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ABOUT IN FOCUS - ARMED VIOLENCE MONITOR

In Focus - Armed Violence Monitors provide information on the specific types of firearm incidents and the related topics to illustrate the magnitude of firearms' adverse impact on civilians.

This issue focuses on firearm incidents in the context of public disputes in South East Europe (SEE) from 1 January to 31 December 2021, including a comparative overview to 2020. Firearm incidents arising from public disputes represent a serious threat to citizens' lives and their security, especially given the frequency and grave consequences of these incidents, which include fatal outcomes, injuries, threats and property damage.

METHODOLOGY

The information provided in this report is gathered from the Armed Violence Monitoring Platform (AVMP), which captures data on firearm-related incidents happening in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia, Kosovo* and the Republic of Moldova.

The data is gathered daily from the relevant authorities' official websites, as well as print and online media. Data for Kosovo is also gathered from the police daily incident reports. Quality assurance is conducted rigorously by SEESAC. The platform has seen significant improvements in recent years in terms of data collection and categorization.

The AVMP has been established by SEESAC and funded by the European Union within the framework of EU Council Decision (CFSP) 2016/2356 and EU Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/2111.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **267** firearm incidents in the context of public disputes were recorded on the AVMP in 2021, showing a 20% drop from 2020.

- **98** reported cases in which handguns were used, 38% less than in 2020.

- **32** victims, all men, died in public disputes involving firearms, which is 23% more than in 2020.

*References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).
1. GENERAL OVERVIEW

Firearm incidents arising from public disputes refer to any event in which a public argument escalated into the use of firearms, explosives or ammunition (FAE) for threatening, coercion, intimidation, or firing, resulting in injuries, death, and property damage.

Despite the frequent lack of information on the motives and causes of the disputes, the available data shows that these incidents emerge from spur-of-the-moment conflicts or long-standing disputes over various issues, including unsettled debt or property issues.

Nonetheless, these incidents carry a high risk of causing serious consequences to people and property.

1.1 Public disputes involving firearms vs other types of firearm incidents in 2020 and 2021

The overall number of firearm incidents in the region increased by 14% from 2020 to 2021. The upward trend was seen in almost all types of firearm incidents covered by the AVMP, with the exception of public disputes and disputes with the police. Namely, in comparison to 2020, the number of public disputes involving the use of firearms decreased by 20% in 2021.

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1 Other as a separate category under the Types of Firearm incidents refers to suicides, shootings under undetermined circumstances, non-hunting related shooting of animals, undetermined explosions, weapons used for defence, and all other incidents that cannot be classified under any of the categories above.
1.2 Public disputes involving firearms throughout 2021

The number of firearm incidents arising from public disputes fluctuated throughout 2021, averaging 22 incidents per month. Similar to the trend from 2020, the peak was noticed in the summer months, i.e. in July (36) and August (30), followed by a drop in September when the lowest number of these incidents was reported.

1.3 Public disputes involving firearms by jurisdiction

The aforementioned decline in the number of public disputes involving firearms was reflected in Bosnia and Herzegovina (43%), Kosovo (39%), North Macedonia (25%) and Serbia (19%), while Albania (27%), Moldova (50%) and Montenegro (30%) had an increase.

In 2021, the highest number of firearm incidents escalating from public disputes were reported by Kosovo (81), which accounted for 1/3 of all such incidents. Albania followed with 62 (23%) incidents. A roughly similar number of these incidents were reported in North Macedonia (36), Bosnia and Herzegovina (28), Serbia (26) and Moldova (21).
1.4 Macrolocation

The macrolocation statistics for 2021 indicate that public disputes involving the use of firearms occurring in urban areas were two times more frequent than those in rural areas. There was a similar trend in urban areas in 2020, with three times as many incidents reported.

The above trend was documented across the region in 2021. The discrepancy between incidents in urban and rural areas was more evident in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia.
1.5 Microlocation

In 2021, the data on microlocation was indicated for 153 cases (57%), while for 114 (47%) public disputes involving firearms no such information was provided. The prevalent trend regarding microlocation observed in 2020 continued in 2021. Thus, the majority of public disputes with firearms (71 cases or 46%) took place in the streets in 2021. A shift in the trend was observed regarding cafes/restaurants and homes/yards. More specifically, in 2021, cafes/restaurants came second being reported in 33 cases (22%), followed by homes/yards (31 cases or 20%). In 2020, the opposite trend was seen. A total of 15 cases (10%) occurred in public establishments, including three at gas stations and two on office premises.

In 2021, in all jurisdictions, public disputes involving firearms primarily occurred in the streets, with North Macedonia (19) reporting the highest number of such incidents. Incidents happening at homes/yards were also most reported by North Macedonia (8), while those taking place in cafes/restaurants were most frequently reported in Albania (8). Nearly half of the incidents that took place in public building were reported in Albania (7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Street/Parking lot</th>
<th>Café/Restaurant</th>
<th>Home/Yard</th>
<th>Public building</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montenegro</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Macedonia</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 Public building refers to a building open and accessible to the public or building used as a place for commercial, professional work.
2. TYPES OF WEAPONS

2.1 Type of weapon

In 2021, the type of weapon was specified in 166 (62%) public disputes involving firearms, while in 38% or 101 cases the type of weapon was not reported. Multiple types of SALW were used in 12 (4%) cases.

When the type of weapon was known, the patterns seen in 2020, remained in 2021. Thus, handguns continued to be the main weapon of choice in both years, with rifles/shotguns and automatic/military-grade weapons following at a considerable distance.

![Types of weapons by year](image)

2.2 Type of weapon by jurisdiction

In 2021, hand guns were reported in 98 (59%) public disputes involving firearms, which is 38% less than in 2020. They were the most used type of weapon in all jurisdictions. Rifles came second, reported in 21 cases, mainly in Bosnia and Herzegovina (6), Kosovo (6) and Albania (5). The use of automatic/military-grade was reported in 17 incidents, all of which were reported in Albania (11) and Kosovo (6).

![Most reported types of weapons by jurisdiction](image)
2.3 Legal status of weapon possession

In 2021, the legal status of weapons was reported in 103 cases (39%), while in 164 (61%) it was not specified. In cases when the legal status was specified, weapons were in legal possession in 19 cases, while in 81 they were reported to be in illegal possession.

In relation to 2020, a slight rise in the use of weapons in legal possession was seen in 2021. More than half of the weapons in legal possession (11 cases) were handguns.

Weapons in illegal possession in 2021, were mainly handguns (29 cases) followed by automatic/military-grade weapons (17 cases) and rifles/shotguns (11 cases).

The law enforcement agencies seized the weapons used in 115 (43%) cases when responding to public disputes involving firearms.

2.4 Legal status of weapon possession by jurisdiction

In terms of the legal status of weapon possession at the jurisdiction level, a nearly same trend was seen in 2021 as it was in 2020. As a result, the lack of information on weapon possession outnumbered the cases in which the status was specified, with North Macedonia exhibiting the highest disparity.

The majority of cases involving the weapons in legal possession were reported in Moldova. The highest number of weapons in illegal possession was reported in Kosovo (34), while Serbia (15), Albania (15) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (11) followed. A similar pattern was observed in 2020.
3. PERPETRATORS

Perpetrator refers to any individual who has used a firearm/ammunition/explosive to commit any of the types of incidents covered by the AVMP.

3.1 Perpetrators by sex

Out of 366 perpetrators, sex was reported for 316 (86%) perpetrators, of whom 315 were men, and one was a woman. The sex was not indicated for 50 (14%) perpetrators. In 2020, when the sex was known all perpetrators were men. As is the case in all firearm incidents, the AVMP data reveals a strongly gendered aspect of firearm incidents resulting from public disputes, given that in both years men make up the majority of perpetrators whose sex was recorded.

In 208 cases (78%), the perpetrators were reported as caught, while in 19 cases (7%) the perpetrators remained unknown. The perpetrators were known but not caught in 38 cases (14%). In two cases (1%) the perpetrators died by suicide following the incident.

In 192 cases (72%), the perpetrators acted alone, in 63 (24%) cases there were two or more perpetrators while in 12 (4%) cases the number of perpetrators remained unknown. The only woman perpetrator, who was reported in Kosovo, was indirectly involved in the public dispute resulting in the use of firearms along with three men.

3.2 Perpetrators by age

The age of 173 (47%) perpetrators was indicated, while for 193 (53%) it remained unknown.

Among the perpetrators whose age was known, the age group 19-35 stands out with 100 reported perpetrators, which is 28% more than in 2020.

Those in the age group 36-60 followed with 57 reported perpetrators, which is 12% less than in 2020.

A total of six perpetrators aged 18 and younger were reported, the majority of whom (5) were reported in Albania. Ten were aged 61 and older. For 193 (53%) perpetrators age was not reported. A similar pattern was seen in 2020.

The correlation between perpetrators' age and the type of weapon used shows that handguns were more used by those aged 19-35 (42) than those aged 36-60. Rifles/shotguns, on the other hand, were more commonly used by perpetrators in the 36-60 age range (8).
4. VICTIMS

Victim refers to any individual who has been threatened, injured or died as a result of the use of a firearm/ammunition/explosives. Victims also include those who were present when a firearm was discharged but did not sustain a gunshot injury and those who were present during an incident in which a firearm was present but was not used.

4.1 Victims by sex

A total of 325 victims were reported in 2021, 16% less than in 2020. The sex was reported for 294 (90%) victims, of whom 284 (97%) were men and 10 (3%) were women. The number of women victims halved in 2021. For 31 victims (10%), the sex was not known.

The highest number of victims was reported by Kosovo (92) and Albania (73), followed by North Macedonia (48). Montenegro reported the lowest number of victims, with no women victims.

4.2 Victims by sex and age

The age was specified for 175 (54%) victims, while it was not indicated for 150 (46%) victims. The most prominent age group was 19-35 (91), followed by those aged 36-60 (56). A similar pattern was seen in 2020, although with a smaller gap between these age groups.

A total of 15 victims were aged 18 and younger, which is 50% more than in 2020. A total of 13 victims were 61 and older.
4.3 Outcome for victims

The use of firearms in public disputes poses a serious risk to citizens' lives and their security, as evidenced by the high frequency of severe outcomes, placing these cases alongside incidents in the context of domestic violence, criminal context and undetermined shootings.

Four most reported outcomes for victims by type of incident and year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of incident</th>
<th>Death</th>
<th>Injury</th>
<th>No injury</th>
<th>Threatened</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>2021</td>
<td>2020 2021</td>
<td>2020 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public disputes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>140 120</td>
<td>112 108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal context</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>47 37</td>
<td>270 310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic violence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10 21</td>
<td>39 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undetermined shooting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>102 105</td>
<td>102 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidental shooting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>62 58</td>
<td>0 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compared to other types of firearm incidents, public disputes ranked fourth and second in terms of fatalities caused by firearms in 2020 and 2021, respectively.

The number of persons injured with firearms in public disputes remained higher than in any other type of incident in both years, despite a 24% drop from 2020.

In both years, the number of persons who did not sustain an injury in incidents where a firearm was discharged in the course of a public dispute was highest in relation to other firearm incidents.

Furthermore, the number of persons threatened with firearms during public disputes was second to the criminal context in both years, although it was significantly higher than in other types of incidents.

3 Injury refers to all incidents in which an individual sustained an injury due to the use of a weapon.

4 No injury refers to all incidents in which a weapon was discharged, but the victim did not sustain a gunshot injury.
4.4 Outcome for victims by jurisdiction

The overall decline in the number of public disputes involving firearms in 2021 was mirrored in a drop in the number of nearly all resulting outcomes, with the exception of the fatal consequence, which increased by 23%.

Outcome for victims by jurisdiction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Death</th>
<th>Suicide</th>
<th>Injury</th>
<th>No Injury</th>
<th>Threatened</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montenegro</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Macedonia</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>120</strong></td>
<td><strong>59</strong></td>
<td><strong>108</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>325</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- A total of 32 persons, all men, died as a result of the use of firearms in public disputes. Albania reported the highest number of firearm deaths (13), which tripled compared to 2020. Kosovo reported seven, and Serbia reported five deaths, which is five times less than in 2020.

- Albania also reported the highest number of injured persons (43), showing a 54% increase from 2020. Kosovo reported 22, (half the number reported in 2020) Serbia 15, and BiH 14 injured persons. North Macedonia reported a significant drop in injuries, from 16 in 2020 to two in 2021.

- Two persons, one in Montenegro and one in Serbia, died by suicide with firearms after using a firearm during a public dispute.

- People who were threatened with firearms were mainly reported in Kosovo (40), North Macedonia (31), and Moldova (17).

- The highest number of people who did not sustain an injury when a firearm was discharged during a public dispute were reported in Kosovo (22) and Albania (11).

- Out of ten women victims, seven were injured, two were threatened, and one did not suffer an injury when a firearm was used during the incident.

- In four cases, firearms were present during a public incident but were not used.

4 Not applicable refers to all incidents in which a weapon is present but not used or discharged.
4.5 Relationship between perpetrators and victims

In 2021, the relationship between a perpetrator and a victim was specified in 77 incidents (29% of all cases). In more than half of these incidents (40 cases), the victim and the perpetrators were friends/acquaintances/neighbours. In 35% cases, they were strangers, and in 13%, they were members of extended family. A very similar pattern was documented in 2020.

- In both urban and rural areas, the use of firearms in public disputes between friends/acquaintances/neighbours was twice more frequent in homes/yards (14) than on the streets (7). In the majority of these cases, handguns were the primary weapon of choice (18 cases). As a result of such incidents, 13 people died, 21 were injured and 16 were threatened.

- Disputes between extended family members resulted in the use of firearms in ten cases. These incidents were more frequent in rural (6) than in urban areas (4). The weapons used in these cases were mainly rifles/shotguns (4) and handguns (3). In such cases, one person died, five were injured and five were threatened.

- Public disputes involving the use of firearms among strangers (27 cases) resulted in 15 threatened and ten injured persons. These incidents took place predominantly in urban areas (23), and on the streets (19). Handguns were the most reported weapons.

- In cases when the relationship between the perpetrators and victims was not indicated, 18 people died, 83 were injured and 72 were threatened. These disputes mainly involved the use of handguns (53), followed by rifles/shotguns (12) and automatic/military-grade weapons (10). They were more than twice as much reported in urban (117) than in rural areas (52). In addition, these incidents mainly took place on the streets (38) and in cafes/restaurants (18).
South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC)

Bulevar Zorana Đinđića 64
11000 Belgrade, Serbia

Tel: +381 11 4155300
Fax: +381 11 4155499

e-mail: seesac@undp.org
www.seesac.org

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