
EU CALLS FOR CALM AS PROTESTS OVER ALLEGED MURDERS RATTLE BOSNIA

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Hundreds attended protests in Bosnias two biggest cities on Tuesday, and the European Union demanded an explanation for police detaining the man whose months-long public search for information about his sons death has turned into an anti-government movement.

Davor Dragicevic, 49, was taken into custody in Banja Luka, in the Serb half of Bosnia-Herzegovina, after he failed to appear for questioning related to the death of his 21-year-old son David, whose body was found on a river bank in March. Dragicevic has disputed official reports that his son committed suicide, saying it was a murder covered up by the authorities.

The government, controlled by Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik, has rejected the allegations and urged Dragicevic, who organized dozens of anti-government rallies, to stay away from politics in the Balkan country. The former Yugoslav republic has been semi-divided into Serb and Muslim-Croat entities since the federations bloody breakup. Both parts have struggled to recover from the conflict amid lingering ethnic tensions, a feeble economy and substandard rule of law, which are hurting Bosnias chances of joining the EU.

Protesters in Banja Luka and Sarajevo expressed solidarity with Dragicevic, and with another father, Muriz Memic, who is challenging authorities over the death of his son, Dzenan, presumably killed in a 2016 car crash. The Memic family also insists it was a murder followed by a botched investigation by corrupt officials.

The European Union office in the capital of Sarajevo urged everyone to stay calm and refrain from violence after protesters briefly clashed with police in Banja Luka. The Bosnian Serb authorities temporarily detained two opposition lawmakers who took part in the rally.

It is striking that two fathers in search of justice for their dead sons have mobilized more outcry against lack of rule of law and impunity in BiH than any political party has managed to do, the EU said in the statement, referring to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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