

# **Remembering Branislav Milinkovic**

Editorial board of Security and Human  
Rights

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It was with the deepest sadness that we heard the news that our highly respected and admired member of the editorial board, Branislav Milinkovic (52), so unexpectedly passed away on the 5th of December last year. Although his last position was as the Serbian Ambassador to NATO, his career had been predominantly related to the OSCE. And for so many years our journal Security and Human Rights (formerly the Helsinki Monitor) has profited from his knowledge, ideas, critical assessments and his enormous network of specialists in various fields. Only in the time that he was Serbia's Permanent Representative to the OSCE did he resign from his editorial position in order to avoid possible conflicts of interests, but even in that period he continued to provide us with his welcome advice.

Branko was one of the OSCE 'gurus' who continued to believe in the OSCE's values and principles, even in times of crisis and serious diplomatic disagreements within the organization. And it is hard to overestimate the influence of Branislav Milinkovic on the OSCE process. As he said in his farewell speech to the OSCE Permanent Council in 2004, 'I occasionally make jokes with some colleagues about us as 'true believers' in this organization....but, my deep belief in the basic philosophy of the OSCE – its comprehensive approach and soft security concept – has not been undermined... I believe in the power of soft security, early warning, conflict prevention and long-term investments in democracy building – to the benefit of the entire international community'.


Branislav was appointed Ambassador of the then Former Republic of Yugoslavia to the OSCE in 2001, shortly after the fall of the Milosevic regime and his country's readmission to the OSCE following eight years of suspension for human rights violations. He had not followed a traditional path to a diplomatic career. He was an academic, a journalist, and an activist who had opposed the Milosevic regime from its start in the 1980s. He brought with him to his new post a unique perspective on the OSCE – one formed by personal experience fighting inside his country for principles that lie at the core of the OSCE: human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. He was a believer in peace and in humanity.

When he arrived at the OSCE in Vienna, he quickly earned a reputation as a thoughtful, professional, and trusted diplomat. Despite the very recent and difficult past of his country, he was entrusted with politically delicate positions in the Permanent Council, which he carried out with his characteristic positive attitude, gentle demeanor, and genuine respect for his colleagues.

Branislav continued to play a positive diplomatic role after he was transferred in 2004 to Brussels as the Ambassador to NATO of what was by then Serbia. Again, he took on a post where his country had a difficult past – it was NATO's 1999 bombing campaign of the then Former Yugoslav Republic that led to the withdrawal of Yugoslav forces from Kosovo. And once again, Branislav's professionalism earned him the respect of his colleagues.

Branislav was successful because he truly cared. He cared about his country; he cared about his family; he cared about his fellow human beings. He cared whether human rights were being respected. He cared about the human cost of conflict. And, last but not least, he also cared about our journal. He never missed the annual meetings of the board in The Hague or Vienna and was always surprising us with his creative new ideas and constructive approach. When he promised something, he delivered.

He will be missed both as a colleague, an expert, an enthusiastic debater and most of all as a friend.



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Security and Human Rights (formerly Helsinki Monitor) is a journal devoted to issues inspired by the work and principles of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It looks at the challenge of building security through cooperation across the northern hemisphere, from Vancouver to Vladivostok, as well as how this experience can be applied to other parts of the world. It aims to stimulate thinking on the question of protecting and promoting human rights in a world faced with serious threats to security.

Netherlands Helsinki Committee  
Het Nutshuis  
Riviermarkt 4  
2513 AM The Hague  
The Netherlands

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