

ALERT: Stop police brutality against citizens

Dear colleagues,

The organizations gathered around the Three Freedoms Platform strongly condemn the police brutality towards the citizens gathered at the protests in front of the Belgrade City Assembly on Sunday, December 24, and call for an immediate reaction by the competent authorities to protect basic rights and freedoms. Since the elections on December 17, the citizens of Belgrade have been gathering every evening in front of the building of the Republic Election Commission (RIK) to express their dissatisfaction with the undemocratic election conditions and the theft that occurred before and during the election day, which was pointed out by [local](#) and numerous [international observation missions](#). Vote buying, mass migration of voters brought to the capital with the aim of altering the electoral will of citizens are just some of the irregularities recorded in the parliamentary and local elections. It is exactly these election irregularities that the citizens point out every day in front of the RIK, but yesterday the police used force for the first time in order to disperse the crowd. The organizations gathered around the Platform demand an immediate reaction from the authorities in condemning police brutality, which is a gross violation of the fundamental principles of the rule of law, in which the police should be a service to citizens, not a tool of repression.

In defense of the electoral will, the citizens of Belgrade gathered in front of the RIK on December 24 at 6 p.m. A little later, the protest rally continued spontaneously in front of the City Assembly building when MPs from opposition parties tried to enter the building. Their entry was prevented by strong police forces securing the Assembly building. Soon a group of hooded men threw stones at the entrance.

[The Coalition of Serbia against Violence](#) announced that these are hooligans who were planted by the government in order to cause riots at the protest. This would not be the first time that the government used such tactics in order to subsequently justify the actions of the police and to present representatives of the opposition and citizens who express their dissatisfaction as thugs who would destroy the constitutional order. The police threw smoke bombs and pepper

spray at the crowd and started to break up the protest. Numerous examples of [violent behavior of the police](#) towards the demonstrators were recorded in the videos and photos, and [several people were injured](#) in the police assault. [Several press teams were attacked](#) during the protest. Among the injured is a journalist from the Nova.rs portal, who was hit on the arm by a policeman with a baton. Attacks on Al Jazeera and Beta cameramen were also recorded. [People's deputy of the Green-Left Front Radomir Lazović](#) also announced that he received several blows from behind by members of the gendarmerie. During yesterday's protest, [38 people were arrested](#), including [4 students](#), who were taken into a civilian car by armed persons. Police violence against the demonstrators culminated in yesterday's protest, but the pressure and intimidation to which the gathered citizens were exposed has been pointed out for days. Young people are particularly exposed to targeting, whom the state should encourage to participate in political life and the building of a democratic society, and not, instead, send them the message that protests are something that ends up in prison.

We remind you that earlier this week, videos of an unknown person who was scrolling through the photos from the personal documents of students who are protesting election theft on his phone appeared on the Internet at one of the protests. The photo of an activist from his passport also appeared in pro-government tabloids, and such an identity document could only come from someone from the police. This is the grossest abuse of personal data and [abuse of the police for political purposes](#), and the intention is to intimidate and discourage young people who stood up for democratic principles and values.

In conditions where the competent state authorities do not react to violations of the laws of this country, citizens are forced to seek the protection of basic rights on the street and to fight for them in non-institutional ways. Terror, violence and intimidation used by the police in the service of the government are an unacceptable example of violation of basic rights and freedoms. We condemn the brutal use of force against citizens and call on the competent state authorities to act in accordance with the law. We also call on international and domestic organizations, bodies, independent institutions, individuals and the media to condemn the

[attack on the basic rights of citizens](#), which were violated in the most brutal way during the election day on December 17, but also during yesterday's protest, and in order to prevent further erosion and collapse of basic political and civil liberties.

Signatories:

1. Civic Initiatives
2. Slavko Ćuruvija Foundation
3. Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR)
4. The Lawyers' Committee For Human Rights (YUCOM)
5. The Belgrade Centre for Security Policy (BCSP)
6. Independent Journalists Association of Serbia (IJAS)
7. Novi Optimizam
8. Belgrade Centre for Human Rights
9. Autonomous Women's Center (AWC)
10. Center for Cultural Decontamination
11. Helsinki Committee for Human Rights
12. Catalyst Balkans
13. BeFem, feminist cultural center
14. Women in Black
15. SOS Women's Center
16. Citizens Association Women Space
17. Association of Women Sandglass
18. European Movement Serbia
19. A11 Initiative for Economic and Social Rights