



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

September 5 - September 18, 2025

Freedom of Expression

Attacks and pressures on journalists

A journalist from the Beta agency was attacked in Leskovac while reporting from the protest, when a man ran into her on a bicycle. The editor of the N2 portal states that he was attacked in Čačak by the owner of the pro-regime portal Glas zapadne Srbije. Due to the seriousness of the threats to which they are regularly exposed, the authors of the show "Mentalno razgibavanje" moved to Slovenia, where they now broadcast their show. Death threats directed at N1 television intensified in the days after they reported from the protests in Novi Sad. Among other attacks in the digital sphere, the hacking of the YouTube channels of journalists Nenad Kulačin and Marko Vidojković was recorded. The journalistic profession in Serbia has become one of the most dangerous, and this is a consequence of the atmosphere of attacks and threats, for which the government that regularly targets the media is most responsible.

The forum prohibited

The forum where the student Nikolina Sindelić, who suffered violence from the commander of the JZO Marko Kričak, was supposed to speak, was canceled by the decision of the director of the "Student City" Cultural Center. Canceling the forum, without a valid reason, is another attempt to prevent the student from talking about the violence she suffered during the detention. Police brutality against citizens and students reached its peak this summer when numerous examples of brutal beatings of citizens who did not resist were recorded in the protests.

Pressures on citizens due to participation in protests

The police broke into the home of an activist from Gadžin Han and took down the banner of a bloody fist on his house during the day in which a gathering of local government representatives and some ministers was held on the occasion of Flag Day. Unknown persons vandalised the house of an activist from Odžak, and the cafe of the son of a farmer who participated in the protest in Novi Sad was also vandalized. All this is part of a general campaign of intimidation and punishment of citizens for participating in protests.

Pressures on teachers, professors and students

New pressures on the academic community and educators were noted at the beginning of the school year and before the beginning of the academic year. Another rector was heard before the court. The rector of the University of Arts was heard before the Misdemeanor Court regarding the notification of the educational inspection, and for not holding classes. The academic community interprets this as a continuation of the pressure exerted on rectors and deans who supported student protests and blockades. The moment in which charges and hearings come is a clear threat to all employees at universities and faculties, what will happen to them if they continue to support the student movement. Direct death threats were sent to professors of the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad, Dinko Gruhonjić and Smiljana Milinkov. Both threats arrived at the address of the faculty, and only a day after threats were addressed to professor and journalist Gruhonjić, Ana Brnabić publicly accused him of allegedly spreading rumors about the use of CN gas. This speaks to the way in which public officials contribute to targeting and intimidation campaigns directed against those who express their critical views publicly. According to the announcement of the Academic Network "Slobodan Univerzitet" Novi Sad, a member of the Police Intervention Unit entered the Faculty of Philosophy on September 9, although he did not have the dean's permission to do so. This is a gross violation of academic freedom guaranteed by law. The Faculty of Technology, also in Novi Sad, was targeted by vandals. Politically motivated dismissals carried out in primary and secondary schools continued. 15 professors were dismissed from the Niš high school, a teacher from the Fifth Belgrade High School was suspended, the director of an elementary school in Belgrade was dismissed, and the school board of the "Air Force Academy" High School was dismissed.

Freedom of Assembly

Citizens legitimized at the protests

Almost all the citizens of New Belgrade, who gathered at the "Come and take your garbage" protest, about 30 of them, were identified by members of the police in plainclothes. Residents of the settlement in Kragujevac were also legitimized during the attempt to block the railroad. Citizens gathered to protest the removal of the railroad crossing, but the gathering was prevented by the police. The charges, misdemeanor and criminal, to which those who protest are exposed limit the freedom of assembly and aim to suppress civic participation in socio-political life.

Did the police use dangerous gas at the protest?

Students of the Faculty of Science and Mathematics in Novi Sad published a laboratory analysis of the remains of tear gas shells found on the campus after a protest on September 5, which showed that on that occasion the police used the strictly prohibited and dangerous CN gas. The MUP denied that information and announced that they do not own and did not use CN gas, however, let's remember that they also initially denied that they owned a sound cannon. The effects of the use of this gas on the health of those exposed are very dangerous. Numerous citizens who participated in the protest testified about the consequences such as: breathing problems, burns on the body, runny nose, scratchy throat, watery eyes. At the protest on September 5, the moment when a group of policemen collapsed from a tear gas was recorded. Until now, institutions have not reacted to the issue of the threatened safety of citizens, so it is not expected that they will initiate proceedings to determine responsibility for the potential use of this toxic gas, the use and possession of which by the police is prohibited by law.

Police violence in Novi Sad

After the police began attacking and chasing citizens without any provocation during the protest in Novi Sad on September 1st, following a commemorative walk and a later gathering in front of the Faculty of Sport and Physical Education, citizens gathered again on September 5th for another protest, this time against gross violation of university autonomy. Tensions were especially high in front of the Faculty of Philosophy, which had been occupied for days by the dean and members of the police. At one point, a scuffle broke out with members of the gendarmerie, after which the police launched an intervention against everyone who happened to be at the protest that evening in Novi Sad. The police threw tear gas and stun grenades and then chased and arrested people across the city, including citizens who had not participated in any violent acts against the police. Due to the large amount of tear gas used, even a group of police officers became unwell. Students, citizens, and journalists were attacked. During the police intervention, an elderly man was injured after being pushed by a police officer, causing him to fall and hit his head on the curb. The man suffered a broken elbow and reported pain in his ribs. Police brutality was also witnessed by Aleksandra Božić, who was arrested at the protest after being in a group of people surrounded by police. Officers then forced the group to lie on the ground for nearly an hour. Aleksandra became ill during that time, but the police denied her medical assistance. Among those forced to lie on the ground was also a journalist from the publication Vreme. She repeatedly identified herself as a journalist, but the police ignored her. She was released after lying on the ground for 15 minutes. The others were then taken to a police station, where Aleksandra Božić and a student from the Faculty of Medicine were subjected to humiliating treatment when they were ordered to strip naked, even though such a procedure is only warranted in cases involving serious criminal offenses. According to data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MUP), 42 individuals were detained that night, among them students as well. A journalist from the 021 news portal was also attacked during the protest. While trying to flee from the police, he tripped and fell, and then one of the officers kicked him while he was on the ground. The police also interfered with environmental activist Zlatko Kokanović's attempt to appear on N1 television, at one point even violently dragging him. Another disturbing police intervention took place that evening in the Rectorate building. The police, accompanied by the rector of the University of Novi Sad (a signatory of support for Aleksandar Vučić's list), entered the University campus and forcibly dragged people who had taken refuge there into the Rectorate premises after the police launched a large-scale intervention. The police violently prevented students and citizens from recording the events, and this hostage-like situation lasted for some time. The police remained in the Rectorate building afterward, where they are still present. Members of the gendarmerie also attempted to enter the Faculty of Sciences building, but were stopped by the dean. The brutal behavior of the police is a clear sign that the authorities, even after 10 months of protests, have no intention of abandoning repressive mechanisms to maintain their hold on power and suppress public dissatisfaction.

Police interventions and arrests on counter-gatherings

The police in Kosjerić intervened and prevented a counter-gathering of citizens who had gathered in protest against a gathering of supporters of the ruling party. On that occasion, the police detained 7 people, 6 of whom are currently under house arrest, and one person was released. The police also intervened in several locations in Belgrade, where they suppressed the gathered citizens and on that occasion detained one man. Arrests of peaceful citizens were also recorded in Zrenjanin. In Kraljevo, a man from a group of supporters of the ruling party attacked a participant of the counter rally, and an older man, also at the SNS rally, verbally attacked a journalist, but the police did not take any measures against them. Spontaneous peaceful gatherings are allowed according to domestic regulations and laws, so this kind of police reaction is only an indication of selective action. During the summer, we witnessed violent counter-gatherings organized by supporters of the ruling regime that attacked citizens with pyrotechnics, but the police did not prevent such gatherings, but even openly protected them. Double standards in the police's actions were also recorded after the farmers' protest in Novi Sad, when three farmers were arrested who confronted a man who was trying to provoke the crowd. This man was previously seen at protests provoking the participants, on one occasion he verbally attacked the mother of a young man who died in a falling canopy, he also physically attacked the transporter Jaćimović, and he also hindered the journalistic teams in their reporting.



arrest and/or detention*

IN THE OBSERVED PERIOD

 NOVI SAD: 45

 BEOGRAD: 1

 KOSJERIĆ: 7

 KRAGUJEVAC: 1

 ZRENJANIN: 3

 BAČKA PALANKA: 2

 GADŽIN HAN: 1

IN TOTAL  60 ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS

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