

Belgrade, March 15, 2021

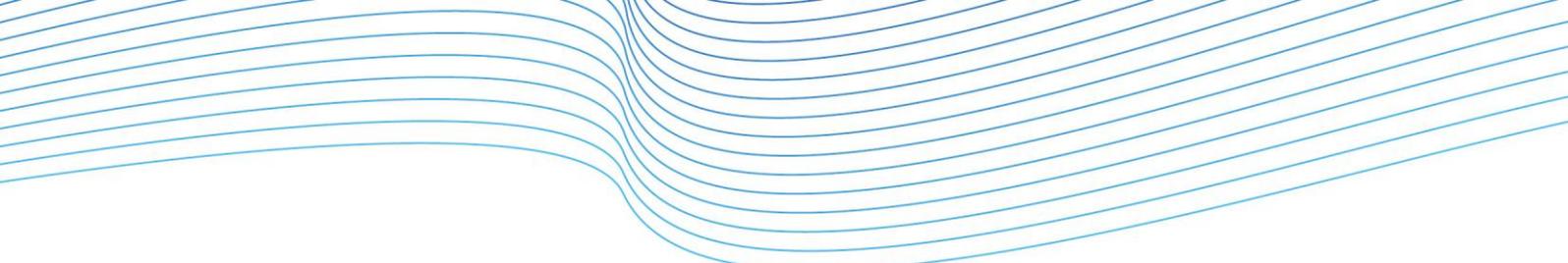
## **Open Call for Violence Against Non-Governmental Organizations Demands Sanctions and Removal of Aleksandar Martinović from the Position of the Chairman of the Assembly Committee**

On the occasion of the open call for physical violence by the Member of the National Assembly, Aleksandar Martinović, civil society organizations gathered in National Convention on the European Union working groups for Chapters 23 and 24 and cross-sectoral groups for political criteria and freedom of expression and the media demand a reaction from the President of the National Assembly from the position of Chairman of the Committee on Administrative, Budgetary, Mandate and Immunity Issues.

At a regular session, on March 11, 2021, Aleksandar Martinović threatened that anyone who criticized the government would be "beaten in the jack", thus openly calling for violence. We express our support and solidarity with CRTA and other organizations and individuals who have been accused by MP Martinović of participating in the "coup d'etat". We ask the members of the Committee for Administrative-Budgetary and Mandate-Immunity Issues to urgently remove the chairman of the Committee from this position; the President of the Assembly, Ivica Dacic, to sanction the drastic violation of the Code of Conduct, and the MP Martinovic to publicly apologize to CRTA.

The National Assembly forum must not be abused for the purpose of inappropriate reckoning with dissidents who are not in a position to answer to accusations. With the threats presented, MP Martinović once again showed that he is not worthy to perform the function of the Chairman of the Assembly Committee which should decide on cases of violation of the Code of Conduct for MPs. Martinovic, as well as his colleagues from the same parliamentary group, show how they have no intention to improve the work of the legislative body.

The criminalization of civil society, the media and political opponents has not stopped, despite the warnings from relevant domestic and international institutions and organizations. Verbal attacks by representatives of the executive and legislative branches of power mark the civil society organizations as "enemies of the state" and thereby question their professional integrity and reputation, and directly endanger activists and employees. This is repeated on a daily basis. Any indication of connection between the state and organized crime or a flagrant violation of the law provokes more and more brutal reactions of the holders of the highest state functions, instead of initiating positive changes and improving the environment in which we live. This kind of behavior distances Serbia and its citizens from meeting the basic criteria for EU membership, which remains declarative strategic goal of the Government.



Due to the aforementioned, the latest call for open violence against non-governmental organizations requires an urgent sanction and the removal of Aleksandar Martinović from the head of the parliamentary committee. Civil society organizations gathered in the working groups of the National Convention on the EU will continue to closely monitor the work of institutions and individuals and point out all illegalities and irregularities in their work. We are not giving up the fight for the rule of law in which freedom of expression is respected and all violence is sanctioned, even verbally, especially when it comes from the National Assembly, an institution that should reflect the sovereignty of the democratic will of the citizens of Serbia.

Working Group for Chapter 23

Working Group for Chapter 24

Cross-sectoral group on political criteria

Cross-sectoral group on freedom of expression and media