



Three Freedoms Under the Magnifying Glass
Violations of Basic Human Rights in Serbia
November 19 - December 2, 2021

Freedom of Expression

**Journalists Disrupted Again While Reporting from the Construction Site of the
"Linglong" factory in Zrenjanin**

On November 20, 2021, [journalists from *Deutsche Welle* and the *VOICE* portal were prevented from reporting](#) on the relocation of workers from Vietnam who were engaged in work within the construction site of the “Linglong” factory in Zrenjanin. *VOICE* journalist Ivana Gordic stated that the road was blocked by the same person who had previously blocked the N1 team's vehicle, and who was found to be one of the managers at the mentioned construction site. However, the journalists managed to reach the village where the workers were accommodated, and their path was blocked again by another person, who withdrew soon after seeing the journalists using their phones.

Threats to *VOICE* journalist Ivana Gordic

The Vojvodina Research and Analytical Center (*VOICE*) [announced that their journalist Ivana Gordić received threats](#) due to reporting on the conditions in which workers from Vietnam work within the construction site of the "Linglong" factory in Zrenjanin. The statement states that *VOICE* was the first to report on the conditions in which the mentioned workers live and work, and that from that moment on, their journalist received threats. Gordic was filmed and photographed while going out on the field, as well as physically prevented from moving during reporting. The Independent Journalists' Association of Vojvodina (NDNV) warned that Gordic was exposed to threats and hate campaigns because she was the first to write about this topic. In their statement, they stated that it is inadmissible for journalists to be intimidated and suffer threats because they report on topics that are important for society.

***Danas* Journalist Attacked During Reporting**

While reporting from a public gathering at the Belgrade Youth Center on November 25, 2021, [Danas journalist Snezana Congradin was attacked](#) by members of the far-right "Leviathan" organization when she suffered a blow to the arm, which knocked out her phone, with which she filmed the gathering. The present members of the police reacted immediately and arrested the attacker. Congradin stated that she was doing a live broadcast from the protest for her paper and that she was attacked despite the present police officers in civilian clothes who separated the right-wingers and the gathering. The "Journalists against violence against women" group [reacted to this attack](#), expressing solidarity with their colleague. They state that the physical attack was preceded by a verbal attack in the presence of the police, which in itself was enough to prevent the attack.

Attacks on Citizens and Photographers During a Rally of the ruling Serbian Progressive Party in Sabac

At a rally of the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) in Sabac, held on November 29, 2021, several people were injured after shouting to SNS members at the protest. Members of the SNS [ran after one person](#), but it turned out that they ran after the wrong person. Two people sought medical help at the local ambulance due to injuries they sustained after [a fight with SNS activists](#). Also, photographer Andrija Vukelic [was beaten when he tried to photograph](#) the beating of two citizens. Immediately after the attack, he approached the members of the traffic police, who called a police patrol, which took him to the local ambulance, after which he gave a statement when he was told that they would "work on the case".

Journalist Kicked Out from Sombor's Mayor Press Conference

Journalist of the *SOinfo* portal, Savo Majstorovic, [was prevented from reporting](#) from the press conference of the mayor of Sombor, Antonio Ratkovic, and the Minister of Sports and Youth, Vanja Udovicic. Majstorovic was first allowed to enter the conference hall, but the security in the hall soon physically kicked him out from the event. Majstorovic states that he did not receive any explanation why he was kicked out from this conference. The Independent Journalists' Association of Vojvodina stated that this incident is proof of the endangerment of local journalists and proof that local politicians are ready to prevent journalists from asking questions and even kicking them out from their press conferences.

Death Threats to the Editorial Board of the Crime and Corruption Reporting Network (KRIK)

The Crime and Corruption Reporting Network (KRIK) [received death threats on Twitter on December 1, 2021](#). According to KRIK, the threats were posted below a story about a police officer who deleted a secret video of the father of Police Minister Nebojsa Stefanovic, but they say that the threat was most likely due to KRIK writing about the son of the President of the Republic. Namely, KRIK reported on a article from an Italian newspaper, which stated that Danilo Vucic, the son of the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vucic, [is the manager of one of the most wanted Serbian football players, Dusan Vlahovic](#). Zeljko Bodrozic, president of the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS), stated that such threats are a direct consequence of the government's treatment of the media. Bodrozic stated that investigative journalists are targeted because the government persistently discredits their work and calls them “traitors”.

Freedom of assembly

Large Number of Arrests and Incidents During Protest Blockades Throughout Serbia

During the protest blockades of roads throughout Serbia, which were held on November 27, 2021, with a hour duration, a large number of arrests took place, but also a large number of incidents that occurred on the spot. Thus, one person in Kula was injured during the police intervention, [after which he was arrested](#), while one person in Lazarevac was arrested after helping a police official get up from the road, [and is charged for "attacking an official person"](#). Members of the opposition Freedom and Justice Party (SSP) [were arrested in Zrenjanin](#), and according to Sonja Pernat, a member of the SSP who was arrested that day, when asked by police why she was detained, they told her it was "by order". Pernat also stated that before the arrival of the police, they were physically attacked by unknown men, as a result of which those gathered suffered injuries. An N1 journalist [was attacked in Gornja Sabanta near Kragujevac](#), when a man, dissatisfied with the roadblock, first told the journalist not to film him, and then hit

the camera. On this occasion, the N1 journalist [filed charges against the attacker](#). In Preljina, several people [were detained by the police](#), and in Pozega, 12 people [were detained](#) including the president of the environmental association "Ne damo Levac". Dozens of people received misdemeanor warrants and charges regarding the organization of the blockade. In Kragujevac, several people received orders [to report to the competent Misdemeanor Court](#), three members of the SSP [refused to testify without the presence of a lawyer](#), while the Democratic Party stated that 15 people contacted them due to [misdemeanor charges for organizing blockades](#) in Kragujevac and Rekovac. The journalist of the VranjeNews portal, Milica Dimić, had to give [a statement to the local police](#), but she was released immediately after it was determined that she was a journalist, and that she was on a journalistic assignment when she was at one of the blockades. Around 7-8 people [were arrested in Novi Sad](#), after the police tried to "break" the blockade.

Citizens in Sabac attacked with an Excavator, Battens and Hammers

[During the blockade of the Sabac bridge on the Sava](#), an excavator appeared, which entered among those gathered on the bridge, and then several people, with battens and hammers, physically attacked the gathered. The footage that appeared on social media clearly shows that at one point the police cordon withdrew, after which an excavator appeared, together with the attackers. [Based on eyewitness statements with which the Civic Initiatives were in contact](#), dozens of those present called the local police duty service during this incident, but their telephone connection was constantly cut off. Eyewitnesses also state that the traffic police patrol was in the immediate vicinity of the incident, but did not react. It is also presumed that the attackers were taken back to the city in official vehicles after the incident. Civil society organizations also reacted to the incident in Sabac, sending requests for action to the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Sabac, the Internal Control Sector of the Ministry of the Interior and the Protector of Citizens (Ombudsman), in order to clarify the events related to the incident. The organizations state that this incident showed a gross violation of the legal obligations of the police in the protection of life, rights and freedoms of citizens, and support for the rule of law.

Persecution of the Person who Stopped the Excavator that Rushed into the Blockade in Sabac

According to media, Dragan Milovanovic, a citizen who stopped the excavator that rushed into the group of gathered citizens during the protest blockade on the Sabac bridge on the Sava, was forced to leave Sabac, and is also thinking of leaving the country. It is stated that Milovanovic is the target of unknown persons, "who are looking for him", for "revenge" because he physically attacked the person who was on the excavator during the protest on November 27, 2021, after which the excavator was stopped. It is stated that Milovanovic does not trust the local police and blames their failure to act due to his endangered security. Milovanovic was arrested **the same evening on the day of the protest**, when he was detained for 48 hours. Two days later, he was released to defend himself, and he is charged with the criminal offense of inflicting severe bodily injuries, for which he faces up to five years in prison.

Police Exceeding Authority during the Protest Blockade in Belgrade

During the Belgrade blockade on Mostar loop, a member of the Ministry of Internal Affairs physically attacked two people. He lifted a woman by excessive use of force and transferred her across the sidewalk next to the highway. He physically attacked another citizen when he approached him and pushed him away during a discussion on the road. According to media, it was Aleksandar Krstic, commander of the Savski Venac Police Station, who earlier in the day tried **to hand over a decision banning the blockades** to the organizer Sava Manojlovic from the "Kreni-Promeni" campaign, who refused to accept the decision. On the occasion of this incident, the Belgrade Center for Human Rights (BCLJP) submitted an initiative to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Protector of Citizens (Ombudsman), in order to review the responsibility of this official. It is stated that Krstić acted "illegally, unprofessionally and humiliatingly" towards the gathered citizens.

Freedom of association

***Woman in Black* Premises Attacked Again**

The entrance to the *Women in Black* offices in Belgrade [was attacked again](#) with hate graffiti, which were dedicated to the convicted war criminal Ratko Mladic, but also directed against Stasa Zajovic from this organization. Zajovic states that this attack is not an isolated incident, but part of a continuous campaign of intimidation. She stated that such attacks are a direct consequence of the ruling party's policy, which gives freedom to extremist groups to operate in Serbia. This is the third attack on this organization in the last month. Previously, the office entrance to the *Women in Black* was strewn with similar inscriptions, and then on November 13, 2021, after the end of the protest in Belgrade, organized on the occasion of the mural dedicated to Ratko Mladic in Njegoseva Street in Belgrade, and the arrest of activists Aida Corovic and Jelena Jacimovic, who threw eggs at this mural, unknown persons stole their banner with the inscription "We will never forget the genocide in Srebrenica", and then publicly burned it.

Monitoring

Delay in the Case of Beating From Last Year's Protests in Novi Sad

According to information obtained from the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office in Zrenjanin, where the case of beating of an autistic boy by two police officers during last year's July protests in Novi Sad [is at a standstill](#). Initially, only one police officer was charged in this case, who is charged with the criminal offense of violent behavior, and then the investigation was expanded due to the new evidence that another police officer, who is charged with abuse and torture, participated in the beating. According to the allegations, the first police officer is charged with violent behavior, because at the time of the incident he was not on official duty, that is, he was not hired by the local police, but he was employed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs at the time, unlike the second police officer, who was on official duty at the time of excessive use of force.

New Report of the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS) on Media Freedom

According to the research of the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS), Serbia [has not contributed enough to the protection of journalists in 2020](#). This report covered some of the activities envisaged in the Revised Action Plan for Chapter 23 and the Report on the Implementation of the Revised Action Plan for Chapter 23. The report stated that the European Commission, in its annual progress report, stated that attacks on journalists by high-ranking officials continued, while the Protector of Citizens, also in his annual report for 2020, stated that physical and verbal attacks on journalists continued in 2020. It is stated that the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media does not perform its work independently and transparently, and that the state must withdraw from the ownership of the media. The example of Novosti and Tanjug is cited, from whose ownership the state did withdraw, but these media are now under the control of persons close to the Serbian Progressive Party.