



## **Three Freedoms Under the Magnifying Glass**

### **Violations of Basic Human Rights in Serbia**

### **October, 8 - 21**

#### **Freedom of Expression**

#### **Nova.rs journalist Pero Jovovic Receives Death Threats**

[Media associations and organizations have condemned](#) the targeting and death threats that **Pero Jovovic, *nova.rs* portal journalist, had been receiving for displaying the Republic of Kosovo flag on his Facebook profile.** During his visit to Pristina, where he reported on the “Miredita, dobar dan” Festival, Jovovic published a Facebook check-in post in which he inserted the Kosovo flag. Soon after, he experienced death threats and targeting. The Independent Journalists’ Association of Serbia (IJAS) stated that this campaign against Jovovic was just another campaign of intimidating certain journalists for the purpose of portraying them as “state enemies”. [The “Miredita, dobar dan” Festival expressed](#) their solidarity with Jovovic while stating that persecution of journalists was unacceptable, especially if they report on human rights, freedom and discrimination. Jovovic received more than 1.500 hate speech and death threats just three day after the initial post.

## **Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia Condemns Threats to Journalists**

[Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia of Serbia \(IJAS\) announced that](#) Zoran Cirjakovic directed threats to journalists Jovana Gligorijevic and Snezana Congradin, but also to historian Dubravka Stojanovic and literary critic Jelena Lalatovic, from his Twitter profile, calling for their rape and throwing "acid in their eyes". Cirjakovic is known for threatening journalists from his Twitter profile in the past, while a group of journalists sent out an open letter in July 2019 reporting on continuous threatening they had been experiencing from Cirjakovic's Twitter profile. IJAS stated that this last case will be recorded and that relevant institutions and international organizations will be informed. **This case shows that relevant institutions are not ready to take necessary steps because threats have continued even after years of appealing.**

## **Radio Plus from Grocka Without Electricity After Reporting on Municipality President's Enterprise Debt**

[Radio Plus from Grocka could not emit its program on October 19, 2021](#) after an unexplained shutdown of electricity happened in the building where the radio's transmitter and broadcasting equipment was set up. Stefan Radic, the main and responsible editor of the radio, said that electricity was cut off after a Facebook post was shared on the radio's profile about the debt of an enterprise of Dragan Pantelic, the president of the Grocka Municipality. After that Facebook post, Milomir Nedeljkovic, the president of the Football Club "Pudarci", in whose building the radio equipment was located, notified Radic that he had to cut off the electricity because of Radic not respecting their contract. Nedeljkovic did not say what specific provisions were violated, while Radic claims that he payed for all electrical bills regularly. Nedeljkovic also claims that he "does not want to make a circus out of it" and that "he knows why his electricity was cut off". **Local journalists are especially open to pressure and threats and relevant institutions need to do more on creating an environment that is safe for them to work in.**

## **Private lawsuits against a professor and journalist that reported on sexual assault cases**

Playwright and professor of the Faculty of Dramatic Arts, Biljana Srbijanovic, [received a private lawsuit](#) from Miroslav Aleksic, sued for 4 criminal offences related to rape and 5 for sexual harassment, and his wife for insults. Aleksic also sued Ivana Mastilovic Jasnica, a journalist who first reported on the case of Milena Radulovic, who sued Aleksic for rape. Mastilovic Jasnica has also received a large number of lawsuits for reporting on sexual harassment in the case of Marija Lukic from Brus. **This is just another SLAPP lawsuit whose intention is to intimidate critical voices. This way legal mechanisms are being misused to force journalists and commentators to self-censor and to prevent them from informing the public on important subjects and to express about them freely.**

## **Freedom of Assembly**

### **Forced Payment of Court Ordered Fine for Not Reporting Assembly**

Member of the Let's Not Drown Belgrade movement, Dobrica Veselinovic, [received a court ruling](#) from the Misdemeanor Court in Belgrade which ordered a forced fine payment of 40.000 dinars, because of Veselinovic not paying the fine in time for not reporting an assembly. Veselinovic organized [an assembly in December 2018](#), named "A Heart for David", in solidarity with the "Justice for David" Movement that gathers in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, because of an unresolved murder case of David Dragicevic. Veselinovic stated that this case was only one of 30 cases that are in progress or have been resolved before courts and that are used for putting pressure on the movement itself. **International standards in this field recommend that the obligation of prior notification of assemblies's purpose was to provide enough space for organizers to use available legal means of protection in case the police forbids their assemblies, as well as to provide the police with time to prepare for measures to provide undisrupted and secure policing, and cannot be used as a tool for putting pressure on critics, which happened in this case.**

## **New Law on Protection from Noise in the Environment Restricts the Freedom of Assembly**

The new Law on Protection from Noise in the Environment enables local authorities to declare locations and measures protecting from noise for assemblies that can exceed marginal values of noise, with punishments if the assembly is held without or against their decision. The problematic Article 20 of this law also states that noise protection measures are declared after organizers request it from local authorities, while the request itself must be sent to the authorities minimum 20 day before the assembly, while the assembly cannot be held until local authorities adopt the decision on measures. In case the assembly is held without the decision or against it, legal entities must pay a fine between 500.000 and 1.000.000 dinars, and responsible persons in that entity a fine between 25.000 and 50.000. **This Law is in collision with the Law on Public Assembly in the case of the due date for notification and imposes additional obligations to organizers, which is against international standards in this field. The Freedom of Peaceful Assembly means that every peaceful assembly is permitted and every excessive and unnecessary obligation means restricting this right.**

## **Freedom of Association**

### **Activist Fined for Insulting Hospital Authorities**

The Basic Court in Novi Pazar fined Aladin Paucinac, a local activist on October 7, 2021 for insulting the acting director of the General Hospital in this city, Meho Mahmutovic. The Court said that Paucinac insulted Mahmutovic by chanting offensive slogans. Paucinac's lawyer stated that the fine goes against the rule of law and the practice of the European Court for Human Rights in the field of freedom of expression. Paucinac said that he was surprised by the sentence but that he expected this epilogue because of "court practice that is well known amongst citizens of Novi Pazar". He also said that he will file a complaint. Paucinac is leading protests since last year against hospital authorities which he calls for responsibility for bad conditions within the health system in his city and a high number of deceased. **Public officials must show greater**

**tolerance for critics aimed at them and cannot put pressure on activists for what they say or what they do in order to discourage their work.**

### **Police Puts Pressure on Activists and Locals During Protest**

Local activists from Paracin, gathered around the “Let’s Defend the Baba Mountain, Plana and Lesje”, are under pressure from the police, while a policemen [threatened locals](#) that are protesting, on October 7, 2021. In the last month, activists and locals have been asked to show IDs on [a protest on October 23, 2021](#) and in [one earlier incident](#), policemen have detained and grabbed a local during protest. [Locals are protesting and setting up blockades](#) because of problems emerging from a local quarry, including drying of water sources, damage on their houses and destruction of local roads from overloaded trucks transporting stones. **Using force to suppress citizens that are associating instead of facilitating active dialogue is unacceptable and goes against democratic values.**

### **Monitoring**

#### **Court Ruling against RTV Pancevo after Journalist’s Lawsuit**

[The Higher Court in Belgrade ruled on October 9, 2021](#) that Radio Television of Pancevo (RTV Pancevo) did not speak the truth about Pancevo.SiTi journalist Nenad Zivkovic and ruled a compensation of 80.000 dinars to be paid to the journalist. In the period from May 29 to June 6, 2019, RTV Pancevo published information about Zivkovic in which he was called out as “being worse than a passionate political activist”, “fake journalist” and “being part of a paid project that was unintentionally exposed by the American pro-government organization Freedom House”. Zivkovic filed a lawsuit on November 29, 2019 against RTV Pancevo and the main and responsible editor Jasmina Petkovic, asking for a compensation of 300.000 dinars, but the Court ruled a smaller compensation. Despite Zivkovic stating that he was satisfied by the ruling because it gives a small contribution to the field of public debate, he stated that the ruled compensations were not matching the damage journalists were experiencing. Zivkovic is running one more court process against RTV Pancevo and two more against the *epancevo.rs* portal and

its editor Aleksandar Cupic for lies that were reported on him at the same time as those in RTV Pancevo.