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# THREE FREEDOMS UNDER THE MAGNIFYING GLASS



Civic  
Initiatives

freedom of expression

freedom of assembly

freedom of association

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

October 17 - October 30, 2025

### Freedom of Expression

#### Threats and verbal attacks on journalists

Threats and verbal attacks on journalists continue unabated. These attacks often come from government officials, and such rhetoric only fuels and encourages others to threaten and insult media workers, both in public and in digital sphere. A member of the City Committee of the Socialist Party of Serbia in Vranje, Darko Stanojević, insulted the editor-in-chief of “Info Vranjske”, Mihajlo Stojković, and included primitive insults directed at members of his family. The Minister for Public Investments, Darko Glišić, accused the media of the United Group of inspiring a man to storm the tents set up in front of the National Assembly of Serbia, during which one person in this improvised camp of government supporters—who have occupied the city center since March—was injured. Dangerous statements made by the minister and other SNS officials effectively paint a target on the foreheads of critically oriented media and directly endanger their employees. When government representatives publicly and without consequence attack the media, it is unsurprising that others appear who believe that insults are acceptable and even desirable. Threats of violence have been directed at journalist and host of the show Good, Bad, Evil, Marko Vidojković, and a few days later at his colleague, Nenad Kulačin. The father of a former Serbian Progressive Party MP threatened Veran Matić, a member of the Permanent Working Group for the Safety of Journalists. The Mašina portal has also been targeted with threats. Professor of the Faculty of Political Sciences, Aleksandra Krstić, whose academic work focuses on media and communication, was also subjected to serious threats. Journalists in Serbia have for years faced numerous obstacles in their work, but attacks have intensified and become increasingly severe since the beginning of the mass student and citizen protests against the current regime. Reporters Without Borders recorded at least 89 physical attacks on journalists in Serbia since November 1, 2024. According to data from this organization and the Independent Journalists’ Association of Serbia, the number of attacks on journalists in 2025 is the highest since 2008.

## Censorship at Bitef

The board of the Belgrade International Theater Festival (Bitef) decided to block the arrival of the Swiss director Milo Rau at the festival, despite the decision of the Artistic Directorate. It is believed that the reason for the ban on the arrival of this Swiss artist is that he spoke publicly against lithium mining last year. The Artistic directorate resigned after the decision of the Board. Changing the program of art, music, theater and other festivals has become the manner of the current regime, which does not allow even the slightest criticism and tries to suppress it in every social sphere. Interfering with culture and arts is a direct attack on artistic freedom and basic human rights.

## Threats, attacks, dismissals and other pressures for activism

Another dean has been summoned for a hearing before the Misdemeanor Court following a report by the Educational Inspectorate, which claims she failed to organize classes during the student blockades. The dean in question is from the Faculty of Philology. We remind you that previously, rectors and vice-rectors of the University of Belgrade, as well as the rector of the University of Arts, were summoned for questioning due to criminal complaints. Repression in education is also being carried out against school teachers. Three teachers from Valjevo Gymnasium have been informed that their contracts will not be renewed. Other employees in public institutions are also facing pressure. A nurse from Kovin received a warning of dismissal for supporting the protests and subsequently suffered serious health problems due to stress. A bookstore owner from Sombor was ordered by the inspection authorities to remove his street stand after 10 years of operation. An activist from the association “Let’s (Not) Breathe Deeply” in Užice has also been subjected to inspection harassment after exposing legal violations at the Duboko landfill. Previously, his shop had been vandalized and covered with anti-student protest posters. The association IT Blockade hung a banner calling for a protest on November 1 on the bridge above the highway near Genex. However, the municipal police quickly removed the banner - yet another act of expelling critical voices from public space. Particularly concerning is the attack on students near Pančevo, where they were carrying out their “A student in every village” campaign, aimed at engaging citizens in discussions about current socio-political issues. The students were attacked by a local café owner who insulted them, threatened them, and destroyed their boxes and materials.

## **Freedom of Assembly**

### **Pushing with the police at the protest**

At the protest in Smederevo on October 16, pushing between citizens and the police occurred, and two people were detained and later released. Citizens gathered to express their dissatisfaction with the fact that illegal gas transportation is carried out through the city center. The coordinator of the Fortress Movement was detained and released two days later. He is charged with violent behavior at a public meeting and causing a general danger, because he allegedly planned to remove parts of the railway. The citizens wanted to point out the problem of the lack of a use and construction permit for the railroad over which dangerous materials are transported, but the police, in equipment for breaking up demonstrations, prevented them from doing so.

### **Police stopped students from Novi Pazar**

Members of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MUP) stopped a convoy of students from Novi Pazar near Kosjerić and searched a vehicle that was part of the convoy's escort. In a statement, the police said they had confiscated a telescopic baton and pepper spray, and that a misdemeanor charge would be filed against the driver. The convoy of students from Novi Pazar began their walk to Novi Sad two weeks ago. Along the way, they have received support from residents of the towns and villages they pass through, thus breaking the myth of alleged disagreements between citizens of Serbian and Bosniak nationalities. The unnecessary reaction of the police is an obvious attempt to obstruct the Novi Pazar students in their mission to unite Serbia and raise public awareness ahead of the anniversary of the collapse of the canopy.

### **Misdemeanor punishment for allegedly insulting a police officer**

The misdemeanor court in Subotica fined Elemer Priboj 50,000 dinars for allegedly insulting the police at a civil protest held in July at the roundabout in the center of that city. Priboj denies that he insulted the police officers at this protest, and the police did not submit any evidence that the alleged insult was addressed to them. The high fine sentence imposed on this man from Subotica is one of a series of misdemeanor charges that have been massively received in recent months by citizens across Serbia who participated in protests and blockades.

## **The police legitimized the participants of the rally in support of the people of Palestine**

At a protest in support of the people of Palestine held in front of the Youth Center Belgrade, police officers checked the IDs of the participants. Citizens gathered in front of this institution to express their dissatisfaction with the fact that the Youth Center is organizing cultural events in cooperation with the Israeli Embassy at a time when a United Nations investigative commission has confirmed that Israel committed genocide against Palestinians over the past two years. By organizing these cultural events, the Youth Center is attempting to “wash away” two years of genocide being carried out against Palestinians-one in which Serbia is also complicit by sending weapons to Israel. This is not the first time that those protesting against genocide have faced pressure. Organizers of pro-Palestinian gatherings are regularly subjected to police harassment during demonstrations, and at one event, a woman attacked those gathered and tried to snatch the microphone from a speaker. The pressure on anti-war activists reflects an anti-democratic trend across Europe and systemic attempts to suppress freedom of assembly and international solidarity.