THREE FREEDOMS UNDER THE MAGNIFYING GLASS

Cases of violations of basic human rights in Serbia 25 November - 8 December 2022

THREE FREEDOMS PLATFORM

freedom of association  freedom of assembly  freedom of expression

Freedom of expression
- Journalist Minja Miletić sued for insult

Euronews Serbia journalist Minja Miletić was sued for defamation, it was announced on November 24, 2022. Euronews Serbia announced that they are providing full support to their journalist, who was sued by MP and official of the Socialistic Party of Serbia, Vladan Zagradanin, after she interviewed the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Government of Serbia and the leader of this party, Ivica Dačić.

Local authorities in Tutin discriminate against local media

The editors of the local Pešter TV from Tutin, South Serbia, stated that the local authorities in Tutin have been discriminating against this television for the last two years. According to reports, local officials do not invite Pešter TV journalists to municipal events, nor to the crisis headquarters sessions of this municipality, while the pandemic was going on, but also recently, after the declaration of a state of emergency due to floods. In addition, Pester TV journalists do not receive answers to the questions they ask municipal leaders, nor do officials respond to invitations to participate in this television's program. In connection with the reasons for this treatment of Pešter TV, on one occasion the PR of the municipality, Dinko Bejtović, announced that Pešter TV does not report objectively, while the head of the municipality's cabinet, Edita Dizdarević, cited a disputed news item from this television, which she said was taken out of context.

RTV journalist targeted by a public official

Ribar Bagyi Renata, a journalist from the Hungarian newsroom of Radio-television of Vojvodina, was targeted by the State Secretary in the Ministry of Education and the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (VMSZ), Annemarie Vicsek. Vicsek made a verbal attack in a Facebook comment, and after the publication of the interview, which Ribar Bagyi did with VMSZ official Balint Pasztor. Because of the question that Ribar Bagyi addressed to Pasztor on that occasion, regarding the controversial "Memorial to the Innocent Victims of 1944/45", on which there are also the names of convicted war criminals from the Second World War, Vicsek stated that Ribar Bagyi "had such a dose of hatred when she is talking about another person only because he is from the VMSZ" as well as that she was "taking over the rhetoric of the Serbian opposition, with which hatred is being spread and there was constant talk of some list".

Targeting of journalist Veran Matić by tabloids close to SNS

Journalist Veran Matić, as well as B92 and Insajder productions, were targeted by the tabloid "Informer" in a text published on November 22, 2022. The published text actually conveys sections of the book written by Zvezdan Jovanović, who was convicted of the murder of former Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić, and who in the book relativizes the events related to this murder. On this occasion, the Coalition for Media Freedom also spoke out, which sees this action by "Informer" as an attempt to discredit the journalists who researched and wrote about the background to the murder of Đinđić, and who were therefore under long-term police protection.
The journalist of the portal 021.rs was prevented from reporting from the session of the Planning Commission

021.rs portal journalist Aleksandra Reves was prevented from attending the Public Session of the Commission for Spatial Plans in Sremski Karlovci, this media reported on November 28, 2022. As the reason for this action, the competent authorities announced that “allowing a journalist to attend a public session would be a violation of the municipal ordinance”, and that only citizens, or associations, who had objections to the proposed spatial plan were allowed to attend. Therefore, it was announced that the presence of the journalist “would mean that all citizens could attend the session”. Portal 021.rs concluded that they never had any problems during the long-term reporting from the sessions of the Novi Sad Planning Commission, and they see this treatment of journalist Reves as preventing her from reporting from a public event and informing the public about the sessions that were held.

Journalist Jelena Obućina received death threats

TV Nova S journalist Jelena Obućina received disturbing death threats, it was announced on December 1, 2022. These threats followed after tabloids close to the Serbian Progressive Party, “Informer” and “Alo”, published texts in which they deliberately interpreted Obućina’s words directed at the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, negatively. After the publication of these texts, Obućina received disturbing death threats, which she reported to the competent authorities. Media associations and the regional network SafeJournalists responded to these threats. The competent authorities announced on December 8, 2022, stating that the person who made these threats was found and detained.

Freedom of assembly - Environmental defenders under pressure during protest

Environmental defenders gathered on November 28, 2022 in the center of Belgrade, and during the protest, they were exposed to pressure from police officers. On several occasions, the police asked several participants for their IDs, but also tested them for the presence of alcohol and psychoactive substances. Nebojša Petković from the association “Ne damo Jadar” announced that they experienced this behavior of the police as a form of pressure. Although he stated that the police officers communicated professionally, Petković emphasizes that the police officers cited the instructions of their superiors as the reason for this behavior.

Teachers who protested school violence under pressure from principals

Teachers protested in more than 47 cities in Serbia on December 1, 2022, alleging that they were pressured by the principals of the schools where they work. As the president of the Alliance of Labour Unions of Educational Workers of Serbia, Jasna Janković, told the media, the threats were sent by “party-affiliated directors”, among other things, to teachers who work on the basis of fixed-term contracts. In addition, the Forum of Belgrade High Schools stated that they received information about the educational inspection going out to the field, which checked whether teachers were present at their workplace. Mass protests by teachers were announced after a case of student violence against a teacher that happened in a school in Trstenik, who also filmed this attack.
The High Court in Belgrade rejected the lawsuit of the Millenium Team company against the JugPress agency, that is, their founder "NGO Center for Democracy and Development of the South of Serbia", as well as the editor-in-chief Ljiljana Stojanović, reports N1 on December 5, 2022. The SLAPP filed by the Millennium Team for "subsequent damages for injured business reputation" demanded the payment of damages of 100 euros, an amount that due to public pressure was reduced from the initial amount of 100,000 euros, due to the previously conveyed position of the opposition People's Party on this portal, which criticized the work of this company. This is the first lawsuit of the Millennium Team against JugPress which was dismissed, with the possibility of an appeal, while the proceedings for two more separate lawsuits are still ongoing.