Three Freedoms Under the Magnifying Glass
Violations of Basic Human Rights in Serbia
August 30 - September 12, 2024

Freedom of Expression

Šapić insults the media again

The mayor of Belgrade, Aleksandar Šapić, stopped his months-long practice of refusing to answer questions from journalists of certain media outlets, but he did not stop the practice of insulting those who ask questions he does not like. This time he accused N1 television of "necrophilic politics", just because of questions about frequent breakdowns of city transport vehicles. Although it is important that communication with the media has been re-established, it is equally important that this communication be decent and dignified and in accordance with the position that Šapić holds.

The scientist received death threats again

The associate at the Institute of Economic Sciences in Belgrade, Aleksandar Matković, received death threats again, this time after his name was published on the list of "Environmental terrorists" of the phantom movement "Kopaćemo". We remind you that Matković has already received death threats because of his article published in the newspaper "Danas", in which he deals with the topic of lithium mining from a scientific perspective. It is still not established who sent him the first threats. Regarding the threats addressed to the scientist, the Institute issued a statement saying that: "This situation is not only an attack on an individual, but also on the fundamental values of academic freedom and democracy" and added that "in a country where scientists are threatened with death, there is no freedom."

Nikola Petrović's lawsuit against BIRN was rejected

The First Basic Court in Belgrade rejected the private lawsuit filed by Nikola Petrović against BIRN editor and journalist due to the alleged unauthorized collection of information. The editors do not know which text the lawsuit was filed for. They found out about the lawsuit itself only after they were forwarded the court decision rejecting it. BIRN assumes that the lawsuit was filed because of articles about the property of Nikola Petrović, known as the friend of the President of Serbia. All the data they published are publicly available, BIRN stated.

The journalist is forbidden to attend the opening of public bids

The Ministry of Economy forbade the journalist of Pištaljka to attend the opening of bids for the purchase of the state-owned company Yugoslav River Shipping. Pištaljka officially announced their arrival at the opening of bids, but the security of the building, according to the decision of the Ministry, still did not let them in. Reporting on this type of event is in the public interest of citizens, and all prohibitions are against the law. The Pištaljka portal is a journalistic portal for investigating and reporting corruption.

The mayor of Leskovac insulted a journalist

The mayor of Leskovac, Goran Cvetanović, made an insulting comment on the physical appearance of Milica Ivanović, the editor of the Jugmedia portal. The mayor's inappropriate vocabulary indicates what female journalists are facing who are double targeted, both because of their profession and because of their gender.

Smear campaign against journalist Nenad Kulačin

Nenad Kulačin is exposed to a targeting campaign by high government officials and pro-government tabloids. As a result, he receives threats on social media on a daily basis, and someone has also scribbled on his mailbox on his home address. In connection with all the attacks he has been subjected to, which started because of a column in which he condemned the attacks on another journalist, the International PEN Center also spoke out. They expressed serious concern about the continued harassment of journalists, and two years ago his mother was also exposed to harassment, when she was verbally attacked on the street.

Fredoom of Assembly

Misdemeanor report to the organizer of the protest

Against the organizer of the protest in Belgrade's Mirijevo neighborhood, David Slavković, the police will file a misdemeanor charge in the regular procedure without explaining why. The protest and street blockade were organized due to several days of sewage spillage and the non-response of the competent services. In the end citizens are the ones who suffer, and every form of civic activism, no matter how "small" it is and even though its goal is to improve the lives of people in the community, is exposed to obstructions and pressures.

Fredoom of Association

List of "environmental terrorists"

The website of the newly formed association "Kopaćemo" has appeared on the Internet, which advocates for the opening of mine in the Jadar valley, and the founders of this association are not yet known to the public. Counter-rallies, counter-hunger strikes and counter-protests have been a frequent tool of the authorities in dealing with political opponents in recent years, and the formation of such an association as a counter-association to environmental organizations raises the suspicion that it is another tactic in an attack on civic activism. A special "Register of Environmental Terrorists" has been created on the website, which most directly targets environmental activists, as many as 20 of them. Death threats have already started to reach certain persons from this register. With such a list and accusation of a serious act of terrorism, a target is drawn on the forehead of the activists, and the goal of this action is obviously to intimidate all those who oppose lithium mining. The list of alleged environmental terrorists comes after more than 33 citizens were taken into custody or summoned to police interviews, and a large number of them were charged with the crime of "calling for a violent change in the constitutional order". Therefore, such a register represents only a continuation of the campaign and repression that is carried out against environmental activists. In addition to the misuse of the term terrorism, it is also problematic that on the "Kopaćemo" platform, unknown persons present themselves as an association of citizens. According to the Law on Associations, associations are established "for the purpose of achieving and promoting a certain common or general goal and interest". Nevertheless, this phantom association advocates the establishment of a mine by a private company that has its own economic interests, so the question arises whether the “Kopaćemo” group are advocating for the general interest or are they lobbying for a private enterprise or is it another attempt in dealing with those who disagree with the government's policies?

Sofija Todorović was again detained at the airport

Director of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR), Sofija Todorović, was again detained at the Nikola Tesla Airport on September 5. This is the 9th time since July of this year that passport control has detained Sofia when entering/exiting the country, YIHR announced. "Sofija Todorović is still in the system under a label that causes her to be unjustifiably detained by the Serbian border police on every entry and exit from the country... The continuation of the practice of unjustified detention of Todorović shows that the labels in the system on the basis of which acts against guaranteed human rights are still on strength despite the announcements of the President of the Republic Vučić and the Minister of Internal Affairs Dačić", announced the Initiative. The fact that the lists exist was recently confirmed by Minister Dačić, as well as by Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandar Vulin, who boasted that he was the one who compiled the list. It is not known who else is on this "list of ineligibles", nor what are the grounds for someone to be on it. Obviously, it's about the harassment of all those who are critical of the socio-political situation in the country.

LGBT+ activist attacked

An activist and member of the Pride organizing committee, was attacked in the city center, just a few days before the Pride walk. An unknown man approached the activist and took away the LGBT+ flag from him. The attack on a member of the LGBT+ community took place on the same day when the First Basic Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade made a decision to reject the criminal complaint filed by Andrej Obradović against the police officers of the Novi Beograd police station due to the violence he suffered at the hands of the police. The complete lack of protection of the LGBT+ community by the system, and even the exposure to violence by institutions and its representatives, shows how difficult the position of this community is and why it is important that the demands presented at Pride are taken seriously by the authorities.

Verdict against the activist

The activist of the "Bravo" movement from Novi Sad, Varvara Lukač, was sentenced to a misdemeanor fine in the amount of 16,000 dinars because she held a cartridge that emits colored smoke at the "Serbia against violence" protest last year. In the explanation, it is stated that this is the act of disturbance of public order and peace, and the movement believes that it is a continuation of repression against active citizens. They also ask: "how is it possible to impose a fine on their activist "for lighting smoke", while the official of the Serbian Progressive Party, Vladmir Đukanović, was not responsible for lighting torches on the balconies during the curfew."

A member of an informal group was attacked

A member of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) physically assaulted a member of the informal group of citizens "Defend the Sava embankment" at the market in Belgrade. A member of SNS approached a man who was filming and commenting on the installation of the SNS pult and hit him in an attempt to stop the filming. It is doubtful that there will be any reaction to the violent behavior of the representatives of the ruling party.

Detention of activists of the Kreni-promeni movement

Due to the action by which they invited the Public Company "NišStan" to solve the problem of the clogged drain in the park, one activist of the Kreni-promeni movement was detained for an informational interview, while the police raided the apartment of another activist while he was on vacation. Arrests and searches of homes have become a regular way of treating activists since the start of environmental protests this year. This kind of pressure aims to discourage citizens from dealing with topics of public interest in any way.