

THREE FREEDOMS UNDER THE MAGNIFYING GLASS

Cases of violations of basic human rights in Serbia 9 - 29 December 2022



Freedom of expression – Attacks on the United Media company

The company United Media, which owns both N1 and Nova S televisions, announced on December 26, 2022 that it was under "one of the most dangerous targeting campaigns". The announcement came after a special program was broadcast on Pink TV the previous day, in which the guests were MP and official of the Serbian Progressive Party, Vladimir Đukanović, as well as other people close to this party, including the editor-in-chief of the "Informer" tabloid. For several hours, they called the television company United Media "treasonous" because they "work in cooperation with the Government in Pristina to endanger the security of Serbs in Kosovo." Responding to these performances, United Media stated that their journalists are being targeted for critical reporting on the actions of officials, and that the attacks have become worse and include death threats. Previously, Prime Minister Ana Brbanić also made a series of accusations against the United Media company, stating that this company does not pay taxes in Serbia because it is "registered in Luxembourg". The attacks against N1 and Nova S televisions intensified in the context of delaying the decision of the Regulatory Body for Electronic Media (REM) on the allocation of the fifth national frequency, for which Nova S television also applied.

The newspaper Danas was also exposed to attacks

The tabloid close to the ruling Serbian Progressive Party "Srpski telegraf" published an article targeting the editorial office of the newspaper Danas, it was announced on December 28, 2022. The text was published under the title "Next to Danas, we don't need enemies", and it contains parts of various texts published in Danas that are interpreted in accordance with the editorial policy of this tabloid. In addition, Nova S television was also targeted with this text. The editor-in-chief of the Nova S portal, Mihailo Jovičević, announced on this occasion that this text represents a continuation of the campaign targeting their journalists, the aim of which is to intimidate them, and it comes just a few days after the show on Pink TV, in which dangerous accusations and insinuations were made about the journalists of television N1 and Nova S.

Politician Rada Trajković detained at the Merdare crossing

Politician Rada Trajković was detained on two occasions at the Merdare administrative crossing for several hours without any explanation as to why this was done by officials at the crossing. She was initially detained for four hours while traveling to Kosovo on December 15, 2022, and was then detained again when entering Serbia on the same day. Due to the inability to receive the therapy that is necessary for her treatment, the following day she was transported from the crossing to the hospital in Prokuplje, after which she was transferred to home treatment. Trajković referred to the actions of the officials as "mental torture of political dissidents", addressing the President of Serbia whom she accused of being behind this incident.

Freedom of association

-Russia Today targets civil society organizations

The new portal of Russian state television Russia Today for the Balkan region, RT Balkan, targeted prominent civil society organizations working in Serbia, in an article published on December 20, 2022. The announcement lists the "highest paid non-governmental organizations that received money" from donors from the United States of America, in the period from 2018 to 2022, and singled out the Roma Education Foundation, NGO Atina, Catalyst Foundation, Reconstruction Women's Fund, CANVAS, CRTA, the Belgrade Center for Security Policy and the Slavko Ćuruvija Foundation. In addition, Civic Initiatives, the Krokodil Association, the Krenipromeni organization and the Asylum Protection Center are also highlighted in this article. Media were also singled out, so the portals KRIK, BIRN, Danas and Vreme were designated as "recipients". At the end, RT Balkan states that "every year, millions of US dollars arrive in the non-governmental sector in Serbia", through which "the administration in Washington tries to influence society and the government in Serbia".

MONITORING

Members of private security claim that they had orders to beat activists on Starica mountain near Majdanpek

Members of private security on Mount Starica told N1 that they had orders from the FTO security, hired by the Chinese company ZiJin, to use physical force against environmental activists who were camping on Mount Starica, as well as against other persons who would approach the property of this company. One of the employees stated that they were asked to demolish the activist camp and move them from the location where they were located, stating that several of his colleagues were hired without the necessary license, and often they were convicted persons. In addition, he stated that they were asked to film the attacks and that they would receive monetary compensation for each. The managers of the mentioned company rejected all these allegations. We remind that environmental activists on Mount Starica were repeatedly attacked by private security, and in one incident they found the camp where they were staying demolished. The situation culminated in the disturbing confessions of environmental activists, who were subjected to police torture with the aim of extorting false confessions in order to criminalize them.

The Draft Law on Internal Affairs was again withdrawn from the procedure

The Ministry of Internal Affairs again put the Draft Law on Internal Affairs for public discussion, as well as a set of other regulations from this area, and then the Prime Minister of Serbia, Ana Brnabić, announced that they had been withdrawn from the procedure. The new proposals were strongly criticized by the public and civil society organizations due to the expansion of the powers of the police and the minister of internal affairs and the introduction of mass biometric surveillance, which would drastically threaten the achieved level of human rights and basic freedoms in the country. Previously, the Draft Law on Internal Affairs was withdrawn in September 2021, following criticism from civil society organizations, and the latest withdrawn draft is largely similar to the previous one.