

THREE FREEDOMS UNDER THE MAGNIFYING GLASS

Cases of violations of basic human rights in Serbia 3 - 16 February 2023



Freedom of expression – Citizen receives lawsuit from politician for insult

The President of the Municipality of Indija, Vladimir Gak, filed a private criminal lawsuit for insult against Milan Milosavljević from this municipality, the Vojvodina Research and Analytical Center (VOICE) reported on February 2, 2023. Milosavljević stated that he received the lawsuit because he commented on a post on the municipal Facebook page, calling the President of the Municipality a liar. He confirmed that he wrote that comment because of unfulfilled promises from before by Gak. Lawyer Veljko Milić stated that Gak could have initiated civil proceedings against Milosavljević if he believed that his honor and reputation had been violated, but he opted for a criminal proceeding that could lead to more severe sanctions. Milić concluded that public office holders must suffer criticism, even harsher ones, and that this point of view has been repeatedly confirmed by the European Court of Human Rights.

Investigative journalists targeted by the Prime Minister

The Prime Minister of Serbia, Ana Brnabić, made a series of accusations against investigative journalists, who write about the activities of criminal clans and court proceedings in which members of these groups are tried, in two separate cases on February 5 and 6, 2023. Brnabić has repeatedly accused research portals of cooperation with criminal clans, with the aim of criminalizing Danilo Vučić, the son of Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić.

Editor-in-chief of the Crime and Corruption Research Network (KRIK) Sergej Dojčinović stated that he is "sure that the prime minister was referring to KRIK", given that she had previously made similar accusations in the same context. Dojčinović states that the campaign of attacks on them is an attempt by the authorities to remove responsibility from themselves, taking into account that KRIK previously wrote about the government's ties with criminal clans in Serbia. He concludes that he is often faced with verbal attacks on the street and on the networks, even when the highest political office holders do not name journalists, because the attackers assume who they meant.

Politician Rada Trajković targeted again

Rada Trajković, a Kosovar politician and critic of the authorities in Serbia, has once again been targeted by the highest political officials. Accusations against Trajković of being a "Western agent" were made by Vučić in an Instagram post dated February 6, 2023, and he was joined by the Prime Minister of Serbia Brnabić, who on the same day called Trajković "the greatest shame of our people" on Twitter. We remind you Rada Trajković is often the target of insults from Serbian politicians, and on several occasions her freedom of movement was restricted. In one such case, she was detained overnight at the Merdare administrative crossing, and due to the inability to receive the necessary therapy, she had to be transported to the nearest health facility for treatment.

Journalist Pero Jovović received death threats

The journalist of the Nova S portal, Pero Jovović, is again exposed to death threats because of his articles and expressed views, and he received the latest death threats on February 9, 2023. An anonymous Twitter profile first threatened Jovović by mentioning a gun and a bullet, and after Jovović replied that the threat was "a case for the prosecution", the person behind the same profile replied that all members of the LGBT community "should be killed publicly". In the end, Jovović stated that he reported everything to the Prosecutor's Office for High-Tech Crime, but that none of the previous cases of threats, to which he was often exposed, had any progress in the investigation.

BIRN portal sued for transmitting information from trial

The BIRN portal announced on February 13, 2023 that it had received a SLAPP lawsuit from Predrag Koluvića, the owner of the company "Jovanjica", who is on trial as the leader of a criminal group that grew marijuana. As stated in BIRN's announcement, Koluvića claimed that he was caused mental pain by the transmission of information from the trial, for which reason he is demanding damages in the amount of 200.000 dinars. BIRN stated that, in accordance with the Law on Public Information and the Media, it transmitted the information that was presented at the main trial as part of the trial process, and that this lawsuit contains all the elements of a SLAPP lawsuit, which aims to prevent journalists from further reporting in public interest.



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