



Three Freedoms Under the Magnifying Glass Violations of Basic Human Rights in Serbia

June 14 - June 27, 2024

Freedom of Expression

The journalist was banned from entering Serbia

Voice of America and Radio Free Europe journalist Roman Perl was banned from entering Serbia at the beginning of June. Due to his journalistic profession, Roman was labeled a "foreign agent" in Russia, and the reason for the ban on entering Serbia was that the journalist was a "security risk". Reporters Without Borders announced that Serbia's decision was influenced by Russia.

Brnabić is targeting the media

The President of the Assembly, Ana Brnabić, accused the media of closely cooperating with criminals in the alleged attacks on Vučić. She labeled the media as collaborators of the mafia, which is dangerous targeting and endangering the safety of journalists. Attacks on independent media came in the week when The Global Expression Report, of the international organization Article 19, was published, in which Serbia was ranked 90th out of a total of 161 countries, thus placing it among countries with limited freedom of expression.

Decision on the extradition of the Belarusian journalist

The High Court in Belgrade made a decision to extradite journalist Andrej Gnjet to the Belarusian authorities. The Independent Journalists Association of Serbia (IJAS) announced that it is suspected that the real reason why the Belarusian authorities are seeking his extradition is actually his activism. The defense has the right to appeal this decision to the Court of Appeal. This is another in a series of examples of problems that foreign journalists in Serbia face, especially those who are unwelcome in Russia and countries under its close influence.

KRIK constantly exposed to SLAPP lawsuits

Another judgment was passed against KRIK. This time the reason is the text in which they announced that they were sued by the police unit commander Goran Živković and two of his associates. In the explanation of the Appellate Court, there are also parts that do not exist in the text itself. In connection with this case, the National Working Group for the fight against SLAPP announced that "They fear that the government has finally decided to deal with independent media and journalists, and that KRIK is only the first to be attacked. We demand that the authorities stop stifling media freedom by abusing the judicial system, as well as provide support to independent media and ensure their work without fear of repression." Just a few days after this verdict, Predrag Koluvića, who has already sued several times and won KRIK in court, announced that he will sue them again. The large number of lawsuits KRIK is facing calls into question the survival of this research portal and is an indication of how pressure is being exerted on independent media.

Another lawsuit against the Slavko Ćuruvija Foundation

Another one of those acquitted in the case of the murder of journalist Slavko Ćuruvija, Miroslav Kurak, sued the foundation for a statement expressing disagreement with the verdict. Pressure on the media and the civil sector is also achieved through lawsuits that exhaust journalists and activists financially as well as immaterially.

Feda Štukan was banned from entering Serbia

Actor and writer from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Feda Štukan, was banned from entering Serbia. Feda was detained at the Nikola Tesla airport when he was coming to Belgrade for the festival of the Association "Krokodil", where he was a guest. The actor was not informed that the entry ban imposed on him last year for participating in the "Serbia against violence" protests was still valid. The entry ban is in some way a punishment to the writer for publicly expressing critical views towards the regimes in the region, including Serbia. The campaign against this artist, after participating in the protests, was also conducted through the regime's tabloids, which insulted him on national and religious grounds. Dealing with intellectuals is the manner of the government of the Serbian Progressive Party, which strives to abolish and ban any form of criticism.

Posters at the entrance to Danas

The conservative movement "Naši" plastered posters with the image of Slobodan Milošević at the entrances to the premises of the newspaper "Danas". This is not the first time that this far-right movement has targeted critical media and destroyed their property. No one has responded so far.

Fredoom of Assembly

The student was acquitted

Student Dimitrije Radovanović, arrested in December at a protest in front of the Belgrade City Assembly, was acquitted of "violent behavior". We remind you that Dimitrije spent more than a month under house arrest. The prosecutor's office announced an appeal against the court's decision, and the legal prosecution of one of the students, a participant in the protest, has not yet ended.

Fredoom of Association

Death threats to activists of the "Osnažene" association

After publishing the results of their research on Telegram groups sharing revenge and child pornography, activists of the Association for the Empowerment and Development of Citizens "Osnažene" began to receive death threats and threats of lawsuits. Activists pointed out the prevalence of this form of gender-based violence that affects women throughout Serbia, and that leaves multiple negative consequences for the lives of women who are victims of revenge pornography. Activists have two yeras ago revealed the existence of such groups to the public, and criminal charges against the administrators of the groups were dismissed. By their non-reaction, the institutions show that they have no intention to stand in the way of this practice and to protect the victims of revenge pornography. As this act is still not recognized as a separate criminal act, the only thing left is education and raising awareness about this and all other forms of gender-based violence that is deeply rooted in a misogynistic and patriarchal society that does not sanction abusers.

The security services followed the activist

The weekly Radar published a video showing members of the security services in a local restaurant secretly filming the Local Front activist from Kraljevo, Predrag Voštinić, who was at a meeting with foreign observers before the elections in December last year. The photos taken at this meeting were later used for a smear campaign against the activist by the local authorities. We remind you that Predrag Voštinić was attacked in September last year, when a car driver knocked him off his bicycle. The published videos show that activists in Serbia are under surveillance by the authorities, and that any critical attitude towards the authorities is punished, which even puts the life and safety of activists at risk.

The results of the open calls in the field of culture are late

The Ministry of Culture has not yet announced the results of the open calls in various fields of art, which are therefore already 4 months late. In addition, the City of Belgrade has not even announced open calls in the culture sector and thus "denied support to a large number of artistic programs that are implemented in this city, which seriously jeopardizes the artistic production of local authors", announced The Association Independent Cultural Scene of Serbia. Open calls are often the only source of income for artists and civil sector associations, and non-transparency and delays in the entire process of allocating public finances threaten the stability and survival of the civil sector, especially those associations in the field of culture where funds are already significantly limited.

Prolonged detention of the former union leader

Former president of the Military Union of Serbia, Novica Antic, and his associate have had their detention extended. The leaders of the military union were arrested 5 months ago on suspicion of having committed the criminal offense of embezzlement, although many believe that it is a matter of persecution of politically unfit union leaders.

Campaign against the "Mirëdita, dobar dan" festival

The "Mirëdita, dobar dan" festival, which brings together artists, human rights fighters, peace activists and public figures from Kosovo and Serbia and fosters cooperation and building peace, has faced attacks from politicians since its inception. This year is no exception, when the campaign against the festival seems to be in full swing. Representatives of the Serbian Progressive Party and their coalition partners joined the targeting campaign, and some of them even requested a ban on the festival. The attacks on the organizers of the festival occurred because of the date of the event, i.e. during the religious holiday of Vidovdan, which is also associated with historical events in Kosovo. In the pro-regime media, a campaign of spreading disinformation about the festival was conducted for days, which put the participants and organizers in a security risk. The nationalist hunt led by the representatives of the government against the cultural event between two nations is an indicator of the lack of seriousness of this government, which itself participates in the dialogue with Pristina at the highest political level. Respecting diversity and bringing two communities closer together is the goal of this manifestation, so opposing the holding of such a festival is a way of manipulating national themes for the purpose of self-promotion.