
SERBIA HONORS AUTHOR HANDKE AMID ANGER OVER MILOSEVIC TIES

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Serbia has decorated Austrian Nobel literature laureate Peter Handke for his "exceptional contributions in representing Serbia in the sphere of culture," a move that may anger many elsewhere in the Western Balkans.

"For Serbia, he is a true friend, proven and principled even during the most difficult moments," the head of the awards commission, Sima Avramovic, said on February 15.

"He wholeheartedly defended the Serbian truth even when that caused him much discomfort and dispute, even after he won the Nobel prize," Avramovic said.

The 77-year-old Handke was a controversial choice for the 2019 Nobel Prize for literature.

The Swedish Academy awarded Handke the prize for what it called "an influential work that with linguistic ingenuity has explored the periphery and the specificity of human experience."

The Nobel was handed to him at a ceremony in Stockholm on December 10, 2019 that was boycotted by representatives of a number of countries, including Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo.

Many in the Balkans see Handke as an apologist for Serbian war crimes and a staunch supporter of late Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic during the conflicts that followed the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

Handke did not travel to Belgrade for the ceremony to award him with the Karadjordje Star "for services to the country in peace and war." He maintains a residence in France.

<https://www.rferl.org/a/serbia-honors-handke-milosevic-ties-kosovo-bosnia/30436633.html>

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