
SERBIA WARNS AGAINST CREATING ALBANIA-KOSOVO UNION

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By The Associated Press

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP)

Serbia's foreign minister on Monday denounced a move by Kosovo and Albania to boycott a regional conference, accusing them of coordinating foreign policies with an ultimate aim to create a joint state in the Balkans.

Kosovo, a former Serbian province, and Albania said they weren't attending the summit of southeastern European states that opened Monday in Sarajevo because Kosovo hasn't been invited as a sovereign country.

The minimum Kosovo is asking for participation in such forums is an equal treatment with other participating countries, Kosovo President Hashim Thaci wrote on his Facebook page.

Albanian Foreign Minister Gent Cakaj said he canceled his participation in solidarity with Kosovo.

There is no cooperation without equal treatment, he wrote in his Twitter page.

Kosovo's 2008 declaration of independence has been recognized by most of the West, but not by Serbia and ally Russia. Kosovo split from Serbia after NATO's intervention in 1999 that stopped a Serbian crackdown against Kosovo Albanian separatists and civilians.

Serbian Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic said at the summit that the boycott is part of a strategy by Albania and predominantly ethnic Albanian Kosovo to create a Greater Albania.

Historically, any attempt to form ethnically pure states in the Balkans has led to trouble in the still volatile region. The Serbian nationalist dream of all Serbs living in one state — or Greater Serbia — has triggered a series of wars, including in Bosnia where that dream lingers on within the autonomous Bosnian Serb mini state called Republika Srpska.

Albania and Kosovo foreign ministers last week signed an agreement to unify and coordinate their foreign policies and jointly use Albanian embassies abroad.

Imagine if Serbia signed a similar agreement with Republika Srpska? Dacic asked. Probably the whole world would condemn that, but here, in case of Kosovo, they say well let it go, this is nothing serious.'

Bosnian Foreign Minister Igor Crnadak said the Kosovo and Albania boycott of the summit represents a very hard punch for cooperation in the region.

We were ready to be good hosts to them here, believing in rule No. 1 of diplomacy: despite the difference of opinion in certain matters, you have to come to the talking table, you have to discuss the issues in order to find solution, he said.

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