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## **KOSOVO DECLARES NOBEL LAUREATE HANDKE UNWELCOME**

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Kosovo declared Peter Handke persona non grata Wednesday in the latest protest against his induction as a Nobel literature laureate, barring the Austrian writer from a place he has visited numerous times.

The Swedish Academy's pick for the 2019 prize, which Handke received Tuesday, offended many in the Balkans who see him as an apologist for Serb war crimes during the conflicts that fractured the former Yugoslavia.

One Nobel committee member resigned over the choice, while the ceremony was boycotted by representatives of the embassies of Albania, Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Turkey.

"Today I have decided to declare Peter Handke as not welcome in Kosovo. He is a non grata person from today. Denying crimes and supporting criminals is a terrible crime," Kosovo's Foreign Minister Behgjet Pacolli wrote on Facebook.

### *Milosevic funeral*

Handke has drawn especially acute criticism for speaking at the funeral of late Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic, who died in 2006 while on trial for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Kosovo's ethnic Albanian majority fought Belgrade for independence in a 1998-99 war that claimed 13,000 lives.

Handke was a frequent guest in the tiny Serb enclave of Velika Hoca, one of several small ethnic Serb communities that are scattered around the former Serbian province.

Handke visited Velika Hoca at least five times, most recently in 2014, and donated nearly 100,000 euros to the village of 500 people.

He was also formally barred Wednesday from Bosnia's capital, Sarajevo, where the regional government said his appearance would "provoke the anger and humiliation" of war victims.

## *Srebrenica massacre*

Handke's elevation to Nobel laureate has been painful for many Bosnian Muslims. He is accused of questioning the Srebrenica massacre, in which Bosnian Serbs slaughtered 8,000 Muslim men and boys in 1995.

In 1997, Handke was accused of minimizing Serb war crimes in his book "A Journey to the Rivers: Justice for Serbia."

But he is still welcome to visit the Serb-run region that spans nearly half of Bosnia's territory — a legacy of the war that left the country carved up along ethnic lines.

On Tuesday, Handke told a TV channel in Bosnia's Serb-run region that he would like to visit "in the spring."

Among his Serb fans, Handke is celebrated for taking note of their suffering during the conflicts and challenging the narrative that Serbs were the sole aggressors in the wars.

In Belgrade, one MP proposed creating a human rights prize in Handke's name on Wednesday.

<https://www.voanews.com/europe/kosovo-declares-nobel-laureate-handke-unwelcome>

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