

THREE FREEDOMS UNDER THE MAGNIFYING GLASS

Cases of violations of basic human rights in Serbia 14 - 27 October, 2022



Freedom of assembly – Activists arrested and injured while protesting in Šodroš, Novi Sad

Environmental activists protesting in Šodroš, trying to prevent the start of construction works by the CRBC company from China on that location, have been targets of use of psychical force by the police. Videos available on social media show activists trying to prevent CRBC workers from installing fences on spots where construction was planned for a new bridge in Novi Sad, saying that the company does not have necessary permissions to begin with the construction, thus making it illegal. Fully equipped police officers arrived on-spot soon after, pushing protesters deeper in the forest and clearing spots where the construction fence was being installed. One of the activists stated that two policemen kicked her while trying to push her away. She said that she asked one of the police officers “for his number” to file a lawsuit against him for overstepping authority, while another police officer said that “they do not have numbers today with them”. One student also stated that he was hit by a police officer and that due to injuries received, he went to the hospital. Media reported that at least 10 people were arrested by the police and taken away. Activists have once again gathered in Šodroš on 23 October 2022. N1 shared a video of a woman with visible injuries to her head, who said that a police officer hit her with his shield after she fell to the ground. Another activist reported on his social media profile that he has been injured by the police during the protest, posting a photo from the medical center including a medical report on his condition.

In another video posted on social media, Gendarmerie members are seen using excessive force against a woman, who tried to get away from them, while protesters continuously shouting to the police officers to let go of her. Another video showed one of the activists with visible injuries made to his neck, who stated that these injuries were inflicted to him by the Gendarmerie. N1 reported that 4 persons were detained while 3 persons received injuries that needed to be treated immediately. All injured activists received medical care in the nearby activist camp, while N1 reported that all persons detained were released in late evening hours. **Civic Initiatives were told by activists on spot that the Emergency Service declined their request to come and provide urgent medical care to injured persons, saying that activists needed to request urgent health care from the police first.** Since June 2022, environmental activists have been protesting the planned construction of a new bridge in Novi Sad claiming that works will completely devastate Šodroš, the last green oasis in this city, and an area inhabited by protected species, while also claiming that the works are a prelude to building a new residential and business complex similar to Belgrade Waterfront, a project marked with human rights violations.



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Freedom of expression

-Pressure on the Press

Council

The Press Council said it was under pressure due to attacks and accusations against members of the Complaints Commission of this independent and self-regulatory body. The statement said that the attacks followed after the newspaper Danas sent a request to evaluate the compliance with the Code of Journalists of one of their interviews with the actor Goran Jevtić, who was previously convicted for illicit sexual acts against a minor. The President of the Republic of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, compared this Danas interview with an interview that the pro-government tabloid Informer had previously done with a serial rapist, and for which protests were held for days in front of the editorial office of this tabloid in Belgrade. Danas denied this comparison, stating that they did not discuss the crimes Jevtić had committed. The Press Council stated that the aim of the pressures they are exposed to is to discredit the work of this body, but also the decision itself, which has yet to be made in both cases. To the accusations that it is not possible for a media to submit a request for an assessment to this body, the Council replied that it was not the first time that the Commission considered someone's request of this type, and that it precisely serves as a possibility in the event that it is not possible to determine who exactly is the injured person who would, as a rule, appeal to this body.