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Aleksandar Radić in front of his building accompanied by a police inspector (photo: Vojkan Kostić)

MONITORING OF THE MEDIA SCENE IN SERBIA FOR JUNE 2026

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.

The text of this Monitoring Report was prepared by expert monitoring team from the “Savović” Law Office in cooperation with ANEM.

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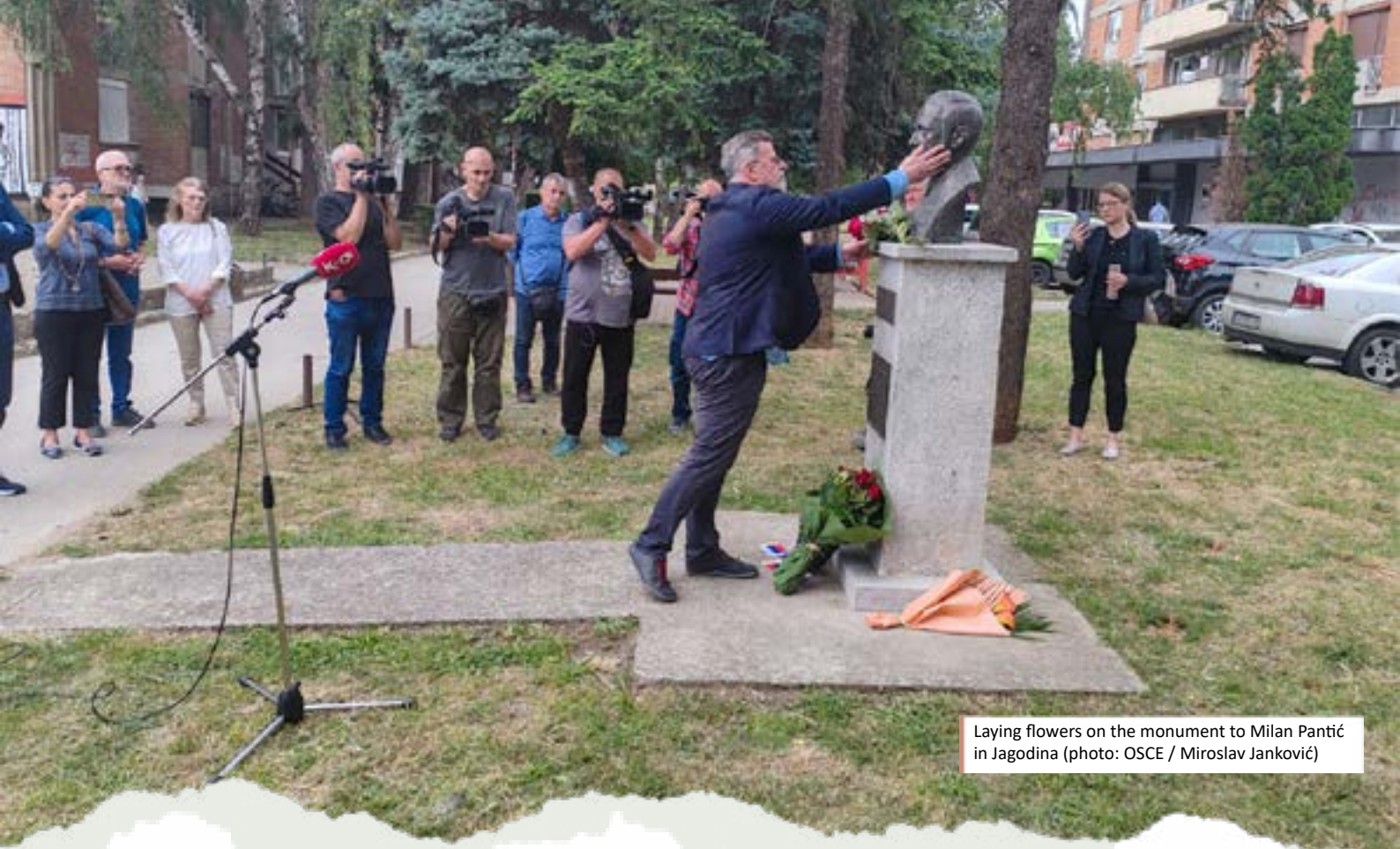
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I FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The European Parliament's¹ Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the [Report on Serbia](#) prepared by the European Parliament's Standing Rapporteur for Serbia, Tonino Picula. The report was adopted with 51 votes in favour, 14 against, and 10 abstentions. The Committee reaffirmed the European Parliament's full support for Serbia's integration into the European Union, while at the same time concluding that Serbia's progress towards EU membership has stalled due to democratic backsliding and the failure to implement reforms in the field of the rule of law. The report—described as the most critical report on Serbia to date²—expressed regret that progress in many negotiating chapters has either been limited or has not been achieved at all.³

The report once again expressed support for the right of all Serbian citizens, including students, to engage in peaceful protests calling for accountability and the implementation of democratic reforms aimed at establishing the rule of law. It condemned the broad range of repressive measures—including excessive use of force and police violence, arbitrary detention and arrest, political exile, and other forms of intimidation—that had been used over the previous year against peaceful demonstrators, students, activists, and journalists. The report called for targeted sanctions against individuals responsible for serious violations of the law and human rights, as well as for an urgent, impartial, and transparent investigation into all allegations of unnecessary and disproportionate use of force and unlawful surveillance of demonstrators. It expressed deep concern over the intensification of verbal attacks, smear campaigns, and pressure directed at civil society organisations advocating the rule of law. The deterioration of working conditions for journalists and media outlets was also condemned. Serbia was called upon to reverse the decline in freedom of expression. The report further noted with concern that Serbia's Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM) remains non-functional due to the absence of a legitimate and operational Council. It also emphasised the importance of protecting academic freedom and institutional autonomy, expressing concern over reports of financial, administrative, and physical pressure on academic staff, as well as government measures interfering with the institutional autonomy of universities.

The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford, in its Digital News Report audience survey, found that only 22% of Serbian citizens trust the media. Last year, that figure stood at 27%. According to the published data, Serbia ranks well below the global average of 37%, which itself has declined by three percentage points compared to the previous year. The survey also indicates that audiences in Serbia are moving to online sources at a faster pace than elsewhere in Europe, suggesting a higher level of distrust in both the media and public institutions. Sixty-four per cent of respondents in Serbia identified media owners as the greatest source of influence over the media, 63% pointed to the government and politicians, while 47% cited organised crime. These findings underscore public concern regarding corruption and possible links between certain media outlets and criminal networks.⁴



Laying flowers on the monument to Milan Pantić in Jagodina (photo: OSCE / Miroslav Janković)

Dark Cloud

For twenty-five years, the dark cloud cast by the murder of Milan Pantić, a journalist with *Večernje novosti*, has hung over Serbia's media landscape. As Veran Matić, Chair of the Commission for the Investigation of Murders of Journalists, stated five years ago, the identities of those responsible are known, but the prosecution still lacks sufficient evidence to bring indictments against them. While laying flowers at Milan Pantić's memorial plaque and monument in Jagodina, Matić—determined to prevent this fact from being forgotten—emphasised that Pantić had been murdered in order to prevent him from raising workers' awareness, because the real problem in Serbia was, and remains, awareness and resistance. Matić stated that the unresolved murders of journalists Milan Pantić, Slavko Ćuruvija and Dada Vujasinović are intended to remain unsolved, and that every attempt to challenge this has resulted in threats to the safety of Predrag Simonović, a retired police major, Dragan Kecman, a retired police colonel, and Matić himself. All of the above-mentioned individuals were members of the Commission for the Investigation of Murders of Journalists.⁵

On the anniversary of Milan Pantić's murder, journalists' and media associations also issued statements.⁶ Jan Braathu, the Representative on Freedom of the Media of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), called on the Serbian authorities to end impunity for crimes against journalists, describing the unresolved murder of Milan Pantić as "a stark reminder that delayed justice is justice denied."⁷

The case concerning the murder of journalist Milan Pantić is currently before the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Jagodina. The case file was returned for further proceedings in November 2023 after the Public Prosecutor's Office for Organised Crime, for the second time in four years, declared itself without jurisdiction to proceed. More on the decision of the Public Prosecutor's Office for Organised Crime can be found in the [Media Scene Monitoring in the Republic of Serbia – February 2024](#).

The Rollout of Digital Repression Tools

A group of civil society organisations, including the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS) and the SHARE Foundation, issued a public appeal to the European Commission, EU agencies, the governments of EU Member States, public institutions, civil servants and elected officials not to legitimise, participate in, support or sponsor the closed annual ISS World Europe surveillance industry conference, where government agencies and private companies trade invasive technologies for mass surveillance, data collection and individual monitoring. According to the organisations, the conference functions "as a marketplace for spyware and other tools of digital repression linked to the targeting of and human rights violations against journalists, activists, migrants and political opponents."⁸

Bathing in Sand

The Agency for Audiovisual Media Services (AMU)⁹ imposed the maximum fines of EUR 10,000 on the broadcasters TV Adria (Adria TV d.o.o., Podgorica)¹⁰ and TV Prva (AST d.o.o., Podgorica)¹¹ for broadcasting the documentary Referendum – The Story of an Imaginary Freedom, produced by the Centre for Social Stability.¹² According to the Agency, the proceedings were initiated ex officio due to elements of hate speech, incitement to national intolerance and discrimination, as well as content that undermined the dignity and legitimacy of the national identity of Montenegrins and the contemporary constitutional order of Montenegro. The proceedings established that the programme broadcast by the two television stations was contrary to the obligations imposed on broadcasters under the Law on Audiovisual Media Services, particularly those relating to the protection of human dignity, the prohibition of hate speech, and the preservation of pluralism and democratic values. In determining the sanctions, the Agency also took into account that both broadcasters had previously been subject to regulatory supervision and had already received measures and warnings for similar content, yet continued to commit the same violations.

More information on last month's decision of the Council of the Agency for Audiovisual Media Services of Montenegro, restricting the reception and retransmission of the entire programme of TV Informer for a period of six months due to a violation of Article 7(1) of the European Convention on Transfrontier Television, is available in the [Media Scene Monitoring in the Republic of Serbia – May 2026](#).

Faulty Scanner

Based on the documentation submitted by Manja Grčić in support of her candidacy for the position of Director General of Radio Television of Serbia (RTS), the Journalists' Association of Serbia (UNS) informed the public that the Agency for Qualifications (AZK) had requested that the Director General provide an apostille, which was missing from the foreign diploma submitted with her application. According to UNS, the scanned copy of the diploma obtained from the Agency for Qualifications under the Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance does not show the date on which the apostille was issued. The Agency did not respond to UNS's inquiry as to when the apostille had been submitted.¹³

More information regarding the documentation submitted by Manja Grčić in the recruitment procedure can be found in the [Media Scene Monitoring in the Republic of Serbia – April 2026](#).

Our Portal and Your Portal

After Ana Mihajlovski Grubin, the former Editor-in-Chief and owner of the publisher of the Naš portal news portal, stepped down from all positions within the outlet, stating that she could no longer guarantee editorial independence, professional standards or the conditions necessary for the newsroom to operate independently,¹⁴ the public was informed that the portal had been acquired by Branko Miljković. Media reports describe Miljković as a businessman connected with construction companies that have secured major contracts in Serbia. One of the most significant companies he owns is MBA–Ratko Mitrović Niskogradnja d.o.o. Beograd.¹⁵

II ATTACKS, THREATS AND PRESSURES

Saddling the Sound Cannon

The Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade announced that, in the course of pre-investigation proceedings concerning the death of a young woman whose body was found in front of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, it had obtained information indicating grounds for suspicion that other criminal offences prosecutable ex officio might have been committed. Specifically, documents seized from the plenums of several faculties allegedly included a document relating to a meeting of the Students in Blockade organisation (Central Security Working Group). According to the Prosecutor's Office, during the protest held on 15 March 2025 at Slavija Square in Belgrade, the participants in the meeting and other unidentified individuals simulated the use of a "sound cannon" in order to instil fear and panic among citizens, thereby provoking unrest that could endanger state security and lead to the violent overthrow of the constitutional order, while causing the domestic and international public to accuse the Serbian state authorities of having used such a weapon.¹⁶ Consequently, the Prosecutor's Office instructed the police to undertake a series of investigative measures, including interviewing all persons who had publicly claimed that a "sound cannon" had been used against participants in the protest on 15 March.¹⁷



Prosecutor of the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade Miodrag Marković (photo: ANEM / Veran Matić)

Pro-government media, acting in a manner that has become all too familiar when implementing prosecutorial directives, claimed that the so-called blockaders had attempted on that day to provoke a civil war and overthrow the state.¹⁸ On the very day that the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office issued its statement, Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) broadcast a special programme entitled "The 'Sound Cannon' File – The Frequency of Fear", in which one of the guests was Miodrag Marković, Public Prosecutor at the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade and First Deputy Chief Public Prosecutor. On that occasion, Marković stated that the prosecution distinguished between four groups of individuals: the organisers, the perpetrators, those who provided media support, and those connected with the mass medical examinations of protest participants allegedly suffering the consequences of the use of the "sound cannon".¹⁹ Along the same lines were the statements made by the Minister of Justice, Nenad Vujić, who announced that the prosecution would, "on the basis of the evidence at its disposal," determine the legal qualification of the criminal offence. While stressing that he was expressing a personal opinion, he added that "there are elements of terrorism."²⁰

The actions of the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office, the public appearances of Prosecutor Miodrag Marković, and the conduct of senior state officials and the media were met with strong public criticism. The Media Freedom Coalition described the prosecution's position as "part of an open, systematic, extensive and intensive campaign of intimidation and suppression of media freedom and freedom of expression", warning that it represented "an indication that this campaign may enter an even more sinister phase."²¹ Prosecutors and judges gathered within the informal group Defence of the Profession stated that it was unacceptable publicly to announce or suggest legal qualifications of criminal offences during the pre-investigation stage, particularly in cases involving allegations of terrorism or attacks against the constitutional order. Their statement stressed that "such statements may create the impression that the outcome of the proceedings has been predetermined, thereby undermining the presumption of innocence, the right to a fair trial, and public confidence in the impartiality of the public prosecution service." Members of Defence of the Profession also recalled that "this was not the first time that Prosecutor Miodrag Marković had made inappropriate and unprofessional public statements," noting that they had therefore filed a disciplinary complaint against him with the High Prosecutorial Council.²² Meanwhile, the editorial board of the weekly Radar addressed an open letter to government representatives regarding attacks on their colleague, journalist Milan Radonjić. They strongly condemned the orchestrated campaign conducted by the highest state officials and pro-government media targeting both the magazine's front page—"The Day Vučić Shot the People in the Back"—and Radonjić as the author of the article. As stated in the letter, "On the eve of the first anniversary of the unfortunate events, on 12 March 2026, [Radonjić] published the results of an investigation into how the authorities had prepared for the large-scale protest of students and citizens held on 15 March 2025."²³



Aleksandar Radić on a journalist assignment last summer (photo: Spasa Dakić)

Three days after issuing its statement, the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade ordered the search of the apartment and office of military analyst Aleksandar Radić. According to Radić's lawyer, the apartment of Radić's wife was also searched. In addition to Radić's electronic devices, computers belonging to his daughter were temporarily seized.²⁴ According to Radio Television of Serbia, the search was based on indications that Radić had "by prior agreement, immediately after the protest, begun spreading information about the alleged use of a sound cannon."²⁵ The Prosecutor's Office stated that the search warrant had been issued due to "grounds for suspicion that the criminal offence of Incitement to the Violent Change of the Constitutional Order, or another criminal offence prosecuted ex officio, had been committed."²⁶ Two days after the search, Radić informed the public that he had been summoned to the premises of the Military Police for the forensic examination of the seized computers.²⁷ His lawyer warned that the state authorities had acted unlawfully, pointing out that the evidence temporarily seized by the Ministry of the Interior on the orders of the prosecution and the court had been handed over to the Military Police without any written notification being served either on Radić or on his defence counsel.²⁸ After video recordings showing his underage daughter were publicly released, Radić left Serbia.²⁹

The Editor-in-Chief of the Beta News Agency, Vojkan Kostić, was also summoned to report to the Criminal Police Directorate in connection with what, as he informed the public, was the collection of information within the framework of pre-investigation proceedings concerning the alleged preparation of criminal offences against the constitutional order and the security of Serbia.³⁰ In an interview with the Cenzolovka portal, Kostić explained that he and Aleksandar Radić had been sitting in a café when Radić received a phone call from the police instructing him, without any explanation, to return home immediately. Kostić accompanied Radić, and, while they were on their way, the Informer media outlet published a report stating that the search of Radić's apartment had already begun. Immediately before entering the apartment, Radić handed his mobile phone to Kostić. Some time later, police officers requested that Kostić surrender the telephone, which he did, while insisting that they state the legal grounds for their request. According to Kostić, the questioning at the police station focused primarily on Radić's telephone, on the reasons why Kostić had insisted on being informed of the legal basis for the seizure of the device, and on why he had been present at the scene.³¹

Dejan Petar Zlatanović, Editor and journalist of the media outlet Srbin.info³², was likewise summoned to provide a statement to the Criminal Police Directorate in his capacity as a citizen. The Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade stated that Zlatanović had voluntarily responded to the police summons and had given a statement as part of pre-investigation proceedings concerning the suspected commission of the criminal offence of Incitement to the Violent Change of the Constitutional Order, or another criminal offence prosecuted ex officio. According to the Prosecutor's Office, the interview related to "his disputed statements, beginning on 15 March 2025, concerning the alleged use of a 'sound cannon' against citizens at the conclusion of the protest held that day, for which he accused the President of Serbia."³³ Following the interview, Zlatanović reminded the public that Srbin.info had been one of the very few media outlets that had broadcast the events live as they unfolded.³⁴

A statement was also taken from Aleksandar Olenik, lawyer and Vice-President of the League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina (LSV), at the premises of the Criminal Police Directorate. After the interview, Olenik stated that "the police have become a political instrument in the hands of Aleksandar Vučić's ruling regime, with the assistance of the prosecution."³⁵

Bojan Simišić of the environmental organisation Eco Guard (Ekotraža) was likewise summoned for an informational interview.³⁶

The above-mentioned cases prompted strong reactions from the professional community, which warned that journalists and analysts who had reported critically and professionally on issues and events of public interest were being subjected to intimidation. According to these assessments, the actions undertaken by the state authorities could have a chilling effect on freedom of expression, media freedom, and public debate on matters of public interest. They called on the competent state institutions to inform the public, without delay, of the legal basis for all measures that had been undertaken.³⁷

Mobile Device Currently Unavailable

The Association of Independent Electronic Media (ANEM) announced that Veran Matić was attacked by an unidentified man while covering, in his capacity as a journalist, a gathering of several dozen citizens on the plateau in front of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia. As Matić was walking towards the steps leading to the main entrance of the Parliament building, his mobile phone was snatched from his hand. Despite Matić identifying himself as a journalist and insisting that the phone be returned immediately, the man ignored his request. According to ANEM's statement, the phone was returned only after the individual whom Matić identified as Đorđe Prelić, known as Praela, the former leader of the Alkatraz supporters' group and one of the persons convicted for participating in the 2009 murder of French football supporter Brice Taton, instructed that it be given back. During a brief conversation between Matić and Prelić, Prelić stated that Matić had "ruined his life" through his reporting for TV B92.

Following the incident, Matić approached a member of the security staff at the National Assembly. He was told that the incident had not been noticed and was advised to report it to the police, which he immediately did. The case was promptly reported to the Stari Grad Police Station on Majke Jevrosime Street.³⁸ Acting on the instructions of the First Basic Public Prosecutor's Office, the police initiated the collection of information concerning the attack.³⁹



The event in front of the Serbian Parliament immediately before the attack on Veran Matić (photo: ANEM / Veran Matić)

The professional community reacted strongly to the attack on Veran Matić.⁴⁰ The Ministry of Information and Telecommunications also issued a statement, repeating the standard formulation that it “condemns every form of violence, threats, pressure and obstruction of the work of journalists and media professionals.”⁴¹ At the same time, a number of unidentified individuals responded to reports of the attack with threatening and insulting comments. Beneath the news article published on the N1 website, a user signing as “Srbin” directed abusive remarks at both Matić and the N1 editorial team. According to the database of attacks against journalists maintained by the SafeJournalists network, the comments included calls for violence and direct death threats. The full content of the messages was not published in order to avoid further dissemination of hate speech.⁴² The day after the attack, pro-government media outlets (Večernje novosti, Informer.rs and Alo.rs) published security camera footage of the incident, accompanied by articles accusing Matić of “harassing people” before pretending to be the victim.⁴³

For more information on the intensive campaign conducted against Veran Matić, see the [Media Scene Monitoring in the Republic of Serbia for January 2026](#), [February 2026](#), [March 2026](#), and [May 2026](#).

Rage on Four Wheels

Journalists’ and media associations strongly condemned the vandalism of the car belonging to David Gruhonjić, the son of Dinko Gruhonjić. David Gruhonjić had previously been targeted by pro-government tabloids, which claimed that he was an associate of the Croatian Security and Intelligence Agency (SOA).⁴⁴ The journalists’ and media associations attributed the vandalism to the years-long campaign of vilification and targeting directed against David’s father by the highest state officials and pro-government media.⁴⁵

A rally in support of Dinko Gruhonjić was held in Novi Sad.⁴⁶

Instruments of Pressure

According to journalists’ and media associations, the Kosovo Police (the term is used in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1244) pushed journalists from Serbian-language newsrooms and media outlets away from the area designated for reporting on the Vidovdan commemoration at Gazimestan. ANEM stated that force was used against one of the editors of the public broadcaster RTK, even though he repeatedly shouted, in both Serbian and Albanian, that he was a journalist. KoSSev Director Nevenka Medić, despite being duly accredited and clearly displaying press identification, was subjected to a rough body search. Nevenka Medić had previously been exposed to serious pressure. More information on the damage to her vehicle can be found in the Monitoring of the [Media Scene in the Republic of Serbia for October 2024](#).⁴⁷

The Centre for Investigative Journalism of Serbia (CINS) announced that while its journalists were distributing printed copies of excerpts from an investigative story in a public area outside the EXPO premises concerning companies engaged in projects related to the specialised exhibition, three men in civilian clothes, without any identification, invaded the journalists' personal space and demanded that they move away. During the conversation, which lasted approximately six minutes, one of the men filmed and photographed the journalists, while another demanded that they delete the footage they had recorded, claiming that he had not given them permission to film him. Using artificial intelligence, the CINS newsroom identified both men. According to CINS, one of them is a former professional handball player, while the other appears to have links with the Ministry of the Interior, given that he appears in photographs from exercises conducted by the Protection Unit (JZO), as well as in the immediate vicinity of several public officials, including the President of the Republic of Serbia.⁴⁸ EXPO 2027 Ltd. Belgrade stated that the individuals concerned had been engaged to perform security duties. The company maintained that no inappropriate conduct had occurred and that it was carrying out "an internal review of all the circumstances".⁴⁹

Although they had been duly accredited, Vreme weekly journalist Davor Lukač and In-sajder photo editor Srđan Ilić were not allowed to report from the military exercise held at Pasuljanske Livade. This was not the first time Lukač had been prevented from reporting from an event organised by the Ministry of Defence. The same happened to him last year during the military parade in Belgrade.⁵⁰

The duly accredited TV N1 crew was not allowed to report from the second session of the Municipal Assembly of Kula. The newsroom stated that no local journalists were allowed to enter the constitutive session either.

Radar weekly journalist Vuk Cvijić was prevented from reporting on the public session of the Teaching and Scientific Council of the Faculty of Medicine, which was scheduled to confirm the appointment of the Dean that day.⁵¹

According to TV N1, journalists from both N1 and TV Nova were not allowed to attend the session of the Serbian Medical Chamber at which the Director, the President of the Assembly and other governing bodies of the Chamber were elected.⁵²

The Volim Zrenjanin portal was prevented from reporting from a session of the Zrenjanin City Assembly.⁵³

While reporting on illegal construction in Belgrade, freelance photojournalist and journalist Marko Dragoslavić received threats, ANEM reported. Dragoslavić reported the incident to the police.⁵⁴

The professional community strongly condemned all of the above-mentioned acts of pressure.

Heated Threats

A handwritten letter containing death threats addressed to Danica Vučenić was sent from Maribor to the offices of N1 television. The journalist was told: “We will kill those closest to you, you mare.” The threat was reported to the competent state authorities, while the professional community publicly expressed its support for the journalist.⁵⁵

In a comment posted beneath the announcement of the programme *Press ne pucaj* on the Insajder newsroom’s Facebook profile, Vladimir Mitrić, a journalist and *Večernje novosti* correspondent from Loznica, was told that he “should have been killed with a sledgehammer long ago”. In the programme, Mitrić spoke about working under police protection, which he has had for more than twenty years. The protection was granted after a former member of the Belgrade Police Directorate attacked him with a baseball bat, inflicting grievous bodily injuries. Although the attacker was sentenced to imprisonment, the journalist has still not been able to recover the court-awarded compensation for more than fifteen years.⁵⁶

The threat was reported to the Special Prosecutor’s Office for High-Tech Crime,⁵⁷ and the professional community reacted promptly.⁵⁸

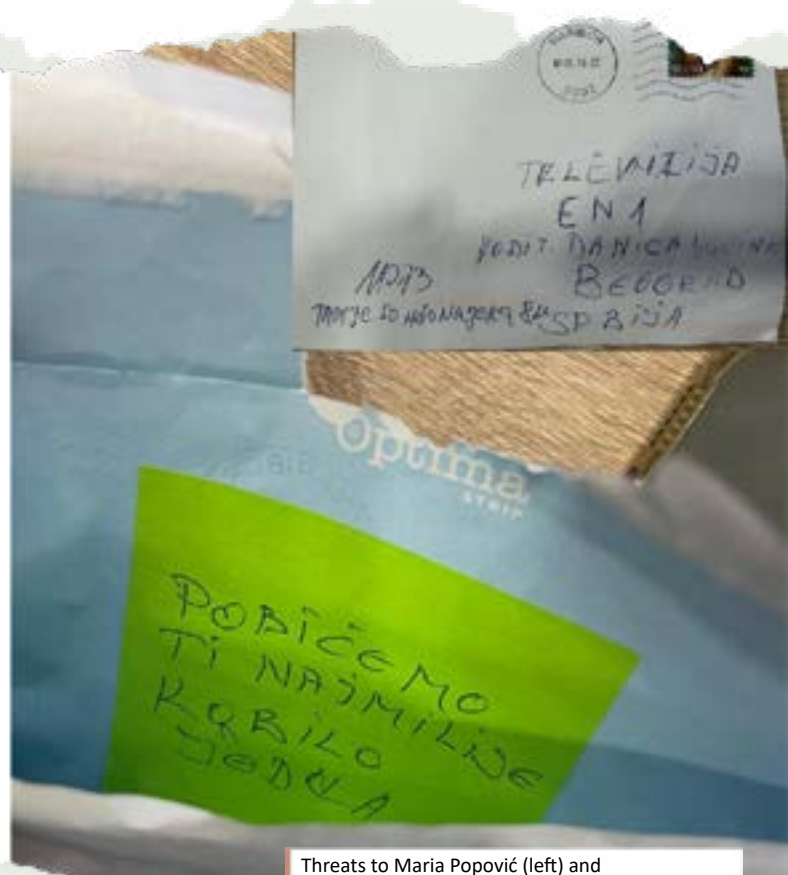
In the comments posted beneath the article “Parallel Activities at the Same Location in Bečej: Students Drew Citizens, SNS Stands Remained Empty”, published on the Facebook and Instagram pages of *Bečejski mozaik*, journalist Kristina Demeter Filipčev received numerous brutal threats, misogynistic and sexist insults, which, through serious hate speech, incited ethnic intolerance. The threats were reported to the competent institutions.⁵⁹

According to ANEM, Dragan Marinković, editor-in-chief of the *Rešetka* news outlet in Leskovac, and his newsroom received death threats through messages and a video posted on the social media platform TikTok. The threats followed the publication of articles based on anonymous letters from a group of parents claiming that the medication buprenorphine was being sold through an organised street distribution network. Following the publication of the first article, the author of the messages insulted *Rešetka* journalists on social media before posting a video in which he addressed the editor as follows: “There are plenty of dark places and passageways in the Lamelas neighbourhood where all sorts of things could happen to you! The new bridge on Ada will be named after you — ‘Mulder’s Bridge’ — because you’ll be thrown off it wearing concrete boots into the deepest part of the river to measure the depth of the water. After three days, catfish will eat you and nothing will be left of you! There are many poor people in Leskovac who would do all sorts of things to you for €200 that you certainly wouldn’t like.”⁶⁰

The newsroom of Vranje News also received a disturbing message from the same social media account that had previously sent threats to the news outlets Magločistač (Subotica), IN Medija (Indija), Južne vesti (Niš), and others. The case was reported to the competent authorities, which have not identified the person behind the account.⁶¹

The professional community strongly condemned the threats. For the first time, independent media outlets from Vranje and Bujanovac issued a joint statement expressing unequivocal support for the Vranje News portal and its editor-in-chief Dejan Dimić, while calling on the competent authorities to react without delay.⁶²

Maria Popović, editor-in-chief of the Pravo u centar portal from Lazarevac, also received threatening messages via Facebook. The threats were reported to the Special Prosecutor's Office for High-Tech Crime, while fellow journalists publicly expressed their support for her.⁶³



Threats to Maria Popović (left) and Danica Vučenić (right)

Quarry

Journalists' and media associations strongly condemned the article entitled "Dinko and Albanian Journalist Backed the Blockaders and Attacked Serbia: It's Good That They Say the Serbs Are Responsible for the Wars in Yugoslavia", in which the pro-government tabloid Informer targeted journalists Dinko Gruhonjić and Getoar Muliqi following the publication of an analysis of media reporting on dealing with the past in the Western Balkans.⁶⁴ The media associations warned that the publication of the article exposed the journalists to public vilification, insults and potential danger. They further stressed that the statement issued by the Ministry of Information and Telecommunications, in which the authors of the analysis were publicly singled out, was particularly alarming.⁶⁵

The Radius of A Circle

After twenty-five years, the programme Kvadratura kruga (Squaring the Circle) ceased to be broadcast on the public service broadcaster. It is well known that the programme's author, Branko Stanković, publicly supported the student protests. Referring to a statement made by the current Editor-in-Chief of RTS's News Programme during President Aleksandar Vučić's appearance on Dnevnik 2, Stanković stated:

"There will be no filming as long as some colleagues call the people a mob."

Commenting on his departure from RTS in an interview with the daily newspaper Danas, Stanković added:

"As for the current situation at RTS, all I can say is: may God help them."⁶⁶

III MONITORING THE ADOPTION OF NEW LEGISLATION

During June, there were no significant developments concerning the adoption of new legislation.

IV IMPLEMENTATION OF EXISTING REGULATIONS

Project Co-financing

The Association of Independent Electronic Media (ANEM) publicly reacted to the decisions of the commissions responsible for allocating funds under the Ministry of Information and Telecommunications' calls for project co-financing of media content. ANEM described the decisions as "scandalous", stating that they represented "the logical consequence of the abuse of the project co-financing mechanism, which serves exclusively to finance pro-government media, government-organised non-governmental organisations (GONGOs), and the enrichment of individuals."⁶⁷ According to ANEM, the unacceptable allocation of public funds by the Ministry of Information and Telecommunications has jeopardised the survival of the remaining professional media outlets.

ANEM's reaction followed the publication by the Ministry of the results of nine calls for project co-financing of media content, under which a total of RSD 482.5 million was allocated. ANEM's analysis showed, among other things, that the single largest beneficiary was VTV d.o.o. Subotica, owned by Vladan Stefanović, which received RSD 11.4 million. When the funds allocated to the other companies owned by Stefanović (publishers of three additional media outlets) are included, the total amount awarded reaches RSD 21.7 million. The analysis further demonstrated that, when funding is viewed according to media ownership, the largest overall allocation—RSD 41.2 million—went to nine media companies owned by Radoica Milosavljević. Publishers of the tabloids Alo and Informer, together with their affiliated companies, received RSD 41.1 million. Three companies owned by Goran Lalić received RSD 14.8 million, while twenty-four companies owned or co-owned by Slavko Stijaković were awarded a total of RSD 27.4 million. Zapple Media Group d.o.o. Novi Sad—a company established this year that publishes several local media outlets, all of which share the same editor-in-chief, Gradimir Banković, an associate of the Centre for Social Stability—received support amounting to RSD 4.9 million for seven projects.⁶⁸

V SLAPP LAWSUITS DIRECTED AGAINST JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA

The Higher Court in Belgrade delivered a first-instance judgment ordering the editor-in-chief and publisher of the investigative portal KRIK to pay Predrag Koluvija compensation for non-pecuniary damage in the amount of RSD 30,000 for each of seven articles published by the outlet in which Koluvija had been referred to as an “accused drug lord”, amounting to a total of RSD 210,000. The Court rejected KRIK’s argument that the expression was a colloquial term commonly used by leading international media organisations, including The Washington Post, The Guardian and Reuters, and that it had been employed in order to avoid confusing readers with lengthy legal terminology and complex legal formulations.⁶⁹

The first-instance court held that the published information constituted value judgments concerning the claimant’s personality. According to the Court, those judgments were based on truthful factual information. However, although the defendants had qualified the expression drug lord by preceding it with the word accused, thereby indicating that no final conviction had yet been rendered, the Court found that the expression drug lord, which carries a pejorative meaning in everyday language, could nevertheless have led the average reader to conclude that the claimant was the leader of a criminal organisation engaged in the large-scale production and trafficking of narcotic drugs. By contrast, the Court found that the expressions marijuana plantation and forged police identification card were not capable of damaging the claimant’s honour and reputation, as they referred to facts contained in the indictment.⁷⁰

Dissatisfied with the judgment, the defendants lodged an appeal with the Belgrade Court of Appeal.⁷¹

This is the second case to have been decided in Koluvija’s favour. More information about the first, which ended with a final judgment, can be found in the [Monitoring of the Media Scene in the Republic of Serbia for June 2024](#).



Predrag Koluvija in front of the court building
(photo: KRIK)

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