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# THREE FREEDOMS UNDER THE MAGNIFYING GLASS



Civic  
Initiatives

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freedom of expression

freedom of assembly

freedom of association

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

10 - 23 April, 2026

### Freedom of Expression

#### Brutal threats against media workers

Senior officials of the Serbian Progressive Party, Milenko Jovanov and Marjan Rističević, used the parliamentary podium to directly insult and label the television stations N1 and Nova S. During the parliamentary session, N1 was described as “propaganda-terrorist trash”, while the founders of these media outlets were labeled “psychopaths”.

Given that state officials, during live broadcasts on national frequencies, endangered the safety of journalists and created a dangerous environment for their work, it is not surprising that journalists Nenad Kulačin and Marko Vidojković were once again subjected to a series of brutal death threats and threats of physical violence. Messages such as “anti-fascist terrorists should be fried” and “your heads should be cut off” were published even as direct responses to news reports on convictions for previous threats. Although the attackers often use personal profiles with real names and photographs, most of these cases remain without judicial outcome, out of 26 initiated cases in recent years, only three resulted in convictions, while Vidojković had previously been forced to leave the country due to security threats.

Journalists and associates of the magazine “Revolt” were exposed to continuous and brutal death threats following a series of articles on corruption and far-right groups. Through social networks and anonymous messages, they received direct threats of physical liquidation, including messages stating that they would be “found and removed”. In addition to threats directed at journalists, their families were also targeted, while private addresses of some editorial staff members were shared in closed groups accompanied by calls for violence. Although all incidents were duly reported, no one has been detained or prosecuted so far.

#### Destruction of the property

A bus belonging to transport operator Milomir Jaćimović was set on fire in the parking area in front of his family home. The incident occurred during the night, and the fire completely destroyed the vehicle before firefighters managed to extinguish it. Jaćimović stated that the burned bus was the same vehicle he had used several months earlier to blockade the municipality of Žabalj, and that he had long used it to transport students. He also stated that this was not the first time he had faced destruction of property.

# **Freedom of Assembly**

## **Attacks during student actions**

During the “Student in Every Village” campaign in Vitanovac near Kraljevo, students participating in the action were attacked. The attackers verbally insulted them, knocked a phone out of one student’s hand, and took a female student’s camera before throwing it away and pinning her against a fence.

During another action entitled “Students Win”, on 18 April in Lazarevac, a minor and a woman placing stickers around the town were physically attacked by exchange office owner Nenad Sinđelić, who is described by students in blockade from Lazarevac as a well-known and previously incident-prone individual. According to their statements, members of the Sinđelić family had previously been involved in conflicts with political opponents. In previous months, threats, provocations, and harassment of students had already been recorded. The attacked woman sustained blows to the head, while the minor suffered blows to the legs. The case was reported to the police.

## **Police repression against students and activists**

Residents of Valjevo gathered in the streets on 14 April to remind the public that, even eight months after police brutality against citizens and minors in that city, those responsible for beatings had still not been identified. During the gathering, police officers wearing balaclavas detained participants while refusing to identify themselves to citizens requesting to see their badges. Masked officers intervened without visible insignia or explanation for the arrests, creating tensions at the scene. Detained citizens were placed into unmarked vehicles and driven away, while witnesses described the event as intimidation and a demonstration of force accompanied by violations of basic police procedures regarding identification during official duties.

Three students from the Faculty of Agriculture in Belgrade were detained by plainclothes inspectors who, according to the students, acted without a warrant. The students were detained without a clear explanation of the reasons for detention, and their vehicle was searched.

Two activists from the informal civic initiatives “Zrenjaninski zborovi” and “Bicikl gerila” were detained in Zrenjaninafter removing political stickers reading “Yellow thieves” and writing the graffiti “Students Are Winning”. While they were removing the stickers, two police vehicles carrying four police officers appeared and immediately identified and detained them.

At the police station, one female activist underwent a particularly problematic search conducted by a woman in civilian clothes who did not identify herself, while the activist was accused of not carrying an identity card.

The mass use of unmarked vehicles, police officers wearing balaclavas without visible insignia who refuse to identify themselves, and police officers using excessive physical force during arrests directly violates the Law on Police. Such practices prevent citizens from knowing who is arresting them and whether those individuals possess official authority.

## **Incident during the protest of residents of Ratina village**

During a protest by residents of the village of Ratina near Kraljevo, who blocked traffic demanding compensation for land expropriated for highway construction, water from a tanker truck was sprayed at them at full force. Instead of compensating the residents, workers employed by the company carrying out the construction confronted dissatisfied citizens. One woman sustained more serious injuries during the incident.

Compensation for damage suffered by dissatisfied farmers due to the construction of the highway from Kruševac to Trstenik has never been paid. No statement regarding the incident has been issued by the competent institutions.

# **Freedom of Association**

## **Workplace pressure and retaliation against employees**

Pressure on employees in public enterprises continues, while the methods used to silence those who speak out are becoming increasingly brutal. Milan Petrić, an employee of the Belgrade public utility company JKP Gradska čistoća, was physically attacked at his workplace. The incident occurred on company premises when a man whom Petrić described as an alleged colleague rarely seen at work approached him from behind, insulted him, and struck him. As a result of the blow, Petrić fell and sustained a serious bodily injury, namely a broken arm.

The attacked employee stated that this incident was not isolated, but rather the culmination of years of pressure, workplace harassment, and intimidation that he had endured after pointing to irregularities in the company's operations and disputed public tenders. He noted that he had previously been dismissed from work, although the court annulled the dismissal two months earlier, but that pressure against him continued. According to Petrić, the public enterprise is treated as a party-controlled company where political activists are employed without appearing for work, while employees who refuse to participate in such practices face threats and physical violence.

During the blockade of an intersection in Novi Sad on 17 April 2026, when citizens were paying tribute to victims of the canopy collapse, a verbal conflict occurred between an elderly man from Sremski Karlovci and gathered citizens. Two police officers intervened and removed the man from the intersection, after which a video of the event was published on social networks.

Following publication of the footage, disciplinary proceedings were initiated against the two police officers, and one of them was suspended. According to statements by a police officer from Novi Sad, the disciplinary measures were imposed due to political pressure from senior officials within the Ministry of Interior, despite the fact that the officers, according to his account, had acted lawfully and were attempting to prevent escalation. Following the police response during the incident, the Ombudsman of Serbia, Zoran Pašalić initiated oversight proceedings regarding the legality and propriety of the Ministry of Interior's actions.

Young football player Jovan Zogović from Kruševac was expelled from football club Bor 1919 after refusing to attend a rally organized by the Serbian Progressive Party. According to his account, club management required players to attend the political gathering, and after he refused, he was informed that he could no longer train and that he "did not belong to Bor". Zogović stated that he was directly told his refusal would have consequences for his status within the team.