



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

November 28 - December 11, 2025

### **Freedom of Expression**

#### **New cases of spying on activists**

BIRN, in cooperation with the SHARE Foundation, discovered that during the detention of four farmers and environmental activists, the BIA installed the NoviSpy spy software into their phones. The NoviSpy software provides access to the microphone, camera, messages, location of the phone, and all data is sent directly to the Security and Information Agency server. We remind you that BIRN and Amnesty International's research from December 2024 showed that the BIA installed spy software to monitor the phones of activists and journalists. Although government representatives denied the allegations from the research, the latest recorded cases indicate that digital surveillance of political dissidents in Serbia continues. Illegal surveillance of activists, journalists and all citizens is used with the aim of collecting data and information that could be used for the purpose of a tabloid targeting campaign. The use of this software is also not legally regulated, and the action of the BIA is directly aimed at persecuting opponents of the ruling regime.

#### **Pressure on the media and censorship**

Some local journalists in Subotica did not receive an official invitation or the possibility of accreditation for the ceremony in the City Hall, where the "Ištvan Pastor" Foundation awarded prizes to the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, and the Prime Minister of Hungary, Viktor Orban. The selective sending of invitations to certain media indicates that there are lists of those who are welcome at official events and those who are not - thus denying free and objective reporting to the public. The page of Blokada info, a student media outlet from Novi Sad that regularly reports on all protests, has been removed from Serbian Wikipedia. The management of the National Theater continues to apply censorship. After the new administration led by Dragan Bokan, the founder and commander of the paramilitary unit of the 90s "White Eagles", amended the Rulebook on the work discipline of employees' behavior and introduced the rule that employees are not allowed to publicly communicate political content and call for activities that have a political character, this time they also banned the award ceremony on the stage of this theater. For the last year, actors have been among the loudest in supporting students and their demands, and the government is trying to stifle independent voices by appointing politically eligible personnel.

## Pressures due to support for the protests

Political retaliation against employees in the education sector who supported the student protests and their demands continues. Disciplinary proceedings have been initiated against an assistant professor at the Faculty of Medicine in Niš for allegedly violating work discipline, all because he joined students in 16 minutes of silence. The secretary of the Faculty of Medicine in Belgrade was dismissed by decision of the acting dean. The secretary had previously openly alerted the competent authorities: the Ministry of Education, the Rectorate, and other institutions to violations of the statute during the dismissal of the previous administration and the disputed appointment of the acting leadership. Because of this, she had been targeted by the faculty administration, and has now been officially removed from her position for pointing out unlawful practices. A PhD candidate in electrical engineering and computer science and an assistant at the State University in Novi Pazar (DUNP), Emir Ugljanin, was fired from the institution due to what he described to the media as a verbal conflict with the brother of the rector, Zana Dolićanin. Students of this faculty remain in blockade, demanding that emergency administration be imposed at the university due to dissatisfaction with how the current leadership is running the institution. We remind that the dean of this faculty also brought in private security, which attacked students who were staying on campus and forcibly removed them from the building. Besides education workers, other employees who participate in protests or criticize the current government are also facing repression. A coffee-maker employed in the Raška Municipal Administration was fired for refusing to attend rallies of the Serbian Progressive Party. Two employees of the Public Enterprise “Post of Serbia” received annexes to their employment contracts reassigning them, and were later fired after speaking at a workers’ protest. One of them was later reinstated. Nenad Rakić, an employee of the cadastre office in Mionica, was removed from his workplace and disciplinary proceedings were initiated against him because he ran as a candidate on the “United for Mionica” list in the local elections. After his buses were confiscated, transporter Milomir Jaćimović has now also had his driver’s license taken away. Through systemic pressure, dismissals, and disciplinary measures, the authorities are endangering the livelihoods of targeted citizens. Farmers are also under pressure, facing selective inspections because of their support for the protests. All institutions in the country have been instrumentalized for the purpose of politically persecuting opponents of the regime.

## Freedom of Association

### Activist attacked

After returning home from the protest, Subotica activist Dražen Lončar and an elderly citizen were attacked by a group of masked men with metal bars. Lončar was taken to the hospital with serious injuries, and the brother of the beaten activist claims that the police initially detained the wrong person. Another worrying thing happened in this case. Namely, in the night between December 9 and 10, the passenger vehicle of the prosecutor, who is acting in this case, was set on fire. This attack on the prosecutor is an indication of wider pressure exerted on prosecutors and judges in Serbia with the intention of preventing their independent work in accordance with the Constitution and laws, all with the aim of subordinating the judicial branch to the executive.

## **BCSP targeted by hacker attacks**

The Belgrade Center for Security Policy (BCBP) announced that they were the target of digital attacks during the past months, some of which were carried out by a hacker group under the control of the Russian Military Intelligence Service, which, they say, was confirmed by the official report of the Microsoft Threat Intelligence Center. Attacks on e-mail accounts, website and digital services were recorded, all during the period when this center organizes an important international conference, the Belgrade Security Conference. Hackers created a fake website that aimed to deceive the participants of this conference, while the official website of the conference recorded more than 10,000 attacks during its duration. Such attacks limit the space for organizations to work and threaten the digital security of employees.

## **Civic space in Serbia "repressed"**

The international research platform CIVICUS Monitor, which tracks the state of civic freedoms in 198 countries and territories, has downgraded Serbia's civic space rating from "obstructed" to "repressed." This category, the second lowest possible, describes countries in which freedoms of expression, assembly, and association are severely restricted, and opposition to the authorities can lead to serious consequences such as violence, legal prosecution, or imprisonment. CIVICUS Monitor cites the increasing repression by the Serbian authorities in response to the ongoing student protests that erupted after the deadly collapse of the railway station in Novi Sad in November 2024 as the key reason for the downgrade. Protesters are facing police violence, attacks by groups close to the ruling party, mass arrests, surveillance, and retaliation, while those responsible for violence against them enjoy impunity. CIVICUS Monitor also warns about actions that further escalate tensions, including the pardoning of individuals accused of attacking protesters and the establishment of counter-protest camps organized by the authorities around key institutions in Belgrade. The new rating on the state of fundamental freedoms in Serbia highlights the seriousness of the situation and the depth of the problems we are facing, problems for which no political solution is in sight under current circumstances, in which the government itself is the source of these issues.