

THREE FREEDOMS UNDER THE MAGNIFYING GLASS

Cases of violations of basic human rights in Serbia, 12 - 25 May 2023



Freedom of expression

The conservative movement Naši again attacks N1 TV

On May 12, 2023, the center of Kragujevac was plastered with posters with the image of Joseph Goebbels and the inscription "If a lie is told enough times it becomes the truth" accompanied by the logo of N1 below.

The posters are signed by the "Naši" movement. This is not the first time the movement has designed and put up posters calling out political party leaders or the media by comparing them to historical figures and movements in a negative context.

Vučić told the N1 journalist that she deserves to be kicked out of the conference

When N1 television journalist Žaklina Tatalović was asked on May 14, 2023 to comment on Prime Minister Ana Brnabić's tweet (a tweet in which she mocks the participants of the anti-violence protest), Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić stated that he would not expel her from the conference, even though she deserved it.

The President of Serbia often uses media conferences to express his personal views towards independent media, as well as their journalists personally, often insulting them.

New inscriptions against N1

On May 16, 2023, new spray-painted inscriptions appeared on the previously painted over mural of Hague convict Ratko Mladić in Vračar - "N1 traitors" and "Milovi traitors".

Đorđe Miketić, a member of Zajedno Moramo, along with fellow citizens, drew a heart over the mural of Ratko Mladić. Just a few days later, Partizan fans also left their message "Turn on your brain, turn off Pink" in the same place.

A few days after he defaced the mural, Miketić started receiving threats through social networks, as well as encountering graffiti that reads "Miketić, Ratko's soldiers are still there."

Threats to a journalist because of an article about the patriarch

Due to his criticism of the Serbian Orthodox Church, following Patriarch Porfirije's insulting remarks about women, Danas journalist Nikola Krstić received several threats and insults in a single day. After sharing the article about the patriarch on social media, Krstić stated that threats began pouring in from various sources, including right-wing groups, tabloids of associates of the government and representatives of the opposition.

The SafeJournalists network has requested from the police and the Prosecutor's Office to find all the persons who sent threats to journalist Nikola Krstić regarding the article in Danas. As they said, an orchestrated campaign was conducted against Krstić, led by the tabloids, who, immediately after the publication of the text, twisted the facts from Krstić's text in an almost identical manner and emphasized that he hates the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Coalition for Media Freedom: The verdict against KRIK prevents freedom of expression

On May 15, 2023, the Coalition for Media Freedom expressed concern over the first-instance verdict against KRIK for a text in which they announced that multiple SLAPP lawsuits had been filed against the newsroom, including one filed by the leaders of the police Witness Protection Unit.

The coalition points out that the freedom of expression of journalists is threatened by this verdict, as the verdict now limits their reporting on the proceedings against them. In this way, the state interferes with freedom of expression and pressures the media not to announce that proceedings are being conducted against them.

The International Press Institute (IPI) also supported KRIK, stating that KRIK's investigative articles in previous years "annoyed" the government of President Aleksandar Vučić and linked several ministers and deputies to corruption scandals, which is why they retaliated with a large amount of SLAPP lawsuits.

Marko Vidojković from DLZ is targeted again

Milimir Vujadinović, MP of the Serbian Progressive Party, accused Marko Vidojković, co-author of the podcast "Good, Bad, Evil (DLZ)" on the portal Nova.rs, of delivering "satanic speech" and called that podcast a "satanic temple". He also said that SNS will continue to fight "against the madness that comes out of the mouths of Marko Vidojković and Milovan Brkić."

Let us remind you that during the previous two years, Vidojković received more than 50 death threats, which has compelled him to reside abroad..

Members of Parliament Marinika Tepić threatened with death

MP and Vice-President of the Freedom and Justice Party, Marinika Tepić, received threats to "calm down" or "she will be killed" on the Facebook social network.

The case was reported to the police.

Freedom of assembly

Threats to the organizer of the farmers' protest

On May 15, 2023, a group of individuals tried to intimidate one of the farmers' protest organizers, Mileta Batu Slankamenac from Gospodginac near Žablje, by coming to his village. Milet's friends told him that they were looking for him, so he took cover and informed the police, after which he and his family were escorted.

According to Slankamenec, he did not find out who tried to intimidate him, but he knows that they left the village as soon as the news appeared on the networks announcing that he was being threatened.

Farmers' protests, which began on May 16, were organized because of the poor conditions under which they produce and sell their products, so they are asking the state for help in the form of subsidies and guaranteed better prices when purchasing agricultural goods.

Farmers across Serbia were prevented from going to protest in Belgrade

Farmers who, after several days of protest for better working conditions, went to Belgrade on May 19, 2023, to join the protest against violence, were prevented by the police in various ways.

Those who left the village from the vicinity of Kragujevac were initially stopped near Velika Plana, and later near Požarevac, where police officers wrote them a ticket. A similar situation was with the farmers from Rača, who, after several stops, the police returned to Smederevo, not allowing them to go to Belgrade with tractors.

At a protest against violence, Manojlović from the "Kreni-promeni" movement was attacked

On the day of the anti-violence protest, May 19, 2023, the Kreni-Promeni movement published a video showing how unknown persons attacked Savo Manojlović. Later, as they say, they determined that they were members of the People's Patrol.

In addition to Sav, two other women were attacked at the protest by Ilija Vuksanović, who has a history of attacking officials. He first tried to take a flag from a woman that said "Stop Femicide" and then got into an argument and cursed at her. He also tried to attack her, but the participants of the protest prevented him.

People in Pančevo were prevented from leaving their financial support for Aleksandar Vučić

It was not possible to leave the meeting in Pančevo, where the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, spoke on May 20, 2023, so easily, even for ordinary passers-by. People in white vests and jackets, on which the name of Aleksandar Vučić was written, formed a cordon and prevented the movement of people, so that they would not leave the space intended for the gathering.

In one of the videos posted by MP Marinika Tepić on her Twitter profile, it can be seen that the cordon was led by Novak Nedić, the Secretary General of the Government of Serbia. The Democratic Party announced a criminal complaint against SNS due to the events in Pančevo.

MONITORING

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) advocates punishing attacks on journalists in Serbia

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) supported the statement on ending impunity for crimes and the targeting of journalists in Serbia, which was jointly submitted by the Association of Journalists of Serbia (UNS), the Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia (NUNS), the Union of Journalists of Serbia (SINOS) and GS KUM Nezavisnost at the Annual Assembly EFJ held in The Hague.

In the joint statement of the journalists' associations, the Serbian judiciary is called upon to conduct fast, impartial, thorough and effective investigations in all cases of murders, attacks, harassment and intimidation of journalists in the online and offline sphere.

People forced to go to the meeting of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS)

Representatives of the opposition parties have submitted a letter to the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office in Niš, requesting the judicial institution to react due to the pressure on employees of public companies and institutions to attend the meeting held on May 26 in Belgrade.

As they say, employees are threatened with dismissal if they do not attend the rally in the capital, which is a criminal offense.

This situation is not unique to Niš, people from all over Serbia are being blackmailed in various direct and indirect ways to go to the capital for the rally scheduled for May 26, 2023.

The methods of coercion were explained by the former employee of the Public Utility Company "Gradska čistoća" Bogosav Nešović and the president of the United Trade Unions of Serbia "Sloga" and MP Željko Veselinović.

