

# **Repression in Education: A wave of Dismissals, Removals and Disciplinary Procedures**



*Last updated: May 20, 2026*

## Summary

The report documents a new form of repression in Serbia's education system, carried out on a mass scale during 2024/2025 and continuing into the 2026 calendar year. Following a wave of salary suspensions for employees in educational institutions at the beginning of 2025, a systematic pattern of criminal complaints, disciplinary proceedings, dismissals, and removals of principals and teachers was introduced by the end of the year. The examples and cases listed in the report represent only the tip of the iceberg - these are cases that have been reported and documented, while numerous pressures on employees in education remain unreported and outside official records.

According to workers unions and professional networks for 2025, more than **100 school employees** have already lost their jobs or contract extensions, while over **110 disciplinary procedures** have been initiated in high schools and elementary schools in numerous cities (Subotica, Belgrade, Srbobran, Požarevac, Gornji Milanovac). The Ministry of Education confirmed that **25 school principals** were replaced, and that as many as **75 principals resigned**, while in Niš the local authorities replaced entire school boards in **26 schools**. Rectors and vice-rectors of universities have been repeatedly questioned and faced with criminal charges, which the academic community sees as an open attempt at intimidation. Pressure on the University of Belgrade culminated in 2026 after the tragic death of a student from the Faculty of Philosophy, which was misused as a pretext for the **Criminal Police** to enter the Rectorate building and for a broad tabloid campaign targeting the rector of the Belgrade University and the dean of the Faculty of Philosophy. At the same time, the authorities also moved to establish parallel structures in higher education. In Niš, they founded the Faculty of Serbian Studies by separating three departments from the Faculty of Philosophy without the prior consent of the faculty's Teaching and Research Council. Prime Minister Đuro Macut signed a memorandum with the Serbian Orthodox Church with the intention of establishing the new Saint Sava University, a project that has raised numerous uncertainties and unresolved questions.

These cases show that formal reasons, such as disciplinary measures, inspection findings, technological redundancies, serve as an excuse for politically motivated retaliation against employees who supported pupils and students in protests. This violates the basic constitutional principles of equality, prohibition of discrimination and autonomy of educational institutions. Trade unions and academic networks warn that this wave of repression can have devastating long-term consequences: loss of quality personnel, collapse of trust in institutions and further subordination of education to political interests.

## Criminal reports and information interviews - Universities

Parallel to the student protests, a wave of criminal charges and police hearings against the rector and vice-rector of universities was launched. These procedures, formally based on applications from individuals or organizations close to the authorities, in practice function as a form of pressure on the academic community. The hearings and applications are related to student blockades and activities of the university during the protests, and were perceived by the public as attempts to intimidate and weaken the university's autonomy. Probably only most visible cases came under the public eye, while part of the pressure remains outside the public record.

A **criminal complaint** was filed [against the rector of the University of Kragujevac, Vladimir Ranković](#), in connection with student blockades of the university. According to the order of the Prosecutor's Office for the Suppression of Corruption, police inspectors conducted an informative interview with Rector Ranković in April 2025 regarding that report. The complaint was filed by an unnamed person for organizing or tolerating the student blockade, and the investigation is being conducted at the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Kraljevo. This case was evaluated as pressure on the academic community, considering that the criminal complaint filed by Miloš Pavlović against the rector due to student blockades was announced through the [tabloids](#).

In April 2025, a **new criminal complaint** [against the Rector of the University of Belgrade, Vladan Đokić](#) was filed by student Miloš Pavlović and a group of like-minded people. The first primary prosecutor's office in Belgrade asked the UB Rectorate to collect information regarding that complaint. The complaint charges the rector with the criminal offense of "violation of equality" (Art. 128(2) CC) due to alleged discrimination in the context of student protests. Rector Đokić was previously interrogated by the police for several hours on another criminal complaint, also filed by the same group (represented as "students who want to study"). Đokić has publicly indicated that he considers these complaints and actions to be a **continuation of the intimidation** of the academic community.

Several vice-chancellors of the University of Belgrade are facing criminal charges brought against them and the rector by Mario Spasić (secretary of a government council). In July 2025, vice-rector for Finance Zorica Vujić testified at the Ministry of Internal Affairs - she confirmed that the [police questions](#) were mainly about **student blockades** and the activities of the University during the protests. Vujić emphasized that actions outside their jurisdiction are being attributed to the Rector's College and that she perceives the entire procedure as additional **pressure** on the University. The complaint against her charges her with abuse of official position and unscrupulous work, and is part of a broader complaint against the rector and vice-rector of UB submitted by Mario Spasić.

Vice-rector Nebojša Bojović and vice-rector Dejan Filipović also went through a similar process. Vice-Rector Nebojša Bojović [was questioned](#) at the end of July 2025. After leaving, he stated that he considered the criminal complaint to be part of the "general atmosphere" created against the University, assessing that it was an attempt to **destabilize academic autonomy**. "The criminal

complaint is part of the general atmosphere of pressure on the University... We will always advocate for tolerance and to put students in the context of the future they deserve," Bojović said. The complaint (by Spasić) against him, the rector and two other vice-rectors accuses them of abuse of position and unscrupulous work.

Vice-chancellor Dejan Filipović gave a [statement to the police](#) in July 2025. He assessed that the report against him was **unfounded** and that it represents pressure on the University and continued intimidation of the academic community. Filipović confirmed that during the statement they discussed student blockades and the return to classes, and he emphasized that many of the things he is accused of are not in his jurisdiction at all, which shows that the purpose of the report is actually to put pressure on the university staff who supported the students. The criminal complaint against the UB rector's team was filed by an organization close to the government (Mario Spasić's "Council for monitoring, human rights and the fight against corruption – Transparency"), and the University Plenum condemned those moves as **illegitimate attempts to silence professors**.

The rector of the University of Arts, Mirjana Nikolić, was the [target of a misdemeanor procedure](#) following a report from the Education Inspectorate, with the explanation that the University did not organize lectures and other forms of teaching in accordance with the Law on Higher Education in the period from December 2024. As a responsible person, the rector is accused of having committed a misdemeanor under Article 136 of the Law on Higher Education, which provides for fines for legal and responsible persons. This case is evaluated by the academic community as another form of **pressure on the university structures** that showed solidarity with the student protests. Formal reasons, such as "not organizing classes", are used as an excuse to discipline the management, while in essence it is an attempt to intimidate and undermine the autonomy of the university.

Iva Draškić Vićanović, Dean of the Faculty of Philology, received an [invitation for questioning](#) before the Misdemeanor Court, also following a complaint filed by the Education Inspectorate alleging that she failed to organize classes during the student blockades. According to the allegations, she was **summoned for questioning** as the accused in a misdemeanor case for which the institution could be fined between 200,000 and 2 million dinars, while she, as the responsible person, could face a fine ranging from 10,000 to 50,000 dinars.

By November 2025, as many as [five deans](#) of the University of Belgrade had received misdemeanor charges, and according to Goran Roglić, Dean of the Faculty of Chemistry, all deans are expected to face them. Minister of Education Dejan Vuk Stanković stated that the state would respond to unlawful actions at universities not through repression, but administratively, rationally, and patiently, although in practice the situation appears otherwise. The previous minister, Slavica Đukić Dejanović, filed misdemeanor charges against all deans, while the Ministry of Education decided not to process professors' payments for the implementation of projects. Roglić described the actions of the Ministry of Education and Minister Slavica Đukić Dejanović as **forms of repression**.

Valentina Arsić Arsenijević, a professor at the Faculty of Medicine, [filed a criminal complaint](#) against

former dean Tatjana Simić and dean candidate Vesna Bjegović Mikanović, accusing them of abusing employees' right to strike during the period of student blockades. The explanation attached to the criminal complaint states that, during a session of the Electoral Council of the Faculty of Medicine on March 12, 2025, Bjegović Mikanović called on members to go on strike in support of the students participating in the blockades, and that there are indications she committed a criminal offense against labor rights under Article 167 of the Criminal Code. It further alleges that the then-head of the faculty administration and chair of the Electoral Council session, Professor Tatjana Simić, failed to prevent the unlawful conduct. A number of professors at the Faculty of Medicine view the criminal complaint as a continuation of a campaign against Professor Bjegović Mikanović, who is considered the most serious candidate for dean. The Faculty of Medicine has for months been experiencing repeated attempts to elect a new dean, following several unlawful election procedures. In May 2026, [Milena Balint was appointed acting dean](#) through an electronic session. She is the wife of Science Minister Bela Balint. Valentina Arsić Arsenijević was appointed as the new vice dean, which is not the first case of **individuals who opposed the blockades advancing in their careers**. For example, Danka Nešović, the acting principal of the Fifth Belgrade Gymnasium who initiated disciplinary proceedings against teachers supporting students, later became an assistant to the Minister of Education. A group of professors from the Faculty of Medicine in Belgrade submitted a request to the rector of the University of Belgrade to review the legality of the decision by the Faculty Council appointing Valentina Arsić Arsenijević as vice dean. Professor Arsić Arsenijević is widely known to the public for her anti-vaccination views and for recommending veterinary drugs in the fight against COVID-19.

## Disciplinary procedures in schools

Disciplinary proceedings initiated against teachers and professors in multiple cities and schools across Serbia have most often been linked to the suspension of classes and support for student protests, and in many cases they were launched hastily and amid serious concerns regarding violations of legal procedures. These examples probably represent only a fraction of the pressures employees are exposed to, as many cases go unreported for fear of retaliation.

The educational inspector ordered the initiation of [disciplinary proceedings against 63 employees](#) of Gymnasium "Svetozar Marković" in Subotica, due to the suspension of work from January 20, 2025. The school interprets this as an **obvious measure of intimidation** of the teaching staff. The provincial body quickly appointed a new acting director, although the previous director has not yet been formally dismissed.

The principal of the school, Snježana Kojić, initiated [disciplinary proceedings](#) against four teachers at Elementary School "Vožd Karadorđe" in Belgrade. The reason for disciplinary proceedings: their participation in **the suspension of classes and support for student demands**.

Another principal, Jasmena Šeguljev, initiated [disciplinary proceedings](#) against three teachers at Gymnasium - School of Economics "Svetozar Miletić" in Srbobran, **due to suspension of classes**.

Principal of Music school "Stevan Mokranjac" in Požarevac, Karolina Sprečvaković, initiated proceedings [against eight teachers](#). According to the petition of educators and citizens, in all these cases the legal **procedures were not followed** when starting the proceedings. These disciplinary measures were initiated immediately after teachers participated in a protest suspension of classes in support of the students.

English teacher at Technical School in Bečej, Siniša Avramov, [was suspended](#) and disciplinary proceedings were initiated against him, due to his participation in the protest work stoppage (from February 7, 2025, at the invitation of the NSPRS union). Avramov states that he will be **fired and his work license revoked** because he refused to end the suspension of classes. He points out that he **went on strike out of solidarity with the students** and that because of this he experiences continuous pressure.

Principal of the Elementary School "Kralj Aleksandar I" in Gornji Milanovac, Dragica Radišić, on the **order of the republican inspector**, initiated [disciplinary proceedings against as many as 40 teachers](#) who participated in the **two-day suspension of classes** (January 20 and 24, 2025). The teachers had two **salaries reduced** by more than 50,000 dinars as a punishment for those days. The teachers' collective claims that the actions are selective - only those who are not "close" to the headmistress were punished, while individuals who were also on strike were exempted from sanctions. These teachers see the procedure as **retaliation and intimidation** ahead of the principal's re-election. The case destabilized the work of the school (almost half of the teachers are under trial), and the union and parents alarmed the public because of the illegality and bias of the proceedings.

The professor of the Fifth Belgrade High School, Ana Prišing, [was suspended](#) because she called a meeting as the president of the school board. Her suspension is seen by the parents of students of the Fifth Gymnasium as a **continuation of the retaliation** carried out by the former acting principal. principal Danka Nešović, and professor Prišing is not the first suspended teacher of this high school.

**Disciplinary proceedings** were initiated against a primary school teacher from Vranje because she was making coffee for students and citizens at protests outside of working hours. The principal reportedly promised that he would not take any action regarding the disciplinary proceedings unless he was pressured to do so. The disciplinary complaint states that the teacher abused her sick leave because she was seen making coffee, even though her doctor had not prescribed rest, but rather physical movement due to spinal problems.

## **Fired and dismissed: Dismissal of teachers and professors due to support of student protests**

In addition to the criminal charges and disciplinary proceedings, repression in education during 2024/2025 took the most difficult form - direct dismissals and firing of teachers and professors. These are measures that leave permanent consequences for professional careers, because employees lose employment, mandates and contracts, most often without clear explanations and in flagrant violation of legal procedures. These cases show that solidarity with students and a publicly expressed critical attitude towards repression are sanctioned in the most drastic way - by removing the unfit from the system. Here, as in the previous areas of the report, we are only talking about a part of the reported cases, while many others remain invisible due to the fear of consequences.

A full-time professor at the Faculty of Medicine in Niš, prof. Tatjana Jevtović Stoimenov, announced that she was practically [removed from the work of the Laboratory](#) for Medical Genetics, which she built herself for years, **due to support of students**. *"If you had been calmer and cooperated more, this would not have happened"*, she was told when she was expelled from the laboratory. In October 2024, she was dismissed from her leadership position in the laboratory without explanation, and on January 28, 2025, she was banned from the premises - after she refused to condemn the student blockade and after she publicly supported students. The professor states that her contract is formally valid, but that the new boss (appointed by the dean) unilaterally prevented her from working and replaced her with other persons, which she directly relates to her decision that she will not teach while the faculty is being blocked and students are being arrested. This case has attracted a lot of attention - the academic community and students believe that it is retaliation against the professor who bravely supported their demands.

Two history professors at the Faculty of Philosophy Niš, prof. Irena Ljubomirović and prof. Jasmina Šaranac Stamenković were a long-time members of the Organizational Committee of the scientific gathering "Niš and Byzantium". Since they publicly supported the student protests and the blockade of the faculty, the city authorities (Local Self-Government of Niš) **excluded them from the board of this symposium**. This decision was made without any explanation, which was also confirmed by the organizers - the city councilwoman only said that *"the two of them can no longer be on the board"* and that *"they are not obliged to give an explanation"*. After public pressure and the withdrawal of one appointed substitute member (an assistant who refused to participate in that injustice), the city authorities changed their minds and the [professors were returned](#) to the board. Nevertheless, the incident triggered a protest march in Nis - the academic community is demanding the responsibility of those who tried to politically eliminate prominent professors because of their attitude.

Professor at the Faculty of Medicine Kragujevac (FMN Kragujevac), Aleksandar Cvetković (known as one of the members of the "Free University" network) **supported the students of FMN Kragujevac**

with a speech at the protest, after which the faculty administration **dismissed him from his duties as a tutor** (mentor for six groups of students) the next day. The academic network "Free University" condemned this [dismissal](#) as an example of an attempt to "silence and intimidate professors who do not remain silent." Therefore, Cvetković was punished for supporting students, which is contrary to the Law on Higher Education. The network states that these attempts at intimidation will remain unsuccessful, as prof. Cvetković still stands with the students, and the "Free University" provides him with full support.

Another Professor at the Faculty of Medicine Kragujevac (FMN Kragujevac) received a **warning before dismissal** in May 2025 because he **refused to hold online classes** introduced during the student blockade. *"It's true. Yesterday I received a warning before being fired because I don't teach online,"* confirmed the professor. Zdravkovic. The document gave him 8 days to make a statement, with the [threat of dismissal](#) if he continued to follow the decision of the Educational and Scientific Council (which declared online teaching unacceptable). The professor publicly said that online teaching is contrary to the legal decisions of the faculty and that he stands behind his professional assessment that *"one cannot become a doctor through a computer."* Students, NSPM and unions came to the defense of Zdravković, stressing that any repression due to profession and publicly expressed opinion is illegal. Professor Zdravković continues to teach, but he made it clear that he will not hold classes either live or online while the blockade continues and the repression of students continues.

Academy of Arts Novi Sad Professor Emeritus and Renowned film director Goran Marković, announced on July 30, 2025, that he **had been dismissed** from the Academy of Arts in Novi Sad. He learned of this indirectly, when his students informed him that another instructor had already been assigned to his course, indicating that the faculty [had terminated his position without notifying him](#). Marković suggested that the decision was likely related to his support for student protests and his public statement that he would not conduct classes while the faculty was under blockade. He emphasized that his contract had not been formally terminated, nor had his remuneration been paid, yet he had been effectively removed from teaching. In an open letter to the Academy, Marković stressed that from a **civic, academic, and human** perspective, it is unacceptable to act as though everything is normal while violence is being inflicted upon students and campuses remain under police blockade. (Following his announcement, the Deans' Board of AUNS denied that Marković had been dismissed and stated that his contract would be extended. However, both Marković and the public remained skeptical, with it being widely regarded that the attempted dismissal was only halted due to public reaction.)

The Dean of the Faculty of Medicine in Belgrade, Prof. Dr. Tatjana Simić, was **replaced** by the decision of the Council made on September 2. The decision of the Council confirmed the [termination of the mandate](#) of the dean, prof. Tatjana Simić, Ph.D., due to an alleged serious violation of the Code of Professional Ethics. Part of the professor stated that the Faculty Council is not at all competent to determine a more serious violation of the Code of Professional Ethics, but that it is the responsibility of the Board for Professional Ethics and the Ethics Committee of the University. The appointment of a new acting dean was also **carried out illegally** by a representative of the Government of Serbia, who is not authorized for that procedure. After several months, the [court ultimately acquitted former Dean](#) Simić of responsibility for the alleged actions that had led to her

dismissal because there is no evidence she did the same. Nevertheless, she was not reinstated as dean, and in the meantime, according to some faculty employees, new acting dean and vice-dean appointments were made unlawfully. The employees claim that the appointment of the vice-dean is illegitimate because the faculty issued her a formal warning in 2022 for violating the code of ethics and for inappropriate public statements, after she promoted the veterinary drug ivermectin during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although, during the ongoing dean election process, the majority of departments expressed support for Professor Vesna Bjegović, she has still not been appointed dean. Instead, the position of acting dean was given to the wife of the Minister of Science and Technological Development.

After Marija Radovanović, the secretary of the Faculty of Medicine of the UB, sent a report to the Ministry of Education on September 8 about the illegality of the work of the Council session of that faculty with a recording, at which the dean, prof. Dr. Tatjana Simić and the newly elected Nataša Milić, received a **warning before her dismissal**. The secretary reported illegal activity of the Council and instead of being protected as a whistleblower, [she faced retaliation](#) from the new illegally elected administration.

Professor Sunčica Ivanović was [dismissed after 15 years of work](#) at the Academy of Educational and Medical Studies in Čuprija. This professor has been exposed to pressure in her work for years because she pointed out numerous irregularities in the work of the academy, including the employment of unprofessional and personnel connected to the ruling party. Namely, she sued the school in 2018 due to the fact that the school employed party personnel as professors, among them former Minister of Agriculture Aleksandar Martinović, Vladimir Orlić, former president of the National Assembly of Serbia, as well as Ivan Bošnjak, state secretary in the Ministry of Local Self-Government.

In July 2025, the professor of the private Faculty of Media and Communications [was also dismissed](#). The faculty cited as the reason for the dismissal of the professor a violation of work discipline by causing damage to the reputation of the institution due to the text "Whose blocks are private faculties" on the Peščanik portal, then an internal email communication in which she "warned about the illegality of online classes" and comments on private Facebook accounts. Therefore, in its explanation, the FMK did not even hide that the reasons for the dismissal were the professor's political views and her pointing out illegalities in the work of the institution.

At the Fifth Gymnasium in Belgrade, where students actively participated in protests, **more than 20 teachers** were notified that their [employment contracts would not be renewed](#) at the beginning of the new school year. Specifically, out of 33 teachers employed on a fixed-term basis, it was verbally communicated that contracts for 22–23 of them would not be extended, particularly targeting those who had supported the student movement. A lawyer confirmed that these teachers were "*punished*" for their support of the protests. While the teachers fear retaliation, their colleagues publicly condemned this selective approach in a statement, describing it as a **gross violation of the principle of equality**. Fixed-term teachers are divided "*without clear criteria, non-transparently, between those who participated in the protests (and were thus penalized by non-renewal) and those who did not (and were rewarded with contract extensions).*" The teachers emphasized that this

constitutes **direct discrimination** and called for an urgent response from the Ministry. Opposition parliamentarians warned schools that such actions are unlawful and announced legal support for the affected teachers. Trade unions commented that this situation “*opens positions for the politically loyal,*” referring to politically compliant staff.

A tense situation and political pressures on the teaching staff were also noted in Niš. Namely, [15 professors](#) of the First Niš High School "Stevan Sremac" were fired, after which the students decided to boycott classes. The **non-renewal of the contracts** was due to the decisions of the school's new management. On August 18, 2025, by the decision of the Ministry of Education, which was signed by Minister Dejan Vuk Stanković, Vera Dujaković was replaced as the director of the First Niš High School "Stevan Sremac", and d. Radmila Stoilković was appointed director. The new principal locked the school after protests by parents and students, she reported to the police a professor who did not allow an unknown man who introduced himself as a new teacher to hold a class, and physical attacks were also recorded on students of this high school who attend classes in other schools' buildings. In the meantime, [the Administrative Court annulled the Ministry of Education's decision](#) to dismiss Dujaković, citing the unlawfulness of such a decision, but acting principal Stojilković refused to hand over the duties back to the former director.

The Principal of the Požarevac Gymnasium Danijela Žukovski, who, together with the teaching staff, **supported students** during the 100-day class suspension, was [abruptly dismissed](#) on August 29, 2025. The dismissal was communicated via email, without a clear explanation, despite prior inspections by the national education authorities finding no serious violations (all minor irregularities had been addressed). Teachers view the dismissal as **an act of retaliation**: “*Retaliation against the principal for not taking repressive measures against the staff during the work stoppage... Retaliation against the staff as well, since over 90% participated in the suspension.*” Principal Žukovski had supported the demands of graduating students and teachers for a safer school environment, did not sanction them, and was politically penalized for this. Her removal caused significant disruption: the enrolment of first-year students was postponed, the school lacked a prepared schedule and class allocation, as the dismissal occurred “*overnight,*” just three days before the start of the school year. Teachers emphasize that the dismissed principal did not break any laws and describe the action as **an arbitrary decision** by the Minister of Education, Dejan V. Stanković.

Immediately before the start of classes, a professor at the School of Applied Arts in Šabac [was also fired](#). Professor Marko Gavrilović walked with students and high school students to protests all over Serbia, he was also an attendant during the exhibitions and the stay of high school students in that school. The formal reason for the dismissal was the reduced number of classes, although a new major - Interior Design - was opened at the school, and the dismissed professor Gavrilović is the only teacher of this profile at the school. "I believe, therefore, that the real reason for the dismissal is the support I provided to the students during the previous school year," said the professor.

Another professor who was active in student protests [was fired](#). The professor of philosophy from Ruma, Bojan Batalo, received a decision by mail informing him that from September he will no longer work at "Milenko Brzak Uča", the school where he spent 16 years. The citizens of Ruma also

published a letter of support to Professor Batalo, in which they stated: "He protested and did not want to remain silent and bow his head. In less than a year, he suffered various **targeting, insults and lies** that henchmen wrote and spoke about him."

Nela Spasojević, a teacher of mathematics at the Trstenik Technical School, also received a [dismissal decision](#) due to her participation in the suspension of classes. Her request to the court for reinstatement through a temporary measure [was rejected](#), although similar requests from her colleagues had been accepted. The reason given was that she had additional jobs alongside her work at the school, despite the fact that such work is legally permitted.

And the mathematics teacher from Bajmok, Andrea Besedeš, [was fired](#) after 17 years of work **because of her support for the protests**. In her previous work, the professor received the National and European Label for the quality of education, but her **political views ruled in the case of dismissal**.

Serbian language professor from the Kragujevac Tourism and Hospitality School, Suzana Ragan, [was fired](#), but the court in Kragujevac passed a temporary measure, after which [she was reinstated](#). The professor publicly supported high school students and students, she walked with them to Niš, and before the dismissal decision, the director initiated **disciplinary proceedings** against her. The court's temporary measure is a small victory for this professor who was exposed to discrimination on political grounds, but the proceedings before the court are still not over.

The Principal of Josip Slavenski Music School in Belgrade, Tijana Kovačević, was [dismissed](#) at the end of August 2025. By decision of Minister Stanković, she was relieved of her duties, and another individual was appointed as acting principal. The formal reason cited was the findings of an extraordinary inspection, namely, that several teachers had been employed in violation of regulations and that some documentation had not been entered into the information system in a timely manner. However, the *Academic Plenum* and students participating in the FMU blockade emphasized that the principal "*clearly and courageously stood with the students*" during the protests, asserting that her dismissal was **politically motivated** (as a punishment for publicly expressing her views on the state of education). This action prompted a protest: students of the Faculty of Music Arts announced a [rally in support](#) of the dismissed principal, highlighting that the trend of repression and "*removing the unsuitable*" in education continues. The case is particularly alarming as it demonstrates that sanctions are extending to cultural and artistic institutions that support demands for safety and justice in schools.

In Kikinda, teacher Sanja Bikić (Elementary School "Vuk Karadžić") [lost her job](#) due to active participation in civic protests. The Freedom and Justice Party (SSP) reported that her employment was not continued specifically because of **her activism**. According to SSP, the school administration created a "**technological surplus**" by merging classes in a nearby village, allowing another teacher to take Sanja Bikić's position, leaving her without workload or employment. SSP described this as a classic case of **political purge** in education: "*The ruling party's policy in schools entails tyranny—employment and dismissal criteria are party loyalty and obedience, not competence.*" Compliant principals, it was said, issue dismissals and make hires according to party directives,

while disobedient staff are removed. The case sparked outrage among parents and students, who demanded explanations from the school, but no response was provided by the authorities.

At the beginning of September 2025, **five school principals** from Zrenjanin, were [dismissed simultaneously](#) under the jurisdiction of the Zrenjanin School Administration, with notices sent via email. The principals dismissed were from Elementary Schools “Mladost” in Tomaševac, “Uroš Predić” in Orlovat, “Branko Ćopić” in Lukićevo, “Žarko Zrenjanin,” and “Dositej Obradović”, both in Zrenjanin. In all cases, the stated reason was identical, alleged “illegal management of the Unified Education Information System (JISP).” The dismissed principals, however, report that the extraordinary inspection took place during their annual leave, that all corrective measures were implemented and reported to the inspectors, yet the dismissals were issued regardless. Three of the five principals have the option to return to teaching positions, while two are left entirely without employment. One of the principals who lost her position has announced an administrative lawsuit, expressing suspicion that the real reason for dismissal was refusal to follow unlawful directives. Last year in Zrenjanin, 26 schools participated in a strike due to poor working conditions in the education sector, and 90% of her school’s staff took part in the work stoppage. Principal Bogojević confirmed that all principals were pressured to initiate disciplinary actions against striking teachers, although there was **no legal basis to do so**. She noted that they now appear to be punished for not acting autonomously to sanction staff: *“During the strike, the entire staff at my school participated. We had no legal grounds to initiate proceedings... we were left to ourselves.”* This coordinated wave of principal dismissals (without serious violations in their work) is interpreted by unions and the public as a purge of **unsuitable principals** and a warning to others. [According to the Minister](#), *25 principals have already been dismissed, and another 75 resigned* previously, highlighting the scale of the pressure.

The principal of "Pavle Savić" Elementary School [was also dismissed](#), and in his place was appointed acting director, supporter of the Serbian Progressive Party. Dissatisfied parents of students of this Belgrade elementary school organized protests, and at one protest the police came and took the acting Principal Nenad Tasić from the school. The formal reasons for the sudden dismissal of the former director were administrative errors, which are easily rectified, and it is not a common case that the heads of school institutions are replaced because of this. Parents believe that the real reason for the change is political in nature.

Five teachers of Elementary School "Jovan Popović" from Novi Sad received a notice from the director that their employment [contracts will not be extended](#). The teachers interpret this as the principal's revenge for their participation in the suspension of classes, in which most of the teachers of this school participated.

Dismissals were recorded in primary schools throughout Serbia: in Elementary School "Milena Pavlović Barili" [in Belgrade](#), Elementary School "Petar Kočić" [in Indija](#), in Elementary School "Svetozar Marković Toza" [in Novi Sad](#), the teacher of Elementary School "Đura Daničić" was announced that her [employment contract would not be extended](#).

At the end of August 2025, parents announced the dismissal of the Principal of the Kindergarten

“Draguljče” in Zvezdara - Belgrade, Milena Pavlović. Principal Pavlović was highly respected, credited with “*reviving the kindergarten*” and maintained excellent cooperation with parents. Parents believe her [dismissal](#) was **politically motivated**, as Pavlović actively participated in student protests and traffic blockades. Authorities provided no explanation, and parents did not receive any official notice regarding her removal. Parents have united in demanding her reinstatement, launching a petition and notifying the Secretariat for Education, the Ombudsman, and the Ministry, asserting that politics should not interfere with preschool institutions. This incident marks the expansion of pressures into the preschool sector, confirming a troubling pattern of punishing education staff at all levels for solidarity with protests.

Radmila Arandelović [was dismissed](#) from the position of director of the Rakovica Preschool in July 2025, although she was re-elected to this position in the same year, at the head of which she was for a full 6 mandates (24 years), thereby confirming her 7th mandate until 2029. In April, Arandelović held training for the licensing of directors of preschool institutions, so it is not clear why she was suddenly removed from the position of director if only a few months earlier she was chosen as an expert to train colleagues for this position. The case from June 2024 was cited as the formal reason for the dismissal, although the deadline for the educational inspection procedures to be initiated is one year, so the decision from July 2025 is legally unfounded. The longtime director believes that the reason for this decision is her refusal to send employees to ruling party rallies, as well as the political views of her family members. Employees and parents of children attending the “Rakovica” Preschool Institution [launched a petition](#) against the illegal dismissal of Radmila Arandelović from the position of Director of the Institution.

The Ministry of Education annulled the public competition for the appointment of the principal of the “Nikola Tesla” secondary school in Boljevac, in which the current principal, Ivan Milutinović, had been elected through the votes of the school staff and the parents’ council. Instead, [they appointed Mirko Milivojević](#) as acting principal. The move might not have been controversial had Milivojević not already had a police record. According to school employees, he was removed from his position as principal of another elementary school in Boljevac in 2020 after losing a court case against an employee whom he had allegedly harassed. Employees of the “Nikola Tesla” school fear that Milivojević was appointed in order **to punish the staff**. One member of the faculty described the dismissed Ivan Milutinović as politically unaffiliated, professional in his work, and a fair educator who did not punish staff members for supporting students during the blockades — something that, apparently, was held against him by local members of the ruling party. The staff further state that several criminal complaints have been filed against the newly appointed Milivojević over incidents in which he was allegedly involved. The first case dates back to 2012, when he struck a maintenance worker at the elementary school where he was serving as principal. The second occurred in 2024, when he allegedly threatened the father of one of the students, thereby committing the criminal offense of endangering public safety. On that occasion, the police also confiscated his handgun.

Professor Pejović Milovančević of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Belgrade, who had been unanimously elected for two consecutive terms, was [removed from her position](#) without following the procedures prescribed by the Faculty’s Statute and without informing the Teaching and Scientific Council. According to several professors at the faculty, no head of department had

ever before been dismissed solely by a dean's decision, especially not without first obtaining the opinion and consent of the department itself. They further state that this is just **another in a series of unlawful actions** and manipulations carried out by the faculty's newly and illegitimately elected administration.

The Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Niš, Aleksandar Mitić, sent a "[request for clarification](#)" to Assistant Professor Dr. Milan Ćirić, stating that his act of stepping outside the faculty building together with students in order to pay tribute to the victims had been characterized as an "unjustified failure to fulfill work obligations" and a "breach of workplace discipline." The assistant professor was asked to explain why he had not sought permission for such an action, to which he replied that he had not requested permission because he did not believe it was necessary. Teachers, researchers, and associates from the Free University have expressed their full support for Milan Ćirić, arguing that such actions send a message to all teachers, students, and citizens that acts of civic courage, professional integrity, and compassion may be subject to sanctions. They have called on the leadership of the Faculty of Medicine to halt the initiated proceedings and abandon **threats of dismissal**.

On her final working day as acting principal of the Fifth Belgrade Gymnasium, Danka Nešović used the opportunity to issue [four additional suspensions](#), bringing the total number of suspensions at the school to twelve. At the same school, nineteen teachers were also denied contract renewals. The first four suspension proceedings initiated against employees of the Fifth Belgrade Gymnasium ultimately resulted in dismissals.

And after Danka Nešović moved from the position of acting principal of the Fifth Belgrade Gymnasium to the role of advisor to the Minister of Education, **repression within the institution did not stop**. The new acting principal, Ognjen Mrvaljević, made a decision in April 2026 to [suspend another teacher](#), Milkica Prica. The school's Parents' Council stated that the new school administration was expected to calm the situation after Nešović's departure, revoke all controversial decisions she had made, and reinstate unjustly suspended teachers. Instead, the practice of unfounded and non-transparent suspensions continued, further deepening conflicts within the school staff and ignoring basic principles of professional integrity and employees' rights. The new acting principal reinstated only two previously suspended teachers, while five have still not been returned to their positions. The Parents' Council characterized the suspension of Professor Prica as **a continuation of a policy of pressure and retaliation**.

The Education Inspectorate ordered [a repeat of the dean election](#) at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade. Maja Kovačević, who was the dean at the time, described this move as controversial, stating that the faculty had previously pointed out the legal unfoundedness of the objections raised by the Ministry of Education and the inspectorate, but that the procedure would be repeated in order to avoid penalties for the faculty. She added that this sends **a broader message to universities** that public statements will be met with pressure, but emphasized that despite everything, universities continue to stand by students and citizens. After the repeated voting process, Maja Kovačević was once again elected dean.

Tatjana Veselinović, an employee of the preschool institution “Poletarac” in Ruma, reported four employees to the Ministry of Education and the inspection service for not coming to work while still being regularly on the payroll. She added that those employees travel every morning by organized transport to Kula and take part in party-related activities ahead of the March local elections, while replacements for them in the kindergartens have not been provided, which she says is harming the children. Tatjana believes **her job position is now endangered** because of filing the complaint and claims that the municipality and kindergarten management plan to declare her redundant and [dismiss her](#). She also stated that she has supported her colleagues and students since the beginning of the student protests, but that she has never engaged in such activities during her working hours.

Employees at the BioSense Institute [had been on strike](#) for several months due to what they described as **unlawful dismissals** and the appointment of unqualified individuals to key positions. The removal of Director Crnojević, which followed his refusal to send employees to a rally of the Serbian Progressive Party, marked the beginning of a series of irregularities in the institute’s operations. After the court ruled that Crnojević’s dismissal had been unlawful, he was reinstated to his position, but he was faced with a number of ongoing problems at the institute, including alleged [obstruction of work](#) by the Provincial authorities and the Governing Board. The institute has now moved to emergency financing because the financial plan and public procurement procedures were not adopted on time.

At the elementary school Bora Stanković Elementary School, teacher Vujica Stanković was not offered a contract extension after working at the school for five years. All of his colleagues had their contracts renewed except for him. In May, he started working at the same school again as a substitute teacher. After that, a job competition was announced, and both he and another candidate applied. However, the other candidate did not submit the required documentation. The competition was then allegedly canceled unlawfully, and a new one was announced in which that other candidate will likely be selected. The teacher announced that he will file a criminal complaint against the school principal.

Tatjana Vasović Novosel was the principal of Banović Strahinja Elementary School and was later [dismissed](#), as she claims, because of her support for the student protests and for the school staff who decided to suspend classes. After being removed from her position, Vasović Novosel returned to teaching and now works as an elementary school teacher. She sees her dismissal as a reward and a great source of pride, viewing it as proof that she is on the right side, **fighting for the reputation and dignity of education workers**.

Jovana Solomun, an artist and educator from Zrenjanin, first [lost her workspace](#) in a gallery and then also lost her job at the Student Dormitory, where she worked as an educator. She claims that she is not alone in this, as another colleague was also dismissed. From the very beginning, Jovana supported the struggle of the students occupying university buildings, and inspired by the large protest at Slavija Square, [she created badges](#) featuring the symbolism of the gathering.

Students of the 20. October Gymnasium in Bačka Palanka gathered one school morning in November 2025 in the school hall to wait for the new acting principal and [express their](#)

[dissatisfaction](#) with the dismissal of former principal Tamara Antić. The former principal was **dismissed because she did not want to punish teachers** who had supported their students. In addition to her dismissal, the school psychologist was fired for supporting the students in blockade. The students [prevented](#) the new acting principal from entering the school, even though he arrived accompanied by police. The new acting principal, Vladimir Trkulja, had been seen several times at gatherings of the Serbian Progressive Party. The students also launched a petition demanding that principal Antić be returned to her position.

In addition to this principal, two other principals in New Belgrade were also dismissed, as well as Dragan Filipović, who [was removed](#) from the position of head of the Belgrade School Administration. The principal of the Braća Vilotijević Elementary School in Kraljevo [was dismissed](#), and she suspects that the reason was her support for student blockades, as well as the fact that she opened the school gym to student walkers and refused to punish teachers who had suspended classes. Employees organized a gathering in front of the school in support of the principal, while parents stated that she had been running the school flawlessly for 23 years.

The academic network Free University points to the **deterioration and systematic destruction** of the State University of Novi Pazar through the [removal of professors](#) who expressed solidarity with the student blockades. According to members of the Free University network, certain professors are not being re-elected to academic positions not because of incompetence or failure to meet requirements, but solely *“because of their political unsuitability and disobedience.”* Assistant lecturer Emir Ugljanin at the State University of Novi Pazar [was dismissed](#) following a disciplinary complaint. He emphasizes that disobedience and disagreement with the ruling structure at the university are immediately punished, and that as many as 30 professors and teaching assistants have [lost their jobs](#) in different ways. Ugljanin also points out that job competitions have been announced not only for the 30 positions vacated by these dismissals, but also for colleagues who are still currently employed.

The appeal of Professor Jelena Kleut from the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Novi Sad against the decision of the Senate not to elect her to the position of full professor [was rejected](#) by the expanded composition of the University Senate. Professor Kleut points out that the vote was secret and that this shows that members of the Senate are not willing to stand behind their vote with their name and surname. She also describes this procedure as a **demonstration exercise** and claims that a similar fate will likely await other professors whose re-election is approaching. With this decision, Professor Kleut effectively [lost her job](#) after nearly [two decades of work](#) at the university, and more than **1,200 professors** signed a letter of support for her. Only two weeks after this decision, following which Professor Kleut lost her position, the [Senate awarded the title of full professor to two candidates](#) from the Faculty of Philosophy without meeting the conditions that had been set for Professor Kleut. The academic network Free University states that it is clear that the processes within the Senate are controlled by party sympathizers of the Serbian Progressive Party, since the majority of this body consists of signatories of support for electoral lists of Aleksandar Vučić. It is also noted that since the beginning of the student protests, Professor Kleut has been regularly targeted by tabloid media and officials of the Serbian Progressive Party.

Suzana Mišić Stanković [was dismissed](#) by a decision of the Ministry of Education from her position as principal of the Bora Stanković Gymnasium in Valjevo. She had supported the graduating students participating in the school blockade, but after pressure from local authorities she was ultimately removed from the position she had held since 2015.

Jelena Mirković, the principal of the Sveti Sava School in Loznica, [was dismissed](#) by a letter from the Ministry of Education. Staff at the school temporarily suspended classes in support of the principal. The school collective stated that the new acting principal is a person who had not previously worked at the school. It is assumed that the reason for the dismissal was the support the removed principal Mirković gave to students, as well as allowing students to stay overnight at the school during a large protest in Loznica. Due to this decision by the Ministry, six members of the School Board resigned, including all three parent representatives and all three staff representatives, as well as the assistant principal. [The Ministry stated](#) that Mirković's dismissal was not sudden nor **politically motivated**, but rather caused by the fact that she allegedly failed to remove irregularities in the school's operations identified by the Education Inspectorate, which has also been the most common explanation given by the Ministry in cases of dismissals of school principals. This explanation was formally given by the Assistant Minister for Secondary Education, Danka Nešović, known for the repression and retaliation she carried out at the Fifth Belgrade Gymnasium while serving as its acting principal.

Isidora Jovanovski, a German language teacher at the Gymnasium in Pančevo, [was dismissed](#), as she claims, for obvious **political reasons** after giving clear support to students in the blockade. Due to the situation at the school since the appointment of an acting principal, a protest was also held in front of the City Assembly.

Tijana Matejić, whose name appears on a student list, was [suddenly and without explanation dismissed](#) and informed by phone. Her lawyer claims the [procedure was illegal](#) and announces a lawsuit. The teacher stated to the media that during her work at the Polytechnic Academy she had no objections regarding her performance.

After months of pressure due to her support for students in blockade, teacher Zorka Karas from the Braća Novakov Elementary School near Bačka Palanka [was dismissed](#). Despite disagreement from staff and requests from parents addressed to the school, the principal made the decision to terminate her employment and [another teacher was hired](#) in her place. Parents of pupils in her class also organized a **boycott of classes**.

A [class boycott](#) was also organized by students of the in Lajkovac due to the dismissal of principal Danijela Bogdanović and the appointment of acting principal Radmila Milentijević. The newly appointed principal then resigned, and Saša Nikolić was selected as the new acting principal, after which the students ended the boycott and [returned to classes](#).

## Broader systemic and repressive pressures on the academic community

The tragic incident in which a female student fell from the fifth floor of the Faculty of Philosophy served as a pretext for top government officials and pro-regime tabloids to launch yet another attack on the academic community. Immediately after the incident, the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office ordered the police to question the dean and other employees of the Faculty of Philosophy, on suspicion that the criminal offense of "negligent performance of duty" had been committed. [Members of the Criminal Police Directorate](#) spent several hours at the Faculty of Philosophy on March 27, as well as the following day. The Faculty [issued a statement](#), emphasizing: "It is in both our interest and the public interest that the investigation be conducted within the framework of the law and as efficiently as possible, so that the full truth about the circumstances of the tragic event can be established as soon as possible. Accordingly, during the course of today, we cooperated with units of the Criminal Police Directorate, which inspected all faculty premises and requested documentation, and removed from the building, at the request of the Prosecutor's Office, in addition to the Faculty's general acts, a portion of student documentation that has no connection whatsoever to the tragic event." Moreover, the Criminal Police Directorate, especially since the appointment of Marko Kričak as its head, has been **actively involved in carrying out repression** against the academic community, students, and citizens, including arrests, detentions, raids, and apartment searches.

For days, tabloids ran a smear campaign in which the dean and the rector were directly accused of the student's death, while the highest state officials made [morbid statements](#), such as the one by the Minister for Public Investments, Darko Glišić, who told parents: "Do not enroll your children in 'blockading' faculties, because they will return them to you like this girl from Šabac—in a coffin." The situation culminated in a **raid by the Criminal Police Directorate** on the building of the University of Belgrade on March 31. [The raid was broadcast live](#) on pro-regime television channels, which were present at the scene immediately before the arrival of the Criminal Police officers. All footage of the entry into the university was instantly **aired on national-frequency channels**, indicating a coordinated effort aimed at discrediting the academic community that had stood by its students.

**Police remained inside the rectorate building** for almost the entire day. The public prosecutor from the Special Anti-Corruption Department of the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade, which had ordered the raid, gave a pompous statement to the media listing everything that had been seized, including "[plastic plates](#)." The first thing members of the Criminal Police Directorate did upon entering the building was to [remove a banner](#) expressing support for the students. The rectorate stated that **documentation** belonging to students participating in the blockade had been **confiscated**. During the search of the rectorate premises, staff inside the building were not allowed to leave, while a large number of students and citizens gathered at Students' Square. However, police also arrived and unsuccessfully [attempted to disperse the crowd](#), thereby directly violating the Law on Public Assembly, which stipulates and allows spontaneous gatherings as immediate reactions to specific events. Not only did the police attempt to disperse the crowd, but they also

[used force](#). One officer [deployed tear gas](#), and footage shows one police officer [striking a woman with a baton](#), another [slapping a young woman](#), as well as the [pushing of a journalist](#) and [other forms of violations](#) of citizens' right to freedom of assembly.

During the day, the **police restricted students' access** to the building, [photographing the documents](#) of those who had classes at the Rectorate. In the evening, after spending the entire day inside the building, [Rector Vladan Đokić](#) delivered a speech from the balcony of the Rectorate, thanking those gathered for their support and sending a message to the authorities: "You can take the computers and receivers. You cannot take the truth. You can search offices. You cannot search the conscience of the people. You can send the police. But for every patrol you send, a thousand students will come. Sixteen people died in Novi Sad. No one has been held accountable. No one has been dismissed. Not a single receiver has been seized. Not a single office has been searched. But when the rector stands with the students—that's when the police arrive. That tells you everything you need to know about this government. They are not afraid of crime. They are afraid of education."

After the gathering, **several people were detained**, and the [police also detained students](#) at their homes. An architecture student [spent 48 hours in custody](#). Two students were also called in to give statements regarding the student's death; however, [according to their lawyers](#), most of the questions they were asked concerned the faculty blockades. In addition to them, the [dean of the Faculty of Philosophy](#) was also questioned about the blockades. Taking all this into account, as well as the fact that items belonging to students participating in the blockades [were confiscated](#), it appears that all the measures undertaken were aimed at **further pressuring the academic community**, and that the tragic event was exploited for that purpose.

It is important to note that in the case of the Criminal Police Directorate's raid on the Rectorate building, the prosecutor who was on duty in the Special Anti-Corruption Department that day initially [refused to issue an order](#) and to conduct the search of the Rectorate. However, the Chief Public Prosecutor, Nenad Stefanović, who is closely associated with the SNS, issued a binding instruction, forcing her to go to the scene. The prosecutor was compelled to comply because this is now provided for under the latest amendments to judicial laws. Prior to these amendments, objections by prosecutors to binding instructions were decided by a special commission of the High Prosecutorial Council, precisely in order to reduce the possibility of undue influence by senior prosecutors over individual prosecutors and thereby strengthen their independence. However, this commission has been abolished by the new amendments, and objections to binding instructions are now decided directly by a higher-ranking prosecutor, effectively rendering any such objection meaningless in advance.

In addition, **other forms of pressure** on the academic community are being carried out. In Niš, the departments of History and of Serbian Language and Literature at the Faculty of Philosophy were [shut down](#) and then, without the consent of the faculty staff, transferred to the newly established Faculty of Serbian Studies, whose creation was encouraged by high-ranking state officials, including the Minister of Culture. Furthermore, the state has announced the establishment of a new university in cooperation with the [Serbian Orthodox Church](#). Following student protests and blockades, such

decisions indicate the **authorities' intention to create parallel universities and faculties** — loyal to and aligned with the ruling party — that would serve to simulate cooperation between the government and academia.

The depth of the ruling party's intention to install loyal individuals across all institutions is also reflected in tensions surrounding student parliament elections. Newly formed student associations established by students involved in blockades are being prevented from, or face obstacles in, participating in elections for student parliaments that have for years been led by individuals closely connected to the SNS. The latest example of **pressure on student parliaments** was recorded at the Faculty of Medicine, where students in blockade organized within the association "Sinapsa" reported election fraud and an attempt to insert fake ballots pre-marked in favor of the list that has long controlled the student parliament. During election day, the [police also arrived at the faculty](#), and a member of private security broke a window and entered the building.

## Data from Unions and Professional Networks

The university professors' network *Academic Plenum* reported in August 2025 that, according to their records from the "For the day after" database, there are **28 cases involving 33 teachers** across Serbia who [did not have their employment contracts](#) renewed. That number has certainly increased by now. The Plenum points to a clear pattern whereby school principals refused to extend contracts for teachers who participated in protests, while those who did not protest had their contracts renewed, constituting severe **discrimination**. Such practices violate the Constitution and national laws (Labour Law, Anti-Discrimination Law). If **selective treatment is proven**, school principals may bear **legal responsibility**, as this constitutes a breach of citizens' equality before the law. The Plenum has called on all affected teachers to report their cases and gather evidence (contracts, notifications, testimonies) for collective legal protection.

According to the Independent Trade Union of Education Workers of Serbia (NSPRS) from September 2025, **more than 100 school employees** have lost their jobs or had their contracts not renewed in the 2024/2025 academic year as [retaliation for participating in or supporting protests](#). The union has continuously warned that schools are implementing mass non-renewals of contracts, particularly targeting teachers who were active in protests. NSPRS and other unions note that new (unofficial) employment criteria are being applied, political loyalty and willingness to appease authorities, rather than professional competence. The unions have urged employees not to fear or give up, announcing lawsuits and outreach to international education organizations regarding these cases. Additionally, NSPRS encourages all teachers whose contracts were not renewed to file complaints with the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality due to suspected **political discrimination** in employment.

## Other relevant information

According to a statement by [Minister of Education](#) Dejan Vuk Stanković dating in August 2025, **75 school principals** across Serbia have **resigned**, and **25 principals** have been **dismissed** due to events related to protests. This data illustrates that over 100 schools have been left without their previous leadership, voluntarily or involuntarily, amid a climate of pressure. Many principals, according to available testimonies, were pressured from above to punish teachers, leading some to resign rather than participate in unethical actions, while others were dismissed as a warning to others.

In Niš, in mid-2025, **members of school boards** were **dismissed** in 26 schools: 12 elementary, 12 secondary, and 1 special school, by local authorities, who [replaced all previous board members with new ones](#). The opposition asserts that this measure is aimed at establishing **full control over education**, replacing non-compliant board members with loyal personnel. This ensures governmental influence over the appointment of principals and decision-making in schools. This move coincides with the dismissals of principals and teachers, indicating a systemic approach by the authorities to **centralize school management and eliminate any autonomy** expressed during the protests.

Since the beginning of the protests, it has become a constant practice of the educational authorities to **dissolve school boards** and introduce **temporary governing bodies** in order to **target disobedient teachers and proactive parents**. It has been announced that new amendments to the overarching **Law on the Foundations of the Education System** will also introduce [a new structure for school boards](#) which, according to Minister of Education Dejan Vuk Stanković, is intended to “reduce external influences and entrust school governance to those who are the founders and financiers of the school.” The Minister did not specify how the composition of school boards — which by law serve as the governing bodies of schools — would be changed. Dejan Vuk Stanković also stated that he supports changes in the governance structure of higher education institutions aimed at **increasing the influence of the founder** and principal financier, namely the state. Such changes have been characterized as measures by an autocratically oriented regime aimed at **politicizing and centralizing the education system** through reducing the autonomy of educational institutions.

The results of elections for the main political offices in the country are not the only ones the authorities seek to influence directly through various tactics; they are now doing so in practically all types of elections. Attempts to exert **stronger influence over elections for school boards** have also become noticeable. The Forum of Vocational Secondary Schools warned of serious and systemic violations of employees’ rights in certain schools due to the unlawful [denial of voting rights](#) to non-teaching staff in school board elections. They emphasized that such conduct is not merely an irregularity, but a direct violation of the law and of the fundamental principles of equality, stressing

that these are issues of discrimination and the rule of law in education.

## Conclusion

All the aforementioned cases, from disciplinary procedures and the dismissal of teachers and professors to the removal of principals and administrators, indicate a **pattern of politically motivated pressure** within the education system. Formal reasons, such as disciplinary measures, technological surpluses, inspection findings, were often used as pretexts, while the actual motivation, according to numerous testimonies and union statements, was **retaliation for support of students during protests**. Such practices are illegal and contrary to constitutional principles (equality and anti-discrimination). Professional associations have announced legal action and urge authorities to review each individual case.

This situation creates an atmosphere of fear in schools and universities - many education professionals feel targeted simply for supporting students or criticizing unsafe conditions. As noted by the Academic Plenum, if contract non-renewals of **protest participants** are proven intentional, directors and responsible officials face serious legal liability for discrimination. Union activists and opposition politicians have emphasized that these purges send a message that any public dissent against authorities will be punished, violating fundamental freedoms (freedom of speech and assembly).

From a legal perspective, many of these actions could be contested in courts and independent bodies. Administrative lawsuits have **already been filed** by dismissed principals, complaints submitted to the Commissioner for Equality, and some teachers are pursuing individual claims. The outcomes of these proceedings will determine whether the rule of law will protect education workers or whether political will will prevail over the law. What is **indisputable** is that in Serbia's 2023/2024 education year, hundreds of education professionals collectively protested against violence and for the dignity of their profession, while the authorities responded with coordinated repressive measures, from disciplinary actions to dismissals which continued into the following academic year, marked by blockades and protests. This **disciplinary campaign** against the education sector has no basis in existing laws and constitutional rights and represents a misuse of institutions for political purposes.

Cases of pressure unfortunately have not ceased even after schools and faculties ended the blockades. Unions monitor and publish [new cases](#), with the *number of dismissals far exceeding 100 cases*. The broader public and media support education workers, and multiple protests have been held where students, parents, and citizens demanded the **cease of repression and the reinstatement of dismissed** teachers. It remains to be seen whether this pressure, combined with legal actions, will succeed in halting retaliation and establishing the rule of law in education. Otherwise, experts warn, the long-term consequences will be severe: loss of qualified personnel, eroded trust in institutions, and **further politicization of the education system**, contrary to fundamental principles of autonomy and professionalism in teaching and learning.