

# THREE FREEDOMS UNDER THE MAGNIFYING GLASS

Cases of violations of basic human rights in Serbia, September 22 - October 5, 2023



## Freedom of Expression

*President  
Vučić accuses  
the journalist*

During his address to the public, President Aleksandar Vučić accused N1 journalist Sanja Sovrlić of insinuating with her question that Serbia is responsible for the attack on Kosovo police that took place on Sunday, September 24. After the President's address, the journalist asked if there was any information about attackers who killed a policeman from Kosovo, and whose uniforms attackers wore, and where they got them from, to which the President accused the journalist of insinuating that Serbia is responsible for what happened. In the situation of tensions in Kosovo, it is extremely dangerous to put journalists in the context of national enemies, which directly endangers their safety.

*Threats to Brankica  
Stanković*

Journalist Brankica Stanković was threatened with expulsion via platform X. The threat came after a program on Happy television in which the editorial staff of Insider and Brankica Stanković were designated as responsible for creating a "monstrous image" about the people of Kosovo.

*The security guard  
attacked the N1  
journalist*

A security worker of the Mitros factory from Sremska Mitrovica attacked N1 journalist Maja Đurić, first verbally, and then physically. The worker tried to remove the N1 team from the public area in front of the factory, and on that occasion he pushed the journalist away. This is another in a series of attacks on journalists in the previous two weeks, and in the report of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, it was stated that the safety of journalists in Serbia is a serious cause for concern.

*Vranje news portal  
targeted*

Vranje committee of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) issued a statement in which Vranje News was labeled as "the newspaper of the terrorist and war criminal Albin Kurti". Independent Journalists Association of Serbia warns that this kind of rhetoric "directly threatens the safety of journalists and makes them targets of further attacks" and calls on SNS to condemn the statement of its city committee from Vranje. After the events in Kosovo in Banjska, the media reporting impartially on this event are exposed to constant threats and intimidation, and the labeling of independent media as "enemies of the state" and "traitors" puts journalists in an extremely dangerous situation.

## Targeting of the newsroom and editor of Danas

In just a few days, the editorial staff and the editor of the newspaper Danas Dragoljub Petrović, were repeatedly exposed to threats, attacks and pressure. On Facebook a comment on the text "What is the role of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the tragic events in Kosovo?" was left that said: "After the burning, there will be no mention of them". On the same day, the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, during a guest appearance on a TV show, targeted the newspaper Danas, saying that the "destruction of Serbia" is the main topic and goal of this media. The day after Vučić's comments on the TV, leaflets targeting Dragoljub Petrović, the editor-in-chief of the paper, were thrown at the entrance of the building where the Danas editorial office is located. The leaflets are signed by the Conservative movement Naši, which is not the first time that this movement has attacked independent journalists, but so far no one from this movement has been held accountable for the constant attacks and targeting of the media.

## Painted board at the entrance to RTS

**Green-left front MP Radomir Lazović painted a board at the entrance of Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) in pink color during the "Serbia against violence" protest.** Lazović states that he intended to point out to RTS the need to report "in the interest of the citizens", but his action was condemned by various journalistic associations. The Association of Independent Electronic Media (ANEM) announces that even though they have been pointing out for years that RTS does not fulfill the provisions of the Law on Public Media Services, this does not give anyone the right to paint the RTS with a threatening message that Lazović said: "Consider this a warning". "Such words are welcomed with joy by those who send daily 'warnings' and threaten N1, Danas or individual journalists in a much more massive and brutal format ... We have to work to stop this spiral of unacceptable attitude towards journalists", announced ANEM.

## Freedom of Assembly

### The Police "removed" a woman from a reported protest

**The police in Požarevac removed Radica Dimitrijević from the location in front of the court building where she was on a hunger strike.** Although Radica reported the protest, the police forcibly took her to the police station, where she was detained for 40 minutes, after which she was taken to the hospital due to arm pain. Radica has been on hunger strike for the third day because of a property dispute that has been going on for 13 years, and in recent years she has been on hunger strike several times over the same issue.

### The Police stopped the protest march

**On September 23, the police interrupted the protest march called "Stop Cutting Forest" organized by the "Defend the Forests of Fruška Gora" movement.** The protest was organized due to the culmination of planned forest cutting in the Fruška Gora National Park. After the police prevented the gathered citizens from blocking the road, the protestors returned in front of the information center of the National Park, where the protest started. Citizens have the right to freely express their dissatisfaction and to use various protest methods for this purpose, and every prevention of this is a violation of basic human rights.

## *Police clashed with environmental activists*

**The police clashed with environmental activists who were waiting for the arrival of Prime Minister Ana Brnabić on Kablar, in order to express their dissatisfaction with the plan to build a glass observation deck on that mountain.** MP of the Ecological Uprising, Aleksandar Jovanović Ćuta, told the media that the police "pressed them onto the sidewalk" and then arrested three activists. The activists were released later in the evening.

## **Freedom of Association**

### *Arrested activist Petar Đurić*

**The president of the "Dad, this is for you" movement, Petar Đurić, was arrested on September 23, at an event in Belgrade.** The police state that the reason for the arrest was a public order disturbance and not having an ID card at the time. On the other hand, Đurić believes that the real reason for his arrest is political. At the time of his arrest, he had with him a cardboard figure depicting President Aleksandar Vučić in a prison suit, which Đurić regularly brings at the "Serbia against violence" protests. Đurić's movement announced that he received death threats via social media after this event.

### *Marko Oljača was attacked*

**The President of the Society for Sustainable Future "Steps" Marko Oljača was attacked in Belgrade on the night between September 30 and October 1.** Two unknown men physically attacked Oljača, and the motives of the attack are still unknown.

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# MONITORING

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## *Convicted Aida Ćorović*

The misdemeanor court in Belgrade handed down a verdict in which activist Aida Ćorović ~~was convicted of violating public order and peace, because she threw eggs at a mural of Ratko Mladić in November 2021.~~ However, the verdict does not mention anywhere that the activist targeted a mural dedicated to a convicted war criminal, nor does it mention the inappropriate behavior of the police towards the activist during the apprehension. Ćorović stated that she will not pay the fine of 100,000 dinars and that such a verdict will not intimidate and silence her. With this verdict, the court has once again sided with those who glorify war criminals and spread hatred and intolerance in society.



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