FIREARM INCIDENTS IN CRIMINAL CONTEXT

in South East Europe in 2020
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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 brings into focus the firearm-related incidents in criminal context in South East Europe (SEE) from 1 January to 31 December 2020, drawing attention to firearm incidents related to organized crime and armed robberies as the most frequently reported types of incidents within the criminal context category.

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 daily incident reports by police. 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 the EU Council Decision (CFSP) 2016/2356 and EU Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/2111.

HIGHLIGHTS

529 firearm incidents in the criminal context were recorded on the AVMP in 2020.

12 firearm incidents in criminal context were reported in April, the lowest number ever recorded in this category.

29 persons, all men, were killed with firearms in firearm incidents in criminal context.

*References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).
1. FIREARM INCIDENTS IN CRIMINAL CONTEXT

The Criminal context category consists of three subcategories: organized crime subcategory covering firearm incidents related to human, drug and weapon trafficking, organized criminal groups’ clashes etc., armed robberies subcategory, and other criminal incidents subcategory that includes firearm incidents with a criminal background that are not associated with organized crime or armed robberies (e.g. kidnapping, planned assaults, etc.).

1.1 General overview

1.1.1 Firearm incidents in criminal context vs other types of firearm incidents

The graph shows the share of types of firearm-related incidents in SEE as captured by the AVMP in 2020. With 529 incidents, criminal context is the second most frequently reported type of incident in the region, after weapon seizures.

** Other as a separate category under the Types of Firearm incidents refers to suicides, shootings under undetermined circumstances, non-hunting related shooting of animals, explosions, weapons used for defence, weapon surrender, and all other incidents that cannot be classified under any of the categories above.

1.1.2 Firearm incidents in criminal context throughout 2020

April 2020 is the month with the lowest number of firearm incidents in criminal context ever reported on the AVMP. The lowest number coincided with the introduction of COVID 19 measures across the region. On the other hand, with 69 incidents, December is the month with the highest number of recorded incidents in 2020 in this category.
1.1.3 Firearm incidents in criminal context in jurisdictions

Throughout 2020, armed robberies dominate as the most frequently reported type of incident within criminal context, accounting for 70% of all incidents in this category. The increase in the number of armed robberies in 2020 was observed in November, reaching its peak in December. The number of firearm incidents related to organized crime incidents almost doubled in the second half of the year.

*The firearm incidents classified in the other criminal incidents subcategory account for 13% of all incidents in criminal context.*
1.2 Firearm incidents related to organized crime

1.2.1 Firearm incidents related to organized crime by jurisdiction

1.2.2 Firearm incidents related to drug-trafficking and/or cultivation

56% of firearm incidents (68) reported in the organized crime subcategory were connected to drug trafficking and/or cultivation. Albania with 20 and Bosnia and Herzegovina with 19 recorded firearm incidents related to drug trafficking account for 32% of all organized crime incidents involving firearms, followed by Serbia and Moldova with 9% each. All firearm incidents related to organized crime reported in Kosovo (5) are connected to drug trafficking. In North Macedonia, no cases of drug trafficking involving firearms were reported.

1.2.3 Types of illegal activities recorded in the organized crime subcategory

44% of all firearm incidents related to organized crime were connected to organized criminal groups' clashes (28), smuggling of goods (17), weapon trafficking (5) and human trafficking (3).
1.3 Armed robberies

1.3.1 Armed robberies by jurisdiction

Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo make up 69% of all reported armed robberies in the region, followed by Serbia with 13%, North Macedonia with 9%, Albania with 3%, Montenegro with 2.9% and Moldova with 2%.

1.3.2 Armed robberies by macrolocation

375 armed robberies were reported in the region in 2020, 88% of which were committed in urban areas. Most armed robberies in rural areas were reported in Kosovo (53%).
1.3.3 Armed robberies by capitals

Sarajevo recorded 65% of all armed robberies reported in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Sarajevo and Belgrade, the main robbery targets were shops.

In Skopje, 75% of all armed robberies took place in the first quarter of 2020.

Prishtina recorded 28% of all armed robberies reported in Kosovo.

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<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Number of Recorded Armed Robberies</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sarajevo</td>
<td>91</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pristina</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skopje</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belgrade</td>
<td>5</td>
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1.3.4 Armed robberies by microlocation*

More than one-third of all armed robberies were committed in shops, with Bosnia and Herzegovina reporting the highest number of such robberies (60), followed by Serbia with 18 shop robberies reported. Of all gas station robberies, 80% were reported in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. Gambling facilities were targets of armed robberies, mainly in Bosnia and Herzegovina (20) and North Macedonia (7). Kosovo reported 30% of home robberies involving firearms.

1.3.5 Armed robberies involving the theft of firearms

The theft of firearms was recorded in 45 cases. In 21 cases, firearms were reported to be in legal possession before the theft. In 31 cases, firearms were stolen from homes and in 8 cases from legal entities, including shops, shooting ranges or institutions. 73% of firearm thefts were reported in Kosovo.
2. PERPETRATORS* IN CRIMINAL CONTEXT

A total of 1,005 perpetrators were reported in criminal context in 2020. Perpetrator refers to any individual who has used a firearm/ammunition/explosive to commit any of the types of incidents covered by the AVMP.

- In incidents for which the sex of perpetrators were specified, 485 were men, and 14 were women.

- Men make up the majority of perpetrators in all subcategories, accounting for 91.6% of perpetrators. Women were reported as perpetrators of firearm incidents related to organized crime and armed robberies, 7 in each subcategory.

- In 43% of cases (228), the perpetrators were reported as caught. The perpetrators of organized crime incidents involving firearms were caught in 89% of incidents in that subcategory. Perpetrators of armed robberies were caught in 106 cases (28%), while in 264 cases they remained unknown.

- In incidents in which, the age of the perpetrators was indicated, most perpetrators fall under the age group 19-35 (234 people), while 148 people are in the 36-60 age group.

*Refers only to incidents for which the number and sex of the perpetrators were reported.
Victim refers to any individual who has been threatened, injured or died as a result of the use of a firearm/ammunition/explosives. While the majority of victims in criminal context fall under the armed robberies subcategory, most of those with a fatal outcome were reported under the organized crime subcategory.

- The overall number of victims in the criminal context was 404. Sex was reported for 356 (88%) victims, with 220 men and 136 women.

- Men were reported as victims of armed robberies, with almost 39% of men threatened in armed robberies or injured (76% of all victims injured in robberies).

- Women were mainly reported as victims of armed robberies. A total of 125 women were threatened with a firearm, thus accounting for 94% of all female victims of armed robberies.

- For victims whose age was specified, the majority fall in two age groups: 36-60 age group (40 people), and 19-35 age group (36 people).

*Refers only to incidents for which the number and sex of the victims were reported.
persons were threatened, all in armed robberies. The highest number of threatened victims was reported in Bosnia and Herzegovina (113), Kosovo (70), Serbia (43) and North Macedonia (26). In all mentioned jurisdictions, the majority of threatened victims were women, except Kosovo where the number of male victims is doubled compared to female victims.

persons were injured with firearms in incidents in criminal context, 21 in armed robberies, 15 in incidents classified under the other criminal incidents subcategory in the criminal context, and 10 in organized crime incidents, with men representing majority of victims. No firearm-related injuries in criminal context were reported in Moldova.

persons were killed with firearms in incidents in criminal context. All victims were men, of whom 14 were killed in firearm incidents related to organized crime, 11 in incidents falling under other criminal incidents subcategory, and 4 in armed robberies. The highest number of victims with fatal outcome were reported in Albania (15), followed by Serbia (4) and North Macedonia (4).

*Injury refers to all incidents in which an individual sustained an injury due to weapon use.
** No injury refers to all incidents in which a weapon was discharged, but the victim did not sustain a gunshot injury.
***Not applicable refers to all incidents in which a weapon is present but not used or discharged (for example, theft of a weapon).
4. TYPES OF WEAPONS* IN CRIMINAL CONTEXT

In 107 (20.2%) firearm incidents, the weapons used were in illegal possession, while in 396 (74.8%) of them, the type of possession was not reported. In 26 (4.9%) cases, the weapons were in legal possession.

4.1 Recorded incidents by type of weapon and jurisdiction

*The graph shows the number of incidents by types of weapons reported in criminal context in each jurisdiction in 2020 and presents the number of incidents in which the use of these types of weapons was recorded. In 2020, the type of firearm was either unknown or not reported in 23% of recorded incidents in criminal context.

4.2 Recorded firearm incidents by type of weapon and subcategory

Handguns were the most reported type of weapon used in criminal context in all jurisdictions, with 248 reported incidents involving this type of firearm.

Rifles/Shotguns and Automatic/Military-grade weapons were reported in 29 incidents each, thus being the second most reported types of weapon in criminal context.

Rifle/Shotguns were mainly used in robberies (19), with Kosovo reporting 16 robberies involving rifles.

Automatic/Military-grade weapons were mainly reported in firearm incidents related to organized crime. Out of 17 organized crime incidents involving automatic weapons across the regions, 9 took place in Albania.

Fake/toy guns were used in 14 incidents in criminal context in 2020, all related to robberies. Serbia reported the highest number of fake weapons used for committing robberies (9), followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina (3).
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