



# Freedom of expression and freedom of the media: Safety of journalists

## FOLLOW-UP TO THE PREVIOUS REVIEW

During the Third UPR Cycle, Serbia received 27 recommendations regarding the freedom of expression and freedom of media. Out of this number, 16 recommendations are related to the safety of journalists and media workers.

Although the Republic of Serbia has undertaken some concrete steps, safety of the journalists has not improved, numerous attacks and threats on journalists are recorded continuously, and the existing protection mechanisms have not proven to be sufficiently effective and adequate.

## NEW DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE FIRST REVIEW

The most important and effective mechanism was developed within the multisectoral Standing Working Group for Journalists' Safety, with a developed system of contact points for reporting and monitoring incidents against journalists, monitoring the procedures that have been initiated and reacting in case of irregularities.

The Ministry of Interior and the Public Prosecutor's Office adopted Internal instructions with the aim of improving the system of receiving reports and dealing with cases of attacks on journalists. However, there are still a large number of reported cases, a small number of convictions, a large number of rejected criminal charges, as well as a large number of unknown perpetrators.

Independent journalists and media are exposed to various types of pressures, targeting and smear campaigns from public officials and pro-government media, which often leads to harassment and serious threats by ordinary citizens, primarily through social networks.

The Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (IJAS) recorded 137 cases of attacks and pressures in 2022. Data showed that 48% of threats and attacks against journalists from 2017 to 2020 period were not solved and that 70% of the closed cases had ended with the dismissal of the criminal complaint.

Lastly, there are still no judicial epilogues in the cases of murder of journalists Milan Pantić, Dada Vujasinović and Slavko Ćuruvija. In the case of journalist Milan Jovanović, whose house was devastated in an arson attack in 2018, trial has also not been completed.

## RECOMMENDATION

**Conduct prompt, impartial, thorough and effective investigations into all cases of deaths, attacks, harassment and intimidation against journalists offline and online, ensuring no impunity for perpetrators.**

## QUESTION

What steps does the Government of Serbia intend to take to prevent various types of pressures, targeting and smear campaigns against investigative and independent journalists and media by high representatives of the executive power, members of National Assembly and pro-government media?



### ABOUT ORGANISATION

The Belgrade Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) is a non-partisan, non-political and non-profit association. Established in 1995, BCHR is focused on protection of human rights, education, development of democracy, strengthening of the rule of law and the civil society in Serbia. BCHR has participated in UPR processes since 2012. The Platform of Organizations for Cooperation with UN Human Rights Mechanisms is a coalition of NGOs that recognize the need for and relevance of the continuous evidence-based reporting process, monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations these mechanisms have been issuing to Serbia and interaction with Serbian Government bodies for monitoring the implementation of UN human rights recommendations.

### CONTACT DETAILS

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