



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

22 May - 4 June, 2026

Freedom of Expression

Threats against Mašina Portal

The editorial staff of the Mašina news portal received a death threat in the form of a message containing the threat of “a bullet to the forehead.” Journalists’ and media associations warned that this constituted a serious threat to the safety of journalists and media workers and called for an urgent response from the competent authorities. After the editorial team informed the public about the threat, several disturbing comments followed, including another threat stating: “You will end up in a barrel.” In a statement, Veran Matić, President of the Managing Board of ANEM and a member of the Permanent Working Group for the Safety of Journalists, recalled that more than 80 threats had been reported to the Special Prosecutor’s Office for High-Tech Crime over the past year and a half, yet none of these cases had been resolved in court nor had any perpetrator been punished

Suspensions of teachers at Jovina Gymnasium

Pressure on employees of Jovina Gymnasium in Novi Sad marked almost the entire month of May. The school principal, Radivoje P. Stojković, suspended six teachers and initiated disciplinary proceedings against them, including temporary removal from duty pending the completion of those proceedings. Among the suspended teachers are Marija Vasić, Biljana Prlina, and Rima Grujić, who state that they have been charged with participating in a warning strike, allegedly failing to ensure the minimum work process, and being absent from certain teachers’ council meetings.

One of the suspended teachers, Biljana Prlina, stated that the disciplinary proceedings were fabricated and that the documentation provided to the teachers contained numerous irregularities and discriminatory elements. Representatives of parents and teachers warned that the months-long conflicts within the school, pressure on employees, and disciplinary proceedings were seriously affecting the functioning of classes and the position of students. Meanwhile, the suspended teachers claim that the ultimate goal of the proceedings is their permanent removal from the school.

Sociology teacher Marija Vasić stated that, in addition to the suspensions, around thirty employees had taken sick leave as a result of psychological pressure. The suspended teachers had their official email accounts blocked and were denied access to the electronic gradebook system, leaving them without access to information necessary for performing their duties.

Hate speech and targeting of the Roma community in the media

Several organizations dedicated to the protection of Roma rights reacted to statements made by Dragan J. Vučićević, editor-in-chief of Informer Television, which they described as hate speech, discrimination, and the collective targeting of the Roma national minority. The reactions were prompted by claims made during a nationally broadcast television program that “Roma blockaders” were responsible for the theft of copper cables from railway infrastructure and the suspension of rail traffic ahead of a major student protest in Belgrade.

Roma organizations stated that these allegations were made without evidence and amounted to directly linking an entire national community to criminal activity. In their statements, they argued that such remarks contribute to the spread of prejudice, encourage ethnic intolerance, and further worsen the position of Roma in Serbia, who have been subjected to stereotypes and discrimination for decades. Representatives of Roma organizations warned that it is particularly problematic for such messages to be disseminated during a period of heightened social and political tensions, when public discourse can have a significant impact on the safety of minority communities.

In response to the controversial statements, the Union of Roma of Serbia, the Roma Party, and the Democratic Union of Roma called on the competent institutions to act urgently and establish accountability for the public targeting of Roma people. The organizations stressed that it is unacceptable to collectively portray members of an entire national minority as responsible for criminal offenses and that such rhetoric deepens social divisions and normalizes discrimination in the public sphere. Some reactions also demanded a public apology, warning that the Roma community must not be used as a tool in political conflicts or as a convenient group to blame for social developments.

Additionally, the A11 Initiative filed a complaint with the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality against Dragan J. Vučićević over his discriminatory statements about Roma people. The complaint states that the remarks associated members of the Roma national minority with criminal activity solely on the basis of their ethnic background, thereby violating anti-discrimination regulations and protections afforded to national minorities. The organization argued that publicly linking an entire ethnic community to crime reinforces negative stereotypes and contributes to the social stigmatization of Roma people.

Following the public condemnations and the initiation of proceedings, Minister of Information and Telecommunications Boris Bratina defended the editor-in-chief of Informer Television, arguing that the reactions represented attempts to pressure the media and restrict freedom of expression. At the same time, he criticized the responses of institutions and organizations that had condemned the controversial statements. These developments further intensified the public debate over the limits of freedom of expression, media responsibility, and the protection of minority communities from speech that may encourage discrimination and intolerance.

Brutal attack on a transgender woman and her partner in New Belgrade

The association “Da se zna!” announced that during the night of May 28–29, a transgender woman named Mateja and her partner were physically attacked by two unidentified men in New Belgrade, near the Genex Tower. According to available information, the attackers had previously been traveling with them on the same public transportation vehicle. After getting off at the same stop, they allegedly followed the couple.

Mateja’s partner was first knocked to the ground and repeatedly punched and kicked. Mateja was then attacked while being subjected to homophobic insults and was struck in the face, causing her to lose consciousness. Both victims sustained physical injuries, and the incident was reported to the New Belgrade Police Station, along with the relevant medical documentation.

The association further stated that, while taking statements, police officers allegedly made homophobic remarks and denied the gender identity of the attacked individual.

Threats and obstruction of a student during filming in Pionirski Park

On May 23, Milica Nenadović, a student from Niš, entered Pionirski Park in Belgrade to record events and individuals present there ahead of and during the student protest held that same day at Slavija Square. According to her account, she entered the park and filmed supporters of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) who were gathered there.

As she was leaving the park, she was stopped by SNS activist Vukašin Đoković, who had previously become known for involvement in incidents and violent attacks on students and citizens. According to Nenadović, her phone was taken from her, all of her recordings were deleted, and she was subjected to multiple threats. She stated that she was told she would be taken to a so-called “black tent” and that she would “see how she would be dealt with.” At the same time, she was warned that she would face consequences if the material she had recorded were made public.

After the incident became known to the public, a gathering of citizens and students was organized in Niš outside a local television station in response to Vukašin Đoković’s appearance as a guest on the program. Participants expressed support for the student and called for a full clarification of the circumstances surrounding the incident.

Milica Nenadović stated that she did not report the incident to the police because she feared for her personal safety. She explained that she was concerned that the individuals who had threatened her might gain access to her address and other personal information. The incident took place in the presence of police officers, whom she approached after being stopped. However, she ultimately decided not to initiate formal proceedings due to fear of further repercussions.

Freedom of Assembly

Police Intervention and Arrests During the Protest at Slavija

During the large student and citizens' protest held in Belgrade on May 23, several incidents and clashes occurred near Pioneers Park and at other locations in the city center. After the protest ended and the crowd began to disperse, stun grenades, flares, and bottles were thrown, while the police intervened against a portion of the demonstrators.

Videos published on social media captured a moment in which police officers tackled a protester to the ground and struck him with a baton during an arrest. According to data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 23 individuals were detained during the unrest and charged with assaulting police officers and disturbing public order and peace.

At the same time, lawyers providing legal assistance to detained citizens stated that some of those held had not participated in violent incidents but had merely been near the scene or were detained without a clear explanation of the grounds for their deprivation of liberty. Throughout the night, several individuals were taken to different police stations across Belgrade, while families and lawyers attempted to determine their whereabouts and the legal basis for their detention.

Civil society organizations and Students in Blockade expressed concern over the use of excessive force, as well as the conduct of the police toward demonstrators after the gathering had ended. Particular attention was drawn to videos of arrests showing police officers using physical force against citizens who did not appear to be offering resistance at the time.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Internal Affairs stated that the police acted in accordance with the law and intervened in order to prevent further violence and protect public order and peace.

Attack on High School students in Zvezdara

During a gathering near the Sixth Belgrade Gymnasium in the Zvezdara municipality, an incident occurred in which supporters of the Serbian Progressive Party physically attacked a group of high school students. The incident took place after the students attempted to block the passage of a rally held under the slogan "Serbia Wins" by placing garbage containers on Batutova Street.

Several minors were physically assaulted during the incident, including a fifteen-year-old girl. Some of the attackers were wearing balaclavas. The students stated that their peers were knocked to the ground, punched, and kicked, while the police, who had previously been providing security for the event, did not intervene during the incident itself.

Following the event, students from the Sixth Belgrade Gymnasium, together with students from other schools and local citizens, gathered in front of the Zvezdara Police Station demanding an explanation for the lack of response from police officers. Graduating students stated that instead of celebrating their last day of school, they spent the day protesting in front of the police station and demanding accountability for the handling of the incident.

In public statements, they emphasized that the police must provide equal protection to all citizens and that it is their duty to prevent violence, especially when minors are involved.

On the other hand, representatives of the Serbian Progressive Party rejected the accusations and presented a different version of events, claiming that the students and citizens had attempted to block the street with garbage containers and provoke incidents.

Threats against a High School student

Following an attempt to provoke an incident during a gathering at Slavija, in which a high school student intervened to prevent an attack on peacefully assembled citizens, Students in Blockade warned that threats had subsequently been directed at the student.

According to their statements, information about his location and place of residence is being systematically collected, and claims have emerged that a monetary reward is being offered for information that could lead to his whereabouts being identified. The students also stated that they had received warnings that individuals were seeking the addresses of witnesses to the incident, as well as other students who were present at the scene.

During the gathering, the young man stopped an individual who allegedly attempted to attack citizens, after which he became the target of intimidation and threats. Due to concerns for his safety, he has refused to appear publicly under his full name.

Concerns over Police conduct during a detention in Niš

On May 25, a female activist from Niš was taken from her workplace by plainclothes police officers and driven outside the city in a vehicle without visible police markings. According to available information, police officers detained her in Niš under an order originating from Belgrade, after which she was taken for questioning.

According to her account, several police officers participated in the operation, and she described the detention as an intimidating experience that left her feeling unsafe and frightened. She stated that during the intervention it was not clear to her why measures were being taken against her or why such a large number of officers had been involved.

Her mobile phone was turned off during the process, and her family was therefore unaware of what was happening. Following the detention, Students in Blockade in Niš stated that the case represented an abuse of police powers and a disproportionate response toward a citizen who had become known for her participation in protests.

After questioning, the woman was released. Her lawyer stated that she was fined 90,000 Serbian dinars for pushing a garbage container during a gathering in Belgrade.