



BEZBEDNI NOVINARI


**SIGURNA
L!NIJA**
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Representatives of journalistic and media
associations with colleagues from Dimitrovgrad
(photo: OSCE/Miroslav Janković)

MONITORING OF THE MEDIA SCENE IN SERBIA FOR MARCH 2025

UVOD

The monitoring of the media scene is conducted to continuously track events and processes affecting media freedom in the Republic of Serbia. This monitoring focuses on freedom of expression; monitoring the implementation of existing regulations; the adoption of new regulations, as well as amendments to current ones, both in the media field and other areas that directly or indirectly impact media freedom; and the analysis of lawsuits considered by experts to be SLAPP suits (strategic lawsuits against public participation) targeting journalists and media outlets.

Publicly available data, information obtained from journalists, editors, and other media professionals, journalistic associations, and media organizations, as well as from governmental and non-governmental bodies, are used for monitoring.

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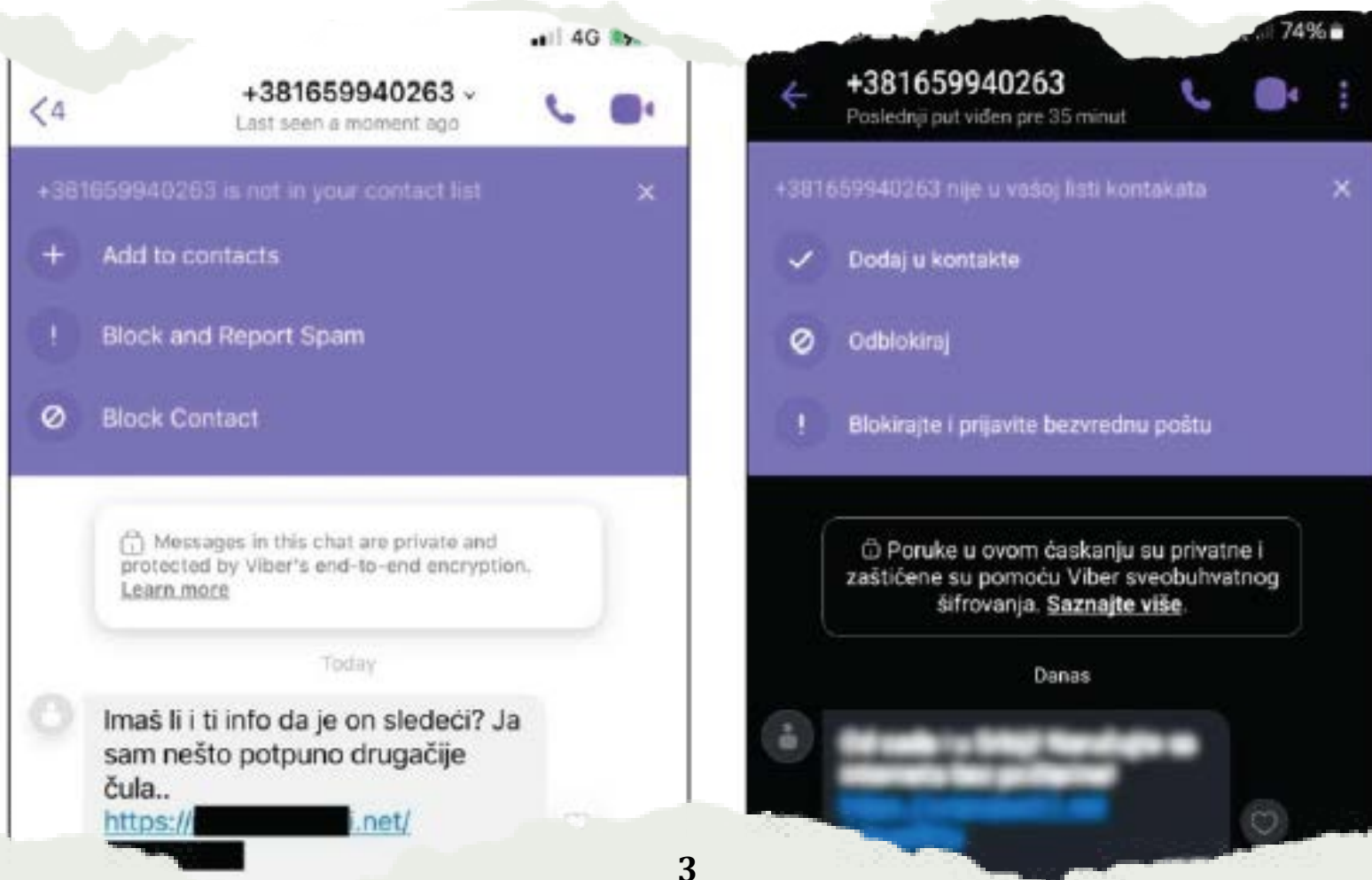
I. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

New Findings from the International Organization Amnesty International

At the end of March, a forensic analysis conducted by the international organization Amnesty International found evidence ([Journalists targeted with Pegasus spyware - Amnesty International Security Lab](#)) of an attempted installation of one of the most sophisticated and invasive spyware programs, Pegasus, on the mobile phones of two journalists from BIRN. The journalists received Viber messages from an unknown number registered with the operator Telekom Srbija. The messages contained links to a Serbian-language internet domain. Amnesty International stated with a high degree of confidence that the domain is associated with the Pegasus spyware. The journalists did not click on the links, thereby preventing their devices from being compromised.¹

Both domestic and international expert communities reacted to this case.²

The Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR) platform and the SafeJournalists Network (SJN) issued a statement strongly condemning the attacks on journalists and non-governmental organizations in Serbia. It was stated that violence, obstruction, and intimidation are tolerated and even carried out by the highest representatives of the authorities. In addition to the threats and pressure directed at journalists Ksenija Pavkov and Ana Lalić Hegediš, the physical removal of journalists from the City Hall in Novi Sad, and the detention and search of journalists during a session of the Novi Sad City Assembly,



serious concern was raised by the raid conducted by criminal police on the premises of several civil society organizations, including CRTA – the publisher of Istinomer, an online fact-checking portal.³

Meeting of Representatives of Journalists' Associations and Organizations Who Are Members of the Permanent Working Group for the Safety of Journalists with Local Media Representatives

The meeting of the Permanent Working Group for the Safety of Journalists (PWG) was held at the end of March in Dimitrovgrad. In addition to the organizers – the Association of Independent Electronic Media (ANEM) and the FAR online portal from Dimitrovgrad – the meeting was attended by the OSCE Mission to Serbia, local journalists, and representatives of journalists' and media associations that are members of the PWG.⁴

The meeting was organized in Dimitrovgrad because state institutions, even after more than a year, have still not begun addressing the case of illegal surveillance of Slaviša Milanov, a journalist from the FAR portal based in that town. (See more in the Media Scene Monitoring Reports for [March](#) and [December](#) 2024).

The case of Slaviša Milanov had already been discussed at previous meetings of the PWG. The prosecution and police ignored the need for a swift and effective response





Slaviša Milanov in conversation with representatives of media associations (photo: OSCE/M. Janković)

until similar new cases occurred and the international organization Amnesty International published its report. Only then did the police receive an urgent request to investigate the allegations raised in the criminal complaint.

At the meeting, Milanov stated:

“It is not pleasant to live with the knowledge that they know everything about you and are following you. Those who are supposed to protect us are not doing so, because institutions in Serbia do not function. We don’t even know who is handling the data collected about us. It creates a sense of insecurity. The only institution that initiated any action was the Ombudsman, who requested a report from the police. The police were given 15 days to provide it, but that didn’t happen. The public’s reaction was spot on because it’s the only way to learn anything when the system doesn’t work.”⁵

Journalist Sergej Ivanov also spoke about the problems faced by the FAR editorial team. In February, the President of the Dimitrovgrad Municipality, Vladica Dimitrov, falsely accused Ivanov of attempting to bribe members of the local assembly. Ivanov stated that, because of his activism, he was labeled as someone offering bribes to assembly members, which forced him to file a lawsuit against the President of the Municipality of Dimitrovgrad.⁶

CRTA Association – Criminal Complaint in Response to Unauthorized Handling of Information and Documentation

The CRTA association filed a criminal complaint ([Crt_a_krivicna-prijava.pdf](#)) on the grounds that the individuals named in the complaint unlawfully handled information and documentation obtained when members of the criminal police entered the organization's premises.

The criminal complaint was filed against: the President of the Republic of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić; the Chief Public Prosecutor of the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade, Nenad Stefanović; the acting public prosecutor of the Special Department for Combating Corruption of the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade, Jelena Milutinović Ziljkić; the head of the Anti-Corruption Department of the Criminal Police Directorate, Miloš Savić; and unidentified persons employed by the Ministry of the Interior and the Special Department for Combating Corruption of the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade. The complaint accuses these individuals of multiple criminal offenses: Abuse of Official Position under Article 359, paragraph 1; Unauthorized Collection of Personal Data under Article 146, paragraph 3; and Causing Panic and Disorder under Article 343 of the Criminal Code.⁷

(More on the entry of armed criminal police officers into the premises of several civil society organizations can be found in the [Media Scene Monitoring Report for February 2025](#)).

Report Published on the Council of Europe Platform for the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists

At the beginning of March, the report "Media Freedom in Europe: Confronting Political Pressure, Disinformation, and the Erosion of Media Independence" was published on the Council of Europe's Platform for the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists. The report states that Serbia, Turkey, and Georgia share second place in the number of attacks on the physical safety and integrity of journalists.

The report also highlights Serbia as a country where local and regional journalists face significantly more difficult conditions than their colleagues working in larger cities or national media outlets: their salaries are lower, they have fewer resources, and institutional support is minimal. The report mentions a campaign targeting the editor-in-chief of the KRIK portal, Stevan Dojčinović, which involved the manipulation of disinformation with the intent to intimidate him. It also references the cases of N1 Television journalist Vanja Đurić and Nova S Television journalist Željko Veljković, who were subjected to online hate speech incited by politicians. The acquittal of four former State Security Department officials, previously convicted at first instance for the murder of journalist Slavko Ćuruvija, is described as a significant "step backward." The result of this reversal is as follows: the perpetrators and instigators of crimes against journalists remain unpunished, journalists and civil society are discouraged, and the public loses trust in the independence of the judiciary.⁸

Public Broadcaster and Media Darkness

At a gathering in the city of Bor on March 2, the President of the Republic of Serbia called the RTS (Radio Television of Serbia) correspondent from Niš an “imbecile.” The comment was “provoked” by her remark that during the protest “Student Edict,” a fifteen-minute silence “echoed loudly.”⁹

Students condemned the President’s statement and expressed their support for the journalist — not only for her but for all journalists who perform their work conscientiously, responsibly, and in accordance with the Journalists’ Code of Ethics of Serbia. They called on RTS to publicly respond and stand in defense of their colleague.¹⁰

The RTS Editorial Board also deemed the President’s statement inappropriate. The RTS Correspondents’ Office condemned the statement and demanded a public apology from the President.¹¹

Journalists’ associations reminded the President of the legal framework and called on him to issue a public apology to RTS correspondents and to “begin fostering a culture and ethics of public discourse,” meaning he should stop using “hate speech and aggressive rhetoric that incites discrimination and aggressive behavior.”¹²

Following these reactions, the President issued an “apology.”

“Let’s be clear — as President of the Republic, regardless of the daily torment I endure, even though I am not competent [for media matters], I have no right to call anyone an imbecile, and I apologize to the citizens of Serbia and the journalists of the aforementioned RTS bureau for having done so. However, I also think equally poorly of the professionalism and objectivity of the said journalists. I believe they are a disgrace to their profession — that is, I believe they are not journalists but political activists.”¹³



In an open letter, more than forty journalists from Niš informed the public that they would cease reporting on the President's activities until he issued a proper public apology to their colleague.¹⁴ Their decision was supported by colleagues from other cities, including Bujanovac, Vranje, Bosilegrad, Vladičin Han, Preševo, Leskovac, Prokuplje, as well as reporters from the RTS bureau in Novi Sad.¹⁵

International news agencies reported on the insult to the RTS correspondent and the President's so-called apology.¹⁶

Students and citizens expressed support for the RTS correspondents by gathering in front of the RTS bureau in Niš.¹⁷

The following organizations called on their members to stand in solidarity with their colleagues and to refrain from covering the Serbian President's activities until he issues a proper apology to the journalists he insulted: the Association of Online Media (AOM), the Independent Journalists' Association of Vojvodina (NDNV), the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS), the Business Association of Local and Independent Media – Lokal Pres, the Slavko Ćuruvija Foundation, and the Trade Union GS KUM "Nezavisnost."¹⁸

Meanwhile, the ruling party claimed that the public broadcaster was "violating all principles of journalism" and represented "the strike force of a color revolution attempt in Serbia."¹⁹ This was echoed by the President himself, who spoke of a "special role" played by RTS in a "color revolution."²⁰ Concluding his statement with a message that Radio Television of Serbia would be "returned to the people," the President added:

"We will not endanger the lives of RTS workers or their right to lie and mislead the public — just as N1 and Nova S do, only to the much much higher degree — but these [RTS] have a much greater responsibility."²¹

A number of employees at Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) have been consistently supporting the student protests. (Editorial departments responsible for RTS's cultural programming — including the Culture and Arts Editorial Team, the Drama and Domestic Series Program, the Documentary Program, the Children's Program, and the Dramaturgical Department of the Cultural and Artistic Program) — signed a joint statement declaring that the majority of employees in RTS's cultural and artistic programming support the students' demands. They described the student movement as "responsible, courageous, and persistent," and as a fight for a society based on values that are noble, deeply patriotic, and oriented toward a better future.²²

Employees at Radio Belgrade have also voiced their support for the students' demands. In a statement signed by the majority of employees from the Cultural and Artistic Programming Department of Radio Belgrade's Second Program, the Music Editorial Department of the Second Program, the Drama Program of Radio Belgrade, the Editorial Department for Documentary Work and Political Culture of the Second Program, the Production Department of the Second Program, and the Third Program of Radio Belgrade, it was written:

“This generation of young people, through non-violent struggle, brings us back to the values of justice, a free spirit, and responsibility. It is up to us to attend their lesson in political culture.”²³

The Music Production Department of Radio Television of Serbia, together with its ensembles, also issued a statement fully supporting “the students’ demands and their sincere fight for a responsible and just society.”²⁴

The RTS trade union “Nezavisnost” expressed unequivocal support for the students as well.

The Editorial Board of the RTS News Program — widely regarded as a master at crafting news in ways that cause the most damage exactly where they want it — once again demonstrated that it does not operate in the public interest nor in the interest of truthful and timely reporting. The clear intention — perhaps driven by a desire to outdo the spin doctors and liars from an era we all wish to forget — to create chaos, because such individuals thrive in chaos, must not be allowed to succeed this time. [...] Colleagues — editors, journalists, presenters, editors, cameramen, lighting technicians, sound engineers, technicians, managers, directors — we urge you all to disassociate yourselves from this version of RTS. All of us contributed to what RTS has become today. Some more, some less. Many through silence, others through action.”²⁵

In early March, the ASNS trade union of production and technical workers employed at RTS’s Joint Media Institution submitted a formal request for the dismissal of Nenad Stefanović, editor-in-chief of the news program.²⁶ (The open letter by RTS journalist Milan Srdić and the union’s demand for Stefanović’s dismissal were previously covered in the [Media Scene Monitoring Report for January 2025](#)).

The Trade Union of the Public Media Institution Radio-Television of Vojvodina and the “Nezavisnost” Union of the same institution issued a public statement addressing Minister of the Interior Ivica Dačić, asking: “At whose request and on what grounds has the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Serbia deployed police officers to remain, around the clock, for a month and a half now, inside the premises of the provincial public broadcaster?”²⁷

An informal group of RTS employees named “Our pRoTeSt,” which had student support, called on citizens in early March to participate in a protest titled “The Silence Echoes,” held in front of the RTS building.²⁸ The employees demanded from their superiors that RTS report objectively on events of public interest and that the news program include a diversity of viewpoints.²⁹

During an appearance by the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, on RTS's Dnevnik 2 central news program, journalist and editor Bojana Mladenović referred to the protesters as a "mob."³⁰ Her remarks sparked a strong backlash from the student movement. In response, students decided to block the entrance to RTS for twenty-two hours, a decision that was supported by other citizens as well. In a show of solidarity, students from Novi Sad and Kragujevac blocked access to Radio-Television Vojvodina³¹ and Radio-Television Kragujevac.³²

After access to the RTS building was blocked, some employees began using the basement entrance to enter the premises.³³ Goran Karadžić, Director of Radio-Television Vojvodina, refused the students' request for the provincial public broadcaster to report on the blockade.³⁴ As a result, regular programming was suspended on both RTV and RTS.³⁵

Branko Stanković, author of the show "Kvadratura kruga" broadcast on RTS, announced he would cease filming episodes of the program as long as his colleagues continued to refer to the people as a "mob."³⁶ Journalist Dane Ilić refused to use alternate entrances under police escort to host the RTS morning show.³⁷

The Journalists' Association of Serbia called for unobstructed access to the building for public service media employees. While stating that obstructing journalists from doing their job is unacceptable, the association also emphasized that protest as a form of criticism of public service media coverage is a legitimate expression.³⁸

Darko Šper, the chief union representative of RTV's "Nezavisnost" union, began a hunger strike inside the RTV building. He took this step after employee demands remained unmet, despite promises from General Director Goran Karadžić. Among the demands were that Karadžić submit a formal request to the Management Board for the dismissal of Acting Editor-in-Chief of the First Program Nenad Ćaćić, that he meet with a student delegation involved in the blockade with union mediation, and that police officers leave the RTV premises.³⁹ Though dissatisfied with the lack of progress, Šper ended his hunger strike after seven days due to health concerns.⁴⁰

Protest Action “General Strike”

Members of the Media Freedom Coalition joined the protest action “General Strike,” organized by students on March 7. The Media Freedom Coalition issued a public call to its members, all media outlets, and media professionals to express solidarity with the students by halting their work in support of the students’ demands. Member organizations of the Coalition participated in a one-day strike and called on media outlets to symbolically stop their work from 11:52 a.m. to 12:07 p.m.: TV stations to go dark, on-line media to black out their websites, and radio stations to pause their broadcasts.⁴¹

Several outlets responded to the students’ call, including members of the United Media group⁴², Cenzolovka⁴³, Danas⁴⁴, Južne vesti⁴⁵, and Nedeljnik⁴⁶.

Five media outlets in Kosovo that report in Serbian also expressed support.⁴⁷

The editorial board of Insajder TV stated it would not participate in the general strike but would report on it.⁴⁸



Illustration: Marko Somborac

II. ATTACKS, THREATS AND PRESSURE

Since the beginning of 2025, a total of 20 cases have been opened by public prosecutors' offices based on criminal complaints (four in January, seven in February, and nine in March). The reported incidents affected 22 individuals, 21 of whom work in the public interest in the field of information. Of those affected, 13 were men (61.9%) and 8 were women (38.1%).⁴⁹

Ten of the cases are being handled by the Special Public Prosecutor's Office for High-Tech Crime. These incidents involved 10 victims: three men (30%) and seven women (70%).

As of March 31, 2025, the following actions had been taken in these cases:

- In one case, proceedings are underway in court based on an indictment by the public prosecutor;
- In one case, evidence collection is ongoing;
- In 18 cases, a request has been filed for gathering relevant information.

According to the NUNS database, there were a total of nine physical assaults, twenty-one verbal threats, and sixty instances of pressure. A notable incident involved the denial of entry into Serbia for journalists from Slovenia and Croatia who had planned to report on the "On 15th for the 15" protest (March 15).⁵⁰

Pressure and Attacks on Journalists Before and During the "On 15th for the 15" Protest

The Beta news agency reported that, the day before the "On 15th for the 15" protest, journalists and employees of Radio Belgrade 2, Radio Belgrade 3, and Radio 202 were told they would not be allowed to enter the Radio Belgrade building until Monday, March 17. According to Beta's source, it was decided that only journalists "loyal to the leadership and the regime" would work on Radio Belgrade's First Program, possibly from a relocated site for security reasons.⁵¹

Following the release of an audio recording of a wiretapped conversation, just a day before the protest, activist and student Lazar Dinić and members of the Movement of Free Citizens — Lado Jovović, Marija Vasić, Davor Stefanović, Srđan Đurić, and Mladen Cvijetić — were detained. Their homes were searched, and two days later they were placed in 30-day detention. A group of 25 civil society organizations issued a statement condemning the arrests. One of the detainees' attorneys confirmed that the recording had been made by the Security Information Agency (BIA) based on an order from the Higher Court in Belgrade. The recording was broadcast by pro-government media outlets, which described the activists as terrorists trying to overthrow the state. These claims were echoed by top government officials.⁵²

While covering the protest, a journalist and cameraman from Insajder TV were obstructed by an unknown man who blocked their camera with a flag.⁵³

Several foreign journalists were detained at the Serbian border to prevent them from covering the protest. The stated reason was a so-called “security risk.” Among those denied entry were journalists from Slovenian outlet POP TV and Croatian outlets and agencies RTL⁵⁴, Slobodna Dalmacija⁵⁵, Piksel⁵⁶, and Kropiks⁵⁷. Croatian journalist and activist Iva Anzulović was also denied entry to Serbia.⁵⁸

Domestic and international audiences condemned the Serbian authorities’ actions, calling them a violation of human rights and a breach of the Law on Public Information and Media, which states that “freedom of public information must not be violated through abuse of official position or public authority.”⁵⁹

During the protest, according to testimony from a large number of citizens and video recordings capturing the moment, a powerful (acoustic, thermal...) shock was felt on Kralja Milana Street — between the Beograđanka building, the Student Cultural Center (SKC), the Yugoslav Drama Theatre (JDP), and Masarikova Street — while a fifteen-minute silent vigil in honor of the victims of Novi Sad canopy collapse was held. Attendees described the shock as a loud roar, comparing it to the sound of a stampede, an aircraft, or an oncoming vehicle in a tunnel. It was perceived as an invisible force descending from the sky or tearing through the ground beneath them. The shock triggered intense fear and panic among the protesters. The organizations Građanske inicijative (Civic Initiatives), the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, CRTA, FemPlatz, the Lawyers’ Committee for Human Rights (YUCOM), and the A11 Initiative began collecting citizen testimonies and documenting symptoms and problems reported following the incident (including intense fear, panic, shock, rapid heartbeat, trembling, and disorientation). Their conclusion was that there are serious indications that some form of unauthorized device may have been used to produce the shock.⁶⁰

The Ministry of Internal Affairs⁶¹, the Ministry of Defense⁶², and the Security Information Agency (BIA)⁶³ denied credible allegations that a so-called “sound cannon” or any other unlawful device was used during the protest.

The Higher Public Prosecutor’s Office also issued a statement, ordering the First Basic Public Prosecutor’s Office to open a case and identify individuals who publicly claimed that a “sound cannon” had been used. The order was issued “due to the existence of grounds for suspicion that the criminal offense of Causing Panic and Disorder, under Article 343 of the Criminal Code, was committed in that way.”⁶⁴

The First Basic Public Prosecutor’s Office complied with the order of the Higher Prosecutor’s Office and instructed the Ministry of Internal Affairs to determine what occurred during the fifteen-minute silent vigil, when “a loud and unusual sound was heard, causing panic, running, pushing, and people falling on Kralja Milana Street, ”and to investigate whether “a pyrotechnic device, weapon, or other generally dangerous means was used that could have endangered the life and health of the gathered citizens.”⁶⁵

Two days after issuing the statement, a new one followed. The Prosecutor’s Office declared that, based on the collected reports, it had concluded that no so-called “sound cannon” had been used. Nevertheless, the office stated that it would continue working to determine the cause of the citizens’ behavior during the incident.⁶⁶

Detention of Nemanja Šarović, reporter for KTV from Zrenjanin and leader of the movement “Love, Faith, Hope”

On March 8, Nemanja Šarović, reporting live for KTV television, covered events from an improvised camp in Pionirski Park.⁶⁷ The camp had been set up in front of the Presidency by members of a group called Students 2.0, which claimed to be motivated by a desire to study and strongly opposed the actions of other students who were blocking universities in pursuit of broader human rights-related demands. Shortly thereafter, alongside Students 2.0, a group of men claiming to be veterans of the Special Operations Unit (JSO) — disbanded in the 2003 police operation “Sablja” (Sabre, after assassination of first democratic Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić) — also set up tents.⁶⁸

Šarović approached each of his (potential) interviewees politely and asked entirely relevant and expected questions, staying within the bounds of the gathering’s stated purpose. If they claimed to be students, he asked at which faculty they studied and for how long. Few were willing to answer. However, while they may have refused to respond, they were not hesitant to launch accusations: that he was a traitor, that he didn’t pay child support, that he misused travel reimbursements during his term in office, and so on. One woman among the group told him: “We’re all going to ride you now.”⁶⁹

At one point, a young woman dressed as a security shouted at Šarović, “You, get the hell out of the city!” She grabbed his arm and, in a raised voice filled with tension, said, “You’re not allowed to attack students!” Shortly after that, his microphone was knocked from his hand.⁷⁰ A crowd formed around him, people shouted that he was a violent man, and blocked his movement. They raised a flag high to prevent the KTV cameraman from recording what was happening. One older man threw coffee on Šarović.⁷¹

After that, a plainclothes police officer approached Šarović and ordered him to leave Pionirski Park. Initially, the reason given for the order was a disturbance of public order and peace, but this was later changed to concerns for Šarović’s safety. When the journalist refused to leave, wanting to continue reporting, additional uniformed officers arrived as reinforcement, and the journalist was forcibly taken to a police vehicle and transported to the police station. Šarović offered passive resistance throughout.⁷²

Due to feeling unwell at the station, Šarović was transported to the Emergency Center in an ambulance, accompanied by police.⁷³ After being examined, he was told he would have to return to the station with police escort to sign and receive a detention order. Šarović refused, pointing out that four hours had already passed,⁷⁴ and that the Criminal Procedure Code stipulates that the collection of information may last no longer than four hours — unless the person giving information consents to a longer duration, which Šarović had not.⁷⁵

Two days after the controversial incident, the Ministry of Internal Affairs issued a statement saying that a request to initiate misdemeanor proceedings against Šarović would be filed for “disrupting a student gathering in Pionirski Park, based on a report by participants.” He was charged with the offense of indecent, insolent, and reckless behavior

under Article 8 of the Law on Public Order and Peace.⁷⁶

The domestic public condemned the arrest of Nemanja Šarović.⁷⁷ The Journalists' Association of Serbia (UNS) reacted strongly to the incident. In its statement, it also condemned the police's treatment of Danas daily journalist Vojin Radovanović, who was recording Šarović's removal to the police station. Radovanović told UNS that, instead of receiving an answer to his question about why Šarović was being taken away, he was pushed several times by police officers. According to Radovanović, two officers told him he would be detained if he did not move, and they also threatened arrest to KTV owner Danijel Radić, who was present the entire time.⁷⁸

Just a few days later, Nemanja Šarović was again taken to the police station. The public learned of the event through social media and media outlets, where a video appeared showing Šarović stating, as he was being escorted to the station, that he had been summoned to report to the police at 3:00 PM on the same day—and that the summons had been delivered at 3:00 PM.⁷⁹

After being released, Šarović explained that the reason for his detention was a video report he had produced that day. He had attempted to ask the police present in Pionirski Park what they intended to do about the large number of unregistered tractors parked nearby. The video shows that none of the uniformed officers responded to his question. As a result of this incident, Šarović was charged with obstructing police officers in the performance of their duties and with verbal abuse.⁸⁰

During his third visit to Pionirski Park, one of the individuals present forcibly took Šarović's mobile phone from his hand. The police did not react.⁸¹

Issue of the Right to Report from Pionirski Park

TV N1 journalist Miodrag Sovilj was also ordered to leave Pionirski Park. The request was made by an unidentified man wearing a protective mask. He told the journalist that filming was not allowed and that the order came from the police. Sovilj verified the validity of this information with two uniformed police officers, who said they were unaware of any such order and confirmed that Pionirski Park is public space. When he attempted to return, the same man who had relayed the ban blocked his path and refused to communicate, turning his back on him.⁸²



The attacker on the BIRN journalist
(photo: Saša Dragojlo)

Attack on BIRN Journalist Saša Dragojlo

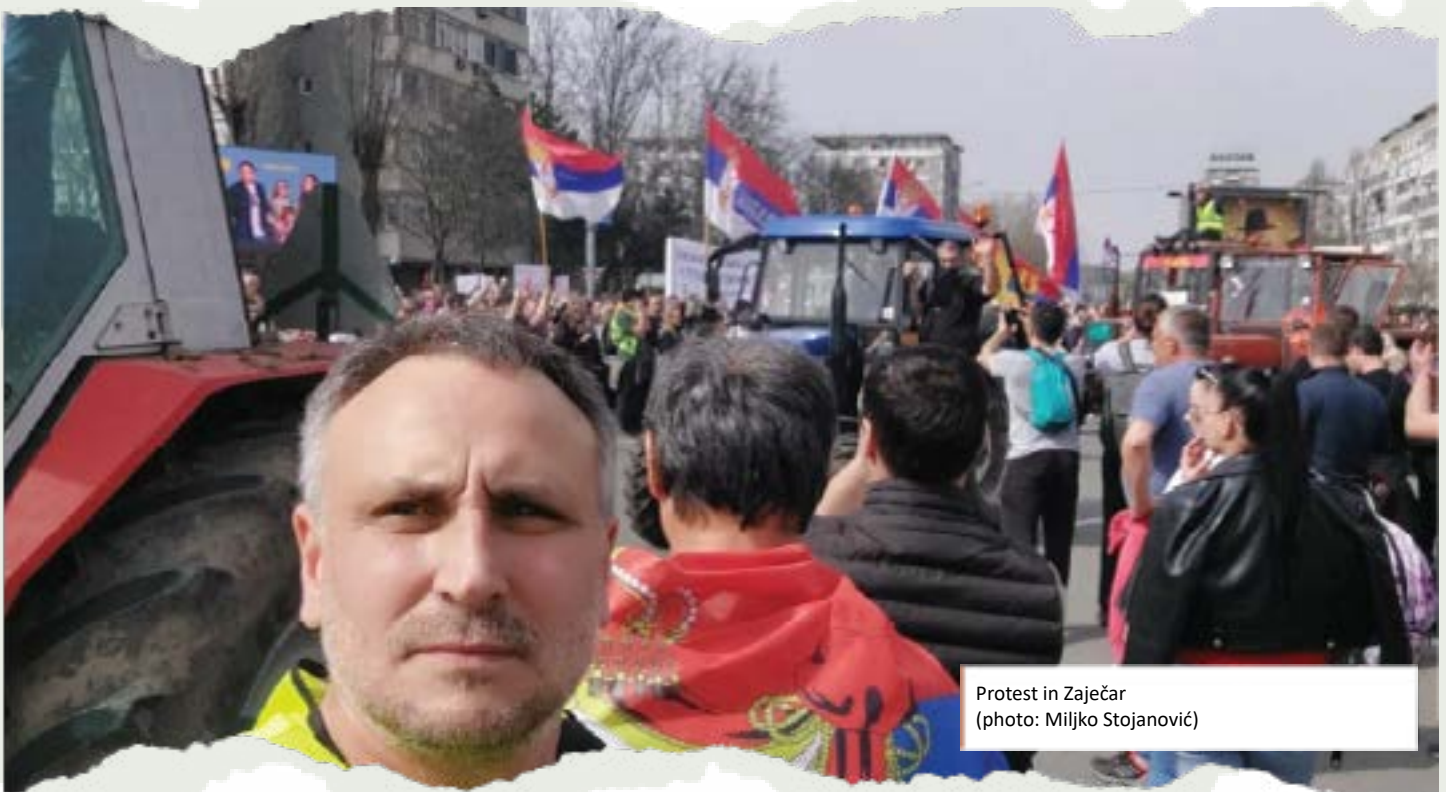
Investigative journalist Saša Dragojlo was attacked near the Đeram green market in Belgrade while performing his journalistic duties. Dragojlo was filming a commotion among citizens protesting in front of a Serbian Progressive Party booth. He identified himself, but this did not stop an unidentified man from attacking him. Dragojlo reported that the police, despite being nearby and aware that he was on duty, refused to intervene.⁸³

Journalist associations responded to the incident. The attack was reported to the relevant institutions⁸⁴, and BIRN journalists identified the attacker.⁸⁵

Pressure on Journalists Reporting from Protests in Novi Sad, the Village of Veliki Izvor, Zrenjanin and Sremska Mitrovica

The TV N1 crew was subjected to insults while reporting from a gathering of parents in front of the “Sonja Marinković” elementary school in Novi Sad. Some parents had gathered to support teachers on strike, while others called for the normalization of classes. A member of the group demanding a return to regular classes called the N1 journalists “Ustaše,” referred to the station as “Ustaša TV,” and tried to snatch journalist Žarko Bogosavljević’s phone while pushing him.⁸⁶

Journalist Brankica Matić was reporting from a public gathering in front of the “Miloš Crnjanski” elementary school in Novi Sad, organized by parents demanding the resumption of regular classes. When she attempted to interview one of the participants, she was first verbally assaulted and then physically attacked by a man who grabbed her phone. The journalist immediately sought help from nearby police officers, but was told there were no grounds for filing a report since she had not sustained injuries. When she informed them that the attack had been recorded, they responded that they did not have the necessary forms with them.⁸⁷



Miljko Stojanović, a journalist from Glas Zaječara, was physically attacked while reporting on a protest drive organized by residents of the village of Veliki Izvor as part of the “Noise Against Dictatorship” campaign. According to Stojanović, an unknown individual grabbed his arm during filming, while he was also subjected to verbal pressure.⁸⁸

Dijana Šćekić, journalist and editor-in-chief of Ozon Media from Sremska Mitrovica, was verbally assaulted by an unidentified man while reporting from a protest in front of the Medical School in Sremska Mitrovica. He directed highly vulgar insults at her and made false claims about her private life. According to the journalist, a nearby police officer did not react. She reported the incident to the relevant authorities.⁸⁹

Jovan Njegović Drndak, photo editor of the Zrenjanin newspaper, was obstructed by an unidentified man who got in his face, preventing him from filming a protest in front of the courthouse in Zrenjanin. The man insulted students and Drndak as well. According to Drndak's report, the police officers present responded in a timely manner.⁹⁰

Targeting of N1 Television Journalists

The database of attacks on journalists maintained by the NUNS recorded a case of targeted intimidation against TV N1 journalists. Posters appeared featuring the N1 logo with an Ustaša cap superimposed and the message: "Ustaše from N1, you are not welcome in Aranđelovac!" The posters were signed by the conservative movement "Naši."⁹¹

Strongly condemning the targeting of N1 media, NUNS emphasized that such threatening messages are not only hate speech but also "a direct call to violence and an endangerment of journalists' safety."⁹²

TV N1 journalists also received threats via email. These threats were reported to the competent public prosecutor's office.⁹³

In March, N1 journalists were blocked from entering their building. Among those involved in the blockade, journalists from Raskrikavanje and KRIK recognized members of the Socialist Movement party — local government officials, directors of state-owned companies, and associates of then Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia, Aleksandar Vulin.⁹⁴

Almost no one present was willing to speak to the journalists. When asked about the reason for their presence and who organized the gathering, most people turned their heads away and tried to hide from the camera. One man attempted to snatch a journalist's phone.⁹⁵

The blockade lasted nearly two hours. Citizens gathered at the scene to show support for N1 employees.⁹⁶

Experts described the event as a serious act of political pressure on independent media.⁹⁷

Aleksandar Vulin confirmed that members of the Socialist Movement had blocked TV N1 and stated from the parliamentary floor: "It won't be hard for us to come again — if you didn't hear us clearly, if you didn't understand us, we'll come back and be louder."⁹⁸

Searches of Journalists Entering the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia

Journalists from several media outlets were subjected to detailed searches when entering the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia. As recorded in NUNS's Database

of Attacks on Journalists: “If there was any sound from the metal detector, they were required to remove jackets, belts, and set aside their equipment, which had not previously been standard practice.”⁹⁹

Threats Against Enes Radetinac, Editor and Journalist of TV A1 from Novi Pazar

TV A1 editor and journalist Enes Radetinac was accused by an anonymous individual on Instagram of promoting evil. The messages, which mentioned Radetinac and his wife, were posted as comments under a TV A1 sketch in which he appeared. The case was reported to the competent public prosecutor’s office.¹⁰⁰

Insults and Threats Directed at Biljana Roganović, Editor and Journalist of Online Press from Prokuplje

Biljana Roganović, editor and journalist of Online Press from Prokuplje, received insults and threats over the phone. The case was reported to the police, and the journalist was called in to give a statement.¹⁰¹

Threatening Messages Sent to Brankica Stanković, Editor-in-Chief of Insajder Television

At the beginning of March, Brankica Stanković received a series of offensive and threatening messages via the social network X. One message included a video showing a group of hooligans chanting from the stands: “You’re dangerous like a snake, you’ll end up like Ćuruvija, Brankica you whore.”

The video was of a 2009 incident in which a group of hooligans brought an inflatable doll (meant to represent the journalist) to the stadium stands, waving it, throwing it, kicking it, and impaling it on a pole. As a result of that incident, Miloš Radosavljević Kimi, one of the leaders of Partizan’s fan group Alkatraz, was sentenced to 16 months in prison; Goran Klještan, leader of the Shadows fan group, and member Aleksandar Perišić were given suspended prison sentences of 10 months; Milan Gudurić received a suspended sentence of one year.¹⁰²

The new threats, along with a formal complaint citing the endangerment of the journalist’s safety, were forwarded to the competent prosecutor’s office.

Attack on Vuk Cvijić, Radar weekly Journalist

Nearly eleven months after the attack on Vuk Cvijić in central Belgrade, the First Basic Public Prosecutor’s Office determined that the journalist had been struck and pushed by Milan Lađević, one of the co-owners and publishers of the pro-government tabloids Srpski Telegraf and Republika.rs. However, the prosecution concluded that Lađević had not committed the criminal offense of violent behavior, nor any other crime subject to prosecution ex officio.¹⁰³

According to the decision, reviewed by journalists of Nova.rs, Lađević and Cvijić gave differing accounts of the event (Lađević denied hitting Cvijić), and surveillance footage was submitted to the prosecution only after several months. Although the act was described as violent, the prosecutor ruled that the lack of reaction from bystanders — i.e., that public peace was not disturbed — meant there were no grounds for prosecution.¹⁰⁴

NUNS expressed disappointment and concern over the prosecutor's decision. Cvijić is expected to file a complaint against the dismissal of the criminal report.¹⁰⁵

(Un)favorable Conditions for Reporting in Serbian in Kosovo

The SafeJournalists Network condemned the rhetoric of Kosovo Central Election Commission (CEC) member Sami Kurteshi, who referred to the Association of Journalists of Kosovo (AJK) and the Kosovo Women Journalists Network (KWJN) as “a coalition of criminal groups.” The network described his statements as threatening and defamatory and called on the relevant institutions to urgently ensure the safety of journalists and uphold press freedom.¹⁰⁶

After publishing an article about the sudden suspension of newborn and death registrations in the Municipality of North Mitrovica, KoSsev journalist Dragana Vukosavljević began facing pressure from Fatima Staviljeci, a municipal official and until recently head of the Civil Registration Office in that municipality. This was not the first time the journalist had contacted Staviljeci regarding civil registry issues, as Staviljeci had previously provided information and directed her to the relevant ministries in Pristina. During their communications, Staviljeci did not request anonymity.¹⁰⁷

After the article was published, however, Staviljeci expressed anger that her name was mentioned in the piece instead of attributing the information to the Civil Registry Office. She told the journalist that her name must not be used and threatened to arrive with the police within two minutes.¹⁰⁸

The editor of the KoSsev portal was unable to determine why pressure was exerted on the journalist. KoSsev informed its readers that, by the time the article was published, neither the police nor the official Fatima Staviljeci had appeared at the newsroom. The portal announced it would report the incident to professional journalist associations and the Ombudsman's Office in Kosovo.¹⁰⁹

Journalist associations condemned the actions of the municipal official and called on relevant institutions to investigate the case.¹¹⁰

In a series of articles published on the Srpski Glas portal — whose ownership remains unknown — the Serbian-language media outlet Radio Goraždevac in Metohija was accused of “acting in favor of independent Kosovo.” The outlet responded by emphasizing that it is the only Serbian-language media organization operating in Metohija, that it has been reporting professionally for decades under extremely difficult conditions, and that it plays a vital role for the local Serbian community.¹¹¹

III.(UN)ETHICAL CONDUCT (NOT) IN ACTION

A fire broke out at an unlicensed nightclub in Kočani, North Macedonia, during a concert attended by more than 500 people. At least fifty people were killed, and hundreds were injured. Domestic and international media organizations, along with the Macedonian Media Ethics Council (CMEM), urged the media to adhere strictly to professional reporting standards, to show empathy, and to share accurate information while respecting the privacy of the victims.¹¹²

The day after the tragedy, Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić visited citizens of North Macedonia being treated at the Clinical Center of Serbia, accompanied by a large group of journalists and cameramen. Journalist associations¹¹³ and media unions in both Serbia and North Macedonia condemned the visit as dangerous self-promotion and ethically unacceptable due to the risk it posed to the injured patients.¹¹⁴

In a statement issued by the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS), it was noted:

NUNS strongly condemns this government move and demands accountability for endangering patient health. A visit by multiple individuals who are not clinical staff should never have been allowed. [...] Regime tabloids exploited the tragedy to the fullest, with headlines that cannot even be called 'clickbait' but rather represent a gross and ruthless violation of the victims' dignity.¹¹⁵

The association called on the Ministry of Information and Telecommunications to respond to the publication of photos and videos showing grieving family members, their private moments, and gravesites by media outlets including Republika, Kurir, Blic, Alo, Telegraf, and Mondo.¹¹⁶

Subsequently, the Ministry issued a public warning and requested that the photos and videos from the funerals be removed.¹¹⁷

IV. MONITORING THE ADOPTION OF NEW LAWS

The Government of the Republic of Serbia, currently in a caretaker role, withdrew the draft Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance from parliamentary procedure. No explanation was provided for this decision.¹¹⁸

On the same day the draft was submitted to the National Assembly, the organization Partners Serbia submitted a request to both the government and the assembly to suspend the adoption process, noting that the proposed solutions failed to address key problems identified by civil society, lawyers, journalists, and other participants in the public consultation.¹¹⁹



Illustration: Unsplash / Absolut Vision

V. IMPLEMENTATION OF EXISTING REGULATIONS

Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM)

REM has begun publishing reports on its website prepared by the Monitoring and Analysis Service based on complaints filed against broadcasters since the expiration of the mandate of the previous REM Council (November 5, 2024). These reports have no legal effect, as final decisions are made by the REM Council. According to UNS, the former Council frequently disregarded these reports when making decisions.¹²⁰

REM and the Alleged Statement by Tamara Skrozza

REM rejected a complaint filed by NUNS against TV Pink concerning their reporting on a supposed statement by journalist Tamara Skrozza. REM stated that there were “no grounds to initiate proceedings ex officio against the Pink Media Group.” (More on this case in [Monitoring of the Media Scene for February 2025](#)).

However, journalists from the portal Cenzolovka obtained information that REM’s Monitoring and Analysis Service had concluded that TV Pink had broadcast a segment attributing a statement to Skrozza that she clearly did not make. The report stated that this amounted to hate speech and that the content was not in line with the Rulebook on the Protection of Human Rights in the Media. The service recommended initiating an investigative procedure, but the REM Council ignored this recommendation.¹²¹

Project-Based Co-Funding

According to UNS, as of March 12 only eleven local self-governments had issued public calls for co-funding media content production, despite the legal deadline being March 1. Out of 167 municipalities and cities, 125 had issued calls within the legal timeframe.¹²²

The Association of Independent Electronic Media (ANEM) urged the Ministry of Information and Telecommunications to initiate misdemeanor proceedings against municipalities that failed to meet the deadline.¹²³ ANEM also reminded that delays occurred last year as well and criticized the Ministry for failing to hold responsible officials accountable, despite earlier announcements.¹²⁴ ANEM further called for a review of the criteria used to score candidates for selection to project co-funding commissions.

In March, the Ministry of Information and Telecommunications submitted requests to initiate misdemeanor proceedings¹²⁵ and established commissions to evaluate submitted projects.¹²⁶

VI. SLAPP LAWSUITS TARGETING JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA

In March, there were no significant developments regarding the initiation of SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation) proceedings.

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