
THREE FREEDOMS UNDER THE MAGNIFYING GLASS



Civic
Initiatives

freedom of expression

freedom of assembly

freedom of association

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

August 22 - September 4, 2025

Freedom of Expression

Journalist attacked in "Ćaciland"

After she asked a question to Miloš Pavlović, a "student who wants to study" and who spoke at the ruling party rallies, three men attacked the journalist from behind. One of the men poured liquid on the journalist, while the other approached her from behind and stole her phone. This is another in a series of attacks to which all those who dare to film people who have been stationed in the strict center of the city in front of the National Assembly for months are exposed. This is a park where tents have been set up and where supporters of the ruling party and alleged students who are against the blockades are housed. Several journalist teams were attacked in this park, which has been known as "Ćaciland" since March. No one was held accountable for any of the attacks.

The security "detained" and then released the journalists

After trying to ask a question to the director of United Group, Stan Miller, the security of the hotel in Belgrade roughly detained journalist Ana Novaković and did not let her leave the building for some time. In addition to her, a journalist from Nova S was also detained. The journalist wanted to get an answer from Miller regarding the audio recording published by research portals KRIK and OCCRP, in which a conversation between Miller and the director of Telekom Serbia Vladimir Lučić can be heard. In the conversation, the director of United Group promises Lučić that he will meet him regarding Vučić's request to fire the director of United Media, within which the independent media in Serbia N1 and Nova S operate. The audio recording disturbed the public and indicated that the top of the government is actively working to stifle the remaining independent media, the consequences of whose shutdown would be unfathomable. Violent behavior towards journalists who tried to ask a question occurred during a period of record physical attacks on journalists in Serbia, as reported by Reporters Without Borders.

Threats to the editorial office of “Južne vesti”

In the comments on the news, death threats were sent to the editorial office of Južne vesti. This local media in the south of Serbia is facing numerous pressures in their work, and in addition to threats, they were also faced with lawsuits before. Local media are particularly important sources of information, and the pressures they are exposed to are a direct threat to freedom of expression locally.

Mass dismissals of educators for supporting protests

Since the beginning of the school year, teachers and professors who support high school pupils and students are under unprecedented pressure. More than 20 professors of the Fifth Belgrade High School received information that their contracts will not be extended and that they will lose their jobs, and all of them have in common that they supported the student protests. So far, several teachers have been fired across the country in: Srbobran, Trstenik, Kragujevac, Bečej, Kikinda, Novi Sad, and according to the Independent Union of Educational Workers of Serbia (NSPRS), more than 100 employees have lost their jobs or contract extensions. Several principals were replaced, including: the principal of the Požarevac High School, the principal of the “Josip Slavenski” Music School, five principals of elementary schools in Zrenjanin, and even the principal of a pre-school in Belgrade. According to the Minister of Education, Dejan Vuk Stanković, 75 directors resigned, while 25 were replaced. It is about an obvious attempt by the authorities to carry out a political purge of the unfit in educational institutions. In addition to teachers, 26 school boards in Niš were replaced, and information is circulating about the intention of SNS to coordinate its members in order to join the Parents' Councils and thus establish complete dominance in school management.

Consequences for supporting the protests

Numerous citizens who support the student protests face negative consequences for publicly expressing their views. Dismissals are one of the methods of repression used to punish citizens for participating in protests or for posting their support on social networks. A bus driver in a private company was transferred to another position because he refused to transport SNS supporters to a rally. The bus transporter Jaćimović has been under pressure for months, and the latest in the series is the stopping and search of a bus carrying citizens who went to the protest. A fitness trainer from Čačak was kicked out of the club because he refused to join SNS supporters who attacked citizens during protests. Three medics from the Novi Sad emergency service were fired because they refused to be on duty at the SNS premises on the night when peaceful citizens were attacked by members of the SNS with pyrotechnics. The flower shop in Konjarnik, whose owners are active in choirs, was targeted by vandals for the second time and this time it was set on fire, fortunately without major consequences thanks to the reaction of passers-by.

Freedom of Assembly

Incidents in front of the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad

In the early morning hours of August 26, the dean of the Faculty of Philosophy entered this faculty in Novi Sad with some staff members and kicked out the students who were in the building. He also called the police who prevented the students from entering the college building and who left the college building only on September 8. At one point, there was a push between citizens and police officers in front of the faculty. One person was detained during the incident. The dean refused to talk to students and colleagues and decided to occupy the faculty with the help of the police. The clashes with the police also occurred the next day after the deadline that the students had given the dean to resolve the crisis he created had expired. On the second evening, the police used pepper spray, pyrotechnics were thrown, several people were slightly injured and several people were detained. One of the detainees testified that he was subjected to police torture, when the policemen pushed him into the faculty building and beat him there, and then they also beat him in the van while they were taking him to the police station. While reporting from the scene, a member of the gendarmerie threatened the N1 team that he would arrest them because the searchlight was on.

Police attacked citizens after a commemorative walk in Novi Sad

On the first of September, all over Serbia marked 10 months since the fall of the canopy in Novi Sad. Citizens gathered at the invitation of high school students and paid their respects to the victims. A commemorative walk was held in Novi Sad. After the walk, part of the crowd walked to the Faculty of Sports and Physical Education, where the dean burst in with the police and masked men that day and kicked out the students from the faculty building. He did just like the dean of the Faculty of Philosophy in that city. The citizens gathered in front of the faculty, where the police were stationed, which at one point suddenly started pushing the citizens in front of the Faculty, and then started chasing the citizens who were returning home after the protest. The Ministry of Interior of Serbia announced that members of the police intervened after a group of citizens sent them "gross insults and curses". During the police intervention, shock bombs were thrown and examples of police brutality and preventing journalists from doing their journalistic work were recorded. Namely, the police briefly took away the phone from the Beta journalist and thus prevented him from documenting the police action. The incidents in Novi Sad broke out after the intrusion of two deans, close to the ruling party, with the police into the premises of the faculty. The latter reactions of the police are a continuation of the repression carried out on students and the academic community, as a reprisal for the rebellion against corruption.

Announced criminal charges against citizens of Obrenovac

The police legitimized citizens of Obrenovac who painted over graffiti against protests and student blockades. The citizens painted over the graffiti with white paint, which is also the color of the wall on which the graffiti is located, but despite that, the police legitimized them and announced misdemeanor charges. This is not the first time that citizens and activists in Serbia face negative consequences for restoring facades to their previous state and removing offensive graffiti that spread hate speech, and charges are another form of pressure on those who participate in public debate. Offensive graffiti against the blockades have been written on facades across the country in recent weeks, including on the building where two journalists live, as well as on the premises of the Human Rights House Belgrade.

Freedom of Association

Association targeted by inspection

The city inspection of Leskovac tried to remove from one of the buildings an advertising canvas of the Green Uprising association, which supports the current protests in Serbia. The inspection did not succeed in its intention, but they announced that they will come again, next time accompanied by the police. This represents an obvious pressure on local associations whose survival is threatened due to the non-transparent practices of local authorities regarding the financing of associations from city budgets and due to political pressures to which civil society in Serbia is exposed.

BIA in the Association's premises

On August 27, the premises of the Rural Cultural Center Markovac were visited by a representative of the Security Information Agency (BIA), who conducted an informative interview with the activists of this women's association. Since the beginning of the year, this association has been the target of local authorities who are trying to evict the association from the premises of the House of Culture, which was arranged and improved precisely thanks to the activists who revived the cultural life in this small community. The representative of the BIA promised to mediate in communication with the local authorities in order to regulate the continuation of the organization's work. In the last year, with environmental and then student protests, we witnessed the increasing involvement of members of the BIA in intimidating and spying on activists and citizens. The visit to the premises and the informative conversation are a continuation of the practice of the shrinking space for civil society organizations and represent an attempt by the authorities to intimidate those who act critically in their communities.

Two misdemeanor charges against the activist

A police officer from Novi Sad filed two charges against activist Robert Silebrholc. The first misdemeanor charge refers to the protest held on July 15, 2025, in front of the building where the apartment of Miloš Vučević, president of SNS, is located, where the activist shouted the slogans "Miloš, scum". The second report is almost identical, but refers to a different event and a different date, the entry into the previously damaged SNS premises on August 14. Namely, Robert was detained for entering the destroyed SNS premises, although the activist claims that he himself did not participate in their demolition. For this misdemeanor, the applicant requested a prison sentence (due to improper and reckless behavior). When Robert was taken into custody, he was actually handed the first report for insulting Miloš Vučević, submitted a month earlier. These two applications have the characteristics of SLAPP lawsuits filed against participants in public debate with the goal of stifling critical speech and public debate.

arrest and/or detention*

IN THE OBSERVED PERIOD

 NOVI SAD: 12

 GORNJI MILANOVAC: 1

IN TOTAL  13 DETENTIONS

*This part of the report refers to citizens and activists who were arrested or detained at public gatherings or because of because of public statements and posts on social networks in which they express their critical views.