

# THREE FREEDOMS UNDER THE MAGNIFYING GLASS

Cases of violations of basic human rights in Serbia, 7 - 20 April 2023



## Freedom of expression

### *The President of Serbia insulted the journalists of the Danas and Nova newspapers*

The President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, called the journalists of the Danas and Nova newspapers "big liars" at a press conference held on April 7, 2023. At the conference, he referred to the earlier campaign of the Prime Minister of Serbia, Ana Brnabić, who on that occasion targeted the independent media, stating that they were "obsessed" with the President of Serbia.

### *TV Pink owner Željko Mitrović threatened journalists from other newsrooms*

The owner of Pink TV, which is close to the ruling Serbian Progressive Party, Željko Mitrović, published on April 7, 2023, on his Twitter account, a video in which he criticizes "journalists from other newsrooms" for insulting Serbian institutions, as well as because, as he says, "they are carrying out a public lynching of the journalists" of his television stations. He also announced that "it is not excluded" that he will use his own media power in "self-defense".

As a reminder, Mitrović has already targeted journalists from other newsrooms, by publishing a video in which he calls for the arrest of the journalists of the editors of the portal Nova.rs, the daily newspaper "Danas", television Nova S and N1.

### *Simo Spasić threatened Nova S host Ivan Ivanović*

The president of the Association of Families of Kidnapped, Missing and Murdered in Kosovo and Metohija and convicted rapist Simo Spasić, known to the public for his open support for the ruling Serbian Progressive Party, sent threats to TV presenter Ivan Ivanović on April 9, 2023. In connection with these threats, the *SafeJournalists* network also reacted, which called the institutions to prosecute Spasić as soon as possible due to the latest threats

### *Singer Vlado Georgiev threatened a journalist from the Nova.rs portal*

Singer and composer Vlado Georgiev threatened a journalist of the Nova.rs portal on April 10, 2023, after the journalist asked him a question about his private business. Namely, the journalist was interested in information about the financial report for the year 2022 of the company "Danube Cargo", which deals with river cargo transportation, and which Georgiev opened in 2020. After the email with questions sent to him by the journalist, the singer called him by phone and sent harsh threats.

## *The mayor of Belgrade made accusations against journalists of N1 and Nova S*

**The mayor of Belgrade, Aleksandar Šapić, made a series of accusations against Nova S and N1, during a public statement on April 11, 2023.** On that occasion, journalists asked him to comment on a recording that has reached the public, on which his chief of staff can be heard offering to set up a public procurement to a private company that manages the ticket collection system in Belgrade's public transport.

He also said that the video can be edited, and when asked by N1 why he did not answer the questions of the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, which reported on this video, Šapić said that he "doesn't talk to liars".

## *Public official condemned Danas for a cartoon*

**Director of the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund of the Republic of Serbia and member of the ruling Serbian Progressive Party Relja Ognjenović targeted the daily newspaper Danas on April 19, 2023, via Instagram.** With a post on Instagram, Ognjenović criticized the caricature published in this daily newspaper, which referred to Prime Minister Ana Brnabić. In another Instagram post, Ognjenović announced a lawsuit against the newspaper Danas, due to an article about Ognjenović being illegally appointed to the position of director of this state organization.

## **Freedom of assembly**

### *President of Žagubica Municipality hit MP Aleksandar Jovanović Ćuta*

**Member of Parliament of the Republic of Serbia Aleksandar Jovanović Ćuta was attacked by the President of the Municipality of Žagubica, Safet Pavlović, after a protest in that place, organized due to the announcement of the opening of a mine.** Ćuta went to Žagubica to support environmental activist Ivan Milosavljević, and a fight broke out in front of the municipal building after Pavlović provoked the crowd by blowing them kisses. The attack on Ćuta took place, as he claims, after they entered the municipality building, and he refused to shake hands with Pavlović.

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# MONITORING

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## *Anniversaries of the deaths of great journalists whose families are still waiting for justice*

Twenty-nine years since the death of Duga newspaper journalist Dada Vujašinović was marked on April 8, 2023, and two days later, 24 years since the murder of Slavko Ćuruvija, journalist and publisher of *Dnevni telegraf* and *Evropljanin* newspapers.

The President of the Commission for Investigating Murders of Journalists, Veran Matić, said on Friday, on the eve of the 29th anniversary of the death of Vujašinović, that he thinks the prosecution is keeping the case open, but that there is no proactivity. The initial investigation stated that the journalist killed herself with a hunting rifle, however, seven years ago, the Dutch forensic institute came to the conclusion that the cause of death could be murder, suicide or an accident. None of this has yet been proven.

No one has yet been convicted of the murder of Slavko Ćuruvija. These days, the closing arguments in the court proceedings of the murder suspects are underway. The prosecutor asked for a maximum of 40 years in prison, and the suspects, former heads of the Department of the Security Service of Serbia Radomir Marković, Milan Radonjić and Ratko Romić, declared that they are not guilty of murdering Ćuruvija.

## *N1 correspondent from Kragujevac under threat*

The lawyer of N1 television correspondent from Šumadija and Pomoravlje districts, Milan Nikić, stated that his client is threatened because he is engaged in journalism. As he says, in the last three years, Nikić was the target of verbal and physical attacks seven times, which were perpetrated against him exclusively during or in connection with the performance of journalistic work.

The matter went further when Nikić was intimidated while filming a feature on the strike of workers at the city waterworks public enterprise in Kragujevac, which was followed by direct surveillance of his apartment. Because of this, he was relocated from his home, but after a month he had to return and continue his work, because his existence was threatened. Lawyer Radivoje Kastratović appeals to all competent institutions to ensure smooth work for journalists.



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