





# Weekly Briefing

**Montenegro political briefing:  
The great crisis of the new government  
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# **The great crisis of the new government**

## **Summary**

*June was marked by the culmination of intolerance between the individual parties that make up the ruling majority. The current composition of the Montenegrin Government has been called into question and the status quo seems impossible. Disagreements that have existed for some time between certain constituents of the government have resulted in a crisis, and many options, including new parliamentary elections, are possible. However, it seems that in the current situation, the most certain outcome is the reconstruction of the existing government, perhaps with a new Prime Minister. However, there are many actors who want to regulate the situation.*

## **Introduction**

The June dismissal of the Minister of Justice and Human and Minority Rights for his denial of the Srebrenica genocide, as well as the adoption of a Resolution on Srebrenica, led to the most serious crisis in the ruling majority, which is not calming down. The Democratic Front (DF), which opposed both, the removal of the minister and the adoption of the resolution, accused the Prime Minister (PM) of betraying the interests of "Serbs" by proposing such moves. On the other hand, the PM accused the members of parliament (who half year ago nominated him to be PM) of being hypocritical and immoral. It was the trigger for an avalanche of accusations but also a deepening gap between the DF and the PM. DF representatives announced that he is no longer the PM for them.

## **Events that led to the crisis**

The ruling majority reluctantly, with the help of the opposition, fired the Minister of Justice, Human and Minority Rights. The reason was his denial of genocide, but it seems that such an initiative by the PM is rather the need to preserve his own position, after the representatives of the European Union clearly condemned such rhetoric and attitudes, as well as any denial of genocide in Srebrenica. Because the dismissed minister is obviously not the only one from current government who denies the genocide in Srebrenica, but his mistake was that he was the only one to publicly state such an attitude. Thus, form again overcame essence. However, representatives of the pro-Serbian coalition, which was led by the PM in the parliamentary elections, condemned the PM's behavior, trying to attribute to him cooperation

with the largest opposition party, the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS), which supported the minister's dismissal. This was used as a basis for the DF to demand the resignation of the PM. However, special hypocrisy was shown by the Democrats, who defended the PM at every opportunity, but abstained when voting on the minister's dismissal.

Another event that has further deepened the gap between the DF and all other constituents of the government is the adoption of the Srebrenica Resolution. This resolution was initiated by the opposition Bosniak Party. Again, it seems that the representatives of the ruling majority (who voted for this resolution) voted in order to protect their own interests. It is hard to believe that some of them voted based on their sincere convictions. In any case, messages of encouragement and support for this act, as well as messages of gratitude, came from numerous international addresses, especially from Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, it remains questionable whether Montenegro has a sincere majority with developed values of politicians.

### **How realistic are the new parliamentary elections?**

What is significant, however, is that such events have produced a strong political crisis that is likely to last until a solution satisfies the interests of the many parties that constitute the government. For now, the leaders of the DF are making demands that do not go in favor of the current PM. Namely, the only solution that is acceptable for them is for the parliamentary majority to reach an agreement on a new government with a new PM. It is likely that their insistence will go in that direction. It is possible to expect that the DF will blackmail other parties in power with new elections. A possible solution by the DF is the formation of a transitional government that would prepare for the parliamentary elections, including an agreement on electoral conditions.

However, the question is whether the threats of the DF with the new elections are real at all? Because, the coalition gathered around the DF had the biggest support in the parliamentary elections last year. Since then, despite significant financial and logistical support from Serbia, the coalition's popularity has declined, as shown by local elections in Niksic and Herceg Novi municipalities. The leader of that coalition in the parliamentary elections was the current PM, who is no longer in good relations with the DF. Moreover, its closeness is more associated with the Democrats, who in the opinion of some analysts and politicians represent a "smooth version" of the Democratic Front (especially due to close cooperation with the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro). Therefore, the DF obviously does not consider elections to be a priority option in resolving the crisis, but is aware that fear of elections also exists among

other political parties that are constituents of the government. (especially among the smallest ones who would probably not pass the census) The acquired positions and employment of parties' members could be interrupted by new elections, which is the biggest fear of these parties. Therefore, it is to be expected that new elections are used more as a method of intimidation than a realistic option. However, even if no solution is found within the parliamentary majority, new elections are difficult to expect in the next few months.

### **New Prime Minister - how?**

In any case, the current state of power relations is unsustainable. This is confirmed by the fact that at the first meeting of the representatives of the parliamentary majority, the DF has rejected the possibility of rearranging the government headed by the current PM. The refusal to meet with the current PM is enough to assume that his mandate as PM will be short. However, the PM met with the signatories of the agreement on the establishment of this government, after which they issued a joint statement on the latest political crisis in the country. They said that the elections were not the solution, and that this government had their full support, while they condemned the interference of the foreign factor (Serbia). However, the interference of Serbia did not bother them when they removed the previous government in August 2020 with a huge support and campaign from Belgrade. At the time, it was described as a "struggle for democratic transition." Such double standards of the new parliamentary majority further indicate the desire to preserve the acquired status within the new government.

However, if there is a vote of no confidence in the current PM, the question is whether the parliamentary majority can vote for a new PM, or does the fall of the PM automatically mean the fall of the government? Some prominent lawyers and analysts believe that there can be no new PM without new elections and that any other decision would be illegal. However, this would not be the first time that political parties have made illegal or unconstitutional decisions.

### **Interrelationships between ruling coalitions**

What is clear is that there is currently a greater conflict between the ruling parties themselves, than between the government and the opposition. There is an obvious "war" between the Democrats and the DF, who are vying for votes. Although formally everyone calls for dialogue, further distance between the two parties is inevitable, precisely because of the desire to dominate the political scene, but also because of the different dependence on European addresses. As some analysts have noted, Democrats must explain the vote for the Srebrenica Resolution to extreme Serb elements in their party. Therefore, they often resort to extremely

questionable, at least from a moral aspect, attacks on the DF, accusing them of collaborating with the opposition DPS.

However, it remains questionable why no one from the DF and their supporters from Serbia and from the Serbian media attacked the leader of the Civic Movement URA, who is also the Deputy Prime Minister. Because, the paradox is that only the "Democrats" and the DPS are lynched in the media, and not the URA, which also voted for Srebrenica Resolution. Rumors about the blackmail of the URA leader by the DF are gaining in importance for the first time, because the DF, even in its demands for a new government and a new PM, emphasizes that there will have to be places in the new government for the URA leader. On the other side, URA leader, regardless of the Montenegrin public and Montenegro as an independent state, called on neighboring countries (obviously referring to Serbia) to sit down and find a solution for Montenegrin political crisis. Therefore, it would not be surprising for him to nominate himself as the new PM, if that is acceptable to the DF.

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The Montenegrin government was shaken by events in June and is on shaky ground. It is difficult to expect that government will survive in this same composition. The final outcome will largely depend on the political intentions of the DF, but it is obvious that the government will undergo significant changes, regardless of whether they come through mutual agreement of the ruling coalitions or, less likely, new parliamentary elections.