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Representatives of journalistic and media associations, members of the Permanent Working Group for Safety of Journalists, visiting Južne vesti newsroom (photo: OSCE / M. Janković)

MONITORING OF THE MEDIA SCENE IN SERBIA FOR MAY 2025

INTRODUCTION

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

The international organization Amnesty International published its [Annual Report on the State of the World's Human Rights](#) for 2024. The report states that demonstrators and journalists in Serbia face intimidation, harassment, and malicious lawsuits for peacefully engaging in matters of public interest.

It notes that investigative journalists, human rights defenders, and activists continue to be targeted in pro-government media and subjected to Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs). The report also highlights that senior government officials have repeatedly called for the adoption of a “foreign agents” law as a means to suppress critical expression.

Amnesty International cites data from the Independent Journalists’ Association of Serbia (IJAS/NUNS), according to which there were over 150 threats and attacks against journalists during 2024. It further reports, based on NUNS findings, that the Crime and Corruption Reporting Network (KRIK) faced sixteen malicious lawsuits over the course of the year due to its investigative journalism. The report also includes a March 2024 assessment by the UN Human Rights Committee, which emphasizes the widespread use of discriminatory rhetoric directed at journalists—both online and in traditional media—as well as troubling public statements made by politicians and high-ranking officials.

Regarding protests, particularly those of an environmental nature, the report states that they were subjected to heavy police surveillance, excessive use of force, and arbitrary arrests. Following anti-lithium mining protests held in August, at least thirty-three activists were arrested across seventeen Serbian cities. Some were detained or questioned for their posts on social media, while others were targeted merely for participating in peaceful demonstrations. A number of those arrested faced disproportionate criminal charges, including accusations of inciting violent overthrow of the constitutional order. They were subjected to prolonged interrogations, searches of their homes, and confiscation of their phones and computers. With respect to the seizure of electronic devices, Amnesty International presented evidence in December of the previous year showing widespread use of illegal spyware and other invasive digital forensic techniques employed by Serbian authorities against activists and independent journalists.

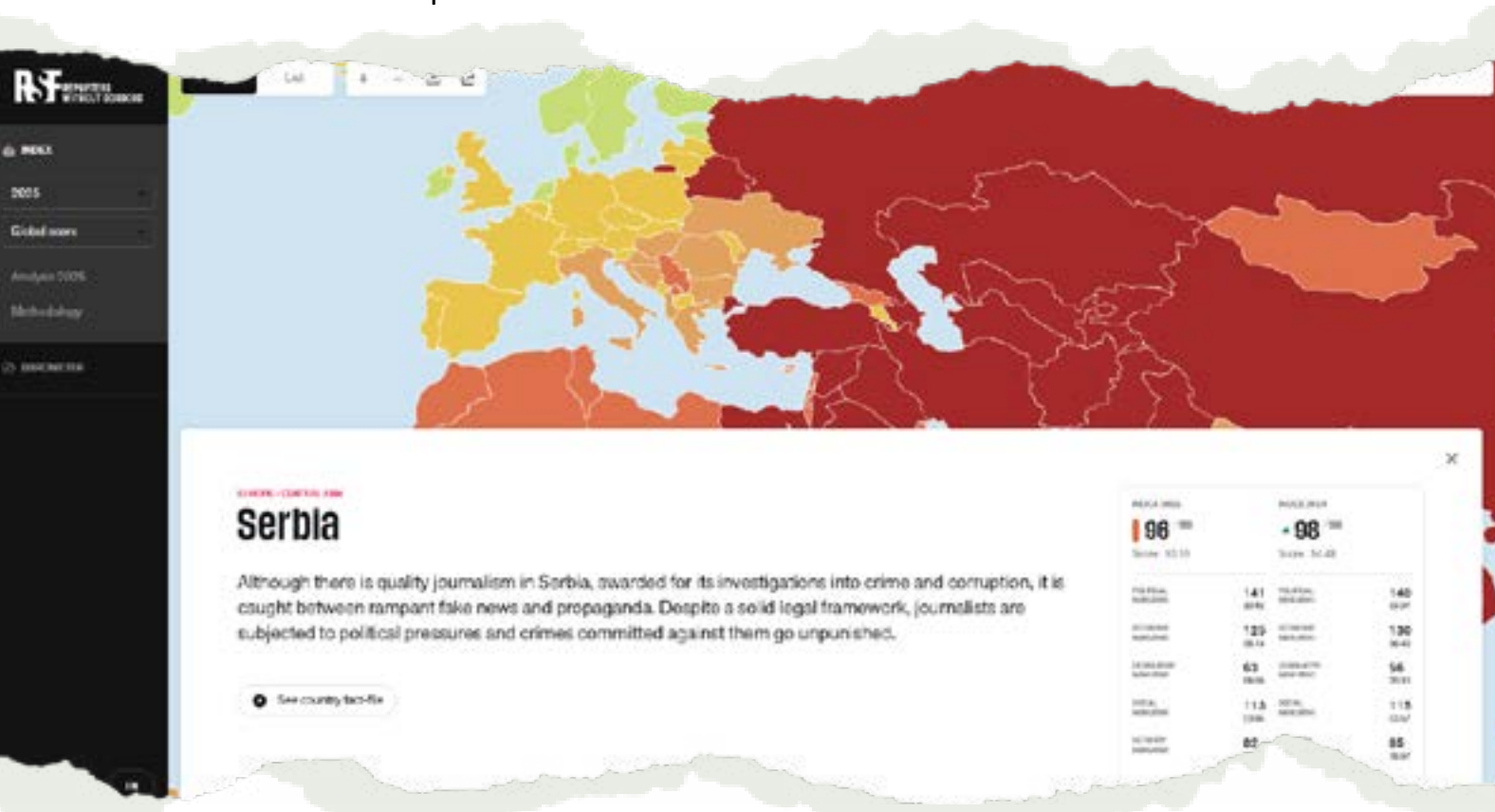
On the World Press Freedom Day, the international organization Reporters Without Borders (RSF) published the [2025 World Press Freedom Index](#). This year, out of a total of 180 countries, Serbia ranked 96th. A two-place improvement, however, is described by Head of the EU and Western Balkans Desk at RSF Pavol Szalai as an illusion—pointing out that Serbia’s advancement is actually due to the decline of other countries. A drop of 0.92 points (from 54.48 to 53.55) confirms that media freedom in Serbia has, in fact, deteriorated.¹

The report states that Serbia has a strong tradition of high-quality and award-winning investigative journalism focused on crime and corruption. However, the media landscape remains under pressure from disinformation, propaganda, and political interference, while crimes against journalists mostly go unpunished. This is evidenced by the 2024 acquittal of four former intelligence officers charged with the 1999 murder of journalist Slavko Ćuruvija.

According to the report, members of the ruling elite frequently attack journalists, with such assaults often echoed and amplified by certain television channels. Neither politicians nor state institutions—most notably the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM)—have demonstrated a willingness to curb or sanction such behavior. Instructions given to prosecutors and the police in response to attacks on journalists have yielded positive outcomes only in isolated cases. The judiciary, the report notes, must prove its independence and efficiency in protecting media freedom.

The report also highlights that female journalists are targeted not only because of their work but also because of their gender. National broadcasters and pro-government tabloids are frequently observed violating journalistic ethics when reporting on issues such as violence against women and members of national minorities.

Cases of illegal surveillance of journalists by security agencies and the police are also documented in the report.



Following the visit of representatives from international associations and organizations under the Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR) consortium to Serbia, a report titled [Media Freedom in a State of Emergency](#) was published. It includes key findings from the visit as well as a set of recommendations. The main conclusion is that the crisis requires serious attention and urgent action by national authorities and the European Union. The report emphasizes that Serbia's EU accession process demands swift and concrete measures to protect journalists and media freedom.

The report notes that attacks on media professionals in recent months have reached levels unseen in decades. Threats to media freedom and pluralism have significantly intensified during student protests, which have generated new dangers for journalists reporting from the streets. Journalists have been physically assaulted, received death threats, faced serious accusations by high-ranking political officials, targeted by spyware, and subjected to coordinated harassment campaigns—all in an environment where perpetrators face no consequences. The hostile conditions under which they work rob journalists of time, drain them emotionally, and impose financial burdens as they battle lawsuits designed to silence them and discredit the profession.

On the World Press Freedom Day, journalists' associations drew attention to the key problems media professionals face and called on state institutions, international organizations, and the broader public to take all necessary measures to ensure the protection of journalists, freedom of expression, and citizens' right to accurate and unbiased information.²





Meeting of Permanent Working Group for Safety of Journalists media members with colleagues, prosecutors and police in Niš (photo: OSCE / M. Janković)

The Association of Independent Electronic Media (ANEM), the OSCE Mission to Serbia, and representatives of journalists' associations held a meeting in Niš with journalists, representatives of the prosecution, and the police. Niš was chosen as the location because several attacks on journalists had occurred there in the week leading up to the meeting. Participants included representatives from NUNS, UNS, RTS, SBS Radio, Jugpress, TV Nova, Niš Initiative, TV Belami, Niš TV, Beta, and the FAR news portal.³

The discussion focused on specific cases of attacks against journalists while pointing out that police officers who witnessed some of these attacks often failed to respond. It was also emphasized that it is necessary for the prosecution to regularly issue formal urgencies to the police, in order to ensure adherence to established procedures in cases of attacks on journalists and to enable their efficient resolution.

One of the issues raised was the offensive remarks made by the President of the Republic of Serbia toward the RTS correspondent in Niš. Although the RTS crew attended the meeting, the public broadcaster did not report on the event. Members of the Permanent Working Group for Safety of Journalists (PWG)— comprising ANEM, AOM, the Association of Media, NUNS, NDNV, and UNS—offered the following comment:

“Seated at the table were both male and female journalists from RTS’s Niš bureau, who were recently the target of verbal abuse by the President of Serbia. For that reason, this should not have been just another news item for RTS—as it would be for any other media outlet—but also a gesture of solidarity with their colleague, which, it appears, was absent due to the editorial decision not to cover the meeting.”⁴

Statistical Data on the Actions of Public Prosecutors in Criminal Cases Involving Media Workers (2016–2025)

The Republic Public Prosecutor’s Office has published data on how public prosecutor’s offices have handled criminal cases concerning threats to the safety of individuals performing tasks of public importance in the field of information, covering the period from 2016 through the end of May 2025.

According to the report, in 2025 alone, a total of 34 cases were initiated in public prosecutor’s offices based on criminal complaints or reports (four in January, seven in February, nine in March, seven in April, and seven in May). These cases involved offenses committed against 36 individuals—33 of whom are engaged in public information activities. Of these 33 individuals, 19 were male (57.58%) and 14 female (42.42%).

Sixteen cases (47.06% of the total) were initiated by the Special Public Prosecutor’s Office for High-Tech Crime. These proceedings were related to incidents committed against 14 individuals, of whom 13 work in the field of public information. Among them, three were male (23.08%) and ten female (76.92%).

As of May 31, 2025, the following actions had been taken:

- In two cases, court proceedings are ongoing based on indictments filed by the public prosecutor;
- In one case, a decision was issued to dismiss the criminal complaint;
- In two cases, official notes were made stating there were no grounds to initiate criminal proceedings;
- In one case, evidentiary proceeding are currently underway;
- In twenty cases, a request was filed to collect relevant information;
- In four cases, information gathered during the preliminary investigation is under review for decision-making purposes;
- In three cases, the contents of the complaints are being assessed to determine further action;
- In one case, despite measures taken during the preliminary proceedings, the potential perpetrator has not been identified.

A first-instance or final decision was reached in three cases, representing 8.82% of the total number of cases.⁵

Employment Status in Question

At the end of May, the Council of Europe's [Platform for the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists](#) recorded the [termination](#) of employment for two longtime Politika journalists—Sandra Gucijan, weekend edition editor, and Dorotea Čarnić, editor of the Crime section. The journalists did not receive any formal explanation for the termination of their contracts. They were verbally informed that their positions would be eliminated due to an ongoing restructuring process. Both women perceived the terminations as a means of intimidation directed at other journalists within Politika. In a statement to UNS, Dorotea Čarnić said that both she and her colleague believe the dismissals were politically motivated, noting that they had publicly supported the student protests from the beginning.⁶

A group of employees at Radio Television of Serbia (RTS), organized under the initiative Naš pRoTeSt (“Our pRoTeSt”), announced that their colleague from the TV Production Department was dismissed for protesting live on air during the blockade of the RTS building. Additionally, three freelance associates reportedly did not have their contracts renewed due to expressing dissenting opinions.⁷ RTS denied these claims, asserting that “the proceedings were initiated due to violations of work duties and breaches of workplace discipline [...], not for expressing personal opinions or disagreements with the editorial policy of the public broadcaster.”⁸

NUNS stated that pressure is being exerted on RTS employees under the pretext that they have “damaged the reputation” of the public broadcaster. Some employees were asked to provide written statements regarding views expressed on air, while others received verbal warnings. A common thread among those pressured is that they had signed an open letter calling on the RTS Governing Board, the General Director, and the Program Council to engage in dialogue with employees who disagree with the editorial direction of RTS’s news programming.⁹ Following the pressure, NUNS reports, “some freelance contributors withdrew their signatures.”¹⁰

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) and NUNS also expressed concern over the erosion of professional standards and ongoing pressure faced by journalists and other staff at Euronews Serbia. According to their statement, employees are dealing with censorship, unprofessional demands, bans on asking certain government representatives questions, and sanctions for refusing to comply. The statement notes that, as a result, several journalists have already left the outlet.¹¹

Sanctions for Activism

In the second half of May, after spending more than two months in pre-trial detention, activists Davor Stefanović, Srđan Đurić, and Mladen Cvijetić were placed under house arrest with electronic monitoring.¹²

Earlier in May, the European Parliament called on Serbian authorities to release the detained activists. This appeal was included in a resolution adopted at the initiative of Tonino Picula, the European Parliament's rapporteur for Serbia.¹³

(More on the detention of activists from the STAV group and the Movement of Free Citizens can be found in the [Media Monitoring Report for April 2025](#)).

On April 17, a social media user, Marko Marjanović—who goes by the alias Kristal Met Dejmon—was detained for posting the phone numbers of three RTS journalists and the Speaker of the National Assembly of Serbia on his profile. He was subsequently banned from using social networks, chat apps, YouTube, and from attending registered or unregistered public gatherings. The posted phone numbers were accompanied by the following message:

“I found this photo somewhere on the internet. Please people, I beg you not to call her or send her messages or pictures [...]. I’m asking all of you not to call and not to send stupid stuff [...], people, please don’t—I’m begging you.”

The prosecution acted swiftly in this case, but with questionable interpretation of Criminal Code provisions, which appeared to aim at suppressing freedom of expression.

Marjanović was charged with the criminal offense of Stalking against the Speaker of the National Assembly. It remains unclear whether she personally filed a complaint or if the prosecution initiated proceedings ex officio.

For context, the Speaker of the Assembly had previously [stated](#) that many people have her phone number, that she answers all calls—including those from unknown numbers—and that she is often contacted by “ordinary people” seeking help with unresolved issues.

To constitute the offense of Stalking, the law requires that an individual repeatedly and persistently: follows another person without authorization; attempts to make contact against their will directly, through third parties, or by communication means; misuses personal data to order goods or services; threatens the life, body, or liberty of the person or someone close to them; undertakes similar actions in a manner that signifi-

cantly disrupts the victim's private life.

Persistence is defined in Serbian legal practice (Supreme Court of Cassation judgment Kzz 53/2023, dated January 31, 2023) as repeated behavior aimed at achieving a particular objective.

Commenting on the prosecutor's decision to classify the offense as Stalking, President of the Association of Prosecutors of Serbia, Lidija Komlen Nikolić, stated that the case may in fact fall under Unauthorized Collection of Personal Data¹⁴—an offense prosecuted upon private complaint—given that the information was not disclosed by an official.¹⁵

II. ATTACKS, THREATS, AND PRESSURE

Attack on Insajder Journalist Stefan Miljuš

During the International Workers' Day celebration, Insajder journalist Stefan Miljuš was physically [attacked](#) in downtown Belgrade, on Nikola Pašić Square, while reporting from a gathering organized by the Confederation of Autonomous Trade Unions of Serbia. Miljuš was filming a group of veterans marching with flags toward the RTS building when one of them shouted "Pump it!"—prompting some individuals in the crowd to insult and physically attack them. One veteran was struck, which led to pushing and eventually police intervention.

While sending video material to his newsroom, Miljuš noticed a young man filming him with a phone. He asked who the man was and why he was recording. The man began to walk away quickly, and Miljuš followed him, repeating the questions. The man then turned, told the journalist to back off, and struck him twice on the arm, knocking the phone out of his hand. Another young man soon joined the assailant and also demanded that Miljuš leave.¹⁶

The Insajder editorial team reported the incident to the relevant authorities.¹⁷

The professional community promptly responded with public condemnation.¹⁸



Attack on Insider journalist Stefan Miljuš
(Photo: Insider/ Stefan Miljuš)

Attack on TV N1 Cameraman Marjan Vučetić

While entering a tent to film the visit of ruling party leader Miloš Vučević to the village of Makovište near Kosjerić, an unidentified man [struck](#) N1 cameraman Marjan Vučetić multiple times in the back. Several others joined in, shouting insults such as “traitor,” “foreign mercenary,” and “yellow scum,”¹⁹ and forcibly kicked him out of the tent.²⁰

Vučević, president of the Serbian Progressive Party, did not react to or condemn the attack. Instead, he remained seated at the same table as the man who had assaulted the cameraman, and even shared a [photo](#) of the occasion on his X (formerly Twitter) profile.

The incident was reported to the authorities. The Ministry of Internal Affairs quickly identified the perpetrator, against whom a criminal complaint will be filed with the Higher Public Prosecutor’s Office in Užice on suspicion of the offense Violent Conduct at a Public Gathering or Sporting Event. No police custody was ordered. TV N1 revealed the attacker’s identity as Ljubiša Knežević, president of the local community council of Makovište.²¹

Experts strongly condemned the attack, highlighting the alarming increase in assaults on camera crews.²²



Marjan Vučetić, N1 cameraman, and Nenad Božović, N1 journalist
(photo: OSCE / M. Janković)

Attack on Južne vesti Journalist Tamara Radovanović

Following two separate events in Niš—one organized by students and the other by the Serbian Progressive Party—Južne vesti journalist Tamara Radovanović was assaulted in the city center. She was on public property, clearly marked with a visible press badge, and performing her professional duties. The incident occurred in the presence of police officers and was partially recorded.²³

In the video she made, a man is seen aggressively approaching her, yelling insults, twisting her arm, trying to grab her phone, and attempting—with the help of several other men—to intimidate her. A plainclothes police officer on site did not intervene to protect the journalist. Instead, he removed her from the scene and asked for her ID. Despite at least ten uniformed officers witnessing the incident, Radovanović was advised to report the assault to the police.²⁴

The professional community responded publicly and critically.²⁵



Attack on TV Nova Journalist Ivana Marković and Cameraman Dejan Marković

On May 17, TV Nova journalist Ivana Marković and cameraman Dejan Marković were physically and verbally assaulted while reporting from the Serbian Progressive Party gathering in Niš. At the instigation of two unidentified men—one of whom used a megaphone to shout “Ustaše,” “Get out of here,” “Shame on you, stupid Ustaše,” “Goodbye, this isn’t Croatia,” and “Get out, get out!”—a group of citizens forced the journalists to leave the public area from which they were reporting.²⁶

The journalist tried to call the police but could not hear whether anyone had answered due to the surrounding noise. Surrounded by the crowd, she waved her hands, trying to attract officers’ attention. Eventually, police officers approached and escorted the journalist and cameraman away—but took no action against the aggressors. According to the journalist, she was pushed and struck from behind while continuous shouting persisted.²⁷

The incident sparked strong reactions from professional associations and the wider public.²⁸

Attack on Glas Šumadije Journalist Nikoleta Jošović

Nikoleta Jošović was attacked in downtown Kragujevac while covering a protest action organized by discontented citizens near a Serbian Progressive Party booth. According to Jošović, an unidentified woman took promotional materials from the booth and then struck her camera tripod, knocking her phone from her hand. Jošović gave a statement to the police. Authorities collected personal information from the woman who attacked her.

The incident drew public condemnation from journalists’ associations and media organizations.²⁹

Attacks on Journalists During Reporting in Jelašnica and Grljan

While reporting from rallies held as part of the Serbian Progressive Party's (SNS) election campaign in the towns of Jelašnica and Grljan near Zaječar, journalists from Glas Zaječara, TV Nova, N1, and Insajder were prevented from carrying out their reporting duties.

In Jelašnica, TV N1 and Glas Zaječara journalists were physically obstructed while attempting to report on the visit of Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić. Unidentified men struck the N1 cameraman's hands to force him to lower his camera and blocked the lens; Glas Zaječara journalist Miljko Stojanović had his phone taken away; N1 journalist Miodrag Sovilj and his crew were pulled by the arms until they were forcibly removed. In the video recording of the incident, one of the men is heard saying "This is a request—for now," as he demanded the journalists leave.³⁰

In Grljan, journalists from Glas Zaječara, TV Nova, Insajder, and N1 were told they could not report from the event because they lacked accreditation. It should be noted that no prior notice of accreditation requirements had been issued, nor were journalists provided with information on-site about how to obtain credentials to do their job.³¹



News team N1 in conversation with security guards and activists at the SNS rally in the vicinity of Zaječar (photo: BBC/Nemanja Mitrović)

Obstruction of Reporting: KoSsev Editor Tatjana Lazarević Outside the National Assembly

While attempting to gather video and photo materials for the KoSsev archive, editor Tatjana Lazarević experienced harassment, prompting a public reaction from the newsroom. The incident took place outside the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, near a row of white tents.

Lazarević was approached by a young man who later identified himself as a student at a hospitality high school. Holding his phone upright, he asked her who she was. Rather than answering his questions, Lazarević posed questions of her own—including why he was protesting. The young man claimed that because of “blockaders, drug addicts, traitors, and foreign mercenaries who are destroying Serbia,” he would be unable to enroll in university. He also made accusations against KoSsev.

Police officers at the scene failed to react until two passersby and a group of young men got involved in the conversation. According to Lazarević, the student then returned “inside the Čaciland enclosure.”³²

Detention of Journalist Nikola Doderović, SBS Radio Correspondent

Nikola Doderović was detained while reporting from a Serbian Progressive Party rally in Niš. At the time of his detention by Ministry of Interior officers, he was accompanied by a friend—a student of communications and journalism—who was assisting with filming and photography. Both wore press vests. Doderović had his ID on him, while his friend did not. Police officers asked to see Doderović’s ID and then demanded he empty his backpack. The journalist complied. Although no issues were found with the contents of the bag, officers handcuffed him, falsely claiming he had no identification on him.³³

According to Cenzolovka, at a meeting of the Permanent Working Group for the Safety of Journalists held in Niš, the police officer who detained Doderović could not clearly explain his actions. “It came down to you appearing suspicious because you had books in your backpack,” the portal quoted.³⁴

At the police station, according to Doderović, he was asked for details about the media outlet he worked for and the location of its newsroom. Officers were interested in written documentation proving his employment. While questioning how his press credentials had been issued, police told him that such ID cards “can be bought.”³⁵

The professional community responded publicly and critically to the incident.³⁶

Detention of Photographer Gavriilo Andrić

Gavriilo Andrić, a photographer who has been documenting student protests for several months, was detained during a civic protest and blockade of the court and prosecution offices in Novi Sad. He was released from police custody two hours after being detained. The professional community publicly reacted to his detention.³⁷

Threats and Pressure Against Journalists

The editorial team of the Bečejski Mozaik (Bečej Mosaic) portal received threats after publishing a video recording from a protest in Bečej, held in response to the violent actions of police outside the Faculty of Sport and Physical Education in Novi Sad. A threatening comment was posted under the video from a Facebook profile named “Ivan Jevtić.” NUNS reported the threat to the competent authorities.³⁸

This is not the first time journalists from Bečejski Mozaik have faced pressure. In November last year, journalist Kristina Demeter Filipčev was physically and verbally assaulted (see the [Monitoring of the Media Scene in Serbia for November 2024](#)). According to information she shared with NUNS, the attackers have yet to be identified, despite a video being submitted with the criminal complaint that could assist in their identification.³⁹

Threatening messages were also sent to journalist and editor of the Storiteler portal, Vladimira Dorčova Valtnerova, via comments on the media outlet’s official Facebook page.⁴⁰

While [reporting](#) from the front of the protest march “Krug Dvojke” in Belgrade, N1 TV journalist Žana Bulajić was verbally harassed by an unknown woman who aggressively got in her face. Student safety guards organizing the march responded promptly to the incident.⁴¹

The media publishers of TV N1 and Nova S filed a lawsuit against the association Center for Social Stability for defamation. They requested that the Basic Court in Novi Sad issue an interim measure prohibiting the association, until the final conclusion of the legal proceedings, from broadcasting or making public—via Pink, Prva, B92, K1, or any other television outlet or social media platforms such as X—any video footage containing the logos of N1 and Nova S, images of their journalists, and claims that they “lie and spread hatred.” The interim measure has been upheld with final legal force, and the case remains ongoing.⁴²

Among the forms of pressure journalists faced in May, NUNS also documented repeated posts on the Zaječarski blok Facebook page of a video targeting Glas Zaječara journalists Miljko Stojanović and Anđela Ristantjević.⁴³

In May, Miljko Stojanović received a summons from the Misdemeanor Court for failing to carry his personal identification card during an incident on March 25, which occurred during the “Noise Against Dictatorship” protest drive. The incident was reportedly initiated by SNS councilor Nelija Nikolić and another man, who attempted to seize the journalist’s mobile phone. It is noted that Stojanović had a press card and driver’s license in his parked car nearby. To date, Stojanović has not been invited to give a statement regarding the reported assault. The professional community strongly protested the fact that, despite criminal complaints filed by multiple individuals who sustained injuries,⁴⁴ the SNS councilor appeared on the electoral list “We Won’t Give Up Serbia – Aleksandar Vučić” rather than being prosecuted.⁴⁵

Overturned Conviction in the Case of Threats Against Nova S Journalist Isidora Kovačević

The Higher Court in Šabac overturned the first-instance verdict issued by the Basic Court in a case involving threats to Nova S journalist Isidora Kovačević. Milan Filipović had initially been found guilty of posting “wanted-style” posters bearing the journalist’s image and sentenced to two years in prison. The first-instance court also imposed a one-year restraining order.

In a statement to the media outlet Cenzolovka, Kovačević emphasized that the organizers and coordinators of the campaign remain unknown, as do the identities of the print shop responsible for producing the leaflets and the individuals involved in their distribution. She expressed dissatisfaction with how the case was handled from the outset and noted that the state’s actions send a clear message that it does not care about the safety of journalists—suggesting that threats and attacks against them are acceptable behavior.⁴⁶

More on the case of Isidora Kovačević can be found in the [Monitoring of the Media Scene in Serbia for October 2024](#).



“Warrant poster” for journalist Isidora Kovačević in Šabac (photo: private archive)

Criminal Complaint Against Journalist Srđan Škoro Dismissed

The Basic Public Prosecutor's Office in Zrenjanin determined that there were no grounds to initiate criminal proceedings in the case of journalist Srđan Škoro's appearance on KTV in June of the previous year. Commenting on the so-called "favorable" conditions in Serbia, Škoro "suggested" that the son of President Aleksandar Vučić be "sent to Majdanpek and Bor, to the mines, to work there properly. No Cobras [elite security forces], no protection—let him contribute there, let the cameras film him, and Željko Mitrović can even come and make a reality show." He added that Danilo Vučić should "demonstrate what kind of Obilić he is." Regarding Kosovo, Škoro said that Danilo Vučić "could go there as well, but on his own—not at the state's expense, not at the expense of what [Aleksandar] Vučić remains silent about, with Cobras and special forces providing security just so the child can watch a football match."⁴⁷

Reacting to what was interpreted as an alleged incitement to murder, the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade instructed the First Basic Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade to open a case to determine whether the crime of Endangering Security had been committed against the President of the Republic of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, and his son Danilo. More on this case can be found in the [Monitoring of the Media Scene in Serbia for July 2024](#).

The official note concluding that there were no grounds to initiate criminal proceedings was issued on February 25, 2025. However, the public was not informed of this decision until three months later, when attorney Ivan Ninić obtained the information through a request filed under the Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance.

Killed and Missing Journalists in Kosovo

May marked the 26th anniversary of the disappearance of Ljubomir Knežević, a journalist for Jedinstvo and a correspondent for Politika from Kosovo. Knežević went missing on May 6, 1999, near Vučitrn, at the foot of Mount Čičavica, in the evening hours as he was returning home from an assignment.⁴⁸

III. MONITORING THE PROCESS OF ADOPTING NEW LAWS

During May, journalists' and media organizations and unions raised serious concerns about the manner in which the process of amending three key media laws was being conducted.

The Ministry of Information and Telecommunications initiated the procedure for amending the Law on Public Information and Media (LPIM), the Law on Electronic Media (LEM), and the Law on Public Media Services (LPMS). Although the Action Plan for implementing the Media Strategy had not been adopted, the Media Freedom Coalition and other organizations called for a public debate. However, the Ministry refused to hold one and informed the organizations via email that the European Commission had confirmed the alignment of all draft laws, and that they should submit their comments within 48 hours, since any further discussion would "slow down Serbia's European integration."⁴⁹

The most contentious proposals were those with the potential to cause the greatest harm to investigative journalists—namely, provisions concerning the presumption of innocence and the publication of information related to criminal proceedings.

Experts and professionals strongly opposed these provisions, successfully preventing the inclusion of measures that would have disproportionately restricted freedom of expression.⁵⁰

By the time of writing this monitoring report, all three media laws had been adopted. The expert public described the adoption process as non-transparent and carried out under "an unacceptably expedited procedure, without a public debate and with limited participation from the expert community."⁵¹

IV. IMPLEMENTATION OF EXISTING REGULATIONS

Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM)

At a session of the Committee on Culture and Information, which opposition MPs refused to attend, a report on the list of candidates and nominators for members of the REM Council was adopted. Opposition MPs requested that the Committee be allowed to vote on the controversial candidates, but Committee Chair Sanja Branković Jević responded that there was no legal basis for such a vote, as the agenda had already been adopted. Following this, MPs from opposition parties left the meeting.

The professional public had regularly reported on the backgrounds of the controversial candidates.⁵² Regarding the repeated procedure for the election of REM Council members, the legal representative of the NGO Civic Initiatives—an organization that actively monitors the selection process and is one of the authorized nominators—stated that the situation in this election cycle is “considerably worse due to the large number of GONGOs and organizations close to the government that do not meet the required criteria, especially in the area of child protection.”⁵³ During the selection process, it was repeatedly pointed out that the executive branch was exerting undue pressure on the process. In a statement, Civic Initiatives said:

Civic Initiatives warn of direct interference by the executive branch in the process of electing the new Council of the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM). Several organizations working in the field of child rights have reported receiving calls and instructions in recent days regarding the nomination process from the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, as well as from the Cabinet of the Minister without Portfolio responsible for Gender Equality. Calls were also made by local government units that fund projects run by these organizations.⁵⁴

Due to statements made by the Speaker of the National Assembly, Ana Brnabić, regarding the résumés of two candidates nominated by the journalists’ associations NUNS and UNS—statements in which she openly advocated for certain candidates—NUNS called on her to “stop manipulating facts and misleading the public.”

In a statement, NUNS said:

The Speaker of the National Assembly must not abuse the office she holds. We also remind her that it is the government’s responsibility to ensure a transparent and objective process, not to once again interfere in the selection of REM Council members and openly side with certain candidates.

By the time this monitoring report was completed, 78 authorized nominators and 16 candidates had withdrawn from the REM Council election process.⁵⁵

Project-Based Co-Financing

The Bureau for Social Research (BIRODI) requested that the Ministry of Information and Telecommunications (MIT) annul the evaluation of projects submitted under the 2025 Public Call for the Promotion of Professional and Ethical Standards and Research in the Field of Public Information. The request was based on the claim that in three out of five cases, the project evaluators were biased.⁵⁶

The association “Lokal Pres” published an analysis indicating a potential conflict of interest in the process of allocating funds for local media projects. It was noted that the same commission members were deciding on projects at both the national and local levels, and that some of them were not qualified to serve as media experts. These are just some of the reasons why independent local media received only minimal funding through public calls.

The analysis stated that “53 local media outlets that are members of the Association of Lokal Pres association received a total of RSD 16,368,000 from the Ministry of Information and Telecommunications of the Republic of Serbia in 2025, which is less than the combined amount allocated to just two TV stations — Radio-Television Kruševac and TV Zona Plus from Niš.”⁵⁷

V. SLAPP Lawsuits Targeting Journalists and Media

Among the politicians identified by the European CASE Coalition (Coalition against SLAPPs in Europe) at the beginning of 2024 as having filed the most lawsuits against the media was Dijana Hrkaločić, who initiated 11 lawsuits against journalists from various media outlets, including the editor of the investigative portal KRIK.⁵⁸

The Belgrade Court of Appeals upheld the first-instance ruling of the Higher Court in Belgrade, which dismissed as unfounded the lawsuit filed by Dijana Hrkaločić, former State Secretary at the Ministry of the Interior, against Stevan Dojčinović, editor-in-chief of KRIK, and the association that founded the portal.

Hrkaločić's 2022 lawsuit concerned a total of six articles published on KRIK's website in January and February of that year. She demanded that the defendants pay her €6,000 in damages for non-material harm and that the editor be ordered to publish the judgment.

The court found that the defendants had acted with appropriate journalistic diligence and had made multiple attempts to contact the plaintiff. According to the court, the articles were based on documents from judicial proceedings and on information uncovered by journalists during years-long investigations into cases known as Jovanjica 1, Jovanjica 2, and the Belivuk clan. The court concluded that the articles presented critical views of the work of the prosecution and mentioned the plaintiff "within a broader context in which the defendants pointed to the connections between state officials and criminal groups." Given that the plaintiff was a State Secretary at the Ministry of the Interior at the time in question, the public had a legitimate interest in being informed about the matters reported. The court further emphasized that public officials must demonstrate a higher level of tolerance toward information and criticism related to their public functions. Importantly, the court stressed that the article's headline and content must be considered as a single, unified whole.⁵⁹

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