



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

July 31 - August 20, 2026

Freedom of Expression

Film director and professor Stevan Filipović beaten

While filming unidentified individuals demolishing a protected building in Belgrade, Stevan Filipović, a professor at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts, was attacked. His phone was taken, and he was then knocked to the ground. Several men kicked him and beat him with a metal chair. He stated that mercenaries of the ruling party carried out the attack. The First Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade announced that two individuals had confessed to taking part in the attack, while a search continues for the third participant. The identity of those who took the mobile phone has still not been established. Filipović posted on Instagram that his phone had been sent for forensic examination at the Ministry of Interior and was subsequently moved to Kosovo and Albania. He also emphasized that the competent prosecutor's office had not called him in to identify the attackers.

Activist stopped at the border over the sound cannon investigation

Bojan Simišić, a member of Eko straža (Eco Guard), was detained at the border while returning from a business trip. After being searched, he was ordered to wait for inspectors from the Criminal Police Directorate's counter-terrorism unit. He gave a statement as a private citizen, and officials said this was the "first round" of questioning in the investigation into the sound cannon case. Simišić said he had seen a media article reporting that police were looking for him even before receiving any formal summons. He also received death threats from the deputy president of the Ivanjica Municipal Assembly, who posted on Instagram that, in a serious state, Simišić should be killed. In June, at the order of the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office, an investigation was launched into the use of the weapon deployed against citizens at the March 15 protest in Belgrade. So far, it is known that several people have been questioned, and a warrant has been issued for military analyst Aleksandar Radić "on the grounds of suspicion that he committed the criminal offense of Preparing Acts Against the Constitutional Order and Security of the Republic of Serbia." Radić and Eko straža had pointed to evidence of the use of some kind of weapon back in March.

Threats to journalists on social media

Veran Matić, president of the Managing Board of the Association of Independent Electronic Media (ANEM), received threats on the social network X. A comment reading “Let’s cut off the hydra’s head” was posted alongside his photo. The targeting continued through articles published by Informer, Alo and Večernje novosti, which the Press Council found to be in violation of the Code of Ethics of Serbian Journalists. Matić also received threats on other social media posts where his statements were fabricated, threats of death, hanging, sacrifice, and public execution. Biljana Stepanović, a journalist and director of Nova ekonomija, received threatening messages on her Facebook profile. They read: “We will meet (...) Now go running to that same police and ask for protection.”

The editor of the A1 portal from Novi Pazar reported on potholes that appeared on a bridge just days after temporary repairs. The media report was published on Facebook. Sulejman Durević, head of the Urban Construction Land Sector at the Directorate for Construction, posted a video of the repair work in the comments. One of the workers involved in the repairs made inappropriate comments toward the A1 journalists. Insults were also directed at the portal’s female journalist who was on site. At the end of the recording, Durević is seen “blowing a kiss” to the newsroom, adding the comment “If you are afraid of a kiss, then die of fear.”

The editor and newsroom of the Volim Zrenjanin portal received threats in a comment on one of their articles and via a phone call from a man who identified himself as an SNS supporter. The comment read “there is no cure for you, except a bullet,” while the phone call contained a threat to smash the editor’s head. Threats were also directed at Zoomer’s journalist Darko Gligorijević. A clip of his appearance on N1 television was posted on social media, where a comment appeared: “Aren’t you ashamed to come to our village of Dubovac and spread lies, Ugh, come again and see what happens to you.”

In the comments on a post by the Association of Independent Electronic Media about threats made against Marko Vidojković and Nenad Kulačanin, new death threats were posted once again. This is the third time that posts about threats have themselves attracted new threats. Marko Vidojković received a total of three threats in one week. On the page of the IN Medija portal from Indija, a comment appeared: “Scum, he should be killed, not rewarded.” The news concerned his shortlisting for the Courageous Writer Award for a writer under persecution, given by the Václav Havel Center in New York.

Responses from the competent authorities to such threats continue to be absent, and journalists remain under pressure not only from unknown individuals but also from state officials.

Prosecutor’s vehicle set on fire

The vehicle of Valjevo prosecutor Vukašin Vujičić was doused with a flammable liquid and set on fire during the night. He stated that he suspects the car was set on fire because of cases he is handling. One of these is a case against a criminal group led by Marko Mirković, who is known to be close to the SNS. For weeks before that, a targeted media campaign had also been waged against him in local outlets.

Targeting of a former Valjevo student

On the program Pretres, broadcast on the local television station V5, a former student of Valjevo Grammar School was targeted. Untrue claims were made about him, and he was attacked over a photograph he has with the Rector of the University of Belgrade, Vladan Đokić. A few days later, the host read out and analyzed his school grades on air. Citizens and activists in Valjevo came under increasing pressure as the anniversary of the August 14 protest of the previous year approached, at which numerous participants suffered police violence. In July, the program also claimed that this student “must not move around the city alone.” Local television stations were especially active in this targeting, rather than providing citizens with objective information.

Students attacked and violently detained

Lana, a student at the Faculty of Medicine in Novi Sad, was attacked in her building by a man. While they were in the elevator, he began choking her. He took her phone the moment the elevator stopped. Although the phone's location was established, police refused to act. According to Sabac students, an inspector stated: „This wasn't an ordinary theft. He wanted to kill or rape you.“

In Niš, police officers asked a female student for her ID card in front of her house. After she went to get it from the yard, she was forcibly pushed into a police vehicle, sustaining injuries to her head and the area below her shoulder in the process. When she requested medical assistance and a lawyer, she was denied both of these rights.

Freedom of Assembly

Removal of student signs and banners

During the “Chat with a Student” campaign held in Veliko Gradište, two men approached a twelve-year-old boy after he had stepped away from the stand, and they tore a badge and a sticker off his shirt. During a second action organized by students and citizens over the EXPO caravan event in Kruševac, police forcibly confiscated banners reading “Students are winning” and “EXtreme Plunder of the Homeland”. In Kragujevac, police checked the identity documents of those gathered who were holding similar banners. The organization of the EXPO exhibition has been accompanied by various irregularities, and this kind of conduct by state bodies suggests that citizens are not being allowed to voice criticism.

Lawyer suspected of assaulting an official

Nikola Mirković, who represents several citizens who survived police violence at the protest in Valjevo on August 14, 2025, received a summons to appear before the prosecutor's office as a suspect in an assault on an official at that same protest. Two proceedings are underway regarding the police violence at the protest. One is against police officers for the criminal offense of abuse and torture, currently being handled by the Prosecutor's Office for Organized Crime. The Valjevo prosecutor's office is conducting proceedings against citizens on suspicion that they took part in an attack on police. Mirković states that this is a continuation of pressure on lawyers who serve as defense counsel in these court proceedings. For several weeks now, a media targeting campaign has been waged against a group of lawyers from Valjevo, and the ongoing court proceedings point to a clearly designed strategy meant for those who point to police brutality-

Pride caravan held under difficult conditions

In Kraljevo, during the Pride caravan, a group of men opposed to the event threw objects at the gathered citizens and journalists, breaking through the police cordon. Journalists were hit by objects from the local media outlets LiKVidno.info and Glas Šumadije. An interview journalists were conducting with Bojan Lazić, director of the Da se zna association, had to be cut short for safety reasons. The gathering was disbanded shortly after. Police did not react when stones were thrown at participants of the gathering. In Zaječar, opponents of the event likewise insulted journalists from the Glas Zaječara portal. They also shouted homophobic insults at those gathered. This event is held to announce the Pride Parade in Belgrade. So far, it has been cancelled once, and counter-gatherings have been organized on nearly every day it took place. The recorded reactions of the police were not enough to prevent conflicts between the two groups, but the members of the Ministry of Internal Affairs primarily separated the two gathered groups, without preventing the shooting of those gathered.