

# Regional Overview: Europe 26 January – 1 February 2020

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## ACLED

Bringing clarity to crisis

Last week, demonstrations across the Balkans and Southeastern Europe remained high, in particular in Montenegro and Greece. Demonstrations in Eastern Europe, including Russia and Ukraine, remained relatively low compared to previous months.

In **Montenegro**, protests against the Religious Freedom Law continued for the sixth week, with dozens of marches and processions being held in most cities. The Serbian Orthodox Church claims to be targeted unfairly by this law. Solidarity protests were also held in Serbia and Kosovo.

In **Kosovo**, Self-Determination (LS) [a.k.a. Vetevendosje] and Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) formed a government, one day before the deadline. It puts to an end four months of political uncertainty, and occasional demonstrations, after snap elections in October 2019 ([RFE/RL, 2 February 2020](#)).

In **Serbia**, the “1 of 5 Million” anti-government protest movement has split, after the Belgrade faction decided to form a political party and participate in the parliamentary elections set for 26 April. The move breaks with the election boycott maintained by the coalition of opposition parties. Several local factions of “1 of 5 Million” announced they will continue to organize protests and campaign for the boycott, effectively splitting the movement, which has been organizing protests across the country for more than a year ([N1, 29 January 2020](#)).

In **Bulgaria**, about a dozen demonstrations were held over local environmental and labor issues. Citizens continued to demonstrate over the ongoing water shortages in the Pernik area, with one demonstration ending in clashes with police.

In **Greece**, demonstrations picked up over a number of issues, some labor related, with dozens of demonstrations across the country. In various cities, people protested the ratification of the updated defense agreement with the United States, allowing the use of Greek military facilities ([Greek Reporter, 31 January 2020](#)). Farmers started their annual demonstrations, which are expected to last several weeks, complaining over fuel and commodity prices and the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) ([Ekathimerini, 27 January 2020](#)). In addition, protests over living conditions in migrant camps continued.

In **Cyprus**, the number of demonstration events increased to nearly a dozen, with people in both northern and southern territories demonstrating over various environmental, education, social and labor issues.

In **Russia**, protests continued at similar levels and over similar issues as weeks prior, with about three dozen events reported. A handful of protests were held over the constitutional amendment proposal ([Kommersant, 1 February 2020](#)).

The Trilateral Contact Group on **Ukraine** continued its negotiations in Minsk to determine the next three areas for the disengagement of forces. Parties agreed on disengagement in Hnutove, Donetsk province, but could not yet reach agreement on the two other areas for the disengagement ([AP, 29 January 2020](#)). Meanwhile in the Donbass region, fighting between Ukrainian government forces and separatist rebels intensified, with 122 armed clashes and 181 shelling incidents resulting in four reported fatalities.



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