
THREE FREEDOMS PLATFORM

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION
FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY
FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION



Three freedoms under the magnifying glass

Review of violations of freedom of association, assembly and expression in Serbia 16-28 Februar 2019

Freedom of Expression

1. The portal „Prismotra“ published two articles about the work and private lives [of journalists Vanja Djuric and Zaklina Tatalovic](#). N1 TV journalist Vanja Djuric has been labeled as the person who "made films against Serbia", alluding to her participation in the movie "Albanians are our sisters", while Zaklina Tatalovic is targeted by posting her private photos on that portal. The Independent Association of Journalists of Vojvodina called for an urgent reaction from those in charge, reminding that similar attacks on Vanja Djuric occurred last year, but that no judicial epilogue has yet taken place.
2. [Olivera Zekic](#), a member of the Council of the Electronic Regulatory Body for Electronic Media, said the public interest would be jeopardized if the media conveyed the political views of proponents of the boycott of the election. She added that criticism at the expense of REM's work comes from the fact that the opposition does not answer the most important questions. The Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability ([CRTA](#)) indicates that this statement introduces confusion into the public space and can be interpreted as a call for media bias and the hindering of objective and timely information for citizens.
3. The journalist and publicist [Petar Peca Popovic](#) had faced with the cancelation of promotion of his book in Vrsac due to the alleged occupancy of the hall, just days after his appearance on the political TV show "Utišak nedelje". In his guest appearance, Popovic made a number of criticisms at the expense of the authorities, which is why there is serious doubt that the motive for canceling the hall is his political impropriety.
4. [The Youth Initiative for Human Rights](#) has asked the Ministry of the Internal Affairs to ban the presentation of a book by a convicted criminal against humanity, Vojislav Seselj, in the New Belgrade City Hall. The reason for the ban is because the book deals with the denial of the Srebrenica genocide. We remind you that during the previous presentation of this book there was a physical attack on [Natasa Kandic and activists of the Humanitarian Law Center](#).

5. The journalist of the portal Indexonline, [Redzep Korac](#) was physically assaulted by the brother of the head of the professional staff of Novi Pazar football club. The reason for the attack was Korac's writing about the club's coach, Nenad Kolasinac, and a blow to the head was followed after by a debate in which Korac was threatened. The Serbian Journalists' Association has asked the police and prosecution to clarify the case. The trend of increasing attacks on journalists is noticeable during the past period, which is certainly due to the complete passivity of the competent authorities, whose reactions are usually absent or too mild.

6. [The Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia](#) has asked the competent prosecutor's office to investigate suspicions of media wiretapping over a scandal that broke out after Minister of Defense [Aleksandar Vulin](#) responded to former Minister of Defense [Dragan Sutanovac's](#) allegations in an unpublished weekly newspaper. Sutanovac and the editors of weekly „Nedeljnik“, whose emails contain an unpublished interview, claim that they have no dilemma that their communication was unlawfully intercepted. On the other hand, the Ministry of Defense denies such allegations and justify that it was an unintentional omission and that a mistake was made by the PR team which instead of the text in the "Kurir" mentioned an unpublished interview in "Nedeljnik". Such cases make the work of the media and journalists significantly more difficult by introducing uncertainty and fear that they may at any time be subject to unlawful surveillance and wiretapping.

7. The journalist and author of the documentary series "The Ruler" dealing with the political development of President Aleksandar Vucic has been targeted by state officials and members of the Serbian Progressive Party. On that occasion, Lekic, as well as the interviewees who appeared in the film, were characterized as propagandists, compared to „Josef Goebbels" and called „associates of the Albanian mafia". [The Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia](#) has indicated that such labeling can have extremely dangerous consequences and that those in charge should not remain silent on such cases. In addition to the reporters, the target was [N1 television](#), which aired this documentary, and one of the reactions that followed was damage to a car bearing the logo of that television in Nis. On that occasion, the police investigated and referred the case to the basic public prosecutor's office in Nis, but no further steps have been taken. This case is a continuation of an intense and systematic campaign against N1 television, which for months has been the victim of the daily campaign of almost all government officials and tabloids close to them.

Freedom of Association

1. For the associations of the Luznička Handicrafts - Women's Economic Center, the local community denied the use of their premises in which they had worked in previous years and invested in the purchase and renovation. A criminal complaint was filed against the president of that association, Karolina Stamenkovic, although she was registered as the owner of the premises in the official real estate register. In this way, the work of an organization who through its work has helped to encourage the entrepreneurship of a large number of women in and around Babusnica is hindered and the citizens who have found inspiration for their activism are demotivated.

2. Due to suspicions raised by the City Assembly of [Prokuplje](#), police began questioning citizens whose signatures were in a petition calling for a ban on the construction of mini-hydro power plants in the area. The competent public prosecutor's office will therefore order a graphological expert evaluation of the signatures in order to examine these doubts. Taking such rigorous measures against citizens who are fighting for legitimate democratic means for their right to a healthy environment is a new phase in the process of narrowing civil rights and freedoms. We remind that citizens in this area have been protesting about the construction of mini hydroelectric power plants for years and that they have so far faced various forms of pressure and, in some situations, physical attacks.

Freedom of Assembly

1. [Dobrica Veselinovic](#), an activist of the „Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own" Initiative, was summoned for a hearing for taking pictures of the Presidency building on his cellphone before protesting against the construction of mini-hydro power plants. Veselinovic is suspected of endangering the security of the President of the Republic. This bizarre accusation is just one in a series faced by activists of this Initiative who are being prosecuted for more than 30 criminal and extrajudicial proceedings for organizing and participating in public meetings.