



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

October 31 - November 13, 2025

Freedom of Expression

Mass attacks on journalists by SNS sympathizers from "Ćaciland"

The area in front of the National Assembly of Serbia, which has been occupied since March by tents housing supporters of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) and individuals with criminal backgrounds, has become a dangerous and restricted zone for media workers. The people fenced in this park, now mockingly called "Ćaciland", have, regularly attacked journalists trying to report from the scene. In recent days, the number of attacks has increased. The escalation began when Dijana Hrka, the mother of a young man who died in the collapse of a canopy, began a hunger strike. Since then, SNS supporters have been gathering in even greater numbers in "Ćaciland," using loud music and lasers to provoke the grieving mother and the citizens who have come to support her. On Sunday, November 2, a group of men from "Ćaciland" surrounded Insajder journalist Nataša Mijušković. Some of them grabbed her arm and demanded that she show them the photos she had taken and delete them from her phone - "so that they wouldn't break all her bones." Later, the journalist identified one of the attackers in KRIK's database of individuals stationed in the camp. All persons listed in that database have criminal backgrounds. Another incident occurred in the same area when photojournalists from Radio DIR in Ruma, were surrounded by plainclothes individuals who demanded that they delete their recordings and struck them on the head, causing one of them to seek medical assistance. Also on Sunday, November 2, when the residents of "Ćaciland" attacked citizens who had gathered to support Dijana Hrka, JZO commander Marko Kričak checked the ID of Danas journalist Vojin Radovanović, even though he was wearing a yellow press vest clearly marked "PRESS." Kričak became known to the wider public after being accused of abusing detained students and citizens and threatening student Nikolina Sindelić with sexual violence. Another case of violence was recorded on November 4. Four men attempted to drag the visibly identified reporter, wearing "PRESS" vest, into the fenced-off area. When they failed, they beat him, knocked him down, and kicked him while he was on the ground. A gendarme who was present did not intervene but instead told the reporter to "just move away." Not only is the police failing to respond, but officers themselves are also participating in the attacks. During the protest on November 4, police first prevented a journalist from the portal Pazovačka.rs from passing, then struck her in the shoulder and pushed her away. On Wednesday, November 5, during a gathering of SNS supporters in front of the National Assembly, a KTV crew was also attacked. The police cordon, standing just steps away from the journalists, took no action against the thugs who had come to the ruling party's rally. Unknown men also physically removed an Insajder TV reporter who was conducting interviews with regime supporters at the time. The lack of accountability for the attackers stationed in the pro-government camp is a clear indicator of the state's attitude toward the safety of journalists.

Marko Kričak sued Nikolina Sindelić

The notorious commander of the JZO Marko Kričak, accused of violence against detained protesters at the rally on August 14, and threats of rape against the detained student Nikolina, has decided to file a criminal complaint against her for the alleged violation of "reputation and honor". In this way, Kričak once again taking revenge against the student who spoke publicly about the violence she was exposed to. Such a lawsuit is an indicator of deep-rooted misogyny and hatred towards women who dare to speak publicly about violence, and the fact that this violence is carried out by a member of the security services is an additional reason for concern for all those who go through violence. This is a sign that victims will not be protected when they turn for help and support, a sign that the institutions are not there for them. Kričak previously sued a MP, a former MUP colonel.

Attempted hacker attack on KRIK

A hacker attack on the emails of members of the KRIK newsroom as well as on the website was recorded. The warning about this attack came from the company Google, which says that it is a "government-backed attack" but without further details. At the end of last year, Amnesty International published a report with evidence of persecution and digital spying and monitoring of journalists and activists in Serbia, which the authorities denied, but new examples recorded in practice contradict their claims. The attack on the research portal took place on the same day that KRIK published the database "Ćaci(s): Guardians of the Party", which lists individual persons who are in the fenced pro-government camp.

Journalists attacked

Supporters of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) attacked the correspondent of the Beta Agency, the journalist of the Subotičke.rs portal and the journalist of the Magločistač portal in front of the premises of that party in Subotica. Men dressed in black forbade journalists to take photos of the rally that was taking place in front of the SNS premises. One of them crumpled the accreditation that Beta's reporter was wearing around her neck, and tried to take away her colleague's phone. This kind of attack takes place in the light of the dangerous rhetoric used by the government representatives against the independent media, and the local media, which are less visible to the general public and thus remain unprotected, are particularly at risk.

Pressures, dismissals, threats, attacks

Support for the protests and for the students has become the reason why many citizens are now facing pressure. Teachers at the Fifth Belgrade Gymnasium have not received their September salaries, nor the first part of their October pay. This high school has been under pressure since a new principal was appointed, a person whose behavior has repeatedly angered both students and teachers, who are now blocking the school demanding her dismissal. The principal of the Gymnasium in Bačka Palanka was dismissed from her position because she refused to fire teachers who took part in the work stoppage. The school psychologist from another school in the same town was fired for supporting the protests. Municipal officials from Lučani physically attacked a priest who had hosted students marching toward Novi Sad in the local parish house. Physical attacks on students have also been recorded. After the blockade of the Ibar highway, students from Čačak were assaulted, according to their testimony, the attacker was also an SNS official. In front of the police, the SNS coordinator for Sombor, Vrbas, and Žabalj hit a student in Belgrade on November 5, during two simultaneous gatherings one in support of Dijana Hrka, and the other organized by SNS supporters in “Ćacilend.” Students are also facing other forms of pressure. Two students from Novi Pazar were denied enrollment for the next academic year because they did not submit their documents on the official registration day; that day, they were walking to the protest in Novi Sad. This decision represents an act of retaliation by the rector of the State University of Novi Pazar against students demanding her resignation. Particularly exposed to pressure, from the beginning of the protests and especially in recent weeks, is bus operator Milomir Jaćimović, who has been providing free transportation for students and citizens to protests across the country. His buses were stopped several times within a single week on the way to Belgrade, where he was bringing students to the protests in support of Dijana Hrka. Milomir himself was detained twice, and ultimately seven of his buses were confiscated. Together with his underage son, Jaćimović began a hunger strike to protest the regime that deprived him of his means of work and thus made it impossible for him to provide a livelihood for himself and his son.

Freedom of Assembly

Obstruction of the Commemorative gathering

In the days before the big Commemorative meeting in Novi Sad on November 1, the regime did everything in their power to discourage and prevent citizens from gathering in this city and marking one year since 16 people lost their lives in the fall of the canopy. From the tabloid campaign and public appearances of the highest officials of the government who talked about the alleged violence planned for that day, to special broadcasts the day before in which the arrest of an opposition MP from Novi Sad was broadcast, nothing prevented citizens from gathering in huge numbers and marking this date in a dignified way. The police first announced that the meeting on November 1, as well as the reception of students the day before, would be recorded, which speaks of the increasing presence and use of mass surveillance technologies. The day before, all train traffic was suspended due to an alleged report of an explosive device. A group of young people from Hungary was stopped at the border and they were banned from entering Serbia with the explanation that they represent a “security risk”. Nevertheless, over 100,000 people came to Novi Sad, and the event passed without incident, but in the following days, the government representatives made a special effort to cause incidents.

SNS supporters attack citizens

The day after the commemorative gathering in Novi Sad, Dijana Hrka, the mother of the deceased young man, decided to go on a hunger strike in front of the National Assembly of Serbia. At the same time, the authorities began bringing their supporters in increasing numbers to the "Ćacilend". A large police presence was deployed to secure the fenced-off camp from citizens who were peacefully protesting. However, many members of the Ministry of Internal Affairs did not stop the violent men from Ćacilend from attacking citizens who had come to support Dijana Hrka. Those gathered in Ćacilend played loud music for three days and nights in a row, provoking the mother who had lost her child. They also attacked citizens by throwing various objects at them, to which the police did not respond. On the contrary, the police arrested citizens who tried to defend themselves or threw the objects back into the fenced camp. Several students were arrested as well. The police also detained students on their way to a protest in Belgrade in support of Dijana Hrka. A group of students from Niš was stopped multiple times on their way to Belgrade, the first time, one female student was detained, and the second time, two male students were detained by members of the Special Operations Unit (JZO), who insulted and threatened them with violence. For days, the violent men from the fenced camp attacked citizens, activists, and students. A member of the group "Running for Students" was attacked, and a man punched a female student in the head just a few steps away from police officers who did not react. Journalists were also attacked with pyrotechnic devices. Among the men in Ćacilend, local city officials were identified. Violence was also recorded in other locations. In Mladenovac, a man drove his car into citizens protesting there. On the evening of November 5, two gatherings were held in front of the National Assembly. At one, citizens paid tribute to the victims in Novi Sad and expressed support for the woman who had lost her child and is demanding accountability for the collapse of the canopy. On the other side, government supporters celebrated to nationalist songs and loud music, perhaps the clearest reflection of the current state of Serbia and the deep division within society that the ruling party's regime has caused.

Freedom of Association

Local activist targeted

A smear campaign was conducted on social networks against the activist and journalist Tara Rukeci Milivojević, who was the target of chauvinist threats and insults. A group of civil society organizations stated that: "Referring to nationality, spreading racist lies and publicly targeting a woman who advocates for equality and justice is hate speech and an attempt to divert attention from essential problems, exploitation, institutional failures and organized intimidation of those who fight for a just society." In the statement, the organizations called on the authorities to show zero tolerance for violence and to protect the safety of activists in the digital and physical space.

“Crni ovan” vandalized again

On the day of the International Day of Anti-Fascism, four masked men vandalized the anti-fascist collective and Crni Ovan space in Novi Sad. This is not the first time that this space for the gathering of activists has been attacked by groups that persistently go unpunished for their actions.

Attacked president of the MERI movement

Dejan Zejnula, president of the Right to Life Movement - MERI, was attacked on November 7, the Assembly of the MERI movement stated. Attacks on activists have intensified in conditions of systemic repression and targeting campaigns by government officials against civil society in the country.