European Parliament
2024-2029

TEXTS ADOPTED

P10_TA(2026)0410

The 35th anniversary of the fall and destruction of Vukovar

European Parliament resolution of 26 November 2026 on the 35th anniversary of the fall and destruction of Vukovar (2026/2979(RSP))

The European Parliament,

– having regard to its resolution of 19 September 2019 on the importance of European remembrance for the future of Europe[1],

– having regard to its resolution of 2 April 2009 on European conscience and totalitarianism[2],

– having regard to its resolution of 17 January 2024 on European historical consciousness[3],

– having regard to its declaration of 23 September 2008 on the proclamation of 23 August as European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism[4],

– having regard to its resolution of 27 November 2014 on Serbia: the case of accused war criminal Šešelj[5],

– having regard to its resolution of 8 July 2026 on the 2025 Commission report on Serbia[6],

– having regard to the trial and appeal judgments of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in the case of *Prosecutor v. Mile Mrkšić, Miroslav Radić & Veselin Šljivančanin* (IT-95-13/1),

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1 OJ C 171, 6.5.2021, p. 25.
2 OJ C 137E, 27.5.2010, p. 25.
3 OJ C, C/2024/5721, 17.10.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/5721/oj.
4 OJ C 8E, 14.1.2010, p. 57.
5 OJ C 289, 9.8.2016, p. 44.
6 Texts adopted, P10_TA(2026)0261.

– having regard to the judgment of the International Court of Justice of 3 February 2015 in the case of *Croatia* v. *Serbia*, in particular its findings concerning Vukovar, Ovčara and Velepromet,

– having regard to Rules 167(2) and 136(4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas 18 November 2026 marks the 35th anniversary of the fall and destruction of Vukovar, a historic Croatian and central European city on the Danube, with a rich multicultural heritage of diverse ethnic and religious communities, whose defence during the Croatian Homeland War holds a central place in Croatia’s national memory as a symbol of resistance to Slobodan Milošević’s Greater Serbian aggression, and as a symbol of the struggle for national independence and democratic self-determination; whereas Vukovar was the first European city since the Second World War to be virtually destroyed in a nearly three-month military siege and through bombardment on a scale thought to belong to the past;

B. whereas on 20 November 1991, after Vukovar had become occupied by the Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA), Serb Territorial Defence forces and paramilitary units, wounded patients, civilians, captured Croatian defenders, and medical staff were forcibly taken from the Vukovar Hospital to the nearby Ovčara farm, where they were beaten and tortured, and at least 200 of them executed and buried in mass graves;

C. whereas civilians and prisoners of war were forcibly transferred to JNA-run detention camps in Serbia, including at Stajićevo, Begejci, Niš, Belgrade, Novi Sad and Sremska Mitrovica, at the Velepromet detention site in Vukovar, and in occupied parts of Croatia, where they were subjected to unlawful detention, torture, rape and inhumane treatment; whereas Croat and other non-Serb civilians were killed, detained, deported or forcibly transferred as part of a wider campaign of ethnic cleansing; whereas churches, monuments and other sites that bear witness to Vukovar’s centuries-old Croatian and central European heritage were deliberately targeted during the siege and occupation, with many of them extensively damaged or destroyed, and valuable artefacts looted;

D. whereas from the destruction of Vukovar and the atrocities committed there in November 1991 to the Srebrenica genocide in July 1995, and throughout the wars that accompanied the break-up of Yugoslavia, Europe once again witnessed the devastating consequences of aggression, territorial conquest and ethnic hatred; whereas on 18 November 1991, the gory Škabrnja massacre was perpetrated by JNA and Serb forces in another part of Croatia, and its victims are commemorated together with those of Vukovar on Croatia’s national day of remembrance; whereas the memory of these atrocities is part of Europe’s shared history and reinforces its responsibility to uphold peace and human dignity;

E. whereas the ultranationalist rhetoric and the concept of Greater Serbia employed by Slobodan Milošević and other influential actors in Serbian nationalistic political and intellectual circles fuelled ethnic tensions and hostility that helped normalise violence as a political instrument, deepened mistrust and undermined prospects for peaceful coexistence across the region; whereas Milošević's 1989 speech at Gazimestan, where he spoke of battles ahead and stated that armed conflict could not be ruled out, was a prime example of this;

F. whereas 1 725 cases of missing persons arising from the Croatian Homeland War remain unresolved more than three decades after the war ended, including those of 1 341 people whose fate remains unknown and 384 people whose deaths have been confirmed but whose burial sites have yet to be located; whereas this continuing uncertainty prolongs the suffering of their families and leaves open a deep humanitarian wound; whereas families of missing persons of all nationalities also continue to wait for answers; whereas establishing the fate of those still missing and locating the remains of those known to have died, regardless of their ethnicity, is a fundamental human obligation and essential to genuine reconciliation; whereas efforts to clarify the fate of those still missing continue, by locating and excavating burial sites, exhuming and identifying human remains, collecting and exchanging information, and seeking access to all relevant wartime records and archives;

G. whereas the then Serbian President Boris Tadić visited Ovčara on 4 November 2010, together with the then Croatian president Ivo Josipović, paid tribute to the victims, apologised for the crimes committed there and stressed the importance of reconciliation and of establishing the fate of those still missing;

1. Commemorates and honours all the victims of Vukovar and all those who suffered atrocities during Milošević's Greater Serbian aggression against Croatia and the wars that accompanied the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia; pays solemn tribute to those who defended Croatia, to the wounded and displaced, to the families of the fallen and the missing, and to civilian victims of war, regardless of their background; notes the enduring place of their courage, sacrifice and suffering in Croatia's national memory; reaffirms Europe's shared responsibility to preserve peace, uphold human dignity and defend freedom;

2. Stresses that Vukovar stands as a solemn reminder that the promise of 'never again', born of the devastation of the Second World War and central to the European project, can never be taken for granted; underlines that the tragedy of Vukovar exposed the fragility of peace in Europe and the consequences of failing to defend it in time; affirms, therefore, that the memory of Vukovar belongs not only to Croatia, but to Europe as a whole, and serves as a lasting reminder

that defending peace, human rights and fundamental European values requires vigilance, sacrifice, political courage and dialogue;

3. Acknowledges the important work carried out by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in establishing the facts and in investigating and prosecuting serious violations of international humanitarian law, including crimes committed in Vukovar; regrets, however, that not all those bearing responsibility for crimes committed during and after the siege and destruction of the city were brought to justice; calls for continued efforts to bring all remaining perpetrators to justice and for enhanced judicial cooperation, in this regard; stresses that sincere acknowledgement of crimes, respect for victims and the establishment of the fate of those still missing are indispensable foundations for lasting reconciliation, and that justice is owed to all victims of the wars that accompanied the break-up of Yugoslavia;

4. Acknowledges the peaceful reintegration of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium into Croatia, completed on 15 January 1998 under the Erdut Agreement with the support of the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES), as an important European example of how negotiation and sustained international engagement can peacefully reintegrate a territory into a state’s constitutional and legal order; underlines Vukovar’s particular significance as a city where, after the devastation of war, communities had to rebuild trust and learn to live together again;

5. Recognises the fundamental right of families to know the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones, many of whom remain unaccounted for more than three decades later; stresses the need to continue efforts to locate missing persons, recover and identify the remains of those who died, and return them to their families for dignified burial; urges the cooperation of the competent authorities to establish the fate and whereabouts of those still missing; calls, in particular, on the Serbian authorities to grant access to relevant wartime archives, disclose all available information on the locations of individual and mass graves, fight against impunity for wartime crimes, and facilitate the recovery, identification and dignified return of victims’ remains to their families; urges Serbia to finally adopt its long-announced law on missing persons in a truly inclusive and transparent manner;

6. Strongly condemns all forms of denial, minimisation or glorification of war crimes, including the public celebration or rehabilitation of convicted war criminals in the region; condemns the public honours paid to Ratko Mladić on the occasion of his funeral in Belgrade on 7 September 2026, following his final conviction for genocide in Srebrenica, crimes against humanity and war crimes; stresses that such practices undermine reconciliation, demean victims and erode

respect for facts established by the courts; highlights that seriously addressing unresolved issues stemming from the war, such as full cooperation on cases of missing persons, accountability for war crimes and redress for victims, represents a civilisational imperative, firmly rooted in the fundamental values and principles of the European legal order, which must be respected;

7. Underlines the lasting need for medical and psychological care, public recognition of the suffering caused by war among different affected communities, support for the families of those killed or still missing, care for war veterans and dignified remembrance; considers that Croatia’s experience illustrates the need to support Ukraine’s defenders, civilian victims, the families of those killed or still missing, communities and civil society affected by the war both now and in the years after a just and lasting peace has been secured, including the long-term challenge of mine contamination and demining;

8. Encourages educational, cultural and commemorative programmes that preserve the memory of all victims, promote a fact-based understanding of the Croatian Homeland War and the 1990s, and that foster peace, respect for human rights, tolerance and reconciliation; recognises, in this context, the educational role of the Memorial Centre for the Homeland War in Vukovar, veteran and civil society organisations, and other memorial institutions; welcomes the commemoration of 18 November as the Day of Remembrance for the Victims of the Homeland War and the Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Vukovar and Škabrnja, honouring all victims and preserving their memory for future generations; emphasises the importance of inclusive remembrance grounded in truth and respect for all victims, fostering reconciliation through dialogue and supporting peacebuilding across the region; underlines the shared responsibility to build a peaceful European future while remembering the past with dignity, and without allowing its wounds to lead to new divisions;

9. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, and the governments and parliaments of the countries of the Western Balkans.