
KOSOVO SERB MP CONVICTED OF INCITING ETHNIC HATRED

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Pristina Basic Court convicted Ivan Todosijevec on Thursday of incitement to ethnic, racial or religious intolerance for his comments about the January 1999 massacre of Kosovo Albanians in the village of Racak/Recak, which he claimed was staged.

He was sentenced to two years in prison, the judge in the case, Musa Kongjeli, told BIRN.

Todosijevec was elected as an MP with the Belgrade-backed Srpska Lista bloc in October and was previously a minister for administration and local government in the Kosovo government until he was sacked for making the comments in March this year.

He made his statement about the Racak/Recak massacre at a ceremony to mark the 20th anniversary of the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia, which was aimed at making Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic end his military campaign against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo.

The Racak/Recak massacre, in which 45 Kosovo Albanians were killed by Serbian forces, was one of the incidents that helped to spark NATO's intervention.

The reason for the [NATO] aggression in our country was the so-called humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo and the fabricated Racak [massacre in 1999], and the Albanian terrorists are the ones who made all this up and committed the biggest crimes in Kosovo, Todosijevec said in March.

They [Kosovo Albanians] committed crimes before the NATO aggression, they killed good Serbian householders and policemen at their workplaces, he added.

The Serbian government's office for Kosovo reacted angrily to Thursday's verdict.

We are all Ivan Todosijevec! What he said bothers them [the Kosovo authorities] because their fake state, like a house of cards, rests on lies and the concealment of crimes, and is therefore scared of every voice of truth, the office said in a statement.

After Todosijevec was charged with inciting hatred, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic spoke out in his support, insisting that he was telling the truth about the massacre.

After a pre-election meeting with Srpska Lista members in Belgrade in October, Vucic said of Todosijevec: This is the man they accused over Racak, a lovely Serbian householder from Zvecan. He is guilty because he said that a staged massacre was carried out in Racak. So I am saying the

same. Let me say three times what Todosijeveć said.

Thursdays verdict is a first-instance ruling and can be appealed.

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