

Statement by Kosovan CSOs on Kosovo's participation at the Summit for Democracy

To:

Shanthi Kalathil

*Coordinator for Democracy and Human Rights
National Security Council
The White House*

To:

Gabriel Escobar

*Deputy Assistant Secretary
Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs
U.S Department of State*

cc:

H.E. Nicholas J. Giacobbe, Jr

*Chargé d'Affaires
U.S Embassy in Pristina*

cc:

Ilan Goodman

*Senior Kosovo Desk Officer
U.S Department of State*

Dear Ms. Kalathil and Mr. Escobar,

We, the twenty-one undersigned representatives of pro-democracy civil society organizations from the Republic of Kosovo, write to you on behalf of our constituencies, in relation to the upcoming Summit for Democracy hosted by the U.S government on December 9-10. It was with great concern that we took note of the news (confirmed by the U.S Embassy in Prishtina) that Kosovo was among a handful of countries in Europe that did not receive an invitation to take part.

The theme and the goals of the Summit are fundamentally important to the work that we do to advance democracy and human rights in our country, with the continuous support of the U.S government. While we do not intend to question the criteria used to invite individual countries to the Summit, as they are under the discretion of the U.S as a host, we would like to ask you to consider our viewpoint on the issue, with the hope that the decision on Kosovo could be reconsidered.

We are on the front lines of the struggle and nurture no illusions about the fragility of Kosovo's democracy, particularly on the rule of law. We are also highly aware of Kosovo's delicate security context in the Balkans, which produces stark ethnic divisions and frequent instability. Yet having in mind the continuous progress Kosovo has made over the years in building a vibrant democracy, as well as the special relationship between Kosovo's people and the United States, we strongly believe that Kosovo deserves to be part of this strategic initiative and would stand to benefit from it.

Kosovo has over the past few years contrasted the negative authoritarian tendencies in other parts of Eastern Europe. Many of our accountability mechanisms have worked very well: there is wide pluralism in the media space; civil society is highly engaged in holding institutions accountable; free and fair elections have enabled several smooth transitions of power. Most of this positive change was driven by an increasingly empowered youth, as well as by women, who have shown to be the strongest factors of democratic resilience. Weaknesses in the rule of law, particularly on the issue of corruption, remain a grave challenge. But this is not a challenge that is unique to Kosovo.

From a foreign and security policy perspective, the people of Kosovo continue to be the most unwavering supporters of the transatlantic alliance in the Western Balkans and beyond. In fact, no country in the region is more concerned by the malign authoritarian influence of China and Russia, than Kosovo. We understand that Kosovo and the U.S have had areas of disagreements over the years. We also understand, and in many cases share, the frustrations that the U.S has with Kosovo's political elites. Yet we fail to see any differences in U.S-Kosovo relations that are fundamentally irreconcilable, and which would merit Kosovo's exclusion from the global pro-democracy camp.

We strongly believe that Kosovo's participation at the Summit would help advance the state of democracy and human rights in our country and would empower us in our efforts to hold institutions accountable. We thereby hope that the U.S government would be willing to reconsider its decision. We offer ourselves at your disposal to provide further clarifications and commit to doing whatever is needed to facilitate and enable Kosovo's participation at this important Summit.

Sincerely,

(Signatories on the second page)

November 9, 2021
Prishtina, Republic of Kosovo

Signatories (in alphabetical order)

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