
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

6-19 November, 2020

Freedom of association, assembly and expression

- [The phantom portal of “Prismotra”](#), encouraged by the non-reaction of the competent institutions, continues to continuously discredit the work of civil society organizations and individuals who deal with the issue of protection and promotion of human rights in their work. In one of the last texts published on that portal, self-proclaimed "fighters against the negative influence of the NGO sector" applied tactics according to which they put themselves in the role of victims of aggressive influence of CSOs, in this case the Committee of Lawyers for Human Rights (YUCOM), which registers cases of attacks on human rights defenders. Given the frequency of attacks originating from this portal, a significant number of reported cases, according to YUCOM's analysis, point to this portal as the perpetrators of the attack, which this portal presented as disabling their free work.
- After the attack on the Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia, unnamed authors from the editorial board of this portal started a campaign of personal targeting of employees in the Independent Association of Journalists of Vojvodina (NDNV). The target of one such attack was [Milos Katic](#), who works as an accountant in NDNV, which in the interpretation of the “Prismotra” portal is presented as "raising funds to finance Vojvodina's separatism". They additionally attribute his participation in protests against the dismissal of RTV workers, as well as protests in the organization of the Initiative Don't let Belgrade d(r)own, "which are already known to gather Vojvodina and Kosovo separatists, secular extremists, flatheads and hooligans." A similar fate befell [Branislava Opranovic](#), a member of the NDNV Council and a journalist of the Autonomy portal, who they claim is "separatist". In addition to a series of accusations of promoting separatism, the authors of the text used her age as a motive for insult, calling her a "separatist grandmother", and photographs and posts on social networks advocating full autonomy of Vojvodina are offered as evidence of her separatism.
- After the attack on Natasa Djereg and Center for Ecology and Sustainable Development (CEKOR), the “Prismotra” portal published a [text](#) listing "anti-Chinese lobbyists in Serbia". The first in that text is Janos Kish, when they claim that together with Natasa Djereg, he is a member of the "Art

of living" sect and that he is in charge of organizing fake medical examinations, which are charged 50 euros. In addition to this "information", his mobile phone number was also published. Besides him, the text also mentions Zvezdan Kalmar, who is also accused of being a lobbyist against Russian investments in Serbia. Another employee of CEKOR, Pera Markovic was also mentioned, when they accuse him of "doing everything to keep 10,000 people in Bor and Smederevo out of work". It seems devastating that no institution in Serbia has made the slightest effort to do something to prevent personal discrediting and insults against people who are neither public figures nor engaged in public affairs.

- The Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia, the Association of Journalists of Serbia and the Union of Journalists of Serbia [condemned](#) the insults uttered against journalist Zaklina Tatalovic by folk singer Aca Lukas on Pink TV, alluding to the motive for her critical attitude towards the government. Their statements state that this case, as well as the used dictionary, is only a simplified version of the attack that Zaklina Tatalovic and other journalists suffer from the highest state officials, as well as the President of the Republic himself. It was also pointed out that part of the responsibility lies with Pink TV, bearing in mind that Lukas was allowed not only to finish, but also to repeat insults against the journalist several times during the show. The [Regulatory Body for Electronic Media \(REM\)](#) determined that no media law was violated and that therefore Pink TV is not responsible for this case, which ended this case without a reaction from the competent institutions. The Minister for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, [Gordana Comic](#), did not want to comment on this case either. The ignorant relationship between REM and Minister Comic supports the thesis publicly presented by the Protector of Citizens [Zoran Pasalic](#), emphasizing that the singer Aca Lukas made the mentioned claims and accusations precisely because he was aware that he would not bear consequences for such behavior, just like others cases of misogyny in public space were not sanctioned.
- [Journalist Ivana Mastilovic Jasnica](#), who has been reporting on the case and the trial of Milutin Jelacic Jutka for sexual abuse of former associate Marija Lukic for years, received disgusting threats via the social network Twitter. After she reported the case to the authorities, it was determined that the threat was sent via a Twitter account made from a phone number that belongs to a certain MM. After the interrogation, the suspect admitted that the Twitter account was made with the help of her phone number, but that she gave it to Milutin Jelacic's daughter, who used that account to insult those who write criticism against her father. After the summons as a citizen, Milica Jelacic admitted that she was the one who sent the messages, after which, with a warning, the Prosecution decided that there were no elements for criminal prosecution.
- The President of Serbia, [Aleksandar Vucic](#), used the tour of the works on the construction of the Covid Hospital in Batajnica to settle accounts with political dissidents and journalists. On that occasion, he accused his political opponents of investing hundreds of millions of euros in the purchase of N1, Nova S, News Max Adria, Danas and five radio stations, advising them "that it is easier for them to kill him". This statement is also a very serious accusation against the professional media, which, by connecting with opposition politicians, denies independence and objectivity in their work. Such statements are dangerous not only because of their obviously untrue content, but also because they lay the foundations for establishing an aggressive narrative towards these media and their journalists, which shows them as a legitimate target of insults, accusations, and even violence that often changes from verbal to physical.

- The work of journalists during the corona virus pandemic has gained additional importance, but the number of obstacles they face has also multiplied. In the most difficult situation [are local media journalists](#) who, due to inadequate cooperation by local officials, find it difficult to obtain reliable and timely information. One of the most serious obstacles faced by the professional media is the so-called "infodemia", ie a multiple increase in the number of fake news that reaches citizens mainly through social networks and whose representatives aggressively reject official data provided by institutions, but also aggressively attack those who use it. The documented concealment and portrayal of a false number of patients during the summer months also contributed to the division of the public, but also to the drastic drop in distrust in official data, BIRN wrote. All this, with the significant impact of the lack of education and the persistence of verbal violence as the dominant form of public communication, results in enormous numbers and frightening content of threats faced by journalists reporting on the epidemiological situation. In addition to the standard accusations that they are foreign mercenaries, you can often hear serious threats and curses such as "I wish you were cut in half". Such cases are alarming symptoms of growing violence in society, but also a clear indication that in crisis management it is necessary for the authorities to systematically address the issue of emotional and psychological aspects of coping with the crisis, especially since this emergency situation has lasted for almost a year
- Journalist and editor of the A1 portal and director of the Media Center in Novi Pazar, Enes Radetinac, received a [threatening text message](#) about his work. [The Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia](#) condemned these threats and called on the authorities to find the perpetrators as soon as possible, which was done thanks to the quick reaction of the police, and criminal charges were filed against the perpetrators for endangering security. It remains to be seen whether the trial will be conducted within a reasonable time and whether the perpetrator will be adequately sanctioned, which would send a clearer message that violence against journalists is not acceptable.