
THREE FREEDOMS PLATFORM



Civic
Initiatives

freedom of association

freedom of assembly

freedom of expression

Three freedoms under the magnifying glass

Review of cases of violations of basic human rights in Serbia

July 31 - August 13, 2020

Freedom of association, assembly and expression

[The Independent Association of Journalists of Vojvodina](#) (NDNV) appealed to the management of the Radio Television of Vojvodina (RTV) to protect the employees in that institution and their jobs, in response to the increasingly frequent announcements of mass dismissals in that media house. The press release states that the public was not presented with professional criteria on the basis of which the reduction of the number of employees would be carried out, which calls into question the competence, but also the goodwill of the Management Board of RTV. According to the NDNV, informing of the minority groups is particularly endangered, bearing in mind the fact that it could not survive in the event of a reduction in the number of employees engaged in this field of work. The release once again reminds and condemns the practice of hiring temporary workers through numerous agencies, which keeps them in uncertainty, and also states that they will offer legal assistance to all colleagues who need it.

After the national television program, "TV Happy", broadcasted a segment in their morning program in which artificial insemination of cows is compared with in vitro fertilization of women, by drawing a parallel between cows and women, the [Protector of Citizens \(Ombudsman\) Zoran Pasalic](#) initiated a procedure to examine the actions of the Regulatory Body for Electronic Media (REM). The disputed segment states that it would be more efficient in the case of women to apply the methods that are applied on the example of cows, and also that doctors and gynecologists should take that course at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. The letter signed by the Protector of Citizens requires REM to state within 15 days the circumstances of the specific case and whether it has initiated the procedure of examining the work of "Happy" television. Unfortunately, this is just one of many cases of gender discrimination on television with national frequency. The frequency of such actions is certainly due to the inaction of the competent authorities, bearing in mind that, apart from sporadic condemnations, such gestures are not, as a rule, adequately sanctioned.

[The Safejournalist network](#), representing more than 8,200 media professionals in the Western Balkans, has condemned recent pressures on the media, journalists, civil society organizations and activists by the Anti-Money Laundering Authority which requested a check of financial transactions of their accounts over the past year. In their statement, they recall that such a move is reminiscent of some moves by authorities in countries with authoritarian regimes that use government mechanisms to deal with people who think differently. For this reason, they believe that it is necessary for the competent authorities to explain as soon as possible how they came to this list of people and organizations and what qualified them to be on such a list. The statement was signed by the Association of Journalists of Kosovo, the Association of Journalists of

Macedonia, BiH Journalists Association, the Croatian Journalists' Association, the Independent Journalists Association of Serbia, Trade Union of Media of Montenegro. In light of these events, recent announcement of the [US Embassy in Serbia](#) is also important, stating that they are proud of the cooperation with civil society in Serbia, emphasizing its great importance in overcoming numerous obstacles in the past two decades.

[Resident of Uzice P.G.](#) has been arrested on charges of committing the crime of violent behavior during recent protests that took place in a large number of Serbian cities when citizens dissatisfied with the actions of the current regime began to spontaneously gather on the streets of cities across Serbia. P.G. was charged with participating in egging, tomato throwing, and painting of a banner with a large picture of President Aleksandar Vučić and the logo of the Serbian Progressive Party, together with 4 other people. Because of that event, three men have already been sentenced to 4 months in prison, and a fifteen-year-old underage girl has also been arrested. This case of arrest, as well as prison sentences for the remaining three young men, represent rigorous punishment and excessive reaction by the authorities, and most certainly an open pressure on those who do not agree with the regime, who are sent a clear message that in case of dissatisfaction they can be drastically punished. We remind you that dozens of people were arrested during the protests held in July, while on the other hand there is no information that any member of the police was held accountable for numerous cases of abuse of power and unjustified use of force.

[Drasko Markovic, a high-ranking official of the Serbian Progressive Party and director of the HR department of the company "Telekom"](#), forcibly interrupted the press conference of the vice president of the opposition Party of Freedom and Justice, Marinika Tepic, held in front of the company's headquarters. On that occasion, Markovic directed several insults at Tepic's account, and then he shoved and removed the microphone set up by the present representatives of the media agencies. The topic of the conference was the business operation and management of this company, which is why Marinika Tepić asked several questions in order for the public to get answers and an explanation as to why and through whose fault this company got into a very unfavorable financial situation. This case is a symptom of deep division and electrified political atmosphere in Serbia, in which institutional dialogue is almost impossible, and such cases show that even the extra-institutional struggle is not devoid of the threat of censorship and violent prevention of expressing opinions.

[Milan Vujic, a student and activist](#) from Novi Sad, was beaten by a male person who caused severe injuries to his head due to posts on social media. The beaten young man states that while he was returning home from practice, a man he knew, who was in the car at the time, called him to stop and that he then punched him in the head. Another male person was in the car with the attacker, but he did not participate in the attack. [After the attack](#), Vujić told "N1" television that he knew the attacker and that the attack was politically motivated due to his posts about the party and the electoral list on which the attacker was. Vujic suffered fractures of several bones of his face, which is why he was operated on urgently and successfully and is currently recovering from the attack. Physical violence is increasingly becoming a common method of political struggle, contributing to the narrowing of the space for public confrontation of arguments between those with opposing views and the relocation of political struggle from institutions to the streets.