
**THREE FREEDOMS
PLATFORM**



**Civic
Initiatives**

freedom of association

freedom of assembly

freedom of expression

Three freedoms under a magnifying glass

Review of cases of violations of basic human rights in Serbia

28 August- 10 September, 2020

Freedom of association, assembly and expression

- Minister for European Integration Jadranka Joksimovic, in her [statement](#) sent a sharp answer to the President of the European Movement in Serbia regarding her assessments that Serbia's European path is advancing "at a snail's pace" and that the work of the Ministry can be described as lethargic. In her statement, Minister Joksimovic said that the European Movement in Serbia is lethargic, and that instead of dealing with the work of the Ministry, the president of that association should work on the modernization of her organization. In addition, the Minister pointed out that the critics of the work of that Ministry do not have adequate knowledge, energy or talent, and that is why they left the state sector. Such an address is inappropriate in a public space, especially if it comes from representatives of the highest authorities. In this way, the attitude of the highest state officials towards civil society organizations, which with their constructive criticism are working to contribute, in this case to Serbia's progress in the process of European integration, is illustrated once again.
- The phantom [portal "Prismotra"](#), which serves to publicly discredit journalists, activists and other citizens who are critical of the current regime, continued with such a practice, and this time the target of their attacks was the investigative journalist Brankica Stankovic. Unknown authors are accusing Brankica Stankovic, who they claim is a favorite among "chauvinists", that she used the information she obtained for the purpose of racketeering people, that is, that she publicly kept silent about the information she had in exchange for money. It is also concluded that she still does her job with the support of "Luxembourg television N1" and that she is at least a journalist, and above all a mobster and racketeer. Bearing in mind that this portal has been making accusations with impunity for months, even years, without anyone standing by its name and surname, it is clear that this is a coordinated and well-designed campaign against critics of the current regime and that such work will not only be constrained, but also that their actions can be expected to intensify in the future.

- After the initial dismissal of a number of employees of [Radio Television of Vojvodina](#), but also the protest against the announced dismissal of another 200 employees through a private employment agency, employers began to receive notifications similar to workers who lost their jobs that they could sign a decision referring to paid leave for the next 45 days. At this moment, the fate of at least a hundred workers who still have a contract with this agency, and whose contracts will not be extended, is still unknown. In that way, not only the material existence of the workers is questioned, but also the regular functioning of RTV, especially when it comes to programs in minority languages.
- In the last two weeks, the trend of physical and verbal attacks and threats against journalists in Serbia has [continued](#). In Novi Pazar, the editor of the "S news" portal was attacked, to whom an unknown person threatened to "be shot" in the presence of the member of the police. The journalist team of TV Sabac was also the victim of the attack during the reporting during the recently held repeated elections at 27 polling stations in that city. Death threats via social networks were also sent to the director of news "Newsmax Adria", Slobodan Georgijev, on the occasion of the announcement of the current president of Montenegro's guest appearance in that program. The position of media workers in Serbia is rapidly deteriorating, both due to increasing obstruction by the authorities and due to unpunished attacks by perpetrators, which as a rule remain undetected and unprocessed.
- The Third Basic Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade issued a warrant against the presenter [Tatjana Vojtehovski](#) for not responding to court summonses. In her author's show in 2016, Vojtehovski pointed out suspicious things regarding court cases on granting custody, i.e. that in most disputed proceedings, the same names appear in the role of a lawyer, expert and judge. One of the cases mentioned in her show also referred to the dispute between the former mayor of Belgrade and the current Minister of Finance, Sinisa Mali, and his wife. In 2017, Vojtehovski testified in court as a citizen, after which court summonses [were sent](#) to the address of Television Prva, where she has not been working for years. After returning from a vacation in Montenegro, Vojtehovski responded to the court's summons and the arrest warrant was revoked, but the indictment against her is still in force due to the suspicion that she committed the criminal offense of violating data secrecy. Vojtehovski has long been the target of pro-government tabloids and institutions due to the opening of numerous scandals and topics in his author's show, which was removed from the television's program shortly after the sale of Television Prva without adequate explanation.
- The Court of Appeals in Belgrade [revoked](#) the first-instance verdict for the murder of journalist Slavko Curuvija and ordered that the trial of the accused be repeated before the Special Court in Belgrade. The explanation of the verdict states: significantly changed the factual situation that he established in his own opinion, in relation to the factual situation described in the indictment. "It is also stated that it is not clear in what way the accused enabled the unidentified person to commit that criminal act, "which makes their actions unclear and incomprehensible". The director of the Slavko Curuvija Foundation, [Ivana Stevanovic](#), stated on behalf of the foundation that they were disappointed and surprised by the decision of the Court of Appeals and

expressed fear that the new trial would be burdened with numerous obstructions of the procedure and obstruction of witnesses. She also pointed out that 21 years after the murder and six years after the indictment, the impression is that justice is further and further, and that in this way a frightening message is sent to all people who deal with public affairs and who express dissatisfaction with the current situation in Serbia. [The president of the European Federation of Journalists \(EFJ\)](#), Mogens Blicher Bjeregard, stated that he was shocked by the way in which justice was removed or postponed in the case of the murder of Slavko Curuvija. Such a decision, which shocked the public in Serbia, aroused doubt in the probability that the outcome in this case will really come to an end and that what was established by the original verdict will survive, and that is the role of the state in the murder of Slavko Curuvija. Based on the events so far, one gets the impression that there is still no political will to shed light on this case, but that there is a desire to make the procedure meaningless and lead to oblivion.

- Journalist [Ruzdija Sabotic](#) started a hunger strike in front of the General Hospital in Novi Pazar, asking the public to get information about the exact number of deaths from the corona virus in that city, as well as how the funds received by donations during that year were spent. Sabotic later stopped the strike on the recommendation of a doctor due to deteriorating health. During the strike, there was an incident when the journalist of the "S news" portal, Medin Halilovic, was attacked, and an unknown man threatened him with death. The police that were near the scene did not react, which is why Halilovic submitted complaints to the Internal Control Service of the Ministry of the Interior, the OSCE Mission to Serbia, human rights organizations and journalists' associations in Serbia. This case represents the sublimation of a large number of problems faced by media workers in Serbia: the inability to obtain information, censorship attempts and attacks and threats accompanied by the silence of the authorities. In addition to journalists whose physical integrity was directly endangered, the most damage is inflicted on the citizens of Novi Pazar, which was one of the biggest hotbeds of the corona virus and whose citizens were denied real information for months, which created additional panic among them and only worsened the crisis. that city was confronted.
- The First Basic Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade rejected a criminal complaint filed by KRIK and their journalist [Bojana Pavlovic](#), whose phone was forcibly confiscated by unknown men after she photographed the son of President Aleksandar Vucic in the company of Aleksandar Vidojevic, who is suspected of being a member of the criminal group. The explanation of the decision rejecting the criminal report states the incorrect information that the place of the event was not covered by the cameras and the prosecutor did not interrogate Vidojevic or Danilo Vucic who attended the disputed event. The violent seizure of a mobile phone after being surrounded by seven men was not defined by the prosecutor as a threat to security, but as her "subjective feeling". The prosecutor also rejected the possibility that the criminal act of misrepresentation was committed in the disputed case, since the investigation established that members of the police did not identify journalist Bojana Pavlović, although she claims that she was stopped by two men who introduced themselves as police officers. On the other hand, the [Serbian Army](#) confirmed that the journalist was stopped by a member of the military police because she took a photo of the protected person, but they did not comment on the other actors in the event. The easy rejection of the criminal report without a thorough determination of what really happened on that occasion is a clear message sent to journalists that there is no political will to protect

them and their work and that any attack on journalists will be treated as a mild incident for which, as a rule, no one will answer.