



Three Freedoms Under the Magnifying Glass
Violations of Basic Human Rights in Serbia
November 5-18, 2021

Freedom of Expression

Activists Detained After Throwing Eggs at Ratko Mladic's Mural

Activists Aida Ćorović and Jelena Jaćimović [were detained in Njegoseva Street in Belgrade](#) on November 10, 2021, after throwing eggs at a mural dedicated to Ratko Mladic. At the site of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR) scheduled rally, where activists planned to demolish the mural, which was then banned by the Ministry of the Interior, activists were [taken into custody after throwing eggs](#) with excessive use of force by persons who did not identify as officials. They were released shortly after being detained in the premises of the Vračar Police Station. Misdemeanor charges were filed against them and another person for violating the Law on Public Order and Peace.

No Police Reaction to the Interference and Insults Aimed at N1 Journalists During Live Reporting

The Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS) [condemned the obstruction and insults aimed at N1 TV journalist Filip Lukic](#), during live reporting from a protest of activists held on November 10, 2021 in Njegoseva Street. While joining the N1 program live, the reporter was approached by two members of the right-wing organization *People's Patrol*, who disturbed him, after which Lukic stopped reporting. NUNS states that members of the police did not react, even though they were in the immediate vicinity of the event. NUNS reminds that in recent years, journalists have become more and more exposed to such attacks, that they face pressures and threats, both on-spot and on the Internet, and that most of these cases go unpunished. It is also stated that authorities and persons close to them, who actively undermine independent journalism, are considered responsible, and the event of obstructing and insulting of Filip Lukic is a direct consequence of such treatment. Only a day later, on November 11, 2021, two people securing the mural in Njegoseva Street, [obstructed the N1 team again](#), which they pointed at, and then approached them with threats to stop filming. [Reporters Without Borders also condemned](#) the obstruction of N1 journalists, and their Pavol Szalai stated that journalists must be protected while reporting on topics that are important for society.

N1 TV Team Blocked at the Exit From the Zrenjanin Industrial Zone After Reporting on Incidents in the Chinese Factory "Linglong"

On November 16, 2021, [the team of N1 television was prevented from leaving](#) the Zrenjanin *Industrial Southeast Zone* after reporting from the construction site of the Chinese factory "Linglong" about the position and working conditions of Vietnamese workers on that construction site. The N1 team assumes that they were stopped by one of the lower managers, who first telephoned and then filmed the N1 team's car. The same person had tried to prevent a VOICE journalist from filming the day before, during which she was threatened with a lawsuit. Access to the barracks where the Vietnamese workers were accommodated within the construction site was blocked by members of private security.

Radio Television of Serbia Ignores the "Kreni - Promeni" Campaign

The "Kreni-Promeni" campaign announced that [Radio Television of Serbia \(RTS\) is censoring a new advertisement](#) against the arrival of the Rio Tinto Company, made as a reaction to the promotional campaign of this company that wants to exploit lithium in Serbia, which has already been broadcast on RTS earlier. "Kreni-Promeni" announced that they respected all legal procedures and business practices of RTS, but that all communication with RTS employees, with whom they agreed to release the advertisement in the program, stopped. "Kreni-Promeni" announced that they will file criminal charges against RTS through the Association for the Protection of Constitutionality and Legality, and call for disciplinary charges against RTS employees for "duty breaching". They also state that RTS conducts censorship and violates the freedom of expression, considering that the prepared advertisement is a response to the previously broadcast promotional campaign of Rio Tinto, before the scheduled referendum on lithium digging in Loznica.

TV Pink journalists attacked while reporting

On November 4, 2021, the TV Pink journalist team [received threats and insults](#) while reporting from the location where the "Kon = Mengele" graffiti was located, which refers to doctor Predrag Kon, a member of the Crisis Staff for the Suppression of COVID-19 Infectious Disease, written in one of the protests against covid passes. An unknown man insulted TV Pink journalists during the filming, and told the cameraman that "he would hit him if he didn't move". The Ministry of the Interior announced that the attacker was arrested on the same day and that a misdemeanor report will be filed against him. **Although the quick reaction of the Ministry of the Interior in this case is commendable, such a reaction is absent in many cases of attacks on journalists working in independent media, who are often targeted by public officials.**

Kosovo politician Rada Trajkovic's pension blocked

Politician Rada Trajkovic announced [on her Twitter profile](#) that her pension is under blockade due to the execution of a verdict based on a lawsuit of the Security Information Agency (BIA) official Bojan Dimic, before the First Basic Court in Belgrade, due to injury to his honor and reputation. Trajkovic stated that she was never informed about the lawsuit and that she found out about the existence of the verdict when her pension was blocked, due to the implementation of the enforcement procedure, because Trajkovic must pay a fine of 500.000 dinars according to this court verdict. Trajkovic states that she was sued by BIA member Bojan Dimic, because of a statement made while she was a guest on the “Utisak nedelje” show, broadcast on Nova S television, on June 2, 2019, stating that "Serbian security services and the mafia were involved in the murder of Oliver Ivanovic" Trajkovic said that she is being persecuted by Dimic because she speaks publicly about the murder of former politician Oliver Ivanovic. She also said that another court procedure is being conducted against her, also because of a lawsuit of Bojan Dimic, about which she was informed in time, and calls on international and civil society organizations to react, considering that the Serbian legal system is used to intimidate activists, whistleblowers and political dissidents.

Freedom of Assembly

Youth Initiative for Human Rights' Assembly Banned

The Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Serbia has banned the holding of a public gathering at which the demolishing of a mural dedicated to war criminal Ratko Mladic was planned, in Njegoseva Street in Belgrade. The Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR), which announced this gathering for November 9, 2021, on the International Day against Fascism and Anti-Semitism, [informed the public](#) that it had received a decision from the Ministry of the Interior not allowing the gathering due to the possibility of conflict between gathered and those who would come to "express displeasure and opposition" to this gathering. The Minister of the Interior, Aleksandar Vulin, [announced on the occasion of this ban](#), that "no one in Belgrade will clash on the streets and spoil the lives of our citizens, and no one will make

the enemies of Serbia happy with pictures of bloody Serbian heads." On the day of the originally scheduled protest, and according to eyewitnesses, members of the Ministry of the Interior [stopped and identified citizens](#) who found themselves in the immediate vicinity of the mural. YIHR states that the Ministry is stifling public gatherings against hatred with this ban, and thus consequently encourages "impunity and freedom of terror for extremist groups". **This is a continuation of the inadmissible practice of the Ministry of the Interior, where politically unsuitable rallies are not allowed, calling for the possibility of "physical conflict between them" due to "gathering a large number of people to express displeasure and opposition to the rally."**

Freedom of Association

Threats to organizations for supporting activists Aida Corovic and Jelena Jacimovic, as well as supporting the removal of a mural dedicated to Ratko Mladic

Several organizations announced that they received threats for providing support to activists Aida Corović and Jelena Jacimovic, who were detained for throwing eggs at a mural dedicated to Ratko Mladic, but also for supporting the removal of the mural, which is called for by civil society organizations. [The Initiative for Pozega announced](#) that in front of the premises of their prominent members in Pozega, in the morning hours of November 11, 2021, graffiti with the inscription "We are waiting for you" appeared, while in the center of Pozega graffiti "Ratko Mladić Serbian hero" appeared. The Initiative stated that they understand these threats as if they are directed at the Initiative itself and that they stand in solidarity with the Maslač family, which is targeted by the inscription. The premises of the *Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR)* in Dobračina 4 in Belgrade were painted twice with graffiti "Ratko Mladić, a Serbian hero". [The first case happened on November 11, 2021](#), and only four days later, [the same inscriptions appeared again](#). After the second incident, YIHR said that the wave of attacks on dissidents and those who openly speak out against war criminals and instigators has lasted for a week, and that representatives of institutions and tabloids close to them create an atmosphere in which such attacks take place and go unpunished. Activists gathered around the group *Čuvari/ke vatre* [announced that they received threatening messages](#) via Facebook due to

the support they expressed to activists Aida Corović and Jelena Jacimovic, and that they also received photos of their members, who were photographed during protests which their members attended, or whose photos were taken from their social media profiles. The group said it would file reports with the authorities. The Regional Academy for Democracy Development also received threats, [after officially supporting the removal](#) of the Ratko Mladic mural, saying that threats such as "hundreds of open death threats, the worst insults, calls for lynching and threats to emigrate from the country" were sent to their addresses and profiles on social networks. Balsa Bozovic, the president of the Executive Board of the Academy, [also received threats](#), after he was a guest on the show "Usijanje" on TV Kurir with Ratko Mladic's lawyer, Branko Lukic. In addition to Bozovic, other persons involved in Serbia's public life also received threats. Djordjo Zujovic, an official of the Social Democratic Party of Serbia, which is part of the ruling coalition, [was forced to leave Belgrade](#) because of threats he received after he threw lime on Ratko Mladic's mural. The actor and member of the Presidency of the Movement of Free Citizens, Sergej Trifunović, [also received threats](#), after he publicly expressed his position regarding the mural to Ratko Mladic.

***Women in Black* Banner Forcibly Taken and Burned After Protest**

After the *Mural must fall* protest, held by activists in Belgrade, on November 13, 2021, on the occasion of the attempt to remove the mural of Ratko Mladic in Njegoseva Street in Belgrade, the banner of *Women in Black* [was stolen and publicly burned](#). According to a statement from the Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR), a group of right-wingers who gathered near the *Mural Must Fall* protest followed the *Women in Black* activists after the protest, and then forcibly stole their banner with the inscription "We will never forget the genocide in Srebrenica." The banner was then publicly set on fire, and the footage was posted on social media. YIHR states that this case is a direct consequence of the equating of extremists and activists "which is a signal to the perpetrators that they can do whatever they want."

Lawyers Questioned by Police over Speeches at Protests and Internal Correspondence on Viber

Several lawyers who spoke at protests, organized over the lawyers' dissatisfaction with the Supreme Court of Cassation's (VKS) legal position that banks were allowed to negotiate loan processing costs, as well as those who corresponded in the internal Viber group, [were brought in for questioning by police](#). Lawyer Miroslav Zivkovic said that he was detained for speaking at the protest, in which he spoke about an example from legal history about a corrupt judge from Herodotus' records, while he stated that lawyer Emilija Petrovic was detained "for correspondence in a closed Viber group" to which she mentioned that "Judge of the Supreme Court of Cassation Dragisa Slijepcevic will give a lecture in Srebrno Jezero regarding the costs of loan processing." He adds that lawyer Slaven Bilcan was questioned because of his speech at the protest, and lawyer Cedomir Kokanovic and another colleague because of correspondence in the Viber group. At a special press conference, at which he presented this sequence of events, Zivkovic stated that it was a matter of repression of the system against the organizers of the mentioned protests and that they were detained because of reports of the judges themselves.

Threats to the Women's Association of the Kolubara District for organizing a dinner for refugee children

The Women's Association of the Kolubara District (ŽUKO) [received death threats](#) for organizing a dinner for refugee children on November 7, 2021. According to the association, they received a phone call from an unknown man who threatened to "kill them all" and "that they would be dead". They state that threats were made due to the events they organized on October 31, 2021, also called the *International Dinner*, which presented the traditional cuisines of the countries from which migrant children come without parental accompaniment, all accommodated in the Asylum Center in Bogovadja. It is stated that they immediately reported the case to the police and that the police reacted in a timely and adequate manner.

Monitoring

Suspended Sentence for Threatening the Editor of Danas, Dragoljub Petrovic

The Higher Court in Belgrade [ruled in the case of threats](#) addressed to the editor-in-chief of Danas, Dragoljub Petrovic, sentencing Dejan Ivkovic from Lazarevac to one year in prison, suspended for three years, for the crime of endangering security. According to the verdict, on November 8, 2016, after Petrovic gave an interview to the Cenzolovka portal, Ivkovic threatened Petrovic via Facebook, stating that he "prepared a set of knives and ropes for quasi-patriots of Serbia for whom there is no mercy." . He added that "there is no place for traitors to his country here." Ivkovic admitted the crime, justifying himself by the alcoholic condition he was in when writing the threats, but the Court found that the defendant had brought himself intoxicated and that it was irrelevant in the case whether the defendant intended to make threats but it takes into account whether the one who received the threats developed a feeling of fear and settlement.

Misdemeanor Proceedings Against a Group of Pirot Activists Suspended

Renewables and Environmental Regulatory Institute (RERI) announced that the Misdemeanor Court in Pirot, on November 5, 2021, [issued a decision terminating the misdemeanor proceedings](#) against a group of activists who blocked the construction of a mini-hydro power plant in Topli Do near Pirot, due to the obsolescence of the procedure. Activists were charged with violating the provisions of the Law on Public Order and Peace, because on October 7, 2019, they clashed with workers and the security staff, who came to the construction site. First, there was a short verbal conflict on one of the barricades set up by locals and activists in the early morning hours, and then the investor tried to approach the construction site from the other road. RERI says that the defense has prepared evidence that would release this group in case the verdict was passed, but they are also satisfied with the way in which the locals and activists came to justice.

The Policy of Not Punishing Attacks on Journalists Encourages New Attacks

Jeremy Dear, Deputy Secretary General of the International Federation of Journalists, said that [impunity for attacks on journalists in Serbia encourages new such attacks](#). The policy of impunity is problematic for journalists because of fear of possible attacks that will not be punished, and many of them resorting to self-censorship. Speaking about Serbia, Dear stated that journalists in Serbia face a bad economic and social position, as well as that they cannot do their job in an independent and professional way due to political pressure. He especially pointed out that media must have the opportunity to develop in terms of financial sustainability and safety at work.

First Verdict in the Case of Threatening Journalist Nedim Sejdinovic

The Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS) announced that the a verdict was passed by the Higher Court in Belgrade due to [threats received by journalist Nedim Sejdinovic](#). A person with the initials B.Z. from Belgrade, who received a suspended sentence of six months in prison for the crime of endangering security, in March 2019 sent death threats to Sejdinovic, in which he called for the "shooting" of this journalist. Sejdinovic states that this is the first verdict within several criminal charges he filed because of threats he received because of his texts. NUNS states that many of their colleagues received threats from the Facebook pages "Serbia is Our Country" and "Belgrade is Our City", where Sejdinovic was also threatened.