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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

December 12 - December 25, 2025

### Freedom of Expression

#### Threats to journalists

Media professionals in Serbia are regularly exposed to targeting and verbal attacks by the highest representatives of the authorities. In such an atmosphere, these attacks spill over into the online sphere, where anonymous death threats and threats of violence emerge, indicating a serious threat to the physical safety of independent journalists. Threats to burn down the Radar newsroom, as well as death threats against cartoonist Dušan Petričić, were sent to the editorial email address and posted on the outlet's website. Journalists Marko Vidojković and Nenad Kulačin were also subjected to threats over several days. In one threat, a person identifying himself as Mile Bajšev The Big Ćaci told the two journalists that they were lucky not to be in the West, where they would be "marked for elimination" and hunted, adding that they were in "Vučić's democratic Serbia," where the people are tolerant, ending the threat with the words "until it snaps." The president of ANEM and a member of the Working Group for the Safety of Journalists, Veran Matić, warns that out of 45 cases of online threats opened in 2025, not a single one has resulted in a conviction. Such devastating statistics further encourage those who, behind anonymous profiles, insult and threaten journalists for doing their job. Attacks in the online sphere are not surprising in circumstances where journalists are constantly targeted by representatives of the authorities. Thus, at a press conference, in addition to standard insults and a rude attitude toward N1 journalists, the President of Serbia stated: "The fact that your mother and father did not teach you basic manners is your problem. And I will teach you—you will get answers even to your heckling. I will teach you order since your parents did not. Shame on you." Following this response by Vučić to questions from journalist Mladen Savatović, a wave of threats and insults against this N1 journalist ensued. Soon after, threatening messages directed at the N1 newsroom also appeared on social media. In an atmosphere of general social polarization and the spread of intolerance by representatives of the authorities toward all those who think critically, it is difficult to avoid counterattacks by individuals who act inappropriately. Thus, on December 16, bomb threats were sent to the editorial offices of pro-government media outlets Kurir, Mondo, and Espresso; fortunately, these threats proved to be false. Threats against journalists continued despite repeated appeals by journalistic and media associations to stop such practices. After reporting on Minister of Culture Nikola Selaković, against whom the Prosecutor's Office for Organized Crime filed an indictment proposal, N1 journalist Ana Novaković was subjected to coordinated bot attacks on social media.

Unfortunately, threats sometimes go beyond the online sphere and spill into real, physical space. Fahrudin Kladničanin, editor of the Hava.rs portal and director of the Academic Initiative Forum 10, was verbally attacked on the street in Novi Pazar on the day of protests for the survival of the State University of Novi Pazar. The alarming number of attacks on journalists that occurred in the final month of the year reflects the dangerous conditions under which journalists have operated throughout the entire year, making this profession extremely dangerous and casting uncertainty over the future of independent journalism in Serbia.

## Threats to Vuk Cvijić

Amid the numerous threats journalists were exposed to during the observed period, one particularly serious threatening phone call directed at Radar journalist Vuk Cvijić stands out. Cvijić received the call on December 17 from an unknown foreign number, and the man who called him warned him to “watch what he publishes tomorrow” and said that Cvijić would “meet” the caller “if he publishes the article.” Cvijić replied to the anonymous caller that everything had already been printed and that the weekly would be published the following day, to which the caller responded, “then you will meet me.” This very serious threat to journalist Cvijić’s safety is especially alarming given that previous cases of physical attacks against him remain unresolved, and that even those perpetrators who were identified have not been punished. The editorial team of the weekly Radar reported the threat to the competent prosecutor’s office, marking it as “urgent.” Journalist Cvijić’s safety is seriously endangered, and responsibility now lies with the institutions and their willingness to protect journalists. Unfortunately, their actions-or lack thereof-so far do not inspire confidence.

## Journalist called to the police

Journalist Uglješa Bokić of the daily Danas received a call from the Novi Sad police instructing him to report to the police station on December 25, to be questioned at the order of the Basic Public Prosecutor’s Office. The questioning was scheduled in connection with the publication of excerpts from an official police report on the Danas portal, related to the arrest of Novi Sad lawyer Nemanja Aleksić in early April of this year. The Prosecutor’s Office ordered the police to question Bokić regarding the circumstances of a criminal complaint filed personally by lawyer Aleksić against an unknown person for the criminal offense of breach of the confidentiality of proceedings. The Danas editorial team learned that the aim of the questioning is to obtain information from journalist Bokić about the source of the published documents. Lawyer Aleksić was arrested following a traffic incident in which he first became involved in a verbal altercation with another driver and then exited his vehicle holding a golf club. At that moment, a police patrol arrived and subdued Aleksić by knocking him to the ground, as shown in videos published on social media. He was subsequently taken to the police station, where he was detained for up to 48 hours. While in police custody, he was subjected to a rapid drug test that showed a positive result for amphetamine, after which he was remanded in custody for up to 30 days. Danas obtained this official police report from a source within the Novi Sad Prosecutor’s Office. Lawyer Aleksić is known to the wider public as the defense attorney of former minister Goran Vesnić in the “canopy collapse” case. Summoning journalist Bokić for questioning constitutes direct pressure and an attempt to intimidate journalists and their sources. Furthermore, any attempt to force a journalist to reveal the identity of a source represents a direct violation of the Law on Public Information and the Code of Ethics of Journalists of Serbia, under which journalists are not obliged to disclose their sources.

## **Preventing journalists from performing journalistic work**

In addition to verbal threats and physical attacks, journalists are also facing numerous other obstacles in their work that obstruct independent, comprehensive, and truthful reporting to the public. Police officers guarding the tent encampment known as “Ćacilend” demanded that a journalist from the Mašina portal delete footage from her phone that she had recorded in front of the National Assembly of Serbia. At the same time, N1 journalist Žaklina Tatalović had her microphone switched off by parliamentary technical staff on the orders of individuals from the office of National Assembly Speaker Ana Brnabić, preventing her from asking further questions at a press conference. All of these actions represent active attempts to prevent journalists from doing their jobs and constitute steps toward a complete media blackout and enforced silence.

## **Pressures due to support for the protests**

Intensified pressure on farmers who supported the student protests continues. The Initiative for the Survival of Farmers announced that one of its members received a decision of passivization of his agricultural holding for a period of five years. A few days later, another case of passivization became known, prompting the affected farmer to announce that he would go on a hunger strike. Through economic pressure on farmers, the authorities are attempting to prevent protests by workers in this sector, thereby directly endangering the livelihoods of the affected families who depend on agriculture for survival. In the previous period, doctors have also faced repression. Professor and cardiologist Vladimir Zdravković, who had previously been threatened with dismissal from the Faculty of Medicine in Kragujevac for refusing to conduct online classes, has now been removed from his position as head of the Cardiology Clinic at the University Clinical Center. Professor Dr. Vladimir Dugalić has also lost his job and will no longer work as a surgeon at the First Surgical Clinic of the Clinical Center of Serbia. Professors and teachers in schools and universities, employees of public enterprises, doctors, farmers, and other workers who privately or publicly stood by students and supported the protests have faced dismissals and disciplinary proceedings as a form of retaliation by the authorities for their participation in the protests.

## **Freedom of Assembly**

### **The gendarmerie surrounded peaceful citizens at the protest**

In Bački Petrovac, a group of about 50 members of the gendarmerie surrounded a smaller group of citizens who organized a peaceful protest. Citizens of Bački Petrovac, of Slovak nationality, gathered on the day of the joint visit of the Slovak and Serbian presidents, to express their dissatisfaction with the state in which this community finds itself. However, the police cordon prevented them from doing so and for two hours they were not allowed to leave the park where they had gathered. Among the citizens was the editor of Storyteller, Vladimira Valtner, who was not allowed by the police to leave the fenced area and carry out her journalistic work. We will remind you that major conflicts started during the summer after the attack by SNS members and supporters on the organizers of the Slovak national festivities and citizens who came to visit the exhibition about the protests.

## **Freedom of Association**

### **Break-in at activist's apartment**

The house of activist Ljiljana Nešić from the association "Women for Peace" from Leskovac was ransacked and vandalized, but nothing was stolen. This association, which deals with the empowerment of women who have suffered violence, has been the target of pressure and smear campaigns for years. The attacks on them especially intensified in 2022, when the activists of this association discovered that money for the SOS office for victims of violence was received from the local self-government by a man twice convicted of domestic violence. The United Nations special rapporteur on the position of human rights defenders spoke out about the attacks they were subjected to at the time, and asked the authorities in Serbia to end the harassment of "Women for Peace". Activists of this association are also exposed to administrative pressure from local authorities, and the raid on Ljiljana Nešić's house is another threat to women who protect and fight for the rights of all women through their work. Of particular concern is the fact that two femicides were recorded in Leskovac within a month, and that the state still does not recognize femicide as a separate crime.