

THREE FREEDOMS UNDER THE MAGNIFYING GLASS

Cases of violations of basic human rights in Serbia 30 September - 13 October, 2022



Freedom of expression

- "Da se zna" LGBT+ organization volunteer attacked

Volunteer of the "Da se zna" organization Lazar Savić was attacked in Čačak twice in the same day, according to the statement of this organization dated October 2, 2022. Savić was attacked in front of a fast-food restaurant, first verbally by two men, and then one of them spat on him. Savić was also pelted with a beer bottle. "Da se zna" stated that this case, motivated by homophobia, came after Savić appeared in public several times, and that these attacks "depict the life of all LGBT+ people who decide to come out publicly and talk about their lives." The attacks were not reported to the police "due to previous bad experiences".

"Večernje novosti" journalist Jelena Skenderija threatened

"Večernje novosti" journalist Jelena Skenderija was threatened on social media, because of a text in which she expressed doubts about the work of the humanitarian organization "28 June". In a series of texts, she raised doubts about the donation process for the treatment of one child, for which money was collected even though the treatment is free. Organization "28 June" denied all statements, and Skenderija received threats from private profiles on social networks, some of which contained death threats.

Local councilor and activist from Majdanpek forcibly taken for questioning

Councilor in the Majdanpek Municipal Assembly and activist Martin Bežinarević was forcibly taken to the court on October 3, 2022. Bežinarević stated that he was taken because he did not respond to a court summons, which he denied stating that he never received any. He stated that the invitation was allegedly delivered to him on the day he attended the session of the local parliament, and no invitation was delivered to his home address. In question is the court case that is being conducted against Bežinarević on the charge of the police chief in Majdanpek, Srđan Milutinović, for insult. The lawsuit followed the incident from 2020, when Bežinarević went public talking about the case of the police chief's physical attack on citizen Dijana Ilić. He was also sued by the deputy president of this municipality and he stated to the media that "all public officials must endure a certain amount of public criticism and have a threshold of tolerance for such things."

Persecution of an activist from Majdanpek who spoke about police violence

The Bor Police Department announced on October 4, 2022, that a report will be filed against Dragan Dmitrović, who testified about the violence he suffered during interrogation at the police station in Majdanpek on September 29, 2022. The statement said that Dmitrović was interrogated at the Police Station on October 3, 2022 regarding these claims, and was then referred to the Health Center in Majdanpek, where no injuries were confirmed. At the end, it was stated that a criminal complaint has been filed against Dmitrović due to suspicion that he attacked four workers of the Chinese company "ZiJin" on September 18, 2022. Several environmental activists from Majdanpek were, according to the claims of witnesses, victims of police violence, including beatings, coercion of statements and preventing contact with lawyers and family members. Dragan Dmitrović went public on September 29, 2022, and said that during the interrogation, two inspectors hit him on the head and back with their fists and threatened to kill him during the interrogation, trying to force him to sign a false statement prepared in advance in which he incriminates three other activists.

Another ban on participating in a press conference in the lobby of the parliament building

MP Radomir Lazović told the media on October 6, 2022, that the President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, Vladimir Orlić, did not allow citizens to address a special media conference, which was organized on the citizens' struggle against the construction of a quarry in Kosjerić. The "Open Parliament" initiative, which monitors the work of the republic's parliament, made a statement on this occasion, stressing that the practice of preventing the participation of citizens in such media conferences was not good. It was stated that the very ban on participation sends a message "that their participation in democratic processes was not desirable, which is contrary to the foundations of democracy." Previously, the participation of mothers of children from the town of Pećinci, whose children were withdrawn from the local preschool was prevented, and according to the mothers' claims, this happened because they are members of the opposition Democratic Party and because of their participation in the farmers' protest that happened in that town earlier.

A journalist and a MP from Niš sued for talking about expired food in a local kindergarten

Journalist of the "Niška inicijativa" portal Srđan Nonić and MP Jelena Milošević were sued by the acting director of the Public Preschool Institution "Pčelica" in Niš, Svetlana Mitić, for "causing panic and disorder", for a public statement in which they announced that the food prepared in this institution had expired. MP Milošević stated that employees of this institution turned to her for help, stating that the director threatened them after she was told that the expiration date of the biscuits used in food preparation had expired. Milošević addressed the media with photographs and correspondence of employees, stating that they needed to request insight into the internal documentation, so that, according to Milošević's claims, Mitić would retroactively create all the missing documentation to hide the omissions in her work. The MP stated that this was not the first time that food has been discussed in this kindergarten. Journalist Nonić added that he suspected the falsification of internal documents after he gained insight into them.

Journalist Vladimir Mitrić verbally attacked

Journalist and correspondent of "Večernje novosti" newspaper from Loznica and Šabac, Vladimir Mitrić, was verbally attacked in the town of Draginac near Loznica, where he was on a journalistic assignment. Mitrić stated that when he entered the restaurant in this place, accompanied by the police, he was verbally attacked by a person, who called him derogatory words. On that occasion, he was told that he would be beaten again. Mitrić has been under police protection since he was beaten at the entrance of the building where he lives 17 years ago by a former police officer. He states that the person from the restaurant was also a former police officer. He pointed out that he was worried about his safety, and that this attack proved his claims that he could be attacked again if his police escort was abolished.

*A member of the
"People's Patrol"
organization
interrupted the live
program of TV N1*

Damjan Knežević, a member of the extremist organization "People's Patrol", interrupted the live reporting of the Zagreb TV N1 newsroom on October 12, 2022, which was conducting an interview with Dragoljub Petrović, the editor of the Danas portal, on Slavija Square at that moment. On that occasion, Knežević spoke about the President of the Republic, Aleksandar Vučić, but also addressed Petrović, whom he reproached for writing about the People's Patrols, "without asking them for their opinion." Petrović denied this, and Knežević then returned to his vehicle, which he stopped nearby.

Freedom of association
*-Pride Info Center
burglarized*

The premises of the Pride Info Center in the center of Belgrade were burglarized twice on October 9, 2022. The "Da se zna" organization reported that an unknown younger person took money from the donation box, and then, together with another person, entered the PIC again during the night and stole the rest of the money from the box. This organization stated that the money was collected to support the process of psychological and legal assistance to victims of homophobia and transphobia, which was implemented by "Da se zna". In the end, it was stated that institutions not reacting to previous cases of attacks on the PIC "is more than condoning them."