

ELECTIONS

UNDER THE MAGNIFYING GLASS



days
until the
elections

Civic Initiatives will continuously monitor and record cases of violations of freedom of expression, assembly and association during the pre-election campaign. We will point out all omissions and illegal actions during the election campaign, including cases of abuse of: public resources and public office for campaigning. We will report on all these issues on a weekly basis to the interested public.

In April 2025, students in the blockade added a demand for the calling of early parliamentary elections to their initial demands addressed to the relevant institutions in Serbia. Finally, after a year and a half of protests and hundreds of thousands of citizens taking to the streets across the country, snap parliamentary elections have been called for 25 October.

The pre-election campaign, however, is taking place amid limited media space, a constant smear campaign and intimidation, and the suppression of citizens' fundamental freedoms. Throughout the pre-election period, we will bring you weekly *Elections Under the Magnifying Glass* reports, modelled on *Three Freedoms Under the Magnifying Glass* reports, in which we will report on all violations of freedom of expression, assembly and association in the context of the upcoming elections.

It could be said that the pre-election campaign began even before the elections were officially called. For months, the ruling party's caravan travelled across Serbia, with the visits attended by the country's highest-ranking officials, including the President and ministers from various government departments. Ahead of the elections, we also learned that a total of 16 students, activists and opposition politicians had been targeted with spyware, including Pegasus, which can only be acquired by states. These circumstances indicate that political actors are entering the electoral contest from unequal starting positions: on one side stand state resources and captured institutions, while on the other are actors exposed to surveillance, persecution and targeting.

The use of public office for campaigning has been in full swing for several months. According to data from the Center for Investigative Journalism of Serbia (CINS), ministers, MPs and other officials from the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) made 160 visits across Serbia between April and mid-August 2026. Campaigning by public officials is prohibited under the Law on Prevention of Corruption, and public officials may not use public resources to promote political parties or political entities, their electoral lists or candidates in elections.



The latest in a series of cases involving elements of the misuse of public resources is a letter from President Aleksandar Vučić that was sent to all pensioners in Serbia through the Republic Fund for Pension and Disability Insurance. In the letter, Vučić addresses pensioners as an outgoing president (given that the ruling party has announced him as the lead candidate on its electoral list and its candidate for prime minister). He points to the results achieved by the state, presenting these results as the success of one side, while portraying the other side as “malicious” and as being “unable to feel gratitude and empathy towards the elderly,” as stated in the letter, and characterising it as a side that would undermine all these achievements. The letter to pensioners raises a number of questions, including how private data belonging to pension beneficiaries came to be used for the purpose of distributing promotional material from the President of the Republic and candidate for prime minister, as well as who paid for the delivery of more than 1.9 million letters.

Although the collection of signatures for electoral lists is only just beginning, it has already been announced who will run and with whom. On 5 September, the Main Board of the Serbian Progressive Party decided that Aleksandar Vučić would be the lead candidate on the electoral list named “Aleksandar Vučić – United Serbia”. This news is hardly surprising, as Vučić’s second presidential term is coming to an end and, under Serbia’s Constitution and laws, he is not entitled to run for president for a third term. Alongside the SNS, the Serbian Radical Party of Vojislav Šešelj and the Party of United Pensioners, Farmers and Proletarians of Serbia – Solidarity and Justice (PUPS) will also run in a coalition. The Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) will participate in the upcoming parliamentary elections in a coalition with United Serbia (JS), the Social Democratic Party of Serbia and the Greens of Serbia.

The day before the elections were called, students in blockades announced that a citizens’ group called “Student List – Students Win” had been established to participate in the early parliamentary elections. The opposition parties that have announced their support for the student list and said they would not run independently are the Green-Left Front, the Democratic Party, the Movement of Free Citizens and the Movement for the Renewal of the Kingdom of Serbia. The student list has not yet been made public, but pro-government media outlets have published a list of 250 names that they claim are included on the student list. It is unclear whether the list is accurate, but this would not be the first time that information from student meetings and plenums has leaked to the media. Tabloid media outlets have already begun targeting individuals whose names appear on the mentioned list.



The Party of Freedom and Justice (SSP), Serbia Centre (SRCE) and the Solidarity movement have announced that they will run in the elections under the Platform for a European Serbia. The National Movement of Serbia, Ecological Uprising and New Face of Serbia will also run separately as part of the coalition known as the National Serbia alliance.

Follow our Elections Under the Magnifying Glass reports in the coming weeks.