



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

May 1 - May 15, 2025

Freedom of Expression

Insider journalist attacked

Two men based in the camp in front of the National Assembly attacked Insider journalist Stefan Miljuš. Miljuš was attacked during reporting when two men hit him and knocked the phone out of his hand. This is not the first attack on journalists that has taken place near the tents set up in Pionirski Park and in front of the National Assembly, where the supporters of President Aleksandar Vučić's are located. This attack occurred at the moment when the World Press Freedom Index of Reporters Without Borders was published. Although Serbia moved up by two places on the list, it essentially regressed, as the total number of points decreased. "In fact, Serbia's score reaches a record low level in the 23-year history of the Index," said the head of the EU-Balkan desk in Reporters, and the reason for this is "the ruling party's efforts to stifle independent journalism with political attacks."

Inappropriate touching of a journalist

The President of the Niš City Assembly, Igor Novaković, from the ranks of the Socialist Party of Serbia, inappropriately touched a journalist from N1 at a press conference. "An inappropriate gesture offended a journalist on assignment, which is unacceptable for an official," N1 television announced.

16 lawsuits against activist

Local officials of the Serbian Progressive Party in Gornji Milanovac filed 16 private lawsuits against Branimir Stojčić, an activist of the citizens' group "Uzinat". The lawsuits refer to the speech that Stojčić gave at the protest, when he read the names of SNS officials who were in the camp formed in Pionirski Park, which became better known as "Ćaciland". All lawsuits are written identically, and their obvious goal is to put pressure on a local activist by filing a large number of lawsuits on the same day.

Pressures due to support and participation in protests

Pressure on students and those who support protests continues. Employees in education continue to suffer the most negative consequences. A teacher of religious studies from Čačak is the target of verbal attacks on social networks that intensified after she conducted an interview with students and professors of the Faculty of Theology. Disciplinary proceedings were initiated against as many as 50 elementary school teachers in Gornji Milanovac because they completely suspended classes on January 20 and 24 in support of the students. Due to the suspension of classes in support of students, disciplinary proceedings have been initiated against an English language teacher at the Technical School in Bečej. A professor at the Faculty of Medical Sciences in Kragujevac also received a warning before being fired because he does not want to teach online classes. The administrations of certain faculties began to openly threaten students, so the dean's office of the Faculty of Medicine in Niš threatened students with criminal proceedings. Students and professors are still the target of police measures. Two students of the faculties of Novi Sad were summoned to a hearing for the alleged attack on an elderly woman near the Futoški market during a protest on January 16. We remind you that an elderly woman then physically attacked the students who were protesting, and in self-defense of the students the women tripped and fell. A student of the Faculty of Law in Novi Sad was intercepted in front of the building where he lives by two men who did not show identification and who introduced themselves as police officers who came to announce to him that he would be invited for an informative interview. A professor at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering received a call from an unknown number, and the person introduced himself as an inspector and threatened to arrest the professor. This is all part of an attempt to intimidate young people and all who support them into giving up their demands. Others who support the protests also suffer repercussions. Private entrepreneurs from Loznica, who participated in the organization of protests in that city, were inspected, based on a list compiled by the head of the Mačva district. The concert of the Beogradski sindikat music group, which publicly supported the students, was banned in Kragujevac, which is an open example of the censorship faced by numerous musicians who publicly criticized the current government. In addition to verbal threats and institutional pressures, physical attacks on those who freely express their opinions have also been recorded. A man from Novi Sad was beaten in a bar by three men because, as he claims, he criticized the local authorities on social media.

Freedom of Assembly

Incidents at protests

An unknown man behaved violently towards a group of high school graduates at a protest. The video shows him being taken away by the police, and the crowd asking him, "How come he's not ashamed to hit a girl." SNS member Vlada Mandić attacked a group of students and war veterans as they passed Pionirski Park, where the camp of supporters of Aleksandar Vučić has been located for weeks. A man tried to break through the blockade at the Faculty of Security with his car. This is happening at the moment when the public learned that the woman who seriously injured a student at the roadblock on January 24, was released from custody. The indictment against her was also changed and she is now accused of a milder crime - "serious crime against general security" instead of the crime of "attempted murder". KRIK reveals that the lawyer of this woman who seriously injured a student is Milan Radoičić's defense attorney in the Banjska case.

Freedom of Association

Activists face prison

The Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Novi Sad has filed an indictment against seven activists from the informal student group Stav and five members of the Movement of Free Citizens. The prosecution has requested that the Higher Court in Novi Sad find the accused guilty of the alleged crime of preparing acts against the constitutional order and security of Serbia, committed in complicity with the crime of attacking the constitutional order and inciting violent change of the constitutional order. The prosecution has demanded that the court impose the maximum sentence prescribed by law for these charges. The activists are facing up to five years in prison. The activists' defense attorneys pointed to the use of an illegally wiretapped conversation as key evidence, but the judge refused to exclude the recording from the case file. To recall, six activists were arrested on March 14 after their wiretapped conversation was aired on the pro-government television channel Informer. The other six had left for Croatia a day earlier to attend a previously scheduled conference, where they were participants and speakers. Their apartments were subsequently searched, and warrants were issued for their arrest. The Higher Court in Novi Sad has been asked to conduct their trial in absentia. One of the arrested, professor Marija Vasić, went on a hunger and thirst strike. This case represents political persecution of activists and is a serious threat to the future of the judiciary and the fundamental freedoms of citizens. The arrested activists are charged with "verbal delict" for something they did not do. Convicting them would be a precedent in the judiciary. It is also the most serious threat to freedom of expression in Serbia and a message to all who dare to speak critically, whether in public or in private, about the current situation in the country to be careful because they could end up in prison.

Activists invited to an informative interview

Activists of the informal youth group SviĆe, Jelena Božić and Darja Stjepić, were invited to an informative interview at the Police Station in Novi Sad. The reasons for the summons were not stated in the summons itself, but after the interview, the activists announced that they were summoned to the interview because of the graffiti they had written on the building of the Security Information Agency in Novi Sad, in which they demanded the release of Stav and PSG activists who have been in prison since March 14 on suspicion of committing the crime of "preparing a crime against the constitutional order and security of Serbia, in connection with the crime of calling for violent change of the constitutional order." The European Parliament also called for the release of the activists after the adoption of the Resolution of the rapporteur for Serbia, Tonino Picula. The Resolution also states that the European Parliament "strongly condemns the instrumentalization of this case by the propaganda media and the unjustified extension of detention" and calls on the competent authorities to immediately release the six activists from detention. Another activist, Krsta Tomković, was detained and soon released, and is suspected of the crime of "obstruction of justice" because he contacted the information service of the High Court in Novi Sad, seeking documentation in connection with the previously submitted request for access to information of public importance, in connection with the arrest of the activist. Inviting the activists of the SviĆe group to an informative interview and detention of Krsta Tomković is just another way of exerting pressure on all those who are fighting for the release of these political prisoners who ended up in prison after illegal wiretapping.

The Youth Center CK13 was attacked

A torch was thrown into the courtyard of the Novi Sad youth center CK13 before the start of the drag party. One person was injured on that occasion. In the days before the drag performance, neo-Nazi groups called for violent prevention of the event, and before throwing the torch, unknown persons tore up anti-war banners on the premises of the association. This homophobic attack on the association is a consequence of the systematic impunity of attackers against the LGBTQ community in Serbia, and is another in a series of attacks on CK13 by extreme right-wingers who have been harassing visitors to this youth center for years, which deals with numerous issues such as dealing with the past, non-violent action, etc.

Canceled open calls for culture

The public open call for culture of the Secretariat of the City of Belgrade, as stated in the Decision of April 23, was invalidated due to the fact that some members of the expert commissions resigned. With the explanation that there are not enough financial resources, even though they stated in the open call that the funds were provided, in mid-April, by the decision of the mayor of Zrenjanin, the local open call for financing projects within the program "Zrenjanin - Capital of Culture of Serbia 2025" was canceled. This is a continuation of the practice of collapsing the position of workers in culture and shows the absence of the authorities' intention to devote themselves to strengthening support in this important area of social life, and numerous organizations are left without financial support, which is crucial for their survival.

Pressure on strikers

The employees of judicial bodies in Niš and the surrounding area who went on strike had their salaries reduced. Unsatisfied with their material position and working conditions, workers have a guaranteed right to strike. Decreasing wages is an obvious attempt to put pressure on workers to give up their demands and is a gross violation of basic labor rights that occurs only a few days after the celebration of the International Labor Day.

Cancellation of space for Mikser festival

This year's Mikser festival will not be held in Silosi, as was the case in previous years. Milan Beko, owner of the port of Belgrade and director of Silosi, three weeks before the start of Mikser did not allow the festival to take place in this area, announced Ivan Lalić, one of the founders of Mikser, and the reason for this, he added, was the participants of the debate program. Mikser Festival is an annual cultural event that promotes innovative, sustainable and socially engaged ideas in design, architecture, urban planning, new technologies, art, music and communications, and the debate part discusses various socio-current topics. The cancellation of one space will not prevent the festival from taking place, but it is a clear indication of the censorship that is being carried out in order to suppress critical voices in public, private and digital space.