons who we have proof were involved in ISIS activities – as they had filled in forms in which they were explicit in wishing to become fighters ... has proved to be a challenge for everyone involved in the process – prosecutors, lawyers and especially judges,” he said.

Another challenge is re-socialisation, Azinovic added. He noted that the Council of Europe is implementing a project to work with convicts involving local communities and police, to avoid the problem of local communities only learning about convicts coming back to them weeks before it happens.

“If we really want to be responsible toward their rehabilitation or reintegration, that process must start earlier,” Azinovic asserted.





## Kosovo: Mass return from Syria creates problems

The criminal code of Kosovo stipulates prison terms of at least five years for committing a terrorist offence. If the offence results in grievous bodily harm to one or more persons, the perpetrator is imprisoned for not less than ten years.

If the offence results in the death of one or more persons, the perpetrator faces a prison sentence ranging from 15 years to life.

Assistance in the commission of terrorism incurs sentences ranging from six months to ten years; facilitation and financing of the commission of terrorism, recruitment and training for terrorism incur penalties ranging from five to 15 years.

Incitement to commit a terrorist offence is punishable from one to five years in prison; concealment or failure to report terrorists or terrorist groups, from six months to ten years; organisation and participation in a terrorist group, up to 20 years; traveling for the purpose of terrorism, from one to ten years.

Article 3 of the law, on Prohibition on Joining Armed Conflicts Outside State Territory, defines “joining or participation in a foreign army or police, in foreign paramilitary and para-police formations, in organised groups or individually, outside the territory”, directly or indirectly, as a crime.

This law predicts sentences of five to 15 years in prison for organisers, recruiters, leaders, or trainers of a “person or groups of person with the aim of joining or participating” in foreign entities for armed conflict abroad, three to 15 years for “any direct or indirect manner, offers, requests, gathering or concealing funds or other material means intentionally, knowingly, or if there are reasonable grounds to believe that it will be used entirely or partially” in foreign entities for armed conflict abroad; three to 15 years for whoever participates in foreign entities for armed conflict abroad; six months to five years of prison for those who publicly “call or incite” participation in foreign entities for armed conflicts abroad, or who conceal information, or who fail to report the planning of these activities, and shelter the perpetrators of these criminal offences; exemptions from the sentences are possible for those who collaborate with prosecution bodies and disclose the group and avoid committing the criminal offence.

In March 2015, Kosovo passed a law outlawing joining armed conflicts outside the state territory, defined as “joining or participation in a foreign army or police, in foreign paramilitary and para-police formations, in organised groups or individually, outside the territory”, directly or indirectly. Sentences for guilt ranged from six months to 15 years in prison.

But security expert Besa Kabashi, founder and CEO of the consultancy firm B.K.R. & Associates, told BIRN that it is difficult to investigate the level of involvement a returnee might have had in a foreign conflict, in zones that are still open conflicts and off limits, let alone distinguish the circumstances.

Another challenge, Kabashi explained, is the involvement of underage persons and “child soldiers” in foreign wars as well as their reintegration if their parents have died or been imprisoned for long periods.

Finally, Kabashi explained, women are especially tough to prosecute, “as it is hard to prove the position of a women in a relationship within a certain mindset that might have not allowed her a choice anyhow – it is hard to know for sure if her participation in a foreign conflict was voluntary or not, and in what capacity”.

Kabashi said the reintegration of returnees from foreign war had become a government priority in 2017, but had faced a fresh challenge last year.

In April 2019, 110 citizens – 32 women, 74 children, mostly under the age of 15, and four adult fighters – were all returned at once from Syria.

Indictments of participation in terrorist organisations were filed against all the women. The children are part of several reintegration activities led by the Interior Ministry.

The Special Prosecution Office says Kosovo has indicted 171 persons in total for terrorism, while the courts have sentenced 123 persons on terrorism-related cases. Courts have ruled on 87 indictments filed for participation in foreign wars, while 57 cases remain in progress.

Another 21 people are under investigation and 107 cases for participation or attempts to participate in foreign battlefields have been suspended.

In final verdicts, courts in Kosovo have sentenced 81 persons for participating in foreign wars. According to Kabashi, the law in Kosovo that outlaws joining foreign armed conflicts does not concern itself with probation after imprisonment.

“Any reintegration efforts beyond the prison sentence have to be done on a voluntary basis,” she said, adding that Kosovo also still lacks a national reintegration plan that would “cut the vicious cycle, allow them to become self-sustainable parts of society, decrease their vulnerabilities and meanwhile improve national security”.



## Albania: No returning foreign fighters convicted

Terrorism-related activities in Albania are punishable under the criminal code in article 28, "Special forms of collaboration"; article 230, "Acts of terrorist intention"; article 230/a, "Financing terrorism", article 230/b, "Concealment of funds and other property that finance terrorism"; article 230/d, "Collection of funds for financing terrorism"; article 231, "Recruitment of persons for committing acts with terrorist intentions or financing of terrorism"; article 232, "Training to commit acts of terrorist intentions"; article 232/a, "Incitement, public calls and propaganda for committing acts with terrorist intentions"; article 232/b, "Threatening to commit acts of terrorist intentions"; and article 234/a, "Terrorist organisations".

Sentences for acts of terrorist intention and financing of terrorism range from 15 years to life. Participation in terrorist organisations incurs prison sentences ranging from seven to 15 years. In July 2014, parliament passed new amendments to the criminal code to include involvement in fighting abroad. Currently, therefore, the criminal code also contains article 265/a, "Involvement in military operations in a foreign state"; article 265/b, "Organising involvement in military operations in a foreign state"; and article 265/c, "Calling for



involvement in violent military operations in a foreign state". Prison sentences for these offences range up to 15 years.

Four men from the northern Shkoder region remain under investigation in Albania for terrorism after they were among 19 arrested in October 2016 in Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia over a plot to attack a football match between Albania and Israel.

Kosovo convicted and jailed eight of them in 2018, but the four detained in Albania were released due to a lack of evidence, after spending a year in detention. Prosecutors asked the court to close the case but were ordered to continue the investigation.

According to the Special Court of Appeal Against Corruption and Organised Crime, in the last 10 years, 23 people have been convicted with a final verdict on terrorism-related charges alone or terrorism charges combined with other ones, like the creation of "criminal organisations", "structured criminal groups" or "armed gangs", etc.

While one was convicted to a life sentence, the other 22 received a total of 256 years of prison, a medium of 11.6 years each. Ten others were declared not guilty.

Andon Mëhillaj was sentenced to life by the appeal court in March 2017. He and other six others were charged with murder and threatening people in Albania, using guns and TNT explosives.

They were hired by others to conduct these criminal acts. Alongside charges of "acts of terrorist intention", they were put on trial for numerous others such as "premeditated homicide", formation of "criminal organisations", and others.

In 2015, the prosecution dropped investigations against three Albanians suspected of recruiting foreign fight-ers, as they were believed to be in Syria, and one was possibly dead.

Courts in Albania have yet to convict anyone in the second instance of fighting in a foreign country and of returning to their homeland, although around 140 people left Albania for foreign wars in 2013 and 2014.

Some 45 returned within months, before the adoption of a law criminalising the act in 2014. Since then, no foreign fighters have returned to Albania from Syria or Iraq and no trials are ongoing for fighting in foreign wars.

In November 2016, courts convicted nine people, including two self-proclaimed imams, in the second instance, of recruiting at least 70 fighters for Syria and Iraq. They were sentenced to a combined total of 102 years and eight months in prison; each sentence ranged between eight months and 18 years.

In May 2017, Almir Daci, a self-proclaimed imam, was sentenced in absentia to 15 years in prison for recruiting fighters for Syria. The verdict was not final. He is believed to have died in combat in April 2016, although there is no official confirmation of his death.

While Albania outlawed participation in foreign wars and recruitment or organising of foreign fighters in 2014, its law does not designate these as "terrorist acts".

Redion Qirjazi, director of the security programme at the Institute for Democracy and



Mediation, IDM, said the Albanian judicial system had no experience with such cases and had faced a challenge handling those who returned home.

“The key challenge facing the judicial institutions will be to correctly categorise the people whose return is expected,” Qirjazi said, explaining that the same approach cannot be applied to victims, fighters, associates and family members.



## Montenegro: Returning fighters is a minor issue

The criminal code defines a range of terrorism-related acts for which one can be punished by at least five years in prison. The penalty is the same for those who threaten to commit a terrorist act. If a death of one or more persons occurs during an act of terrorism, those who commit the act face a minimum of ten years in prison, or 12 years if they kill one or more persons intentionally during the act.

Incitement to committing terrorist acts is punishable by at least ten years in prison, and recruiting and joining organisations in order to commit terrorist acts by between one to ten years in prison. Using an explosive device in a terrorist act is punishable from one to 15 years if it results in intentionally killing someone or severely destroying a building.

Financing terrorism is punishable by one to ten years.

In March 2015, Montenegro adopted law changes that criminalised participating in foreign conflicts. These are now punishable by up to 10 years in jail. The amendments to the criminal

code make it a crime to either join or participate in “armed conflicts outside the territory of Montenegro”.

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Courts in Montenegro have not yet passed down any second-instance verdicts for domestic terrorism. But in May 2019, the Higher Court in Podgorica sentenced 13 people in the first instance, for roles in an alleged coup attempt in 2016, defined as a “terrorist act”.

They included two Russian military security officers sentenced in absentia, eight Serbs and two Montenegrin opposition politicians. They were jailed for up to 15 years in prison.

Montenegro criminalised participation in foreign conflicts in March 2015, with sentences of up to 10 years in prison. Recruiting, organising, financing, encouraging, leading or training foreign fighters was also outlawed with possible punishments of between two and 10 years.

In April 2017, Marko Berovic was sentenced to six months in prison for fighting alongside Russian-backed separatists in Ukraine in 2015. In January 2018, the Higher Court in Podgorica sentenced Hamid Beharovic to six months in prison for joining ISIS in Syria.

The special state prosecutor's office has declined to tell BIRN how many cases of foreign fighters it is currently working on.

the government's state coordinator for combating violent extremism, Dragan Pejanovic, said there was no record of any Montenegrin citizen leaving for Syria after 2015.

Twenty-three had left previously, Pejanovic said, while eight men, one woman and a number of children had returned from Syria and several had also come back from Ukraine.

As in Bosnia, analyst Andjelija Lucic said the biggest challenge to Montenegro lay in the “rehabilitation and reintegration” of these returnees. “Preventive actions strengthen the societal resilience to this phenomenon,” Lucic said.



## Serbia: Trials delayed, and little preventive action

Serbia's criminal code foresees sentences of five to 15 years for acts of terrorism. Penalties for threatening to commit a terrorist act range from six months to five years. Sentences exceed ten years if a terrorist act results in the death of one or more persons, or if there is great material destruction. If the killing of one or more persons is done intentionally, prison sentences range from 12 years to life.

Recruitment for an act of terrorism and public incitement to terrorism incurs sentences of one to ten years in prison. The sentence is the same for financing terrorism.

In 2014, Serbia passed a law prohibiting citizens from fighting on foreign battlefields in military or paramilitary formations, unless part of an official mission of an international organisation of which Serbia is a member. Penalties range from six months to five years.

Fighting abroad is envisaged as punishable through two separate incriminations, participation



in war or armed conflict in a foreign state or organising participation in a war or armed conflict in a foreign country.

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In April 2018, the Higher Court in Belgrade sentenced seven people for terrorism offences – Abid Podbicanin, Sead Plojovic and Terfik Mujovic were each sentenced to 11 years, Goran Pavlovic to 10 years, Izudin Crnovrsanin and Rejhan Plojovic to nine-and-a-half years and Ferat Kasumovic to seven-and-a-half years.

Serbia's Tanjug news agency reported that they were found guilty of terrorist acts, recruitment and training for terrorist acts, financing terrorism and public incitement to terrorist acts.

According to the verdicts, Pavlovic and Plojovic had established connections with ISIS and the al-Nusra Front with help of Podbicanin and Mujovic.

The whereabouts of Podbicanin, Pavlovic and Plojovic are unknown, so they were sentenced in absentia.

The court found them guilty of "collecting money from people who shared the same convictions in Serbia and surrounding countries, as well as Western Europe, and financing the departure of several Serbian nationals recruited to participate in war conflicts, initially in training camps and then on battlefronts in Syria."

Milan Antonijevic, who followed the process, previously told BIRN that attention in this trial focused on the fact that the detention of the indictees lasted for almost four years – and that the trial had been repeated following changes to the Trial Chamber.

"The long duration of the proceedings ... are situations that human rights groups must respond to," Antonijevic said, adding that faster and more efficient proceedings should be a priority.

Antonijevic, now executive director of the Open Society Foundation in Belgrade, told BIRN that earlier, despite official announcements of legal actions against fighters in foreign wars, "they somehow remain in the shadow of other media events".

"At the moment, preventive measures, that is, the preventive function of punishment, are not visible; these procedures somehow fall out of the media's attention," he said, adding that "the issue of re-socialisation [of foreign fighters] in Serbia's criminal law is not something that has received much attention."

A report on terrorism in Serbia in 2018 that the US State Department published in November 2019 said the danger of terrorist attacks and the level of recruitment for ISIS in Serbia were low.

It said the main terrorist threats in Serbia remained the potential movement of money and weapons through the region, recruitment of returned soldiers and revitalisation of terrorist ideologies, as well as the possibility of self-radicalisation.

As of 2015, Serbian courts have sentenced 29 people for fighting with Russian-backed units in Ukraine. All those convicted reached plea bargains, resulting for most of them in suspended sentences of about one year.



Three were sentenced to six months' house arrest. Their sentences were suspended on condition that they did not commit the same offence within a certain period of time, usually between one and five years.



## North Macedonia: Little capacity, coordination or prevention

North Macedonia's criminal law sanctions terrorism in article 394-b, which stipulates jail terms for a person found guilty of terrorism of ten years to life. A person found guilty of "seriously threatening" to commit a terrorist act is punishable by at least eight years in jail.

Those who call for, incite or inspire acts of terrorism are punishable by jail sentences of four to ten years.

Article, 394-v, [according to the Cyrillic alphabet] also envisages jail sentences for financing terrorism, starting from eight years.

North Macedonia changed the criminal code in 2014 to add article 322-a, which addresses fighting abroad. This article envisages a minimum jail sentence of four years for any citizens who take part in unauthorised "foreign military, police, paramilitary or para-police

formations".

The minimum jail sentence for organising the recruitment or financing of such formations is five years.

North Macedonia's National Coordinative Body for Prevention of Violent Extremism and Fight Against Terrorism says it has identified 156 people who participated in fighting in Iraq and Syria, of whom 35 are believed to have died there, while 23 out of 83 who have returned to the country have received sentences.

The most prominent case, in which 11 persons were sent to jail in 2016, codenamed "Cell", concerned a group found guilty of recruiting people to fight in Iraq and Syria and of participation in foreign paramilitary forces.

This was the first such case after the country changed the law in 2014 to include jail sentences for participation in foreign military conflicts. The minimum sentence for participation in such conflicts is now four years in jail and five for organising and financing participation in them.

According to available information, the prosecution has filed charges against another eight persons "for participation in foreign paramilitary structures".

The dean of the State Security Faculty in Skopje, Nikola Dujovski, said that in comparison to other countries in the region, such as Bosnia, North Macedonia has had few terrorism cases.

"But our biggest weakness is the capability of the institutions to deal with this problem and especially the lack of coordination between all stakeholders, beginning from state institutions, courts and prosecutions as well as the non-governmental organisations, including the religious communities," he said.

"As a small country with limited capacities, we are only now beginning to strengthen this coordination, which can help in better processing of these cases, as well in better prevention and resocialisation of these people", Dujovski added.

Like most other experts interviewed by BIRN, Dujovski says the country has few prevention measures in place against radicalisation and helping with re-socialisation of returnees.

"All research show that high-school students are most susceptible to radicalisation, but we have not had a single project for prevention focused on high schools," he noted.

Apart from dealing with returnees from armed conflicts, several domestic cases in North Macedonia have raised ethnic and political tension in the past few years.

A two-day shootout between ethnic Albanian gunmen and the security forces in the northern town of Ku-

manovo in May 2015 left 18 people dead, for example, including eight police officers.

Later, 33 of the 37 defendants received jail sentences for terrorism totalling 736 years in prison. Four suspects were acquitted. Seven of the defendants got life sentences.

Two other high-profile cases have stirred up ethnic tension in the country – including the mass

killing of five ethnic Macedonians in 2012 near Lake Smilkovsko, close to the capital, Skopje.

Some experts, like Dujovski, and the head of the National Coordinative Body, Borce Petkovski, say that due to the risks of politicisation, and the fact that some of the processes are not over yet, they ought to be viewed separately from those involving foreign fighters.

"These domestic cases should be viewed separately, as they are not clear cut," Dujovski said: "Their politicisation and ethnic character makes them very sensitive and we are still not clear in some of them what really happened."

Concerning the infamous mob attack on parliament in 2017, designed to stop the change of government, the criminal code draws a distinction between "terrorist endangerment of the constitutional order" and "terrorism".

In the criminal code, article 313 speaks about terrorist endangerment of the constitutional order and describes attacks against institutions. A separate article, 394-b, deals with terrorism as endangering the public order through killings, kidnappings and other violent acts.