

Serbian President Vučić announces his resignation

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At a large rally organized by SNS, the right-wing ruling party, in Belgrade at the end of June, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic announced his resignation “in a few weeks’ time” and held out the prospect of early presidential and parliamentary elections. In so doing, he is responding to the public protests that have been ongoing for a year and a half, while at the same time attempting to secure his power in the face of a deepening crisis.

Vucic has been president since 2017 and remains the undisputed leader of his party and the government. Under the constitution, he cannot stand for a third term as president. His second term would normally have ended in mid-2027, with the next parliamentary election scheduled for the end of that year. By stepping down voluntarily ahead of schedule, he can now bring the elections forward and enter the election campaign himself—not as president, but as his party’s lead candidate, with the aim of returning to the office of prime minister, which he previously held from 2014 to 2017.

This maneuver follows a familiar pattern and clearly illustrates the crisis in which the government finds itself. As early as the beginning of 2025, Vucic had pressured his then prime minister, Milos Vucevic, to resign in order to deflect pressure from the streets—a sacrificial pawn that failed to bring the protests to a halt. Significantly, Vucic was already presenting himself as a campaigner at the rally, promising higher wages, higher pensions and rising living standards. He once again described student protests as “pure terrorism.”

Until now, the right-wing government has responded to the protests with a mixture of indifference and, more recently, increasingly brutal repression. However, with the protests showing no sign of abating even after a year and a half, Vucic is attempting to take the wind out of their sails by resigning and calling for new elections.

The protests were triggered in November 2024 when the canopy of the newly renovated Novi Sad Central Station

collapsed, killing 16 people. The disaster became a symbol of a system in which nepotism and the entanglement of state and business cost lives. Within weeks, the local outcry gave rise to the largest protest movement since the breakup of Yugoslavia. On March 15, 2025, at least 300,000 people gathered in Belgrade alone; on the first anniversary of the disaster, around 160,000 demonstrated in Novi Sad; in May 2026, a further 180,000 took to the streets in the capital. Rallies took place in over 300 towns and cities, and universities were occupied nationwide.

The movement was initially led by students but was quickly supported by broad sections of the population, including workers, pensioners and young people. It is directed not only against corruption and the abuse of power, but also against the intolerable social conditions under which the majority of the population suffers.

Representatives of the European Union remained tight-lipped following Vucic’s announcements. A spokesperson for the European Commission stated that the EU would monitor the election and “fully respect the decision of the Serbian people.”

So far, the EU has openly backed the right-wing SNS government. Despite propaganda to the contrary in the pro-government media, Belgrade supports the EU’s war course against Russia and is an important partner for Brussels in sealing off borders against refugees attempting to reach Central Europe via the Balkan route.

Serbia is also closely intertwined with the EU economically. Over 60 percent of Serbian exports go to the EU, and over 60 percent of foreign direct investment in Serbia comes from there. As recently as July 2024, then German Chancellor Olaf Scholz traveled to Belgrade in person to attend the signing of a “Memorandum on Critical Raw Materials,” which grants the EU access to Serbian lithium deposits.

The background to this is the Jadar project run by the

British-Australian group Rio Tinto, mining one of the largest known lithium deposits in Europe. According to estimates, German industry could meet up to 90 percent of its demand with Serbian lithium. In June 2025, the European Commission designated the project a “strategic project” under EU raw materials legislation.

The investigative network BIRN recently revealed that the German government is funding Jörg Heeskens, Vucic’s long-standing adviser, who has paved the way for the heavily criticized lithium mining project. Heeskens has been advising Vucic for 13 years in the interests of German industry. According to the report, the cost of this work amounted to around €1.3 million between 2020 and 2026 alone.

Above all, however, the EU fears that any further destabilization of Serbia could spread to other Balkan states and exacerbate the situation there.

In Albania, since the end of May, the “Flamingo Revolution” has developed into the largest protest movement since the downfall of Stalinist rule. It was sparked by a multibillion-dollar tourism project on the Adriatic coast linked to the Kushner/Trump family and has long since expanded into a movement against the right-wing Rama government, the precarious social situation and the sell-off of the country’s assets.

In other states of the former Yugoslavia, the political and social situation is on the brink of collapse. In North Macedonia, 59 people, mostly young, lost their lives in March 2025 in a fire at an illegally operated nightclub in Kocani; in Bosnia and Herzegovina, thousands have protested against the dilapidated infrastructure and corrupt elites following a fatal tram accident in Sarajevo.

Vucic is banking on the opposition’s weakness ahead of snap parliamentary elections, which are expected to be held at the same time as the presidential elections. Should new elections take place, the established opposition parties will be unable to capitalize on the crisis facing Vucic’s government. Even in the last parliamentary elections, the SNS’s lead over the next strongest party was almost 30 percentage points. Today, the mainstream parties—whether far-right and anti-European or pro-European—are divided among themselves and lack any political significance.

According to opinion polls, a list drawn up or supported by the student movement could win the next parliamentary election. So far, however, no such list exists and there has been no official candidacy for the presidency.

A number of figures are active within and around the

protest movement, attempting to fill this political vacuum.

Savo Manojlovic, leader of the Kreni-Promeni (Make Change) movement, has been trying for several years to harness various protest movements for his own ends. He is currently supporting the student movement. In doing so, he advocates closer cooperation with the EU and sometimes even criticizes Vucic from the right when it comes to the alleged sell-out of national interests.

The names being mooted as potential candidates for the presidency are symptomatic of the political confusion within the opposition movement. These include Vladan Dokic, the rector of the University of Belgrade. He supported the students from the outset and withstood vicious attacks by the government—such as a police raid on the rector’s office and being slandered as an “anarchist” and “terrorist.” Dokic has never been a member of a political party, presents himself as emphatically nonpartisan and justifies his involvement solely on the grounds of defending the university.

Another name being bandied about is that of the former basketball player and current EuroLeague president, Dejan Bodiroga. Bodiroga also publicly supported the protests against Vucic but stated that he had no “political ambitions.” There is little more than speculation regarding his political views.

Within the Green-Left Front (ZLF), a member of the European Greens, there are fierce internal conflicts over whether to support a potential list of candidates. Although this had already been decided before Vucic’s resignation announcement, there is now internal resistance to the move within the party. This stems from fears of losing all significance within the broad coalition movement. Politically, the ZLF is also focused on rapid EU accession and is therefore calling for further reforms from the government.

The opposition parties—ranging from the far right to pro-European forces—offer no prospects for students and workers in Serbia. They all represent variations on the same pro-capitalist policies that have caused social conditions in the country to deteriorate ever further. Serbia’s workers and students can only achieve their demands by fighting for a socialist and internationalist program.



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