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## WOMEN IN BLACK CRITICISES SERBIAN POLITICIANS AND REJECTS A NATIONALIST SOLUTION TO THE KOSOVO CRISIS

February 7, 2007, Belgrade: In a stinging rebuke to Serbian nationalism, Women in Black, the renowned Serbian women's group, has accused Serbian politicians of condemning Serbia to further international isolation and perpetuating the policies of the late Slobodan Milosevic by rejecting a UN plan for the independence of Kosovo.

A 5 point statement from [Women in Black](#), issued earlier this week in Belgrade, says that the "discriminatory policies" of Milosevic towards Albanians in Kosovo before and during the 1999 war had made it impossible for Kosovo to remain part of Serbia, and that Serbian politicians are repeating the mistake.

The statement also argues that respect for rights will do more to strengthen the states of Serbia and Kosovo than ancient boundaries. "There must be a firm guarantee of individual and collective human rights of all women and men in Serbia and neighboring countries. People's lives take precedence over territory and state-legal status."

The disagreement follows the unveiling last week of the new UN plan for the future of Kosovo, which has been in a legal limbo since the 1999 war. Under the plan, proposed by UN envoy Martti Ahtisaari, Kosovo will be allowed to declare independence from Serbia, but remain under international supervision much like Bosnia.

The plan was angrily rejected by the outgoing Serbian Prime Minister, Vojislav Koštunica, who insisted that Kosovo is historically part of Serbia and refused to meet with Mr. Ahtisaari when he visited the country.

Women in Black criticizes this reaction as "saber-rattling." Mr Koštunica "did not condemn the war crimes committed in our name in 1999 or today," says the statement. "His irresponsibility is leading Serbia towards international isolation once again."

At first sight, the statement is likely to be unpopular in Serbia, but Women in Black insists that Serbians are ready to reject the past: "The citizens of Serbia want to live in peace, without fear of new wars, renewed international isolation, general poverty and insecurity—in short, without everything that we remember from the period of the criminal Milošević regime."

The statement underscores the fact that women's civil society on both sides of the disputed frontier is united in its determination to reject nationalism. Last summer, Women in Black joined with the Kosovo Women's Network in Kosovo to form a joint

network - the Women's Peace Coalition - and lobby the international community for a rights-based solution to the Kosovo crisis.

\* For more information and a copy of the statement email [stasazen@eunet.yu](mailto:stasazen@eunet.yu)

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