

RESPONSE TO THE SNS LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE EUROPEAN UNION AND ITS MEMBER STATES

14 February 2025

The Free Citizens Movement (PSG) and the Green-Left Front (ZLF) **welcome** the fact that the Government of the Republic of Serbia has finally, after three months, **recognized the legitimacy** of the students' demands and their months-long protests. However, this is the only part of their message we agree with. All other statements, whether conveyed through official or unofficial channels, serve only to **create a false narrative** about the current political and social crisis, its true causes, and the (non)existence of **political will** to resolve it through **legitimate and democratic means**.

We call on the **European Commission, the Council of the EU, and the European Parliament** to **seriously acknowledge and support** the demands of students in Serbia. These demands are not just an expression of domestic discontent; they are directly linked to the **rule of law, ensuring that institutions work effectively and within their mandate, and democratic accountability**, which the EU expects from Serbia. Students are advocating for the **reforms** essential for the country's democratic transformation. Therefore, we expect the **European Union not to remain passive** but to send a **strong message of support** for the students and their legitimate demands.

We welcome the **debate on Serbia in the European Parliament held on 11 February 2025**, particularly the **statements from Liberal-Democrats, Greens, and Social Democrats**, who have **clearly supported the protests in Serbia**. We believe this is a **step forward** that should encourage other **European institutions** to follow suit.

The **SNS government continues to deceive** both the domestic and international public. Until it **commits to fulfilling student demands, stops its hostile rhetoric, and enacts trust-building measures, there can be no dialogue in good faith**.

To provide a **realistic view of the situation**, we will **systematically refute false claims** made by **Serbian government officials**.

Protests and attacks on students

According to Serbian law, citizens have the right to spontaneous gatherings without prior notice to the police. However, this does not exempt the police from their duty to secure such gatherings from the moment they become aware of them, ensuring public order, the protection of property, and the

physical safety of citizens. **The spontaneous, nearly daily 15-minute traffic blockades**—held in honour of the 15 victims who tragically lost their lives when a canopy collapsed at the Novi Sad railway station—**began in mid-November 2024. Yet, until January 16, 2025, the police failed to secure a single one of these gatherings.** This led to serious incidents, **including physical attacks and multiple attempts to run over protesters** standing peacefully on the street.

In most of these cases, **the attackers were members—or even officials—of the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS)**¹. That these were not mere spontaneous clashes is evidenced by the statements of high-ranking state officials, who legitimized violence and openly defended such acts². **Leading this rhetoric were none other than President Aleksandar Vučić**³ and **Belgrade Mayor Aleksandar Šapić**.⁴

Officials from the **Ministry of Internal Affairs only began securing spontaneous gatherings and announced protests in accordance with their legal obligations**⁵ after a female student suffered **severe, life-threatening injuries** when a driver, attempting to “break through the blockade”, hit her at full speed.⁶ This incident sparked extreme public outrage, leading to mass protests involving tens and hundreds of thousands of citizens across almost every city and municipality in Serbia in the following days.⁷

Alongside the physical threats against protesters, a relentless smear campaign was conducted against students throughout the three months of protests. Pro-government media, with the active participation of top state officials, spread fear and disinformation.

President Aleksandar Vučić, National Assembly President Ana Brnabić⁸, and **Prime Minister Miloš Vučević**⁹ repeatedly claimed that foreign (specifically Western) intelligence agencies were behind the protests in Serbia, **most frequently singling out Croatian intelligence services.**

As a result, personal documents—including the passport—of a protest participant who holds dual Serbian and Croatian citizenship were publicly exposed.¹⁰ **Additionally, security services tracked and tabloids publicly reported on and endangered a group of young people from Croatia** who had been in Belgrade at the end of 2024. They were falsely accused of attempting to destabilize Serbia. The situation escalated further when an **Erste Stiftung program/seminar was abruptly shut down and**

¹ [Napadač na studente 22. novembra 2025. godine funkcioner SNS \(Students attacked on November 22, 2025 by SNS official\)](#)

² [Damir Zobenica organizuje napade na proteste \(Damir Zobenica organizes attacks on protesters\)](#)

³ [Aleksandar Vučić – Kako da uhapsimo čoveka koji je išao svojim putem \(Aleksandar Vucic – How do we arrest a man who was just minding his own business?\)](#)

⁴ [Šapić: Pa šta ako su predsednici opština ulazili u sukob sa građanima na blokadama? \(Sapic: So what if municipal Presidents go into conflicts with citizens at the blockades?\)](#)

⁵ [Aleksandar Vučić – Policija da obezbeđuje skupove \(Aleksandar Vučić – "The police must secure protests"\)](#)

⁶ [Automobil uleteo u masu, povređena studentkinja \(Car plows into crowd, injuring a female student\)](#)

⁷ <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/tens-thousands-join-student-led-protests-belgrade-2025-01-17/>

⁸ [Ana Brnabić – Blokadna kuharica \(Ana Brnabić – The Blockade Cookbook\)](#)

⁹ [Miloš Vučević – Na delu obojena revolucija \(Miloš Vučević – "A Color Revolution in Action"\)](#)

¹⁰ [Novosti ugrožavaju bezbednost studenata objavljujući fotografije pasoša \(„Novosti” endangers student safety by publishing passport photos\)](#)

several young people from Croatia, Austria, Romania, and other countries were expelled from Serbia.¹¹

The latest major incident, which nominally led to the **resignation of Prime Minister Miloš Vučević, occurred on the night of January 27–28, 2025, when a group of men assaulted two students with batons, leaving one female student with severe bodily injuries**¹². The attack took place in front of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) offices, as students were putting up protest stickers. **Several masked and armed individuals emerged from the SNS party office and carried out the assault.**¹³

Parliament, civil society and the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media

It is important to note that non-institutional political struggle has become the only remaining way to express dissent and political opposition in Serbia, as **all democratic channels have been rendered completely inaccessible to opposition representatives**. In this context, we emphasize that **the last session of the National Assembly was held on November 25, 2024, in an extremely undemocratic atmosphere**, for which the direct responsibility lies with National Assembly President Ana Brnabić.

During that session, **parliamentary opposition representatives**, in accordance with the law and parliamentary procedures, **submitted a motion of no confidence against Prime Minister Miloš Vučević**. However, **Ana Brnabić unlawfully refused to put it to a vote, in direct violation of all legal provisions**.¹⁴ This led to chaotic scenes¹⁵ during the session and resulted in the adoption of the state budget without any debate¹⁶. Despite previously scheduled discussions and opposition-led initiatives, the National Assembly has not convened since that session.

On the other hand, **representatives of the parliamentary opposition have been completely absent from RTS (Serbia's public broadcaster) and other national television channels for over three months, while the President of the Republic has appeared almost daily, with unlimited airtime.**¹⁷

When it comes to the government's treatment of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Serbia, it can be described as extremely hostile. **NGO representatives are labelled as foreign agents, harassed at border crossings, subjected to special investigations into their personal finances, and targeted by daily smear campaigns in pro-government tabloids.**¹⁸

This **hostility** was particularly evident during the **selection process for members of the REM (Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media) Council**. In accordance with legal provisions, some NGOs nominated candidates with the necessary expertise and integrity to restore order in media regulation,

¹¹ [Proterivanje građanki Hrvatske \(Expulsion of Croatian citizens\)](#)

¹² [Miloš Vučević podneo ostavku \(Miloš Vučević resigns\)](#)

¹³ [Napadač na studente u Novom Sadu pušten iz pritvora \(Student attacker in Novi Sad released from custody\)](#)

¹⁴ [Ana Brnabić odbila da stavi predlog opozicije na sednicu \(Ana Brnabić refuses to put the opposition's motion on the agenda\)](#)

¹⁵ [Fizički sukob poslanika u Narodnoj skupštini \(Physical altercation between MPs in the National Assembly\)](#)

¹⁶ [Usvojen budžet bez rasprave \(Budget passed without debate\)](#)

¹⁷ [Vest godine, Vučića danas nema u medijima \(News of the year: Vučić is not in the media today\)](#)

¹⁸ [Policija Srbije deveti put zadržala Sofiju Todorović \(Serbian police detain Sofija Todorović for the ninth time\)](#)

a requirement for Serbia to receive funding from the Western Balkans Growth Plan. However, the government completely violated the law, accepted candidates from illegitimate GONGO (government-organized NGOs) groups, and launched a media campaign against seven independent candidates^{19 20}, while actively promoting individuals closely tied to the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS). As a result, seven independent candidates withdrew their candidacies, leaving the entire process in deadlock, as REM can no longer be legally constituted.²¹

Unfulfilled student demands

At the end of its letter, the Government of Serbia summarizes the fulfilment of students' demands, once again showing that the only thing the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) cares about is formal compliance, rather than substantive action.

1. Transparent investigation and accountability for the collapse of the canopy at the Novi Sad railway station

It is true that an investigation has been initiated, and legal proceedings have been launched against certain individuals mentioned in the letter. **However, what is missing is transparency from the prosecution, which has not issued a single statement on the progress of the investigation or its findings.**

The **public also remains uninformed** about whether and how the competent prosecution has acted on the **testimony of Jelena Tanasković**, at the time the director of Serbian Railways, who explicitly stated that **Minister Goran Vesić personally oversaw all operational aspects of the station's reconstruction and that President Vučić was directly aware of the project's details.**

Another **concerning issue is that none of the contractors or subcontractors from the company "Starting" have been detained**, even though it is standard practice in such cases to ensure evidence preservation and prevent witness tampering.

As for the investigation into potential corruption related to the project, **it only began months after the incident, and even then, only due to public pressure.** The delay in launching the investigation has created a huge window **for potential evidence tampering.** Corruption was evident from day one, as the project cost skyrocketed from €3 million to €16 million upon completion.

¹⁹ [Novi napadi na Dragana Popovića i Maju Stojanović \(New attacks on Dragan Popović and Maja Stojanović\)](#)

²⁰ [Bakarec napad na Hubača \(Bakarec's attack on Hubač\)](#)

²¹ [Sedam kandidata povuklo kandidaturu za članove Saveta REM \(Seven candidates withdraw from REM Council selection\)](#)

2. Publication of all relevant documents related to the Novi Sad railway station renovation

The Serbian Government correctly stated in its letter that it has published thousands of documents. However, it conveniently **omitted the fact that this was done in three separate releases, each time claiming that nothing more remained to be disclosed**. This completely undermined trust in the completeness and credibility of the published documents.

3. Ending legal proceedings against protesters and releasing all detainees

President Aleksandar Vučić could not issue pardons for citizens who were never convicted in the first place. Instead, **he signed an order halting their prosecution for non-existent crimes, once again demonstrating the state's complete lack of judicial independence**.

Another **key demand was for criminal and political accountability for all those who attacked students at the protests, as well as for officials who incited such violence**. However, **no such accountability has been enforced to date**.

4. Increased funding for education and educational reforms

The government has formally declared its intention to fully meet this demand. However, **due to past failures, students refuse to accept a funding increase through a simple government decree** and instead demand a systemic solution through legal amendments.

These amendments have not yet been discussed, **as the ruling SNS party has been blocking the convening of the National Assembly for over three months**.

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