

# 2025 Activity Report of the Permanent Working Group for Safety of Journalists

- Permanent Working Group for  
Safety of Journalists -

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***The views herein expressed are solely those of the author and contributors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the OSCE Mission to Serbia.***

## I. Summary

- According to data from the Supreme Public Prosecutor's Office (SPPO), the number of cases involving acts against journalists increased by 106.15% last year, rising from 65 in 2024 to 134 in 2025. The number of physical assaults against journalists saw a sharper increase of 366.67%, from 6 in 2024 to 28 in 2025.
- Also, a total of 33 cases were closed in the previous year, representing 24.63% of all cases initiated, which is lower than in 2024, when 27.42% were closed.
- Among the cases filed in 2025, there were three guilty verdicts pronounced, which is more than in 2024, when only one guilty verdict was pronounced. However, it is significantly less than in 2023, when guilty verdicts were pronounced in 12 cases.
- Of the total number of cases, 65 were formed in the Special Public Prosecutor's Office for High-Tech Crime, representing 48.51% of all cases. The percentage of these cases in 2024 was 67.69%.
- The number of cases in which the victims are female journalists decreased from 54% in 2024 to 47.06% in 2025.
- From the onset of record keeping by SPPO in 2016, until the end of 2025, a total of 724 cases were filed based on charges related to offences against journalists. According to the data of the prosecutor's office, a total of 408 cases, or 56.35%, were closed, while 316 cases (43.65%) are still pending and are in various stages of the proceedings.
- In the past year the Journalists' Association of Serbia (UNS) recorded 261 assaults against journalists, which is 150 more than the previous year. A drastic deterioration was noted in physical assaults, with 60 recorded, while in 2024 there were 13.
- In 2025, the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS) recorded 380 assaults against journalists and media outlets, which is significant increase compared to 168 last year. This journalistic organization recorded 116 physical assaults, which is a dramatic surge compared to 18 in 2024.
- Five out of six journalist and media associations from the Permanent Working Group for Safety of Journalists (PWG) froze their status in this body in February 2025 due to dissatisfaction with the results and efficiency of the institutions in solving cases of assaults against journalists. Nevertheless, key mechanisms established within this body, such as the contact point system, remained fully operational throughout the year.

- The PWG 2025 Action Plan was fully implemented and a new one for 2026 was adopted.

## **II. Introduction**

The Permanent Working Group for Safety of Journalists (PWG) represents a unique institutional mechanism for dialogue between representatives of the prosecution, the police and journalist and media associations, in which the OSCE Mission to Serbia (OSCE) plays an important role.

This body was formed in January 2017 with the aim to exchange information, improve the safety of journalists and for more effective response of competent authorities in cases of threats and assaults against media workers. Its establishment represented an important step forward in building trust between the media community and state institutions and accepting the fact that the safety of journalists is a prerequisite for exercising the right to freedom of expression and information, as a fundamental value of every democratic society.

After almost a decade of this body's existence, all available data indicate that the most difficult year for the safety of journalists and a year of serious challenges for the PWG itself is behind us. In 2025, the Supreme Public Prosecutor's Office (SPPO) filed a record 134 cases related to the safety of journalists, which is an increase of more than 100 percent compared to the previous year, when there were 65 cases.<sup>1</sup> According to the official records of the prosecutor's office, the number of physical assaults against journalists increased by more than 360 percent compared to 2024.<sup>2</sup> Journalist associations note an even more dramatic situation.

In addition to worrying statistics, an additional challenge last year was the decision of most journalist and media associations to suspend their status in the work of this body. The freezing of the status indicates the existence of serious discrepancies in the perception of institutional efficiency in the protection of journalists and the overall environment for media work. This clearly indicates the need for dialogue, but also the readiness of all parties to accept facts and reality.

Also, the previous year reminded us that the PWG must adapt to circumstances and find new and creative ways to help those who are the reason for its existence - endangered journalists. Convincing journalists that this body can be useful to them is one of the most important preconditions for its long-term sustainability. The fact that the PWG organized over 30 local meetings during the previous three years, attended by about 500 representatives of media, police and prosecutor offices, demonstrates the commitment and capacity of this body to respond to the challenges faced by journalists and media in Serbia.

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<sup>1</sup> See the SPPO statistics here: <https://bezbedninovinari.rs/article/1400/vjt-statistika-napada-na-novinare-od-2016-do-kraja-2025-godine>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

During 2025, the work of the PWG took place in a complex socio-political context, marked by intense public debates, tensions and protests throughout the country. In such an environment, journalists are often exposed to increased risk both on the ground, during reporting from public gatherings, and in the digital space, through targeting campaigns, threats and hate speech. The safety of journalists during protests is a particularly sensitive issue, as it involves simultaneously securing the right to public assembly and the public right to be informed in a timely and objective manner. Efficient reaction of competent authorities, timely exchange of information and the adoption of clear procedures for dealing with such situations are of key importance for preventing incidents and strengthening trust in institutions.

The importance of the safety of journalists and media freedom was reiterated in the latest European Commission's 2025 Report on Serbia. The Report points out that freedom of expression and the safety of journalists are areas that require continuous efforts, especially with regard to the efficient prosecution of assaults and threats, the transparency of the actions of competent authorities and the creation of a stimulating environment for independent and professional journalism.<sup>3</sup>

This additionally confirms that **improving the PWG work is not only a national issue, but also part of a broader process of harmonization with European standards and obligations arising from the Serbian Government's strategic objectives stemming from the process of EU integration.**

Media freedom is not a privilege of journalists, but one of the fundamental rights of citizens – the right to be informed. A safe journalist means an informed society. When journalists are exposed to threats, pressure or violence, it is not only their personal integrity is threatened, but also the public interest. Therefore, it is essential that institutions respond consistently and without delay to any form of threat to journalists' safety, to ensure an effective investigation, adequate sanctions, and the implementation of preventive measures that reduce risks and strengthened protection.

Since the establishment of the PWG, the OSCE has been the only organization providing comprehensive support to this body through professional, technical, advisory and financial assistance. This support is reflected in facilitating dialogue, in organizing training activities, and promoting the exchange of good practices, thereby further strengthening the institutional framework for the protection of journalists. The OSCE in this process serves as an important guarantor of continuity and compliance with international standards, and especially with the Decision of the OSCE Ministerial Council on the Safety of Journalists from 2018.<sup>4</sup>

During a study visit of the PWG to Paris in early October 2025, representatives of UNESCO emphasized that, according to available data, there are currently 58 national mechanisms

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<sup>3</sup> See the said report here: [https://www.mei.gov.rs/upload/documents/eu\\_dokumenta/2025/serbia\\_2025\\_report\\_sr.pdf](https://www.mei.gov.rs/upload/documents/eu_dokumenta/2025/serbia_2025_report_sr.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> For the Decision of the OSCE Ministerial Council on the Safety of Journalists see: [MC\\_DEC/3/18](#)

for the safety of journalists in the world. Based on insights drawn from the annual reports, they noted that the PWG stands out as an example of good practice, demonstrating the quality of its work despite the challenges it has faced since its establishment.

This report aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the PWG activities in the previous year, with special reference to challenges, achieved results and recommendations for further improvements. In light of the current circumstances, the restoration of trust, the strengthening of institutional accountability and the reaffirmation of the joint commitment to protect the safety of journalists remain a key priority in the partnership of the PWG and the OSCE for the next period.

### **III. Data on cases of assaults against journalists in 2025**

**In 2025**, based on filed criminal charges or reports, **134 cases related to acts against journalists were opened** in the Republic of Serbia Public Prosecutor's Offices. Namely, six in January, seven in February, ten in March, eight in April, seven in May, ten in June, 23 in July, 21 in August, nine in September, ten in October, nine in November, and 14 in December.<sup>5</sup>

This is a significantly higher number of criminal charges and reports compared to the previous years. For example, during 2024, public prosecutor's offices filed a total of 65 cases, which means that during 2025, 106.15% more cases were initiated as compared to the previous year.

In cases filed during this year, ending with 31 December 2025, the following actions were taken:

- in three cases a guilty verdict was pronounced
- in four cases, proceedings are pending before the court based on the indictment of the public prosecutor
- in 12 cases, a decision was rendered to dismiss the criminal charges
- in 18 cases, an official note was issued that there is no basis for initiating criminal proceedings
- in 18 cases, the implementation of evidentiary actions is underway
- in 58 cases, a request was submitted to collect the necessary information
- in eight cases, the details of the criminal charges or report on the information collected during the preliminary investigation procedure are reviewed in order to render a decision
- in 13 cases, even after taking measures in the pre-investigation procedure, the potential perpetrator was not identified

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<sup>5</sup> See the SPPO statistics here: <https://bezbedninovinari.rs/article/1400/vjt-statistika-napada-na-novinare-od-2016-do-kraja-2025-godine> (this Report is the source of all other information mentioned in this section)

The first-instance or final decision was rendered in 33 cases, which represents 24.63% of the total number.

Among the cases filed in 2025, three resulted in guilty verdicts, which is an increase as compared to 2024, when only one newly initiated case led to conviction. However, this is significantly lower than in 2023, when guilty verdicts were pronounced in 12 cases. It is particularly noteworthy that, of the cases filed in 2025, the identity of the reported individual is known in only 38 cases, while in 96 cases the prosecution has not identified yet the alleged perpetrator. In such cases, the initiation of criminal proceedings depends primarily on the police establishing the identity of the perpetrator.

However, it should be noted that during 2025, in addition to the above-mentioned three verdicts in cases filed this year, the courts also pronounced two first-instance and one final verdict in cases from previous years. More precisely, all three verdicts were pronounced in cases filed during 2022.

When it comes to the structure of the reported criminal acts committed against the safety of journalists, this year as well, the charges most often refer to various forms of threatening messages (101 cases). Additionally, charges were filed for physical assaults (28 cases), insults and harassment (three cases), persecution (one case) and confiscation of other people's property (one case).

Against this background, we should particularly emphasize the extraordinary increase in the number of cases filed as a result of physical assault against journalists, by as much as 366.67% compared to 2024, when six such charges were initiated. Regarding the 28 cases from this year mentioned above, the identity of the perpetrators was established only in 12 cases, while in 16 others it is still unknown.

Furthermore, it should be noted that out of the total number of cases, 65 of them were filed in the Special Public Prosecutor's Office for High-Tech Crime, accounting for 48.51% of the total number of cases. On the other hand, 32 cases were filed in general jurisdiction prosecutor's offices under the Appellate Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade, 13 cases were filed under the Appellate Public Prosecutor's Office in Novi Sad, and 17 cases under the Appellate Public Prosecutor's Office in Niš. There were seven filed cases related to acts against the safety of journalists in the prosecutor's offices under the Appellate Public Prosecutor's Office in Kragujevac.

The number of cases filed in the Special Public Prosecutor's Office for High-Tech Crime indicates that a large number of charges still refer to illegal behaviour on the Internet, primarily on social networks. However, a comparative data analysis revealed that the number of cases filed in connection with online threats decreased in total values compared to the previous year. The percentage of these cases in 2025 is 48.51%, while in 2024 it was 67.69% of the total number of cases.

In addition, there is a noticeable decrease in the number of cases filed in connection with acts affecting female journalists - 47.06% of the total number of injured parties in 2025, while this share in 2024 was 54%.

When it comes to data about the gender of victims of assaults in the digital environment, during 2025, the cases of the Special Public Prosecutor's Office for High-Tech Crime were filed in connection with events affecting 45 individuals performing public duties in the field of information. Of these, 19 injured parties were male (42.22%), and 26 were female (57.78%). In 2024, cases were filed in connection with events affecting 28 individuals, of which nine injured persons were male (32.14%), and 19 were female (67.86%).

The data analysis showed that the number of female injured parties (26) in the total number of injured parties in cases handled by the Special Public Prosecutor's Office for High-Tech Crime filed during 2025 has increased compared to 2024 (19), although it is not noticeable in the percentage share.

Finally, it should be pointed out that only in exceptional events (most often when it comes to plea bargaining), it is realistic to expect the case to be closed with a verdict in the calendar year in which the criminal act occurred. Namely, even in situations where the identity of the person reported is known, there are circumstances that delay the timely implementation of procedural actions, most often on the part of the person reported, but often also on the part of the injured party or other parties in the procedure.

For this reason, the work of the public prosecutor's office and the court should be viewed more broadly, in relation to all active cases that are handled during the year, and not focus only on newly filed cases and evaluate the efficiency of proceedings in that context.

### **Data for the period from 2016 to 2025:**

As mentioned earlier, in December 2020, the Republic (now the Supreme) Public Prosecutor's Office (SPPO) issued a new General Mandatory Instruction that regulates the procedure of public prosecutor's offices in cases of reporting events affecting journalists and other media workers.<sup>6</sup> Among other things, the Instruction introduced new measures to improve record keeping for these cases. The records of filed cases involving journalists' safety is updated monthly with data from all basic and higher public prosecutor's offices. Appellate public prosecutor's offices are obliged to deliver to the Supreme Public Prosecutor's Office consolidated monthly reports on actions taken in all cases filed in the records.

The SPPO prepares a summary report in the form of a "Bulletin" for the purposes of the OSCE quarterly newsletter. In addition, a more detailed monthly report—containing statistical data on actions taken and their analysis—is published each month on the SPPO website, within a dedicated section on the safety of journalists.

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<sup>6</sup> Look at: <http://www.vrhovnojt.gov.rs/assets/Obavezno%20uputstvo%20-%20%D0%9E%20%D0%B1%D1%80.10-20.pdf>

From the onset of record keeping in 2016 until the end of 2025, a total of 724 cases related to the safety of journalists were filed in the public prosecutor's offices.<sup>7</sup> According to the statistical data of the prosecutor's office for this period, a total of 408 cases, or 56.35%, were closed, while 316 cases (43.65%) are still pending and are in various stages of the proceedings.

Among the active cases (pending a final decision) - in 13 cases an indictment has been filed and the court proceedings are underway; evidentiary actions are being taken in 25 cases; in four cases, requests for international legal assistance have been submitted to the competent judicial authorities of foreign countries and the responses have not yet been delivered; in 107 cases a request has been submitted to collect the necessary information and the delivery of the required information and evidence is pending; in 11 cases criminal charges or reports on information collected during the pre-investigation procedure are being reviewed in order to render a decision. In 156 cases, even after taking measures in the pre-investigation procedure, the potential perpetrator was not identified (ie John Doe - a term used when the perpetrator of a criminal act is still unknown to the prosecuting authorities).

Although the total number of unidentified perpetrators remains high, it is important to note that the majority of cases with unknown perpetrators are from an earlier period.

| Year         | Active cases | Cases in which the perpetrator has not been identified (KTN - John Doe case) | % of John Doe cases in active cases |
|--------------|--------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| 2016         | 16           | 15   | 93.75                               |
| 2017         | 10           | 10   | 100                                 |
| 2018         | 14           | 13   | 92.86                               |
| 2019         | 11           | 9  | 81.82                               |
| 2020         | 17           | 12   | 70.59                               |
| 2021         | 36           | 25   | 69.44                               |
| 2022         | 35           | 17   | 48.57                               |
| 2023         | 35           | 28   | 80                                  |
| 2024         | 41           | 14   | 34.15                               |
| 2025         | 101          | 13   | 12.87                               |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>316</b>   | <b>156</b>   | <b>49.37</b>                        |

When it comes to the cases that were closed during the mentioned period - 98 cases were resolved by a decision of the court, and 310 cases by the prosecutor's decision.

<sup>7</sup> See the SPPO statistics here: <https://bezbedninovinari.rs/article/1400/vjt-statistika-napada-na-novinare-od-2016-do-kraja-2025-godine> (this Report is the source of all other information mentioned in this section)

Of the 98 cases that were resolved by the court's decision, in 79 cases a conviction was rendered; in 12 cases there was an acquittal; while in seven cases the prosecution's indictment was dismissed or rejected.

On the other hand, 310 cases were resolved by prosecutor's decision. In 146 cases (47.1%) a decision was made to dismiss the criminal charges, while in 139 cases (44.84%) an official note was made that there is no basis for initiating criminal proceedings, i.e. there are no elements of a criminal act for which prosecution is undertaken *ex officio*. In two cases, a decision was rendered that there is no basis for initiating preparatory proceedings against a juvenile offender.

In 21 cases (6,77%), the prosecutor's decision sanctioned the perpetrator by imposing the obligation prescribed by the Criminal Procedure Code regarding delayed criminal prosecution (principle of opportunity). After fulfilling the obligations in full, a decision was rendered to dismiss the criminal charges in these cases. Bearing in mind that this principle imposes certain obligations on perpetrators of criminal acts, it can be considered a form of sanction.

In one case, the Public Prosecutor's Office ordered a diversion measure against a minor offender. After fulfilling the obligations in full, a decision was rendered to dismiss the criminal charges. This principle is similar to that of the deferred prosecution (opportunity), which is applied against adult offenders.

Additionally, in one case involving a perpetrator who is not a citizen of the Republic of Serbia, criminal prosecution was transferred to the competent judicial authorities of his home country through the process of international legal assistance.

### **Data from UNS and NUNS databases**

The Journalists' Association of Serbia (UNS) publishes on its website reactions to assaults, threats and pressures on journalists and media workers. The data is usually published from the records quarterly, which also includes cases that were not made public due to confidentiality requirements.

In 2025, UNS recorded 261 cases of endangering the safety of journalists, which is 150 more than the previous year.<sup>8</sup> A drastic deterioration was noted when it comes to physical assaults, with 60 recorded, while in 2024 there were 13. According to 2023 data, this is a significant jump, when 16 cases were recorded, while in 2022 12 cases.

The number of threats also more than doubled in 2025. There are 54 recorded, compared to 33 in 2024. Threats in the on-line environment took precedence, which remained

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<sup>8</sup> See: <https://www.uns.org.rs/sr/desk/UNS-news/182402/uns-ova-baza-u-2025-godini-zabelezeno-150-slucajeva-ugrozavanja-novinara-vise-nego-prosle-godine.html>

unchanged compared to previous years. The number of pressures and insults has almost doubled, so 50 such cases were recorded in 2025, 21 more than in 2024, when 29 were entered into the database. UNS also recorded 48 events of work prevention and media discrimination, while in 2024 there were 26 such events.

Five assaults against the property of journalists/media were also recorded, compared to one recorded in 2024. As many as 26 journalists who opposed the violation of professional standards and the change of editorial policy, or had posts related to protests on their private profiles on social networks, were fired or their assignments were terminated during 2025, according to the UNS database. The database also includes two cases of censorship. Seven cases of apprehension were recorded, as well as one attempt of surveillance of journalists. Five cases of doxing, i.e. public sharing of personal data, were recorded, while there were no such cases in 2024.

The NUNS database, which is available on its website, is searchable by category, and currently records 1,990 incidents from 2008 to the moment of publication of this report. In 2025, 380 cases of endangering the safety of journalists and the media were recorded, which is significantly more than 168 cases in 2024.<sup>9</sup>

This journalists' association recorded 116 physical assaults, 18 of which resulted in physical injury. In addition, 164 threats and 77 instances of pressure were documented. Compared to the previous year, this represents a drastic increase in physical assaults, with 18 such incidents recorded at the time. The database for that period also included while 71 threats and 73 cases of so-called pressure.

#### **IV. Study of individual cases of assaults against journalists in 2025**

- **Assaults against Vuk Cvijić, journalist of the weekly "Radar"**

Journalist Vuk Cvijić, according to his statement, was forcibly prevented from working by the police during a student and civilian protest in July in front of the Faculty of Law in Belgrade.<sup>10</sup> He claims that he was recording the intervention of Gendarmerie officers with his mobile phone and that he stayed aside. He said that one of them tried to take his phone away, and then three members of this Unit, in order to prevent him from recording, started hitting him with a police shield, elbowing him in the chest and pushing him onto the bench. Then one of them stood in front of Mr. Cvijić, stepped on his shoes and prevented him from filming. Mr. Cvijić claims that he kept repeating that he was a journalist throughout the incident.

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<sup>9</sup> See: <https://nuns.rs/baza-nuns/?keyword=&gender=&type of incident=&life threat type=&physical attack type=&organisation attack type=&organization threat type=&pressure type=&type of media=&incident year=2025&page=1>

<sup>10</sup> See: <https://n1info.rs/vesti/cvijic-policija-dosla-da-bije-studente-kod-pravnog-i-to-je-jasno-ovo-sve-vise-podseca-na-devedesete/>

In this case, NUNS filed criminal charges with the First Basic Public Prosecutor's Office against members of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) for abuse of office, exceeding official authority, use of physical force, abuse, threats, unauthorized attempt to confiscate the phone, as well as violation of other rights of journalist Mr. Cvijić. A complaint was submitted to the Department of Internal Control of the MoI.

A new, and according to witnesses, targeted assault against Mr. Cvijić took place on 15 August in front of the building of the former Army Headquarters in Belgrade.<sup>11</sup> Mr. Cvijić claims that during the protest he stood with his friends and colleagues in front of the police cordon, that no incidents occurred and that it was peaceful. According to him, a uniformed policeman in riot gear approached him from behind and sprayed him with an unknown liquid from a spray bottle on his neck and the right side of his face. After some time, Cvijić felt that his skin was burning. Blindness followed, lasting at least an hour. He was treated at the hospital, and he felt the effects of the assault until morning. TV Nova S journalist Marko Novičić witnessed this incident and said that Mr. Cvijić was the only target.

Also in 2025, the First Basic Public Prosecutor's Office (BPPO) dismissed the criminal charges for the assault against Mr. Cvijić that occurred in May 2024, when Milan Lađević, one of the co-owners and publishers of the tabloids *Srpski telegraf* and *Republika.rs*, knocked him to the ground with a punch to the face and a push.<sup>12</sup> The assault took place in the centre of Belgrade, and almost eleven months after the assault, which greatly upset the journalistic community, the BPPO determined via a video recording that Lađević hit Cvijić, but that he did not commit the criminal offense of violent behavior or any other criminal offense for which prosecution is undertaken *ex officio*. Mr. Lađević denied the assault against Mr. Cvijić, but this was disproved by surveillance camera footage that the police submitted to the prosecutor's office a few months after the first submitted request and several subsequent prosecutorial urgent requests.

The prosecutor described the crime as violence, but based on the fact that present pedestrians did not behave unusually, he concluded that their tranquility was not disturbed and that there were no elements of a criminal act for which the prosecution could prosecute Mr. Lađević *ex officio*. The objection of Mr. Cvijić's lawyers to this decision was dismissed by the Higher Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade. The reasoning was that the First BPPO correctly assessed that, although the assault did occur, it did not disturb the public, i.e. the citizens who witnessed the violent act. The prosecutor stated that there are no elements of a criminal offense for false reporting despite the fact that Mr. Lađević reported the case to the police and claimed that Mr. Cvijić attacked him.

On 17 December 2025, Vuk Cvijić was called by an unknown person from an unidentified number and threatened to "be careful" about what will be published in the next issue of the weekly "Radar", with the message that they will "get to know each other" if the text is

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<sup>11</sup> See: <https://direktno.rs/beograd/628804/napad-na-novinare-protest-policija.html>

<sup>12</sup> See: <https://radar.nova.rs/drustvo/napad-vuk-cvijic-odbacena-krivicna-prijava/>

published.<sup>13</sup> It is written in the NUNS database that the journalist replied that the content had already been closed for publication, to which he was told: "Then you will get to know me", and then he hung up.

- **Verica Marinčić and Miodrag Blečić, "IN media" portal**<sup>14</sup>

Criminal charges were submitted to the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office in Stara Pazova against the person who on 26 February, during the protest march of high school students through Inđija to Ruma, insulted the participants of the march. When Ms. Verica Marinčić, a journalist from the "IN Media" portal, approached the mentioned person and identified herself as a journalist, he physically assaulted her. He swung his hand and knocked out her phone, which she used to record the event, after which he also tried to hit the journalist. He was prevented from doing so by a policeman who was on the spot and had the task of securing the gathering, and the suspect continued to insult Mr. Miodrag Blečić, a journalist of the same portal.

On the same day, the public prosecutor on duty ordered the detention of the assailant, who was questioned on 28 February. Subsequently, the Basic Court in Stara Pazova issued a ban on approaching or communicating with the injured party to the suspect, under Article 197 of the Criminal Procedure Law. On the same day, the injured parties Ms. Verica Marinčić and Mr. Miodrag Blečić were questioned as witnesses.

On 28 February, a plea agreement was concluded with the defendant, for the offense Endangering safety from Article 138 paragraph 3 in connection with paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code, and an indictment was submitted to the Basic Court in Stara Pazova. On the same day, the court pronounced a guilty verdict confirming the agreement, and sentencing the defendant to six months of suspended prison which will not be enforced if the defendant does not commit a new criminal offence within two years. The defendant was also sentenced to a 'ban on approaching, meeting and communicating with a certain person and visiting certain places'. The verdict is final.

- **Marjan Vučetić, N1 Television**

While filming the pre-election rally of the Serbian Progressive Party on 16 May 2025 in Makovište near Kosjerić, N1 Television cameraman Marjan Vučetić was physically assaulted.<sup>15</sup> In this incident, the journalist was hit several times and threats, curses and insults were directed at him.

The Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Užice conducted the investigation, interrogating the suspect, the injured party and four witnesses, and then at the beginning of June 2025 submitted an indictment to the Higher Court in Užice against one person for the criminal

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<sup>13</sup> See: <https://nova.rs/vesti/drustvo/vesna-malisc-vuk-cvijic-je-meta-jer-se-bavi-istravackim-radom-drzava-ne-stiti-novinare/>

<sup>14</sup> See: <https://nuns.rs/incident/incident-1682/>

<sup>15</sup> See: <https://n1info.rs/vesti/video-u-selu-kod-kosjerica-napadnuta-ekipa-n1/>

offense of 'Violent behavior at a sports event or public gathering' under Article 344a of the Criminal Code.

The Higher Court in Užice pronounced a guilty verdict on 20 November, declaring the defendant guilty of committing the aforementioned criminal offence, and sentencing him to five months of suspended prison which will not be enforced unless the defendant commits another criminal offence within one year. At the beginning of June, the PWG organized a meeting in Požega where, among other things, this case was discussed, which actually resulted in a quick verdict.

The Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Užice filed an appeal against the first-instance verdict.

- **Zoran Strika Radio 021**<sup>16</sup>

Zoran Strika, deputy editor of the portal 021, was physically assaulted in April while reporting on the organized departure of people from Novi Sad to Belgrade, to the rally of President Aleksandar Vučić, and the Movement for the People and the State. The assault took place on the quay, at the Danube riverbank, around noon.

Mr. Strika said he kept his distance and started filming with his phone when he noticed that two men were knocking down and beating a citizen who was filming on his phone while passing by. Then Mr. Strika was grabbed by the arm and neck by the assailant. He tried to snatch the phone from his hands, but failed. Mr. Strika told him that he was a journalist, and then he noticed that the director of the Provincial Fund for European Affairs and Development, Ognjen Dopuđ, stood nearby, and asked him to react. Although Mr. Dopuđ, according to Mr. Strika, did not react, the assailant left.

Mr. Strika lent the attacked citizen a phone to call his family. "At that moment, three hooded men approached us. One of them snatched my phone from his hands and threw it into the river, and then ran away," said Mr. Strika.

The assault was reported to the police, and Mr. Strika gave a statement to the First Basic Public Prosecutor's Office in Novi Sad.

For the purposes of this report, information was received from the competent prosecutor's office that the police submitted footage from the surveillance cameras, but that they are still working on the identification of the assailant and that the investigation is ongoing.

- **Aleksa Stanković, photographer**<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See: <https://www.021.rs/novi-sad/vesti/406779/urednik-021rs-napadnut-tokom-odlaska-ljudi-na-miting-u-beogradu>

<sup>17</sup> See: <https://radar.nova.rs/drustvo/aleksa-stankovic-policija-napad-video/>

At the beginning of July, the young photographer Aleksa Stanković, a student of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade and an associate of Studentski glas, was, according to his statement, beaten by the police in his official vehicle.

Mr. Stanković said that after the police "broke the blockade of the intersection", around 1 a.m., he was at the corner of Kraljica Marija and Ruzveltova streets in Belgrade and that a uniformed police officer approached him, stepped on his right foot, asked for his name and when he heard the answer, that he was working for the media, headed towards a police vehicle.

According to him, the masked policeman who was inside the vehicle, threatened him, saying that he caused them a huge problem with the video that was created two days earlier in the same street when police officers with masks on their faces commented about the girls. He also added that the police officers repeatedly said that he would pay for it and that they repeatedly hit him, making him delete his Instagram profile.

Mr. Stanković claims that afterwards a police officer without a mask entered the vehicle and asked him to remove the memory card from the camera, and when he did not do so, the officers hit him on the head, slapped him with their hands, but also with the cap that they removed from his head, which had the "press" mark on it. Mr. Stanković was also wearing a fluorescent vest marked "press".

According to Mr. Stanković, one of the officers broke his memory card and got out of the vehicle. In the police vehicle, Mr. Stanković stayed with an officer who had a mask on his face and who demanded that he deletes his profiles on social networks in front of him. When he did not do that, Mr. Stanković testified that the officer hit his head against the window of the vehicle between five and ten times.

Mr. Stanković, in agreement with NUNS, filed criminal charges against an unknown person, gave a statement at the prosecutor's office, and for the purposes of this report, he stated that so far, the official investigation has not led to the identification of the assailant and the initiation of proceedings against him.

- **Petar Mladenović, journalist of Informer TV**<sup>18</sup>

While reporting from a protest in Novi Sad on 15 August 2025, there was an alleged physical assault against Petar Mladenović, cameraman of Informer TV, when, as he stated, his head and eye were injured.

After questioning the suspects of the assault, the public prosecutor on duty ordered their detention, after which the Basic Court in Novi Sad ordered their detention on 17 August. During the procedure, witnesses were questioned and forensic-medical and forensic-

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<sup>18</sup> See: <https://nsuzivo.rs/novi-sad/uhapsen-napadac-na-ekipu-informera/>

psychiatric expertise was conducted, and an indictment was filed against both suspects for the criminal offense of Violent Behaviour under Article 344 of the Criminal Code.

On 19 December, the Basic Court in Novi Sad pronounced a verdict, declaring the defendants guilty of committing the aforementioned criminal offence, sentencing one defendant to six months, and the other to ten months in prison, which they will serve in home detention.

## **V. Safety of journalists during protests**

The expression of dissatisfaction of a part of society through street protests marked 2025 and had a serious impact on the safety of journalists and the work of the media in general. For the prosecutor's office and journalist associations, this year has become a record year in terms of the number of charges and registered incidents. From the perspective of journalists, which is also recorded in the reports of journalist associations, it can be said that 2025 is characterized by an escalation of assaults, threats, cases of journalists' work being hindered, but also dismissals and terminations of assignments, as well as protests in front of certain media outlets.<sup>19</sup>

UNS data on assaults against journalists and media for 2025 show that 155 cases from the records of this association, with 261 cases in total, are related to the mentioned protests.<sup>20</sup> The issue is not only about assaults and threats, but also pressure and punishment of journalists for fighting for professional reporting. According to UNS, disciplinary proceedings were initiated against journalists and media workers, they were punished by salary reductions and even dismissed.

An additional challenge is the deep division or polarization of the media themselves, into those whose editorial policy is considered pro-government and those that do not have such a policy. This environment also had an impact on the manner in which parts of society treated journalists, depending on the media outlet they came from.

If we look back at earlier protests in Serbia, for the last eight years, it cannot be said that they were characterized by the assaults against journalists and preventing the work of the media, as it has been the case in previous months.

It was not a feature of the protests in late 2018, called "Stop the bloody shirts", later called "1 in 5 million", nor of the environmental protests against the lithium mining project and the company RioTinto, nor the "Serbia against violence" protest in May 2023.

There is an exception during the Corona virus pandemic, when in five days in July 2020, according to UNS records, 28 journalists, cameramen and photojournalists were

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<sup>19</sup> See: <https://www.uns.org.rs/sr/desk/UNS-news/182402/uns-ova-baza-u-2025-godini-zabelezeno-150-slucajeva-ugrozavanja-novinara-vise-nego-prosle-godine.html>

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

assaulted and obstructed in their work during protests in Belgrade, Niš and Novi Sad.<sup>21</sup> 14 of them received injuries, six of which required emergency medical assistance.<sup>22</sup>

According to journalists' associations, a special security risk for journalists in the previous year was a tent settlement set up in the central Pionirski park in Belgrade, protected by fences between the buildings of the Presidency and the National Assembly. Threats were directed towards journalists and media workers from that fenced area and inside it, they and their work equipment sustained physical assaults, in some cases even in the presence of the police.<sup>23</sup>

In moments of crisis, when journalists and media workers approached uniformed police officers, but also when the police officers present could directly witness aggressive outbursts and assaults, journalist and media associations claim that there was often no reaction in the form of identification checks, recording or accepting incident report on the spot, or arrest of those responsible, etc.

Of all reported cases related to assaults against journalists at that location, according to the SPPO data, one suspect was detained for the attack on Nataša Mijušković, Insider journalist. As a result, journalists began to self-organize and through various initiatives to reveal the identity of the assailants, whether citizens or police officers.

At the beginning of 2026, the Association of independent electronic media (ANEM) published the Chronology of assaults against media workers in the area between Pionirski Park and the national Assembly. According to the data from this report, during the nine months since the tents were set up in Pionirski Park, which then extended to the Assembly, at least 25 cases of interference with work and assaults against media workers were recorded in and around that fenced area.<sup>24</sup>

Journalist associations additionally engaged in ensuring the safest possible conditions for reporting from the protest. For example, they opened their premises on the day of large protests, for local and foreign reporters. Unlike some previous protests, it was agreed that media crews would wear fluorescent vests marked "press", which was widely accepted. The OSCE donated press vests and other equipment to journalist and media associations.

Throughout the year, journalists and media workers were presented with the possibility to report assaults and threats directly to journalist associations, i.e. to the 24/7 SOS free telephone line coordinated by ANEM, and supported by the OSCE, with funding from the EU Delegation in Serbia. While travelling around Serbia, the PWG encouraged journalists to report incidents and explained the mechanism of their work.

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<sup>21</sup> See: <https://uns.org.rs/sr/desk/UNS-news/101503/uns-za-pet-dana-napadnuto-i-ometano-u-radu-28-novinara-i-medijskih-radnika.html?print=true>

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> See: <https://n1info.rs/vesti/napadnuta-ekipa-n1-kod-cacilenda-muskarac-razbio-kameru/>

<sup>24</sup> See: <https://anem.org.rs/sr/strane/hronologija-napada-na-medijske-radnike-u-prostoru-izmedu-pionirskog-parka-i-skupstine-srbije>

## VI. PWG activities during 2025

The Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS), the Association of Online Media (AOM), ANEM, the Association of Media Outlets (AM) and the Independent Journalists' Association of Vojvodina (NDNV) decided in February 2025 to freeze membership in the PWG, as part of a broader initiative of civil society organizations. According to the explanation, the decision to suspend co-operation with the legislative and executive authorities was made due to the failure of competent institutions to act in the public interest.<sup>25</sup>

UNS did not adopt a formal decision on this move and is not among the associations that have frozen their status in the PWG.

Publicly justifying the decision to freeze the status, ANEM pointed to the fact that in 2024, the prosecution filed 62 cases related to the safety of journalists, and that in as many as 34 cases the police did not respond to the prosecution's requests to collect and submit the information needed for further prosecution of those responsible.<sup>26</sup>

Given that the prosecutor's office belongs to the judicial branch of government and that the reporting mechanism established through the work of the PWG has proven its value, members of the PWG continued to report assaults and threats under the same principle even after the membership freeze.

Joint activities continued, such as visits by journalist and media associations from the PWG to local areas and meetings with local journalists, prosecutors and, to a lesser extent, police representatives. In the same way, the joint public appearance of journalist and media organizations from the PWG continued, as well as meetings in Belgrade, attended occasionally by the prosecutor's office.

### **Implementation of the PWG 2025 Action Plan**

The OSCE Mission to Serbia made a significant contribution to the efficient and comprehensive implementation of the PWG 2025 Action Plan. The document contained eight activities, all of which were successfully implemented (it is important to emphasize that ten visits to local communities were treated as one activity).

It is also important to point out that all institutions, organizations and associations, members of the PWG, participated in all activities enabling the implementation of the

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<sup>25</sup> See: <https://www.cenzolovka.rs/drzava-i-mediji/anem-zamrzava-clanstvo-u-stalnoj-radnoj-grupi-za-bezbednost-novinarar/#:~:text=novinarska%20i%20medijska%20udru%C5%BEenja,%20objavila%20da%20obustavljaju%20saradnju&text=%E2%80%9C%20SRG%20u%20Bajinoj%20Ba%C5%A1ti:%20Mediji%20i%20gra%C4%91ani%20pod%20pritiscima%20pred%20lokalne%20izbore>

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

Action Plan. This indicates their proactive approach and the importance they attribute to this safety mechanism, despite the frozen status.

- **Regular and extraordinary meetings of the PWG**

Given that the majority of representatives of journalist and media associations froze their participation in the work of the PWG in February, only one regular meeting was held on 22 December 2025 in Belgrade. Other meetings were not held because the freezing of membership primarily refers to the cessation of their attendance at regular and extraordinary sessions.

At the aforementioned meeting in December, problems faced by journalists and public prosecutors were discussed, and data on the actions of public prosecutors' offices in the first 11 months of 2025 were also discussed.

The OSCE representatives presented at that meeting the proposal of the new PWG 2026 Action Plan, in which the focus is on continuing visits to local areas and improving co-operation between local journalists, prosecutors and the police in solving cases of endangering the safety of journalists. All PWG members present supported the new Action Plan, the implementation of which will not be affected by the status of individual PWG members.

- **Visits of the PWG representatives to the local communities**

In order to further support the work of the PWG, providing assistance in responding to violence against journalists, as well as the continuous functioning of the system of contact points and SOS phone lines for reporting assaults against journalists, during 2025, the OSCE and ANEM organized ten visits to the following cities: Dimitrovgrad, Novi Pazar, Čačak, Niš, Požega, Kosjerić, Beograd, Novi Sad, Zaječar and Negotin. A total of 193 representatives of local media, prosecutor's offices and police attended these events. During the last three years, the PWG held more than 30 local meetings, which gathered around 500 representatives of the media, police and prosecutor's offices, contributing to the improvement of the overall safety of journalists in the country.

- **PWG Annual Report**

As part of the implementation of the 2025 Action Plan and the Rules of Procedure, the OSCE supported the preparation of the 2025 Activity Report of the PWG. The report was prepared jointly by representatives of the PWG from SPPO, UNS and OSCE. This report is being delivered to all relevant domestic and international stakeholders for the purpose of familiarizing them with the facts about the work and results of the PWG in 2025. The report is translated into English and published on the OSCE website, and on the websites of all institutions and organizations participating in the work of the PWG. Since the beginning of the work of the PWG, a total of five annual reports have been published - the first for the period 2017 - 2021, and then for the years 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025.

- **Quarterly newsletters on the PWG activities**

With the support of the OSCE, during 2025, the production and dissemination of quarterly bulletins, so-called newsletters, continued with the aim of informing journalists and the general public about the activities of the PWG, the results of investigations in individual cases, and other operational results.

The first quarterly bulletin covered the period from January to March 2025. According to SPPO data, during the first three months of 2025, 23 cases related to endangering the safety of journalists were filed in all public prosecutor's offices in Serbia - six in January, seven in February and ten in March.

According to the official data of the prosecutor's offices, in the second quarter of 2025, in the period from April to June, 25 new cases related to the safety of journalists were filed, which is two more cases compared to the previous quarter. Eight cases were filed in April, seven in May and ten in June.

The third quarterly bulletin covered the period from July to September 2025. According to the SPPO data, a total of 53 cases were recorded in that period - 23 in July, 21 in August and nine in September.

The fourth quarterly bulletin covered the period from October to December 2025. In this period, 33 cases were filed, which is 20 cases less than in the previous quarter. Ten cases were filed in October, nine in November and 14 in December.

- **Training for the prosecutor's office and the police on the safety of journalists**

On October 3, the OSCE and the PWG organized an annual training dedicated to improving the safety of journalists. It was attended by 54 representatives of the prosecution, the media and the police. At the opening of the event, the head of the OSCE Media Department addressed the participants, together with the public prosecutor of the SPPO, a representative of the European Union Delegation in Serbia, and the head of the Press and Communications Department of the Embassy of France in Serbia.

It was especially emphasized to the representatives of the prosecution and the police that journalists must be able to perform their work knowing that the competent authorities will stand by them and ensure their safety. This activity was implemented within the framework of the OSCE project "Strengthening freedom of expression and media freedom in Serbia", funded by the European Union.

- **PWG Study visit to France**

In the period from November 3 to 6, in order to support the work of the PWG, the OSCE organized a study visit to France and meetings with institutions and organizations dealing

with the safety of journalists and media freedom in this country. Ten members of the PWG had the opportunity to exchange experiences on existing national mechanisms for the protection of journalists' safety.

During the visit, members of the PWG met with the representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Culture, the Court of Appeal in Paris, as well as the Prosecutor's Office. Meetings were also held with representatives of the organization Reporters Without Borders, the Union of Journalists (SNJ-CGT), the investigative portal Mediapart, the French Observatory for Assaults against Media Freedom, the Council for Ethics and Mediation in Journalism, as well as UNESCO.

This activity was implemented within the framework of the OSCE project "Strengthening freedom of expression and media freedom in Serbia", funded by the European Union.

- **Observing the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists**

As part of the implementation of the PWG Action Plan and on the occasion of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, ANEM and OSCE organized an event dedicated to the safety of journalists, on November 2, in Belgrade. It was attended by 40 participants, together with Mr. Jan Braathu, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM).

- **Participation of the PWG members in international forums and conferences in order to improve knowledge related to international standards and best practices in the field of protection of journalists' safety**

In order to further improve the expertise of the PWG members, the OSCE supported the participation of 18 representatives of media and institutions from Serbia (including several PWG members) at the regional conference organized by RFoM in Sarajevo on 29 and 30 May.

The conference represented a platform for regional exchange on topics such as - the economics of public interest journalism in the era of large technology companies and artificial intelligence; legal and regulatory trends that shape the freedom and sustainability of the media; the safety of journalists; the future of public media services in South-Eastern Europe; consultations with young people on the development of a public interest framework for the future of journalism; and strengthening resistance to disinformation through fact-checking.

- **24/7 SOS hotline for free legal assistance to journalists victims of assaults**

The existence of a 24/7 SOS hotline for endangered journalists is one of the key activities that enables all cases of threats and assaults against media workers to be properly reported to the competent institutions. The need for the functioning SOS hotline was

recognized within the PWG, but also the previously existing Government Working Group for the Safety of Journalists. It was then determined that journalists do not have adequate legal assistance when their safety is threatened, and that it is necessary to hire lawyers and media experts who will be available to journalists on a daily basis to explain to them how a specific assault should be legally qualified in accordance with the law and what legal procedures should be initiated.

The main goal of this project is to increase the safety of media workers through education and information via the 24/7 SOS hotline, as well as building a stronger partnership and cooperation between the SPPO, MUP and media and journalist associations.

In the period between August, and the end of December 2025, 137 communications were recorded involving threats to journalists' safety. 26 calls were recorded in August and September, the same number in October, 40 calls in November, and 45 in December. Also, in connection with some of the mentioned cases, several telephone conversations and correspondence were conducted, and in some situations SOS line operators subsequently contacted journalists and editorial offices for additional consultations.

This project is implemented within the framework of the OSCE project "Strengthening freedom of expression and media freedom in Serbia", funded by the European Union.

## **VII. PWG 2026 Action plan**

As mentioned earlier, in February 2025, almost all journalist and media associations members of the PWG froze their status in this body. This primarily means that there were no regular meetings that normally take place every three months. Despite this, all established mechanisms for reporting and processing cases of assaults against journalists, primarily the *Contact Points System*, remained fully operational throughout the year.

Also, thanks to the engagement of all members of the PWG, and with the support of the OSCE, the last Action Plan of the PWG, which was valid from 2023 to 2025, was fully implemented through the implementation of all planned activities, despite the above-mentioned aggravating circumstances.

In addition, it is important to stress that the first PWG Action Plan for 2018 - 2019, which provided for 15 activities, was also fully implemented. The same applies to the Action Plan for 2021 - 2022, which provided for 11 activities.

Bearing all this in mind, it can be concluded that since the formation of this body in January 2017, the PWG and the OSCE have jointly implemented over 50 activities in the field of protecting the safety of journalists. The achieved results show that significant progress has been made in developing this body and the capacity of its members; more efficient exchange of information about assaults against media workers; reporting and

documenting incidents, but also promotion of the group and the achieved results in a large number of cities throughout Serbia.

In addition to the fact that with the expiration of the previous PWG Action Plan no further activity plan existed for this body after 2025, defining the new 2026 Action Plan has become particularly important considering the fact that the *Agreement on Cooperation and Measures to Improve the Safety of Journalists*, signed in December 2016, was fully implemented. The agreement provided for ten measures and all of them were implemented.

Finally, bearing in mind the current sensitive political moment, with the announced possibility of early elections, it seems that the very existence, a clear activity plan and even greater engagement of all PWG members are needed more than ever before. Accordingly, at the end of December 2025, a PWG meeting was held and the new 2026 Action Plan was presented and adopted.

Each of the planned activities contains information on the time frame for implementation, and a proposed partner which will participate in the implementation, with the support of the OSCE. All the defined activities became part of the new Action Plan based on the needs recognized in various reports and analyses conducted in previous years in the area of journalists' safety.

***Activity 1: Annual training of police and prosecution contact points on the implementation of the Binding Instructions of the Supreme Public Prosecutor regarding criminal cases of endangering the safety of journalists; application of official notes and the dismissal of criminal charges; violence against female journalists, and other topics from the sphere of public information in democratic societies***

Representatives of the media community believe that there are differences in the quality of work and commitment among individual prosecutor's offices and police administrations. They believe that it is necessary to establish more uniform practices at all levels and in the work of all contact points, which should entail even more efficient other stages of the procedure, such as collecting evidence, writing more grounded indictments, and general detection and prosecution of perpetrators. It is also a fact that the contact points of the prosecution and the police change from time to time and there is a constant need for additional training. Consequently, joint training will be organized in 2026 for representatives from the prosecution and the police. This training will cover the relevant topics aimed at improving the prosecution of criminal offences against journalists. These topics will include combating sexual and other gender-based violence, as well as addressing specific threats and harassment faced by female journalists.

|  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| Partners in the implementation of this activity: | OSCE, SPPo and Mol |
| Time frame:                                      | April 2026         |

### ***Activity 2: Visits of the PWG representatives to the local communities***

During the past two years, it was established that the presence of the PWG in local communities is extremely important. In certain cases, including OK Radio from Vranje<sup>27</sup>, it was one of the turning points that significantly contributed to a more efficient resolution of this case. The engagement of the PWG in local communities helps raise public awareness and alleviates some of the burdens faced by local journalists. It also sends a strong message that threats to journalists' safety will not go unpunished. The practice of PWG representatives visiting local communities must be continued in order to remain a regular activity, occurring at least once every three months, or more frequently if needed. That will be especially important in 2026, which is envisaged as an election year. During 2025 only, more than 10 local meetings were organized, and as many are planned for next year as well.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Partners in the implementation of this activity: | OSCE, ANEM, NUNS, UNS                          |
| Time frame:                                      | Almost each month starting from February 2026. |

### ***Activity 3: Panel discussion observing the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists***

The International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, on November 2, will be observed in partnership with the PWG and the OSCE. The Mission will play a key role in organizing the logistics for the event, while PWG members will contribute with defining the agenda, selecting speakers, inviting participants via their mailing lists, and announcing the event on their websites. The event will further promote the work of the PWG and inform key stakeholders in the country about safety of journalists, including data on assaults from the official prosecution databases and information from journalist associations - NUNS, UNS and NDNV.

|  |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Partners in the implementation of this activity: | OSCE, NUNS, UNS, NDNV, ANEM |
| Time frame:                                      | November 2026               |

### ***Activity 4: Preparation of the Annual Activity Report of the Permanent Working Group for Safety of Journalists.***

The PWG Rules of Procedure mandate the publication of semi-annual Activity Reports of the Group, which had not been done until the end of 2021. At the end of that year the first four-year Activity Report of the PWG was published, followed by the reports for each subsequent year, conclusive with this one for 2025. In order to continue complying with this important obligation and maintain the good practice of publishing annual reports,

<sup>27</sup> [Novinari: Hitno srušiti nelegalno izgrađeni objekat kojim je zazidan deo OK radija u Vranju - NUNS](#)

which significantly contributes to better public awareness of the Group's activities and boosts its credibility, two members of the PWG will work again on preparing the annual report, with support from OSCE Mission representatives.

|  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| Partners in the implementation of this activity: | OSCE, RPPO, AM             |
| Time frame:                                      | November and December 2026 |

***Activity 5: PWG study visit to one of the OSCE participating States aimed at fostering international cooperation and sharing experiences to enhance journalist safety***

In November 2025, representatives of the PWG attended a third study visit, this time to France (after the Netherlands in 2023 and Norway in 2024). According to the participants, this activity was highly successful, significantly improving the Group's coherence and providing new knowledge that can be applied to enhance work locally, which was covered by a comprehensive report. It is important to continue these activities, with the specific countries to be visited, selected based on an agreement between the Mission and the Group's member.

|   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Partner in the implementation of this activity: | Logistics and organization - OSCE |
| Time frame:                                     | May 2026                          |

***Activity 6: Participation of the PWG members in international forums and conferences in order to improve knowledge related to international standards and best practices in the field of protection of journalists' safety***

An exact timeframe for this activity cannot be determined at the moment, but it is important for the PWG to have the opportunity to send its members to international conferences, such as those organized by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Council of Europe, or to the International Journalism Festival in Perugia, as well as other professional meetings and consultations organized by international civil society organizations, including: Article 19, the Committee for Protection of Journalists, the International Press Institute and other similar co-operation projects between institutions and the non-governmental sector in Europe.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Partners in the implementation of this activity: | Logistics and organization - OSCE           |
| Time frame:                                      | During 2026, depending on the circumstances |

**Activity 7: Organization of regular quarterly and extraordinary meetings of the PWG**

Regular PWG sessions are held every three months, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure, while extraordinary sessions are held as needed. For the year 2026, regular

sessions should normally be scheduled for March, June, September and December. Certainly, the holding of these meetings will depend on the future status of the associations within the PWG, but it is important that this activity remains if status changes occur.

|   |                               |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Partner in the implementation of this activity: | OSCE and all PWG members      |
| Time frame:                                     | Depending on the developments |

### **Activity 8: Organization of training for journalists and other media workers on security during public gatherings**

Given that 2026 is announced as an election year, and due to the current socio-political context, it would be important for the PWG to organize a training for journalists. It would be dedicated to security during public gatherings, including protests and demonstrations. This was one of the recommendations from the report after the study visit to France. The PWG will be supported in this by the French unions of journalists as well as the European Federation of Journalists, primarily in the form of the participation of their experts through the preparation of the agenda and the lectures. Certainly, all journalist associations - NUNS, UNS and NDNV - will play an important role in the organization of the training.

|   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| Partner in the implementation of this activity: | OSCE, NUNS, UNS, NDNV |
| Time frame:                                     | March 2026            |

### **Activity 9: In-house trainings for journalists in editorial offices and safety workshops for female journalists and other media workers**

During 2026, at least seven three-day trainings on the safety of journalists in their editorial offices will be held. So far, trainings were held in the editorial offices of Danas, Beta and Radio-television Vojvodina. Some of the potential media beneficiaries for 2026 include: Adria News Network, Fonet, RTS, Ringier, Euronews, Radio 021, Južne Vesti, Mašina, Zoomer, Nova Ekonomija, Novi Magazin, Radio Sto Plus, Radar, Vreme and Tanjug.

Additionally, it is planned to hold at least eight workshops during 2026 for the safety of female journalists and media workers in different cities of Serbia. Two training sessions have already been held in Belgrade.

|   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| Partner in the implementation of this activity: | ANEM              |
| Time frame:                                     | TBC - during 2026 |

### **Activity 10: Trainings on the safety of journalists for university staff**

It is planned to hold at least four one-day training sessions for university staff providing lectures to future journalists at faculties regarding the safety of journalists: the Faculty of Sports of the Union University in Belgrade; the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad; the Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Belgrade, and the Faculty of Media and Communications of the Singidunum University in Belgrade. The invitation was also sent to representatives of the University of Kragujevac.

|   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| Partner in the implementation of this activity: | ANEM              |
| Time frame:                                     | TBC - during 2026 |

**Activity 11: Training sessions for journalism students, on security and familiarization with the work of the PWG (visits to institutions, organizations and attendance at the PWG meetings)**

At the regional conference on amendments to the Criminal Code for the better protection of journalists and the presentation of the results of the PWG work, organized by UNS in December 2025, the most numerous in the audience were journalism students from the Faculty of Political Sciences. It was one of the indicators that journalism students are interested in the topic of legal and practical protection of journalists. By the end of 2026, five two-day training sessions will be organized for journalism students at state universities in Belgrade, Novi Sad and Niš, with the second day of training being reserved for study visits to judicial institutions, organizations members of the PWG and attending the PWG meetings. At least 50 journalism students will undergo this type of training.

|   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| Partner in the implementation of this activity: | UNS               |
| Time frame:                                     | TBC - during 2026 |

**Time frame:**

| 2026        |      |      |      |      |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |      |
|-------------|------|------|------|------|-----|------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|
| Title       | Jan. | Feb. | Mar. | Apr. | May | June | July | Aug. | Sept. | Oct. | Nov. | Dec. |
| Activity 1  |      |      |      | x    |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |      |
| Activity 2  |      | X    | x    | x    | x   | x    | x    |      | X     | x    | x    | x    |
| Activity 3  |      |      |      |      |     |      |      |      |       |      | x    |      |
| Activity 4  |      |      |      |      |     |      |      |      |       |      | x    | x    |
| Activity 5  |      |      |      |      | x   |      |      |      |       |      | x    |      |
| Activity 6  | x    | X    | x    | x    | x   | x    | x    | X    | X     | x    | x    | x    |
| Activity 7  |      |      | x    |      |     | x    |      |      | X     |      |      | x    |
| Activity 8  |      |      | x    |      |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |      |
| Activity 9  |      | X    | x    | x    | x   | x    |      |      | X     | x    | x    | x    |
| Activity 10 |      | X    |      | x    |     | x    |      |      |       |      | x    |      |
| Activity 11 |      |      | x    |      | x   | x    |      |      | X     | x    |      |      |

## **VIII. Conclusions and recommendations**

- From the beginning of the record keeping of cases involving the endangerment of journalists' safety in 2016 until the end of 2025, a total of 724 cases were filed with the public prosecutor's offices of the Republic of Serbia. According to the statistical data of the prosecutor's offices for this period, a total of 408 cases, or 56.35%, were closed, while 316 cases (43.65%) are still pending and are in various stages of the proceedings.
- Out of the total number of closed cases (408), 98 cases were resolved by the court's decision, and 310 cases by the prosecutor's decision. Of the 98 cases that were resolved by the court's decision, in 79 cases a conviction was rendered; in 12 cases there was an acquittal; while in seven cases the prosecution's indictment was dismissed or rejected.
- On the other hand, 310 cases were resolved by prosecutor's decision. In 146 cases (47.1%) a decision was rendered to dismiss the criminal charges, while in 139 cases (44.84%) an official note was made that there is no basis for initiating criminal proceedings, i.e. there are no elements of a criminal act for which prosecution is undertaken ex officio.
- **In 2025**, based on the SPPO records, **134 cases related to acts against journalists were filed**. Namely, six in January, seven in February, ten in March, eight in April, seven in May, ten in June, 23 in July, 21 in August, nine in September, ten in October, nine in November, and 14 in December.
- During 2024, public prosecutor's offices filed a total of 65 cases related to events affecting journalists, which means that during 2025, 106.15% more cases were filed than in 2024.
- The first-instance or final decision was rendered in 33 cases, which represents 24.63% of the total number, indicating a slightly lower efficiency compared to 2024, when 27.42% were closed.
- In the cases filed during 2025, three guilty verdicts were pronounced. This is more than in 2024, when only one guilty verdict was pronounced. However, it is significantly less than in 2023, when guilty verdicts were pronounced in 12 cases.
- In 38 cases filed in 2025, the identity of the assailant is known, while in 96 cases the identity of the reported person is still unknown to the prosecution. In those

cases, the conduct of criminal proceedings is conditioned primarily by the discovery of the identity of the perpetrator by the police.

- Also, the charges filed in 2025 most often relate to various forms of verbal or written threatening messages (101 cases). Additionally, charges were also filed for physical assaults (28 cases), insults and harassment (three cases), persecution (one case) and confiscation of other people's property (one case).
- In 2025, there was a significant increase in the number of physical assaults against journalists, by as much as 366.67% compared to 2024, when six such charges were initiated.
- Of the total number of cases, 65 were raised before the Special Public Prosecutor's Office for High-Tech Crime, representing 48.51% of all cases. This indicates that a large number of charges still refer to illegal behaviour on the Internet, primarily on social networks. The percentage of these cases in 2025 was reduced compared to 2024 when that percentage amounted to 67.69% of the total number of cases.
- In addition, there is a noticeable decrease in the number of cases filed in connection with acts affecting female journalists - 47.06% of the total number of injured parties in 2025, while this share in 2024 was 54% of the total number of injured parties.
- In 2025, UNS recorded 261 incidents of assaults against journalists, which is 150 more than in the previous year. A drastic deterioration was noted in physical assaults, with 60 recorded, while there were 13 last year.
- In 2025, NUNS recorded 380 incidents related to the safety of journalists and the media, a significant increase compared to 168 incidents in the previous year. This journalistic association recorded 116 physical assaults, which is a drastic increase compared to 18 in the last year.
- According to journalist associations, a special security risk for journalists in the previous year was a tent settlement set up in the central Pionirski park of Belgrade, between the buildings of the Presidency and the National Assembly. Threats were often directed towards journalists and media workers from that fenced area and inside it, they and their work equipment sustained physical assaults, in some cases even in the presence of the police.
- ANEM published the Chronology of assaults against media workers in the area between Pionirski Park and the Serbian Parliament. According to the data from this report, during the nine months since the tents were set up in Pionirski Park, which then extended to the Serbian Parliament, at least 25 cases of interference with work and assaults against media workers were recorded in and around that fenced area.

- The majority of journalist and media associations participating in the PWG work (NUNS, AOM, ANEM, AM and NDNV) decided in February 2025 to freeze membership in this body, as part of a broader initiative of civil society organizations to suspend co-operation with the legislative and executive authorities. Despite this, all established mechanisms for reporting and processing cases of assaults against journalists, primarily the *Contact Points System*, remained fully operational throughout the year.
- The OSCE provided a key contribution to the efficient and comprehensive implementation of the PWG 2025 Action Plan. The document contained eight activities, all of which were successfully implemented (it is important to emphasize that ten visits to local communities were recorded as one single activity).
- Since its formation in January 2017, the PWG and the OSCE have jointly implemented over 50 activities in the field of protecting the safety of journalists. The achieved results show that significant progress has been made in developing the PWG as an institution and strengthening the capacity of its members; improving mechanisms for exchanging information about assaults against media workers; recording and documenting incidents; and promoting the work of the Group and the achieved results in a large number of cities throughout Serbia.
- The PWG organized ten visits to the following places during 2025, with help of the OSCE and ANEM: Dimitrovgrad, Novi Pazar, Čačak, Niš, Požega, Kosjerić, Beograd, Novi Sad, Zaječar and Negotin. A total of 193 representatives of local media, prosecutor's offices and police attended these events. During the last three years, the PWG held more than 30 local meetings, which gathered around 500 representatives of the media, police and prosecutor's offices, contributing to the improvement of the overall safety of journalists in the country.
- Bearing in mind the current sensitive political moment, with the announced possibility of early elections, it seems that the very existence, a clear activity plan and even greater engagement of all PWG members are needed more than ever before. Accordingly, at the end of December 2025, a PWG meeting was held and the new 2026 Action Plan was presented and adopted.
- Given that PWG is the only existing platform for dialogue on the safety of journalists, the PWG must continue fulfilling its important mandate by finding new, creative ways to combat impunity for assaults against journalists, intensifying its efforts, including crime prevention, and, importantly, securing additional support from all relevant stakeholders, including the highest political authorities. As before, the OSCE Mission to Serbia will continue supporting the PWG in the implementation of the 2026 Action Plan.