



Civic Initiatives
Belgrade Center for Human Rights
Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights - YUCOM
Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia
Policy Center



Belgrade, July 8th, 2020

Press release regarding the police brutality at the protest

Human Rights House condemns police brutality during last night's protests in Belgrade. Disproportionate use of force was documented in a large number of video material, both on N1 Television and citizens who participated in the protests. It was recorded that the police on several occasions beat people who were standing still or sitting on benches, as well as the violent behavior of the alleged plainclothes police officers, who need to be investigated. Reaction of the police during the protest contains elements of a serious violation of freedom of assembly and torture.

It is obvious that the greatest degree of violence occurred after the police started using a disproportionate amount of tear gas to disperse the citizens who predominantly protested peacefully. Police has obtained a number of injured police officers and horses, but the total number of injured citizens is likely to remain unknown, due to the current situation with the coronavirus and the inability or citizens' reluctance to address to medical services. The measures taken by the police are unprecedented in Serbia.

Police press release, stating that an analysis will be performed and that it will be determined who is responsible for organizing the protest, concerns a lot. The protest that was held yesterday obviously falls under the category of spontaneous protests foreseen by the Law on Public Assembly and represents the reaction of citizens to the press conference of the President Aleksandar Vucic that was held yesterday. The announcement of the police indicates the possibility of further illegitimate proceedings against the citizens who participated in the assembly, and the arbitrary targeting of undesirable individuals seriously endangers the rule of law and human rights.

Organizations constituting the Human Rights House will, in accordance with their areas of expertise, obtain all available information in order to create the most adequate possible reporting to the domestic, international public and competent institutions and to provide legal aid to the citizens whose rights were violated during the protest.

We urge the police, the prosecution and other relevant state institutions to react in accordance with their competencies, to refrain from excessive use of coercive measures, and to react to the possible continuation of protests in the coming days in accordance with the rule of law, in addition to respecting basic human rights.

Member organizations of the Human Rights House:

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