
THREE FREEDOMS UNDER THE MAGNIFYING GLASS



Civic
Initiatives

freedom of expression

freedom of assembly

freedom of association

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

September 4 - September 17, 2026

Freedom of Expression

Attack on the Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy, Danijel Sinani

The Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Belgrade, Daniel Sinani, was attacked from behind by a man who hit him on the back of the head and pushed him, and then ran away stealing his wallet. The attack took place not far from the Faculty of Philosophy. The Ministry of Internal Affairs announced that the suspect in the attack on the Dean was arrested, and the President of Serbia announced explaining that the only goal of the attack was to steal a wallet. The Higher Public Prosecutor's Office (VJT) in Belgrade denied the allegations that the attack on the Dean was politically motivated, because, as it claims, there is no evidence that would indicate that. On the other hand, the Academic Plenum announced that the responsibility for the specific attack on the Dean belongs to its perpetrator, but that the political responsibility for the atmosphere of aggression is borne by President Aleksandar Vučić and the government. The Academic Plenum requested an efficient investigation, determination of responsibility and professional behavior of all state bodies, with the assessment that the election campaign has only just begun, and the academic community is already on target. Dean Sinani stated that, taking into account the curses that the attacker directed at him, he is sure that at least part of the motive came from the atmosphere of violence, intolerance, lynching and targeting, which, in recent years, has been tendentially created through tabloid chases and hate speech.

The academic community has been the target of pressure and attacks since the beginning of student protests and blockades, and this attack on the Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy is just one in a series of cases of targeting members of the academic community who are socially and politically engaged.

Sudden layoffs in education

Aleksandra Malić Sibinović, civic education teacher at the "Vuk Karadžić" School of Economics and Business in Stara Pazova, has not yet had her employment contract extended. The teacher points out that she was assigned the norm for this school year back in August and that she attended the session, preparing for the new school year, even though the school director confirmed her continuation of her work after the session and that she is waiting for some extension of the norm from the school administration. She claims that she shared the fate of all those colleagues who paid the price for public support of the student movement with their jobs.

Danijel Ivanović, a physical education teacher from Kruševac, suddenly found out that he will no longer work at the "Stevan Hristić" Music School. The professor explains that he started the new school year regularly with his department, but then the decision to cancel the contract arrived. Despite the fact that the school denied that it is retaliation, Professor Ivanović believes that the background behind this decision is of a political nature, because he publicly supported the students and, as he says, went to protests in his free time.

Dismissals in educational institutions have become a regular mechanism for removing politically unsuitable teachers and other employees. Repression of this kind has significantly intensified since blockades and protests began, and we are witnessing that on the eve of the elections, the same type of pressure is present on employees in education. This type of retaliation indicates that the government intends to eradicate critical thinking from education, and this trend could become even more pronounced if the announcements of government officials that after the election they will focus on education and "bring order" to this area are fulfilled.

Targeting and pressure on journalists

N1 journalists' request to obtain the accreditation to attend and report on the commemoration of Ratko Mladić was rejected, regardless of the fact that they submitted the request on time. The organizers of the commemoration claimed that the reason for the refusal was a large number of people expected, including relatives and friends and that the space for the media is of limited capacity.

In Nis, ahead of the SNS Main Board, citizens gathered and organized a protest where N1 journalists were verbally attacked and doused with water by SNS supporters. One of the journalists of N1, Nenad Božović, was insulted on that occasion.

Weekly satirical show "24 Minutes with Zoran Kesić" stopped broadcasting, regardless of the previously agreed continuation at the end of the previous season. Zoran Kesić, the author of the show, said that he had the impression that political reasons were behind the decision to stop broadcasting his show on Nova TV, not a business one. He added that he had the feeling that an even darker period was coming for the media and for journalists who believed in their profession and wanted to practice it honestly. He also thinks that his show was the first to be hit because humor is a shortcut to the viewers' attention. As a reminder, this comes after Alpac Media from Portugal bought United Group, although there is still no official approval of the transaction by the Luxembourg regulatory body.

The letter that the journalist of N1, Predrag Popović, sent by e-mail to the High Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade (VJT), and in connection with the criminal offense of denying genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, referring to Article 387, paragraph 5 of the Criminal Code, was published verbatim in pro-regime tabloids. This procedure started a media smear campaign for N1 and a member of the editorial staff. In the "Informer" tabloid, the journalist's action was assessed as "the height of the madness of autochauvinists", and Popović was called a "Serb-hater" and accused of "seeking the arrest of Serbs". Similar texts were published in other tabloids, which further encouraged the attacks on the journalist.

The presenter and editor of TV Nova S, Marko Novičić, was sent threats and disturbing messages due to a post on his personal Instagram account, and in connection with the broadcast of the funeral of convicted war criminal Ratko Mladić. As ANEM announced, the messages wished for the journalist's death and threatened physical violence.

A threatening message was sent to Marko Vidojković on Instagram via a profile under the name Zoran Kosorić. The Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia announced and characterized this message as a serious threat of an attack on the life and body of journalists, which requires a quick and effective reaction from the institutions.

Insults and threats of physical violence were sent to the editor of the Žig Info portal, Željko Matorčević, via the Messenger application from the account of the assistant to the mayor of Grocka, Bojan Pitulić. This is just one of a series of threats of violence against journalists and editors of Žig info, and it is important to remind that Matorčević suffered serious body injuries in the attack in October 2018, and that his colleague Milan Jovanović's house was set on fire in December of the same year.

These cases indicate the continuity of preventing journalists in Serbia from performing their work with dignity, as well as ubiquitous repression in the form of threats, targeting and insults. State authorities were also involved in that repression, including VJT, which showed its connection with pro-regime tabloids.

Freedom of Assembly

Clashes at Belgrade Pride

During the Belgrade Pride march, there was a verbal clash between Pride participants and a group of citizens gathered near the Ascension Church in Kneza Miloša Street. Part of the crowd was directing insulting messages at the Pride participants and shouted the name of Ratko Mladić. Those gathered at the counter rally had church symbols, pictures of saints and a photo of Ratko Mladić, as well as a banner that read: "Immorality and gay shame never again in life". For years, the police in Serbia have been allowing counter-gatherings that spread hatred and intolerance towards sexual minorities in the country, thus giving systemic approval to this type of attitude in the public space.

Citizens prevented from approaching the gathering on the occasion of the arrival of President Vučić

The choir of the city of Sombor called for a meeting on the occasion of the arrival of President Aleksandar Vučić in that city. However, members and supporters of SNS also came to the rally and prevented citizens from going to welcome Vučić. Police and supporters of the Serbian Progressive Party prevented citizens from approaching the location where Vučić's arrival was expected, thus limiting the freedom of movement of citizens.