

VII CONCLUSION

October has seen several drastic cases of physical assaults on journalists, one of which, to make things worse, was perpetrated by the police during the riots of the opponents of the Gay Pride March on October 10 in Belgrade. There were also new threats that had increased the number of reporters in Serbia put under direct police protection, since their lives were at risk. On the other hand, there is no information as to whether the police officers that took part in the beating of “Danas” reporter Aleksandar Roknic have been subject to at least disciplinary action. Similarly, it remains unknown if any charges have been pressed against the attackers on “Kurir”’s reporter Oliver Nikolic and his associates in the village of Mihajlovac near Smederevo. The putting under police protection of B92 correspondent from Zajecar Sonja Kamenkovic, who was threatened by a suspended police officer from Majdanpek, is perhaps a sign that law enforcement authorities are taking threats against journalists seriously this time. On the other hand, the fact that other reporters, such as for example Vladimir Mitric, the correspondent of “Vecernje Novosti” from Loznica, who has been under police protection for more than three years – during which time the people who ordered the attack against him were never identified – or Brankica Stankovic, who has been under police guard for ten months, can hardly serve as consolation to anyone. The same is true for the case of the person indicted for threatening the Stankovic’s security showing up in a talk show of a public service broadcaster as a relevant collocutor in the company of members of parliament, as well as for the fact that police protection makes the job of the protected reporters difficult. The month of October has also seen a drastic misuse of freedom of expression, with an unprecedented violation of privacy and illicit release of information about criminal proceedings against a juvenile person, with the purpose of suppressing the strike of the Trade Union of the Serbian Judiciary. The extent to which the journalist profession, as well as the judiciary, have been downgraded in Serbia, is well illustrated by the fact that someone in the judiciary is prepared to leak confidential information to the media in order to smear a trade union leader and the members of her family, as well as the fact that the media are willing to publish such information, in breach of all ethical and professional standards. The Penal Code also seems to make life difficult for journalists, by providing for a penalty of up to two years for such acts. The public is also waiting for the Draft Media Strategy announced for early November by Culture Minister Nebojsa Bradic, hoping that it will point to possible directions for the development of Serbian media and mechanisms for the protection thereof from similar attacks. It remains to be seen if the Strategy will help achieving those goals.