

THREE FREEDOMS UNDER THE MAGNIFYING GLASS

Cases of violations of basic human rights in Serbia 27 May - 9 June 2022



Freedom of expression

- Novosti journalist physically attacked

Novosti journalist Marijana Kutlača was physically attacked on 27 May 2022 in Belgrade after trying to film an incident happening on the street in front of the city transport bus in which she was a passenger. The attack on Kutlača happened after three persons first blocked the road and damaged the bus and then one of the suspects physically assaulted her. The case was reported to the police and the competent prosecutor's office initiated a process against the attacker. Kutlača stated that she was in shock and that none of the passengers in the bus reacted or defended her from the attack.

New attack on Nova portal journalists

Nova.rs portal journalists were attacked again during field work on 28 May 2022, while reporting from a scene of a burning restaurant in Belgrade. **Nova** journalists were approached by a man who threatened and insulted them demanding they delete the restaurant footage. Despite the journalists insisting the case be solved in the presence of the police, the attacker did not allow them to move. The Higher Public Prosecutor's Office confirmed to the **Nova** portal that the attacker was arrested. As stated by the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS), this case was "a new attack on journalists who report from the field" and that this was "a situation in which journalists were directly exposed to physical harm" which are becoming more common. It was stated that competent authorities need to solve the case fast and sentence the attacker adequately, so that "future potential attacks on journalists would be discouraged".

Nova.rs portal openly discriminated by President of the Serbian Government

Several accusations were made by Serbian Government President Ana Brnabić against **Nova.rs** after an interview this portal had done with the minister of mining and energy was published on 1 June 2022. On this occasion, Brnabić stated that it was "unfair and inhumane" that minister Mihajlović did that interview, while also stating that **Nova.rs** was "in direct ownership of Dragan Đilas" and that this portal "speaks on the worst terms about President Aleksandar Vučić and his family". Brnabić also mentioned "red lines" and said that this particular case would be discussed by party bodies.

OK Radio from Vranje exposed to torture for months

The premises of OK Radio and a bar that works within the same space in Vranje were attacked by unknown men for the third time in a row in the last month and a half. The owner and employees of this radio are being threatened for months for not allowing the construction of a facility just next to them, while the construction site was closed at one moment by the inspection for not having necessary permits. The construction continued and the attackers first broke windows at the entrance to this space and soon after they sprayed the interior with white liquid. In the last attack that happened on 7 June, employees found windows in a separate office completely walled up. The Association of Independent Electronic Media (ANEM) reacted on this occasion and announced that it was "horrified by these savage attacks" on their member, asking the question on when these attacks could evolve into physical ones. The Coalition for Free Media also reacted calling relevant bodies to detain the attackers and those who ordered the attacks.

MONITORING

No progress in the case of the attack on the “Momci” Group exhibition

The Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS) announced that no significant progress has been made after a year and a half since the attack on the comics group “Momci”. It was announced that the on duty policeman was sanctioned with salary reduction for inadequate reaction but additional reaction from the institutions was lacking, stating that the “ministry was silent, and most of the attackers and threats were not processed”. In the evening hours of 13 October 2020, a group of unknown men entered the exhibition and destroyed the works of the comics group “Momci”, during which tear gas was also activated within the gallery.