



Three Freedoms Under the Magnifying Glass

Violations of Basic Human Rights in Serbia

October 22 - November 4, 2021

Freedom of Expression

War Criminal Vasiljkovic Attacks Media that Reported Negatively on His Petition

Dragan Vasiljkovic, also known as Captain Dragan, whose foundation launched a petition to release the convicted murderer of former Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic, [accused the media](#), who reported negatively on his petition, of being “journalistic vermin”, “traitors of their kind” and “sold souls”. At an event held on October 22, 2021, in the Press Center of the Journalists’ Association of Serbia, he also defended the son of the President of the Republic, about whom the media previously wrote as a donor to his foundation. Vasiljkovic was sentenced to 20 years in prison for war crimes during the Yugoslav Wars. After serving his sentence, he became actively involved in public life. Such attacks on journalists who wrote and reported on current political and social issues violate the freedom of expression, while it is completely clear that Vasiljkovic's actions have the tacit support of the authorities. Journalists are often exposed to attacks of this kind, which are based on narratives about "foreign mercenaries" and "traitors". Such attacks are especially dangerous because they come from Captain Dragan, who was convicted of war crimes committed during the wars of the 1990s.

Journalist Snezana Congradin Received Threats Via Social Networks

Danas journalist Snezana Congradin received threats via Facebook from an employee of the Football Association of Serbia (FSS) after a statement she gave to the FoNet news agency. After Congradin was a guest on the "Kvaka 23" show, she received several insulting messages via Facebook from an employee of the FSS, in which, among other things, it was stated "that she is now his only concern". In addition to the insults, audio and video recordings were sent to her, in which the commenting and insulting of the journalist continued. Regarding this case, the FSS also spoke out, stating that it distances itself from the actions of the employee and that there is a possibility of initiating disciplinary proceedings. The Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia also informed the competent prosecutor's office about this case through the Standing Working Group for the Safety of Journalists.

A Lawsuit was Filed against the Crime and Corruption Reporting Network (KRIK) for a Trial Reporting

Predrag Koluvija, who is accused of organizing the production of more than a ton and a half of marijuana in the "Jovanjica" case, [sued the Crime and Corruption Reporting Network \(KRIK\)](#), claiming that he suffered mental pain due to KRIK's reporting from the trial, where he was marked as an "accused narco boss". Koluvija rejected the allegations in the indictment and believes that KRIK violated the presumption of innocence by reporting this way. On the other hand, KRIK states that it respected the standards of journalistic reporting in this case and that the world media, when reporting on crime trials, use the phrase "accused narco boss" or "accused crime boss". KRIK also states that they expect more such lawsuits in the coming period. **This is just one in a series of SLAPP lawsuits aimed at forcing journalists to self-censor in order to prevent the public from being informed about important issues, especially those dealing with corruption and crime.**

The Clinical Center of Vojvodina Restricts Freedom of Expression for Employees

[The management of the Clinical Center of Vojvodina \(KCV\)](#) sent a letter to employees reminding them of the KCV Business Code, which, according to the letter, was violated on several occasions when the employees published information about KCV's business and work on social networks. The letter specifically states that employees are "obliged to preserve the dignity and reputation of KCV", to "show the highest degree of loyalty" to it and that "they must not participate in activities that would harm the reputation of KCV". It was also stated that employees, at every opportunity, should report on the work of KCV in a positive light, while critical views must be expressed through internal channels and mechanisms. This is not the first letter of this type. At the beginning of the COVID-19 epidemic, KCV employees were informed about the ban on presenting information and commenting on the epidemiological situation in Vojvodina, under the threat of being fired. **It is inadmissible to restrict the freedom of expression and expression of employees in a public health institution in this way. Such bans impede the free flow of information on the situation on the ground and disable the channels of communication that were particularly important at the beginning of the epidemic.**

Pressure Continues on "Good Bad Evil" Podcast Authors

Aleksandar Sapic, Vice President of the Main Board of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), [filed a lawsuit](#) against the authors of the "Good Bad Evil" entertaining and humorous podcast, Nenad Kulacin and Marko Vidojkovic, for damaging his honor and reputation, demanding 1.1 million dinars in damages. The lawsuit states that the authors of the podcast, on several occasions, called Sapic derogatory and insulting names, due to which Sapic suffered mental suffering and his intellectual abilities were underestimated. On the other hand, Vidojkovic estimates that the lawsuit is just a continuation of Sapic's confrontation with this podcast, and that the intention to intimidate is hidden behind the lawsuit as part of the preparations for the upcoming elections. Kulacin confirms this assessment, reminding that Sapic had previously threatened to "pull out their hearts".

Freedom of Association

Activist Detained After an Incident in the village of Gornje Nedeljice

The "Ne damo Jadar" association announced that their activist Zlatko Kokanovic was detained on the occasion of the incident that happened on October 28, 2021 in the village of Gornje Nedeljice, near Loznica, during the visit of MEP Viola von Cramon and several opposition politicians and activists. They were approached by a group of activists from the ruling Serbian Progressive Party, who entered into a verbal conflict with von Cramon, shouting "Kosovo is the heart of Serbia", after which the police arrived. Von Cramon and opposition politicians and activists arrived in Gornje Nedeljice, where signatures are being collected for the withdrawal of the spatial plan that allows the construction of a lithium mine by the Rio Tinto company.

***Women in Black* Premises Attacked**

At the entrance to the *Women in Black* premises in Jug Bogdanova Street in Belgrade, misogynistic graffiti and inscriptions "Ratko Mladić" appeared, as well as the graffiti stating "Only Unity Saves the Serbs" ("Samo sloga Srbina spasava"). *Women in Black* said that this was just another in a series of attacks on this organization and that they had faced verbal and physical attacks in the past, as well as attacks on their premises. The organization blames the current regime in Serbia, led by Aleksandar Vucic, for these attacks, stating that right-wing groups are being used to deal with dissidents, especially those who advocate a break with the policies of the 1990s, in which Vučić was an active participant. **The policy of impunity that inspires further attacks on civil society organizations proves the unwillingness of state bodies to stand in the way of violent groups, which create an insecure environment for the work of civil society organizations.**

Monitoring

Attacker on Activist Milan Vujic convicted

The attacker, who brutally attacked Novi Sad activist Milan Vujic in August 2020, [was sentenced](#) to a suspended sentence of six months in prison for the crime of inflicting severe bodily injuries. Vujic was attacked on August 9, 2020 in Novi Sad, after which he underwent face and nose surgery. According to the media, the Court did not deal with those who ordered or incited the attack, but it was determined that the attacker was on the electoral list of the "Truth" Party, which participates in the government in Novi Sad.