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## **SERBIAN PM BLAMES BELGRADE OFFICIALS FOR DEMOLITIONS**

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BalkanInsight

A month and a half after the mystery demolitions of residential buildings and business premises by masked men in Hercegovacka Street in the Savamala district of Belgrade, Vucic admitted on Wednesday that top city officials were responsible.

Without a shred of doubt, behind the demolition in Hercegovacka Street are the highest city officials and they will pay the legal consequences, Vucic told a press conference.

He also said that despite the fact that the demolitions was illegal, he has the highest respect for Belgrade Mayor Sinisa Mali, who he said was the best mayor the city has had since I can recall.

He said that he did not know if Mali would face any charges.

Critics believe that the demolitions were carried out to clear the ground quickly to make way for the high-profile government-backed Belgrade Waterfront development project.

The demolitions have sparked a series of protests calling for senior officials resignations.

But Vucic said that city officials did not have any bad intention or personal gain in mind.

On April 24, election night in Serbia, a couple of dozen masked men blocked Hercegovacka Street, seized mobile phones from eyewitnesses, some of whom were tied up, and demolish buildings with bulldozers.

Residents and workers in the street called the police for help, but according to a report by the Serbian Ombudsman, Sasa Jankovic, police declined to take action.

One of the eyewitnesses who was tied up, Slobodan Tanaskovic, died on May 25 as a result of heart problems.

When was asked how he found out about city officials involvement when no information was given to the press, Vucic responded: I do not know why the prosecution and police told the press that they have no new information about Savamala since I got it from them.

I guess that they had not finished gathering information when you asked them, he added.

During the press conference, reporters for media believed to be close to the government accused journalists from other media of being financed by extremist organisations, and Vucic agreed.

I know for that for a long time and I do not care, he said, and asked why reporters were focused on the Savamala demolitions and not crimes committed 15 years ago, when he was in opposition.

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<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/belgrade-s-officials-involved-in-savamala-demolitions-vucic-says-06-08-2016#sthash.wwOVkprv.dpuf>

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