



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

July 3 - July 16, 2026

Freedom of Expression

Campaign against journalists, lawyers and government critics

Journalist of Kolubarske Darija Ranković and VAmmedia portal journalist Slavica Vujanac were the targets of the Informer TV campaign. During a broadcast aired on this pro-government television station, local media were accused of taking money from local officials to avoid criticizing them, and of instead using their reporting to attack the president of the state. Journalists Ranković and Vujanac were accused of undermining the state, racketeering, and blackmail, along with the public display of photographs and insults directed at their physical appearance.

On the show Paralela on the same television, alongside false claims and insults, lawyers Luka Aćimović, Vera Aćimović, and Jana Aćimović Planojević were also targeted, as well as members of their families. Attacks were also directed at Tamara Aćimović, author of a film about cases of political brutality against citizens in Valjevo, recorded during the civil protests of August 2025.

The informal Inquiry Commission investigating responsibility for the collapse of the canopy at the Novi Sad railway station was also a target of attacks by pro-government media. According to members of this group, this amounts to a coordinated targeting campaign in media reports and broadcasts, in which false claims and characterizations are made, portraying Commission members as people acting against the interests of the state.

Attack on the house of a student and an activist

On the night between July 10 and 11, unknown persons poured red paint over the family home of a student and activist who lived there with his family. The student, whose property was vandalized, had been called to the police station just three weeks earlier to give a statement about the pouring of red paint on the premises of the local Serbian Progressive Party board in Dobanovci, and a week before that, posters bearing his image and homophobic messages had appeared in the area where he lives. A few days later, a support rally for the student was organized, while supporters of the Serbian Progressive Party held a counter-rally at the same time. During the address of one female student, homophobic comments and insults were shouted from the counter-rally.

Threatening comments ahead of the Pride caravan

After the Slobodna reč portal from Vranje published news of the upcoming Pride Caravan, organized by the association Da se zna, a large number of insulting, homophobic, and threatening comments appeared under the post on Facebook. In addition to the event's participants, threats were also directed at the editorial office itself, with one Facebook user writing that the authors of the article would be beaten. At the same time, while announcing a counter-rally called "Family Walk," the author of the comment, and representative of the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Serbia for the south of Serbia, Slađan Ristić, told the weekly Vreme that he had written the comment in the heat of the moment.

The High-Tech Crime Prosecutor's Office is acting on a complaint from the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia, which condemned the threats against the Slobodna reč editorial office.

Threats and intimidation on social media

Threats via social media remain one of the dominant forms of intimidation directed at journalists, media outlets, and media workers. The hosts of the podcast Dobar, loš, zao, Marko Vidojković and Nenad Kulačin, once again received threats via social media. Vidojković, who has been outside Serbia for an extended period for safety reasons, was told he would not be allowed to return, with an emphasis on the possibility of physical attack.

Another case involves a comment left under a news article on the N1 television portal about amendments to the European Parliament's resolution on Serbia, which read: "You should be set on fire in the middle of the street."

At the same time, journalists and professors again received messages claiming they had been marked by the "black hand." Ana Martinoli, a professor at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts (FDU), received the message at her official email address. Journalists Gordana Andrić and Jelena Veljković were contacted through BIRN's accounts. A similar message was sent to the address of the lawyer of the Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia Rade Đurić. In February, threats of this kind, from someone identifying themselves the same way, were directed at journalist Vojin Radovanović, professors Smiljana Milinkov and Aleksandra Krstić, and the N1 editorial office. In such cases, a clearer response from the state is required. Online threats and physical violence against citizens must not go unanswered by the competent institutions.

Journalists banned from covering a gathering

The team from the internet portal FAR was banned from covering the "Serbia Wins" gathering, organized by the Serbian Progressive Party in Dimitrovgrad. The President of the Municipality, who is also President of the SNS Municipal Board, Vladica Dimitrov, did not allow the journalists to film, remarking that they were not welcome. Event security removed the journalists. In their conduct, public officials must remain open to journalists and to criticism. Since the gathering was held in a public space, the presence of citizens, especially journalists, should be permitted without discrimination as to who may cover the event.

Local officials in conflict with journalists

The Secretary of the Aranđelovac Municipal Assembly, Đorđe Riznić, filed a criminal complaint against the editor of the eStvarnost portal, Dragan Todorović, for alleged false reporting. In May, Todorović had filed a complaint against Riznić and the President of the Aranđelovac Municipal Assembly, Nikola Obradović, because they did not allow the portal's journalist to attend an Assembly session. The portal's editorial office states that the complaint contained no evidence. The Association of Independent Electronic Media assessed this case as a SLAPP lawsuit. Riznić later stated that he filed the complaint as a private individual rather than as an official and that he has no intention of persecuting the media.

In Bečej, Kristina Demeter Filipčev, journalist and editor of the Bečejski mozaik portal, asked local officials about the duration of a volleyball camp to be held at their sports center. The center's director, Milan Onjin, said that even if he knew the answer, he would refuse to disclose it. He verbally attacked the journalist, accusing her of "spreading hatred."

Inappropriate comments have also spread to social media. Bojan Pitulić, assistant to the president of the Grocka municipality, shared a post on his Instagram account with the text "Cleaned the streets of the opposition, now cleaning Grocka," along with an insulting comment aimed at Željko Matorčević, editor of the Žig info portal. The post in question was in fact the portal's article about Pitulić's career. The editorial office regards this comment as a threat, given earlier pressure on journalists coming from the municipal leadership. The former president of the municipality, Dragoljub Simonović, filed several complaints against the portal and was found guilty of instigating the arson of the home of the portal's journalist, Milan Jovanović.

Freedom of Assembly

Attack on Vladimir Arsenijević

At the site where a commemoration for the victims of Srebrenica was planned, writer and Krokodil festival program director Vladimir Arsenijević was attacked. The group that attacked him numbered between 20 and 30 people. Arsenijević suffered blows to the head and had his phone taken from him. The commemoration was cancelled for security reasons. A few days later, the identities of two of the attackers were established, but the First Basic Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade did not open criminal proceedings, claiming there were no elements of a criminal offense and that misdemeanor proceedings would be pursued instead. The penalty for this offense is up to 20,000 dinars. According to the lawyer, this effectively forecloses any possibility of identifying the organizers of the attack. This kind of characterization of the attack and the prevention of the planned gathering represents a poor practice in which perpetrators are not adequately sanctioned.

Removal of banners

During the Veseli spust event on July 12 in Mataruška Banja, citizens and students hung banners reading “Students Are Winning” and “Let's Save Studenica” on a suspension bridge. A group of men then approached and violently attempted to remove the banners. Two female students who tried to protect the banners were injured. According to citizens' accounts, one of the men said there was a directive that the only banner allowed to remain was “Serbia Wins” that is recently used at gatherings and events of the Serbian Progressive Party. He later identified himself as being from a state service. The reports of possible false representation and of insistence that only one message be permitted appear restrictive both to freedom of expression and to the range of messages allowed to circulate in the public sphere.

Attack on a group making graffiti

After members of the informal artists' group Sloboda ili ništa (“Freedom or Nothing”) announced on social media a call to action to paint murals over hateful graffiti directed at the Rector of the University of Belgrade, Prof. Dr. Vladan Đokić, on two private houses, numerous threats followed. On the night they were making preparations, they were physically attacked by an organized group of masked men. The attackers beat them and destroyed their equipment. One of the citizens attacked was a member of the group who was seven months pregnant at the time. After she was pushed to the ground and began to scream, the masked attackers dispersed. In a situation where institutions fail to remove offensive comments and citizens gather to address the problem themselves, they still have no protection from masked attackers.

Detention of activists

Dušan Čavić and Branislav Tomić, activists from the association “Za naš kej”, were detained on July 3 on the Sava embankment following a dispute with police and workers involved in works along the embankment. The activists were taken away after a verbal conflict with police and with workers carrying out construction that continued despite a Constitutional Court decision ordering it suspended. The following day, Gordana Đukić, a member of the Rakovica citizens' assembly (Zbor), was detained ahead of a protest organized in front of the Rakovica municipal building. She, a citizen and activist of the Zbor, was released after two hours; the stated reason for her detention was an alleged insult of a police officer prior to the start of the protest in front of the municipal building.

Ban on a film screening

Zbor of Sremski Karlovci planned to organize, in the town's pedestrian zone, a screening of “Tura do Strazbura” (“Tour to Strasbourg”), a TV Nova documentary about students who cycled from Serbia for 13 days to reach the European institutions. While citizens were setting up equipment for the screening, the head of the Sremski Karlovci communal department, presenting himself as an “inspection”, informed the organizers that the screening could not take place because they lacked a permit to occupy public space. The film about the students who cycled to Strasbourg, released in April 2025, had already been screened multiple times in cities across Serbia. This was the first time organizers had been asked to remove their equipment.

The gathering had been reported to the police, who were present at the scene and securing the event, but due to pressure from members of the communal department, the event was moved to the premises of the citizens' group Karlovačka lista.