

Serbia

by Miloš Damjanović

Capital: Belgrade
Population: 7.098 million
GNI/capita, PPP: \$13,420

Source: World Bank *World Development Indicators*.

Nations in Transit Ratings and Averaged Scores

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
National Democratic Governance	4.00	4.00	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	4.00	4.25
Electoral Process	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.50
Civil Society	2.75	2.75	2.50	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25
Independent Media	3.75	3.75	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.25	4.50	4.50
Local Democratic Governance	3.75	3.75	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
Judicial Framework and Independence	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50
Corruption	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25
Democracy Score	3.79	3.79	3.71	3.64	3.64	3.64	3.64	3.68	3.75	3.82

NOTE: The ratings reflect the consensus of Freedom House, its academic advisers, and the author(s) of this report. If consensus cannot be reached, Freedom House is responsible for the final ratings. The ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 7 the lowest. The Democracy Score is an average of ratings for the categories tracked in a given year. The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author(s).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the course of 2016, Serbia's democracy further deteriorated, continuing the negative trend of the previous two years. While improvements were visible in some areas related to European Union (EU) accession, they were offset by negative developments in electoral process, democratic governance, and media freedom. As a result, Serbia's democracy score has dropped to the lowest level since 2005.

For most of 2016, Serbia was caught up in its electoral dynamics. In January, Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić announced that early parliamentary elections would be held alongside the spring local and regional elections. Vučić justified the move by claiming the need for a renewed mandate to continue with important reforms and EU accession. However, given that his government had the support of at least four-fifths of members of parliament (MPs) and faced remarkably little political or societal opposition, it was unclear why he considered a renewed mandate necessary. Indeed, since Vučić and the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) came to power in 2012, these were the second snap elections to be held on their watch. And in December, Vučić raised the possibility of yet another early election in 2017.

The prime minister remained within his constitutional rights in calling for snap elections, but Vučić and his SNS party were clearly keen to secure another four years in power while public support was still high and the opposition remained in disarray. The election eventually took place on April 24 and, similar to the vote in 2014, SNS won an absolute majority. Despite his landslide victory, Vučić delayed government formation, and it was not until mid-August that Serbia had a government with a full mandate to govern. The protracted campaign period between January and April and the delay afterward meant that the country was without a functioning government for much of the year. Vučić, who seemed to enjoy that power and public attention were even more squarely concentrated on him in the absence of a government, offered little justification other than that he was too busy hosting foreign delegations—an explanation that lacked credibility in the eyes of many.

Overall, while the outcome of the elections reflected the will of the people, there was a significant deterioration in the conditions of the vote compared to previous electoral cycles. The influence of the ruling SNS over the media, its extensive exploitation of state resources, the party's huge financial advantage compared to its opponents, and widespread reports of political pressure on voters ahead of election day were just some of the elements that contributed to the creation of an electoral playing field substantially skewed in favor of the ruling party. On election day, an abnormal number of irregularities took place that, while not widespread enough to undermine the overall legitimacy of the vote, could have influenced the final outcome of the election given how close certain opposition parties were to falling below the parliamentary threshold. Opposition claims that the government "stole" the election were exaggerated, but circumstantial evidence does indicate that the observed irregularities were more likely the result of a systematic effort to "massage" the outcome in favor of SNS than accidental and unrelated mistakes.

Despite the fact that for much of the year Serbia's government was either in preelection mode or only had a technical mandate, it did achieve some notable results. Efforts to stabilize public finances and implement a fiscal consolidation program agreed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) proceeded apace, even exceeding IMF targets and reversing the growth of public debt a year ahead of expectations. Economic growth during the course of the year also exceeded expectations. In accession negotiations with the EU, the government managed to secure the opening of Chapters 23 and 24 relating to rule of law, the judiciary, and fundamental rights in July, as well as Chapters 5 (Public Procurement) and 25 (Science and Research) in December. Progress, albeit slow, was also made in negotiations on normalizing relations between Belgrade and Pristina, while relations with other countries in the region remained on a generally positive trajectory, with the exception of Croatia.

Some modest improvements took place in the Serbian judicial system, including the passage of new laws that helped reduce the overall backlog of cases and improved access to trial. Yet, these were more than offset by what has become known as the "Savamala case." On the night of April 24, masked men closed off a street in downtown Belgrade and bulldozed the majority of private properties there to

make way for a government-backed, private real-estate development project, the Belgrade Waterfront. In the process, they also illegally detained anyone present in the area. Vučić later stated that senior members of the Belgrade city government were behind the operation, and an investigation by the Office of the Serbian Ombudsman concluded that police failure to respond to calls for help from the area was part of collusion at the highest levels. With the official investigation failing to make clear progress, the Savamala case in effect showed that the rule of law could, for a period of time, be suspended when it suited Serbian officials.

No positive developments took place in the media sphere; journalists continued to complain of political pressure, and self-censorship was rife across the sector. Following the elections, authorities moved to purge the regional public broadcaster RT Vojvodina of critical editors and journalists. Investigative journalists, in particular, continued to face frequent threats and intimidation attempts.

On a more positive note, the vibrancy of civil society was visible in the way that many citizens chose to respond to the negative developments described above. In Belgrade, thousands of people took to the streets during much of the spring and summer, joining protests organized by the “Let’s not drown Belgrade” movement against the waterfront development and demanding that the authorities start an investigation into the Savamala case and prosecute those responsible. In Novi Sad, several hundred protesters demonstrated on several occasions against the dismissals of journalists and editors from RT Vojvodina.

Score Changes:

- **National Democratic Governance rating declined from 4.00 to 4.25** due to the fact that for most of 2016 the business of governing the country took a back seat to an unreasonably prolonged election cycle and government formation process; also significant was a specific incident where the rule of law was effectively suspended to allow for demolition of private property and make way for a government-backed real-estate development project.
- **Electoral Process rating declined from 3.25 to 3.50** amidst an evident unleveling of the electoral playing field among contestants in favor of the ruling parties and numerous irregularities that occurred on election day.

As a result, Serbia’s Democracy Score declined from 3.75 to 3.82.

Outlook for 2017: Regularly scheduled presidential elections are due in April 2017, yet intense speculation about the candidates had already begun in the fall and winter of 2016, with mentions of Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić himself. All of this suggests that the electoral contest will be very heated. Given the problems identified in the 2016 elections, both ahead of voting and on election day, it will be important to monitor the conduct of the vote.

The government is expected to open further chapters in the accession negotiations with the EU, as well as bring the current economic reform program agreed upon with the IMF to successful completion. Related to EU accession, the government has announced constitutional amendments for 2017, including changes to improve constitutional guarantees for judicial independence. It will be important to observe whether accession negotiations in Chapters 23 and 24 deliver rule of law improvements.

MAIN REPORT

National Democratic Governance

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
4.00	4.00	4.00	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	4.00	4.25

- Because of the unusually protracted election cycle, 2016 was a largely wasted year from a governance standpoint. After much speculation during the previous year, Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić announced in January 2016 that parliamentary elections would take place alongside regularly scheduled local elections in April.¹ The early announcement meant that the business of governing the country took a back seat to formal and informal election campaigning during the first four months of the year. After the elections, despite the outright victory of the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), Vučić delayed formation of his new government for three and a half months, leaving Serbia with a technical government but no full mandate to govern until the middle of August.
- While the local and Vojvodina regional elections were regularly scheduled, there seemed to be little real justification for the holding of snap parliamentary elections. Vučić argued that he wanted a reinvigorated mandate to pursue reforms until 2020, as well as to reaffirm public support for Serbia's European Union (EU) accession path.² Most independent observers were skeptical of this justification, however, given the government's huge majority, unchallenged reform mandate, and broad political consensus over EU accession. Instead, they argued that the real reasons were political and personal. Vučić, the country's most popular politician, preferred to focus campaigning in the local and Vojvodina provincial elections around his own personality to ensure the best result for SNS, and aimed to secure a further four years in power while his party's popularity was still high.³
- With the SNS coalition winning an absolute majority in the parliamentary elections, there also seemed little justification for why it took more than three months to form a new government. Vučić, as prime minister-designate, at times declared that he was too busy hosting important foreign delegations, adding that the country was in any case well run.⁴ At other times, Vučić or tabloids close to SNS suggested that the delay was the result of foreign powers interfering in the choice of ministers.⁵ Neither justification appeared particularly plausible, and the suggestion that Vučić had more pressing matters than finding time to form the government was seen as particularly problematic. Some observers suggested that the SNS leader reveled in demonstrating that he could run the country single-handedly without a government, while at the same time making it clear to his own SNS officials and potential allies that he alone makes the decisions.⁶
- Despite these delays, the Serbian government did achieve some noteworthy results. In July and December, it opened new chapters in the EU accession process, including key ones on rule of law and fundamental rights.⁷ It also made impressive progress in consolidating public finances and implementing the Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). As a result, Serbia will likely undershoot its budget deficit target in 2017 and begin reducing its worryingly high public debt.⁸
- However, one very negative episode and its aftermath arguably outweighed any progress made during 2016. On the night of April 24, masked men with bulldozers entered Hercegovačka Street in the Savamala area of Belgrade and demolished a number of private properties to clear land for the Belgrade Waterfront, a government-backed, elite real-estate development project. Although some, but not all, of the properties may have been constructed without permits, the demolition team had no official orders and did not follow due legal process. The masked men illegally detained night watchmen and other passersby in the area for several hours, seizing their personal documents and phones, and hence preventing them from alerting anyone. Perhaps most disturbingly, police ignored calls to come to the assistance of those detained or whose properties had been demolished.⁹

- Faced with public pressure and outrage, Belgrade Mayor Siniša Mali, numerous other SNS city and national officials, and the prime minister denied any official involvement at first,¹⁰ but as the protests grew, Vučić declared in June that “senior city officials” were responsible for the demolitions.¹¹
- The Savamala case, as it came to be known, in effect showed that the rule of law could be arbitrarily suspended when it suited individuals in positions of power in Serbia.¹² Despite the prime minister’s admission that senior city officials were behind the demolitions, neither the police nor the public prosecution took steps to prosecute them by year’s end. An investigation carried out by the Office of the Serbian Ombudsman found clear evidence that the failure of the police to respond to calls for assistance was not the consequence of individual omissions but was “organized and implemented within the framework of a previously prepared plan and issued orders” from the highest levels of the police.¹³

Electoral Process

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.50

- Early parliamentary as well as regularly scheduled local elections were held in Serbia on April 24. The ruling SNS emerged victorious on all levels, retaining power at the national level and winning control over the Vojvodina provincial government as well as a number of local governments previously under opposition control. However, significant circumstantial evidence suggests that numerous irregularities on election day were likely part of a systematic attempt to manipulate the election result in favor of the ruling party rather than isolated incidents.
- Similar to two years earlier, SNS won a landslide victory in the parliamentary elections, gaining 48.25 percent of the votes and 131 seats—almost exactly the same share of votes as in the March 2014 snap elections, but 27 seats fewer. The main reason for the difference was the far lower number of “wasted votes” (votes cast for parties that did not pass the 5-percent electoral threshold), making the winning party’s proportion of seats much closer to its actual share of votes. The runners-up were the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) and its coalition partners with 10.95 percent and 29 seats, while the ultra-right Serbian Radical Party (SRS) returned to the parliament for the first time since the 2012 elections, finishing third with 8.1 percent of votes and 22 seats. The “Enough is Enough” (DJB) movement led by Saša Radulović and campaigning on a platform of anticorruption, anticlientelism, and economic liberalism entered parliament for the first time, winning 6.02 percent of votes and 16 seats—the same share of seats and votes as won by the Democratic Party (DS). A right-wing coalition of the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) and the Dveri movement scraped past the electoral threshold winning 5.04 percent of votes and 13 seats, while the coalition around the Social Democratic Party (SDS) of former President Boris Tadić won 5.02 percent of votes and 13 seats as well. Parties representing Serbia’s ethnic minorities won 10 seats.¹⁴
- A number of international and local observers monitored the elections, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA). In their postelection reports, the OSCE and CRTA agreed that fundamental freedoms were respected and that the results of the election broadly reflected the will of the electorate, yet both flagged significant problems surrounding the conduct of the elections.¹⁵
- The OSCE report indicated a clear deterioration in electoral conditions and an increase in problems already present in 2014. Unlike numerous previous election cycles, the OSCE concluded that “biased media coverage, undue advantage of incumbency and a blurring of distinction between state and party activities unlevelled the playing field for contestants.”¹⁶ Moreover, it noted that “widespread reports of the ruling parties exerting pressure on voters...raised concerns over the ability of voters to cast their vote freely.”¹⁷ Finally, the OSCE was much more critical of the media environment than in

previous postelection reports, citing a clear bias in favor of the ruling SNS, particularly among broadcast media. Overall, the OSCE found that “these factors could curtail the voters’ ability to make an informed opinion of the contestants and their platforms.”¹⁸

- Just as worrying was the frequency of irregularities reported on or after election day, which suggested a deterioration in the integrity of the voting process. According to CRTA, serious incidents and/or irregularities (such as failing to check the identity of voters before allowing them to vote, allowing voters to vote multiple times, photographing ballot papers, etc.) occurred at 4 percent of the polling stations monitored by the group.¹⁹ In its postelection report, CRTA concluded that, while the number of irregularities was not such that it brought into question the legitimacy of the process as a whole, they “could have influenced the final election result,” especially given that two party lists were hovering on the edge of the electoral threshold.²⁰
- Opposition parties went further, accusing the ruling SNS of a systematic attempt to “steal” the election.²¹ In particular, they produced evidence of polling station protocols (containing results of the count) being tampered with in order to inflate the votes of SNS and deflate that of opposition parties, as well as vote buying and cases of dead voters supposedly voting.²² Opposition leaders claimed that this was part of the ruling party’s attempt to push opposition lists below the electoral threshold and exclude them from parliament.²³ The OSCE report found that protocols from 320 (3.8 percent) of the 8,377 polling stations were problematic in some way.²⁴
- After the elections, the Republic Electoral Commission (RIK) decided to annul and repeat the voting process in 15 polling stations across Serbia. The decision pushed the DSS-Dveri coalition down to 4.99 percent of valid votes, just one vote short of passing the electoral threshold. This led the coalition to accuse the RIK and SNS of trying to steal the election.²⁵ After the vote was repeated on May 4, the coalition rose to 5.04 percent, clearing the threshold.²⁶
- These problems laid bare the inadequacies of Serbia’s institutional mechanisms in dealing with electoral irregularities. There was no official or unofficial investigation or effort to systematically document suspected cases of electoral fraud. The OSCE report also noted that the RIK had no powers to annul elections at certain polling stations or address irregularities unless there were specific written complaints.²⁷

Civil Society

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
2.75	2.75	2.75	2.50	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25

- Serbia’s civil society remained vibrant and lively during the course of 2016. According to the Serbian Business Registers Agency, there were close to 29,000 registered civil society organizations (CSOs) in the country by the end of the year, an increase of around 2,500 compared to 2015.²⁸ Despite this, CSOs continued to report long-standing problems, particularly relating to the financing of their daily operations, as international funding continued to decline while a culture of giving remained underdeveloped among local businesses and individuals.
- Whereas large, well-established CSOs continued to feel under pressure as a result of declining funding, the vibrancy of the sector was most visible in the actions of grassroots activist movements, often mobilizing around specific issues. Perhaps the best example of this was the “Let’s not drown Belgrade” (Ne da(vi)mo Beograd) movement, which emerged as a focal point of opposition to the Belgrade Waterfront, a high-end commercial and real-estate development project pushed with little transparency by the Belgrade city and national authorities in the face of significant local opposition. The movement organized various publicity stunts and small protests numbering in the hundreds already in 2015 but gained more prominence in 2016 after the demolition of Hercegovačka Street. Subsequently, “Let’s not drown Belgrade” organized regular protests demanding a full-scale

investigation. The protests attracted tens of thousands of people at their height and were still occurring months after the April events.²⁹

- Authorities attempted to discredit and pressure protest organizers in several ways. Tabloids close to the government and senior SNS officials, including the prime minister, repeatedly claimed that outside powers were funding “Let’s not drown Belgrade” to undermine Vučić and his government, with frequent assertions that protest organizers were “foreign mercenaries.”³⁰ After one protest in July, during which demonstrators scuffled with the police, the Prosecutor’s Office summoned organizers to give statements in what appeared to be an effort to pressure them.³¹ Ahead of a “Let’s not drown Belgrade” protest in September, activists planning to congregate in the capital reported being repeatedly questioned by the police in what they interpreted as an attempt to pressure and/or intimidate them.³²
- As EU accession negotiations gathered steam, CSOs organized in order to take an active role. One example of their involvement was the formation of the “PreEUgovor” coalition comprised of seven CSOs with expertise relevant to Chapters 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights) and 24 (Justice, Freedom, and Security). The CSOs involved have published their own reports on the progress of reforms in this sphere.³³
- The ability of civil society to organize around ad hoc issues was also visible in the protests that broke out in the city of Novi Sad following a purge of independent and critical journalists from the provincial public broadcaster RT Vojvodina after the victory of SNS in provincial elections.³⁴ A movement named “Let’s Support RTV” (Podržimo RTV) organized protests against the dismissals during the spring and summer, regularly attracting several thousand protesters.³⁵ Interestingly, CSOs close to the ruling SNS organized a counterprotest to support the RT Vojvodina management in June.³⁶
- Progress was visible in the rights of LGBT people. In September, the Belgrade Pride Parade and a longer “Pride Week” passed peacefully for a third consecutive year. LGBT activists noted that the parade and other related activities were taking part in a more relaxed atmosphere than in previous years; however, a heavy police presence was still needed to deter potential attacks against attendees.³⁷ Earlier in August, a symbolically important step toward improving the rights of the LGBT community took place: Vučić appointed Serbia’s first openly gay minister, Ana Brnabić, to head the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government.³⁸

Independent Media

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
3.50	3.75	3.75	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.25	4.50	4.50

- The space for independent journalism and independent media continued to narrow in Serbia in 2016. A report published in April 2016 by the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) echoed the complaints frequently heard from journalists and editors, concluding that media freedoms had deteriorated significantly since the previous report in 2014.³⁹ Although the amount of funding available from media advertising as a whole has stabilized, anecdotal evidence suggests that the ruling parties are able to exert greater influence over where media advertising is channeled, to the detriment of independent media outlets. A direct consequence of this was increasing self-censorship by ordinary journalists as well as an increase in so-called soft censorship, primarily coming from editors and managers of media outlets exposed to political influence, either through their ownership structure or funding.⁴⁰
- Perhaps the most blatant case of bringing independent media to heel was the purge of editors and journalists from Radio-Television Vojvodina (RTV) from May onwards, following the Vojvodina provincial elections in which the SNS came to power in the province. At least 14 editors and

journalists were removed or demoted from their positions, while a number of critical news shows were taken off the air. The editors and journalists claimed there were political reasons behind their removal, namely, to mute critical news output at the station.⁴¹ The move was also particularly worrisome because many journalists previously dismissed from various Belgrade television stations had found refuge at RT Vojvodina, one of the last stations with a significant regional and national reach.⁴²

- Independent, particularly investigative, journalists routinely came under various forms of pressure in 2016, from being followed and photographed on the street⁴³ to receiving death threats.⁴⁴ Perhaps the most sustained attacks were directed against the Crime and Corruption Reporting Network (KRIK). In March, the tabloid *Informer*, close to the SNS, accused KRIK head Stevan Dojčinović of being a “French spy” and published private pictures of him engaged in extreme sports called body suspension, which, in an attempt to discredit him, it claimed were sadomasochistic activities.⁴⁵ The campaign against KRIK lasted for days; more worryingly, Dojčinović claimed that the details of KRIK’s ongoing investigations published by *Informer* could only have been obtained through illegal surveillance by security services.⁴⁶
- Evidence continued to emerge that the previous year’s privatization of state-owned media had resulted in a decrease rather than increase in their independence. Claims that most had been bought by individuals close to the SNS abounded.⁴⁷ At some of these outlets, such as Radio-Television Pancevo, journalists reported that new management had informally told them to join SNS if they wished to keep their jobs; failure to join allegedly resulted in the termination of contracts.⁴⁸
- In such a climate, the press service of SNS organized an exhibition titled *Uncensored Lies* in Belgrade in the summer. The exhibition was supposed to prove that there was no media censorship in Serbia and that journalists were free to write whatever they wanted. It contained around 2,500 news items from electronic, print, and online media that were critical of Aleksandar Vučić and/or the SNS, collected over the previous two years.⁴⁹ Senior SNS officials, including Vučić, visited the exhibition, which national television stations and tabloids close to the SNS reported on extensively.⁵⁰ The fact that the exhibition characterized the articles as “lies” said a great deal about the ruling party’s attitude to critical journalism.

Local Democratic Governance

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
3.75	3.75	3.75	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50

- Regional and local government in Serbia consists of the Vojvodina Provincial Government and Assembly as well as 175 units of local government (i.e., city governments, city municipalities, and ordinary municipalities). On April 24, regularly scheduled elections were held for the Vojvodina Provincial Assembly and 164 units of local government.
- In Vojvodina, the SNS coalition won a resounding victory, gaining 44.48 percent of votes and 63 seats. The coalition around SPS won 8.85 percent of votes and 12 seats, and the SRS won 7.66 percent of votes and 10 seats. The coalition around the formerly ruling DS won only 7.24 percent of votes and 10 seats, the League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina won 6.43 percent of votes and 9 seats, and the “Enough is Enough” coalition won 5.54 percent of votes and 7 seats, while parties representing Vojvodina’s ethnic minorities won 9 seats.⁵¹ On June 20, the Vojvodina Provincial Assembly elected a new government, a coalition of the SNS, SPS, and Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians.⁵²
- Local elections also brought the SNS to power in more than three-quarters of municipalities in Serbia, with the party winning either an absolute majority or ruling together with coalition partners. Indeed, in the province of Vojvodina, the SNS was in power in all 45 municipalities of the province.⁵³

- As with the parliamentary elections, there were numerous cases of irregularities, as well as accusations of intimidation and fraud surrounding both polls in the run-up to elections, on election day, and in the aftermath. Among the better-documented case studies is the municipality of Žagubica, where investigative journalists gathered significant evidence of improper distribution of ballots, disappearance of ballots at certain polling stations, ballot stuffing at others, problematic ballot counts, and intimidation.⁵⁴
- Given the outright victory of SNS in so many municipalities, accusations of problematic conduct in municipalities where it did not win are particularly disturbing. The CRTA report on the conduct of the elections noted that in the municipality of Bela Palanka, where the opposition had won, the entire local election process was annulled on spurious grounds.⁵⁵ Fresh elections held in September were resoundingly won by the SNS amidst a boycott by part of the opposition parties.⁵⁶
- In the municipality of Apatin, the SNS and SPS won 12 seats each in the 29-seat local Assembly. Several weeks later, a local television station broadcast footage of what appeared to be an assembly member from the SRS being kidnapped by SNS activists. Officials from SPS and SRS interpreted this as an attempt to coerce opposition assembly delegates into supporting the SNS in the local assembly.⁵⁷
- Soon after its election, the new Serbian government adopted a new Law on the financing of local authorities. Under the previous law, 80 percent of proceeds from income tax were retained by local authorities with the exception of Belgrade, where city authorities retained 70 percent of proceeds from income tax. According to the new law adopted in October, local municipalities could keep 74 percent of proceeds from income tax, local city authorities 77 percent, while Belgrade city authorities have the right to 66 percent of income tax proceeds.⁵⁸ The changes will make local authorities more dependent on transfers from the central budget in carrying out their basic duties.

Judicial Framework and Independence

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
4.25	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50

- Modest reforms took place to improve the efficiency of the Serbian judicial system in 2016, but, as the EU Progress Report for Serbia noted, a great deal remains to be done in this area. The report listed progress in developing a merit-based recruitment system, in reducing the backlog of cases, and in harmonizing Serbian jurisprudence with EU laws. Nevertheless, ensuring judicial independence was seen as one of the biggest failings, along with the slowness of the judicial system.⁵⁹
- Earlier in the year, the Serbian government's Anti-Corruption Council also published a report on the state of the Serbian judiciary over the preceding two years that found improvements in a number of areas, including ensuring trials within a reasonable time frame, reducing the backlog of old cases, and introducing permanent appointment for heads of courts (instead of the previous temporary appointments, which had left them vulnerable to external pressure). The Council also identified numerous problems, including those relating to political influence, the judiciary's financial dependence on the executive branch, as well as problems of corruption within the judicial system.⁶⁰
- The judicial system's approach to different aspects of the Savamala case provides a good example of the politicization and instrumentalization of the sector. While the public prosecutor's investigation was still in its preliminary phase trying to establish the facts at year's end, in a separate defamation case brought by the Minister of Interior Nebojša Stefanović against the weekly news magazine *NIN*—which wrote about Stefanović's involvement in the Savamala affair—the High Court in Belgrade handed down a ruling against *NIN* just one month after the first and only hearing. Professional media associations disputed the ruling.⁶¹

- Delaying appointments and, in particular, the practice of keeping judges and prosecutors in an acting or temporary capacity continued to impede both the independence and effectiveness of the judicial system. A good case in point was the Office of the War Crimes Prosecutor. Following the retirement of the previous Chief Prosecutor for War Crimes, Vladimir Vukčević, at the end of 2015, a year later a new Chief Prosecutor had yet to be appointed despite the fact that the State Prosecutors' Council had suggested three candidates to the government.⁶² The media also reported that, as of January 2017, over 30 public prosecutors were working in an acting capacity, making them vulnerable to political pressure.⁶³
- One important new law, adopted in December 2015 but coming into force in 2016, was the Law on Enforcement and Security that is expected to significantly reduce the backlog of cases relating to enforcement issues by transferring them to private bailiffs.⁶⁴ Serbian Minister of Justice Nela Kuburović estimated in October that around 900,000 old cases stuck in the courts would be resolved by the end of the year.⁶⁵ The Law on the Protection of the Right to Trial without Undue Delay also came into force during the course of 2016, providing citizens with an avenue for seeking redress in the many instances where cases had been dragging on for years.⁶⁶
- In July, the EU decided to formally open accession negotiations with Serbia in Chapter 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights) and Chapter 24 (Justice, Freedom, and Security).⁶⁷ Many expect the opening of these chapters to act as an important catalyst for reforms that should, in the long term, deliver significant improvements to rule of law in Serbia, as well as the functioning and independence of the judicial system.

Corruption

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25

- The EU's 2016 Progress Report for Serbia concluded that corruption was prevalent and remained a serious problem, with no progress made on meeting recommendations for fighting corruption set out in the previous report.⁶⁸ Serbia's lack of progress in tackling corruption was reflected in the limited changes in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, where Serbia was ranked 72nd out of 176 jurisdictions in 2016, one place lower than its ranking in 71st position (out of 168 jurisdictions) in 2015.
- Although the rise of SNS owes much to the perception that it was committed to stamping out corruption, anticorruption rhetoric and actions have since been demoted on the list of priorities—a great source of anger for the Serbian public. As Transparency Serbia noted, fighting crime and corruption was only the tenth and final point on the agenda set out by Vučić for his new government.⁶⁹ Similarly, a report by the PrEUGovor coalition, an alliance of CSOs formed with the aim of following reforms related to EU accession negotiating Chapters 23 and 24, concluded that, when it came to fighting corruption, “absence of political will is still the main factor preventing reforms and implementing existing legislation.”⁷⁰
- Although there are periodic, well-publicized arrests of groups or individuals involved in criminal and corrupt activities, investigations tend to proceed quite slowly and few reach the point of conviction. The 2016 EU Progress Report notes that there are “very few final convictions for high-level corruption.”⁷¹ The local PrEUGovor coalition was much more critical in its assessment, noting that “measures against corruption mainly amounted to arrests (rather than successfully concluded prosecutions), with a trend towards mass arrests involving large groups of individuals, suspected of corruption in diverse cases which are not in any way connected.” It concluded that the goal of such mass arrests was publicity, linking this to a misguided attempt to demonstrate action as a reaction to EU criticism.⁷²

- One of the most high-profile corruption investigations over recent years was that against Miroslav Mišković, who was accused of abuse of office and tax evasion. In June, Mišković was convicted of aiding tax evasion, while the court did not find enough evidence to convict him of abuse of office.⁷³
- The 2016 EU Progress Report also noted that although the Anti-Corruption Agency was largely independent in carrying out its work, it faced numerous obstacles, particularly regarding the “imprecise and unclear provisions of the law on the Anti-Corruption Agency.”⁷⁴ In the case of the Anti-Corruption Council, while it continued to fulfill its core functions, the report noted that the agency “remained under-resourced” and the government did not “follow up and act on its recommendations.”⁷⁵

AUTHOR: MILOŠ DAMNJANOVIĆ

Miloš Damjanović is a political analyst working and living in Belgrade. He holds a doctorate in Political Science from the University of Oxford, where he worked on post-1989 democratization in Serbia and Croatia.

¹ “Pala odluka: Vučić: Idemo na izbore!” [Decision made: Vučić: We are going to elections!], Blic, 17 January 2016, <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/pala-odluka-Vučić-idemo-na-izbore/xspd6p5>

² “Pala odluka: Vučić: Idemo na izbore!” [Decision made: Vučić: We are going to elections!], Blic, 17 January 2016, <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/pala-odluka-Vučić-idemo-na-izbore/xspd6p5> ; “Serbian PM Announces Early General Elections”, Balkan Insight, 17 January 2016, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/serbia-pm-announces-early-general-elections-01-17-2016> ; “Vučić: Idemo na izbore” [Vučić: We are going to elections], Radio Slobodna Evropa/Radio Free Europe, 17 January 2016, <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/Vučić-idemo-na-izbore/27492703.html>

³ “Mangup iz vlastitih redova” [Rascal in their own ranks], Vreme, 21 January 2016, <http://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=1358417> ; “Vučić: Idemo na izbore” [Vučić: We are going to elections], Radio Slobodna Evropa/Radio Free Europe, 17 January 2016, <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/Vučić-idemo-na-izbore/27492703.html> ;

⁴ “Vučić: Danas nisam imao vremena ni da mislim o ministrima” [Vučić: Today I did not even have time to think about ministers], B92, 28 July 2016, http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2016&mm=07&dd=28&nav_category=11&nav_id=1160091 ; “Nova Vlada 3. Jula” [New Government by 3rd July], Danas, 28 June 2016, http://www.danas.rs/politika.56.html?news_id=322591 ; “Vlada kada Vučiću padne na pamet” [Government when it suits Vučić], Radio Slobodna Evropa/Radio Free Europe, 5 July 2016, <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/vlada-kada-Vučiću-padne-na-pamet/27839687.html> ;

⁵ “Pritisci sa Istoka i Zapada: Evo zašto Vučić već tri meseca ne formira Vladu” [Pressure from East and West: Here is why Vučić has still not formed a government after three months], Newsweek, 26 July 2016, <http://www.newsweek.rs/srbija/75769-pritisci-sa-istoka-i-zapada-evo-zasto-Vučić-vec-3-meseca-ne-formira-vladu.html> ; “Zašto Srbija još nema Vladu?” [Why does Serbia still have no government?], Deutsche Welle, 13 July 2016, <http://www.dw.com/hr/za%C5%A1to-srbija-jo%C5%A1-nema-vladu/a-19395791>

⁶ “Faktor nestabilnosti” [Factor of instability], Vreme, 28 July 2016, <http://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=1415620> ; “Vlada kada Vučiću padne na pamet” [Government when it suits Vučić], Radio Slobodna Evropa/Radio Free Europe, 5 July 2016, <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/vlada-kada-Vučiću-padne-na-pamet/27839687.html> ; “Pančić: Sklapanje Vlade kao tromesečna psihodrama” [Pančić: Government formation as a three month psychodrama], Radio Slobodna Evropa/Radio Free Europe, 31 July 2016, <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/pančić-sklapanje-vlade-kao-tromesecna-psihodrama/27891318.html>

⁷ “Srbija otvorila 4 od 35 poglavlja sa EU” [Serbia opened 4 of 35 chapters with EU], Euractiv, 18 July 2016, <http://www.euractiv.rs/pregovori-sa-eu/10220-srbija-otvorila-4-od-35-poglavlja-sa-eu>

⁸ See for example: IMF Executive Board Completes Fourth and Fifth Reviews of Serbia’s Stand-By Arrangement, IMF, 31 August 2016, <http://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2016/08/31/IMF-Executive-Board-Completes-Fourth-and-Fifth-Reviews-of%20Serbias-Stand-By-Arrangement> ; IMF Staff Concludes Visit to Serbia, IMF, 23 September 2016, <http://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2016/09/23/PR16423-Serbia-IMF-Staff-Concludes-Visit> ; IMF Staff

Completes Review Mission to Serbia, IMF, 1 November 2016,

<http://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2016/11/01/pr16476-IMF-Staff-Completes-Review-Mission-to-Serbia>

⁹ Some of the most detailed coverage of the Savamala case comes from the Network for the Investigation of Crime and Corruption (KRIK) and can be found on this page: <https://www.krik.rs/tag/rusenje-savamala/>. Specific articles regarding the events of the night in question: Bojana Pavlovic, “Još se ne zna ko ruši u Savamali” [Still unknown who was carrying out demolitions in Savamala], KRIK, 28 April 2016, <https://www.krik.rs/jos-se-ne-zna-ko-rusi-u-savamali/>; Ljudmila Cvetković, “Ko je rušio Beograd i dalje bez odgovora” [Still no answer as to who was demolishing Belgrade], Radio Slobodna Evropa/Radio Free Europe, 28 April 2016, <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/ko-je-rusio-beograd-i-dalje-bez-odgovora/27704730.html>; Jelena Zorić, “I čuvar bio žrtva misterioznih ljudi s fantomkama u Savamali”, [Night-watchman was also victim of mysterious people with balaclavas in Savamala], N1, 28 April 2016, <http://rs.n1info.com/a/155941/Vesti/Vesti/Ljudi-s-fantomkama-mucili-cuvara-u-Savamali.html>; Mirko Rudić, Katarina Stevanović, “Fantomke Beograda na void” [Balaclavas of the Belgrade Waterfront], Vreme, 5 May 2016, <http://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=1391793>

¹⁰ “Mali odbacio tvrdnje Nove stranke u rušenju u Savamali” [Mali rejects claims of Nova stranka about demolitions in Savamala], Politika, 7 May 2016,

<http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/354521/%D0%9C%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B8-%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B1%D0%B0%D1%86%D0%B8%D0%BE-%D1%82%D0%B2%D1%80%D0%B4%D1%9A%D0%B5-%D0%9D%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B5-%D1%81%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BA%D0%B5-%D1%83-%D1%80%D1%83%D1%88%D0%B5%D1%9A%D1%83-%D1%83-%D0%A1%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B8>; Branka Mihajlović, “Vučić: Država ne stoji iza rušilaca sa fantomkama” [Vučić: the state is not behind the demolishers with balaclavas], Radio Slobodna Evropa/Radio Free Europe, 11 May 2016, <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/Vučić-država-ne-stoji-iza-rusilaca-sa-fantomkama/27728407.html>

¹¹ Dimitrije Bukvić, “Vrh gradske vlasti odgovoran za Savamalu” [Senior city officials responsible for Savamala], Politika, 8 June 2016, <http://www.politika.rs/scc/clanak/356732/Vučić-Gradske-vlasti-iza-rusenja-u-Savamali>

¹² See for example: Zoran Glavonjić, “Slučaj ‘Savamala’: Suspendovana pravna država” [Savamala Case: Legal State Suspended], Radio Slobodna Evropa/Radio Free Europe, 16 May 2016, <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/slucaj-savamala-suspendovana-pravna-drzava/27737022.html>

¹³ “Utvrdjenje i preporuke Zaštitnika građana br.13-32-2147/2016” [Findings and recommendations of the Office of the Ombudsman no.13-32-2147/2016], Office of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Serbia, 9 May 2016, p.2, <http://www.zastitnik.rs/attachments/article/4723/savamala.pdf>

¹⁴ “Rezultati izbora za narodne poslanike Narodne skupštine Republike Srbije” [Results of the elections for the members of the People’s parliament of the Republic of Serbia], Republička izborna komisija, http://www.rik.parlament.gov.rs/doc/izbori-2016/rezultati/1.%20Zbirni_rezultati.pdf

¹⁵ “Izveštaj posmatračke misije CRTA-Građani na straži” [Report of the CRTA-Citizens on guard observation mission], CRTA/Građani na straži; “Republic of Serbia: Early parliamentary elections 24 April 2016”, OSCE/ODIHR, 29 July 2016.

¹⁶ “Republic of Serbia: Early parliamentary elections 24 April 2016”, OSCE/ODIHR, 29 July 2016, p.1

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ “Republic of Serbia: Early parliamentary elections 24 April 2016”, OSCE/ODIHR, 29 July 2016, p.12

¹⁹ “Izveštaj posmatračke misije CRTA-Građani na straži” [Report of the CRTA-Citizens on guard observation mission], CRTA/Građani na straži, p.61

²⁰ “Izveštaj posmatračke misije CRTA-Građani na straži” [Report of the CRTA-Citizens on guard observation mission], CRTA/Građani na straži, p.23

²¹ “Opozicija podnosi i krivične prijave” [Opposition to file criminal complaints], Danas, 28 April 2016, http://www.danas.rs/danasrs/politika/opozicija_podnosi_i_krivicne_prijave.56.html?news_id=319738; “Tadić: SNS hoće da prisvoji glasove opozicije” [Tadić: SNS wishes to take opposition votes], Politika, 28 April 2016, <http://www.politika.rs/scc/clanak/353992/Tadic-SNS-hoce-da-prisvoji-glasove-opozicije>; “Saša Radulović: Sumnja da je Vučić izvršio izbornu krađu” [Saša Radulović: Suspicion that Vučić executed electoral theft], Dosta je bilo, 29 April 2016, <http://dostajebilo.rs/sasa-radulovic-sumnja-da-je-Vučić-izvršio-izbornu-krađu/?lang=lat>

²² “Dveri: Otkrivena izborna krađa u RIK-u glasove opozicije naprednjaci brojali kao svoje” [Dveri: Electoral theft discovered in RIK, progressives counted opposition votes as their own], NSPM/Dveri, 30 April 2016,

<http://www.nspm.rs/hronika/dveri-u-rik-u-otkrivena-izborna-kradja-glasove-opozicije-naprednjaci-brojali-kao-svoje.html> ; “Patriotski blok KIM: Kako je SNS pokrao izbore na Kosmetu” [Patriotic block of KIM: How the SNS stole the elections in Kosmet], NSPM, 28 April 2016, <http://www.nspm.rs/hronika/patriotski-blok-kim-kako-je-sns-pokrao-izbore-na-kosmetu.html> ; “Opozicija podnosi i krivične prijave” [Opposition to file criminal complaints], Danas, 28 April 2016, http://www.danas.rs/danasrs/politika/opozicija_podnosi_i_krivicne_prijave.56.html?news_id=319738 ; Milivoje Pantovic, “Picturesque Eastern Serbian Town Reveals Extent of Electoral Fraud”, Balkan Insight, 25 May 2016, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/picturesque-eastern-serbian-town-reveals-extent-of-election-fraud-05-24-2016> ; “Kratko izvešće o popunjavanju zapisnika” [Brief report on filling in electoral protocols], Dosta je bilo, 1 May 2016, <http://dostajebilo.rs/kratko-izvesce-o-popunjavanju-zapisnika/?lang=lat>

²³ “Opozicija: Protest zbog izborne kradje u subotu u 13h” [Opposition: Protest against electoral fraud on Saturday at 1300 hours], N1, 29 April 2016, <http://rs.n1info.com/a156083/Vesti/Vesti/Protest-opozicije-protiv-izborne-kradje-u-subotu-u-13h.html> ; “DS: Ruše Dveri-DSS ispod cenzusa, SNS: Pritisak na RIK” [DS: They are knocking Dveri-DSS under the electoral threshold, SNS: Pressure on RIK], RT Vojvodina, 27 April 2016, http://www.rtv.rs/sr_lat/izbori-2016/republicki/ds-ruse-dveri-dss-ispod-cenzusa-sns-pritisak-na-rik_713460.html

²⁴ “Republic of Serbia: Early parliamentary elections 24 April 2016”, OSCE/ODIHR, 29 July 2016, p.20

²⁵ “Obradeno 99.82% glasova – ispod cenzusa Dveri-DSS” [Based on 99.82% of votes – Dveri-DSS below the census], Politika, 20 April 2016, <http://www.politika.rs/scc/clanak/354031/Obradeno-99-82-glasova-ispod-cenzusa-Dveri-DS-S> ; “Obradović verbalno napao članove RIK-a, usledilo i guranje” [Obradović verbally attacked members of RIK, shoving ensued], N1, 29 April 2016, <http://rs.n1info.com/a156001/Vesti/Vesti/Bosko-Obradovic-napao-predsednika-RIK-a.html>

²⁶ “Rezultati izbora za narodne poslanike Narodne skupštine Republike Srbije” [Results of the elections for the members of the People’s parliament of the Republic of Serbia], Republička izborna komisija, http://www.rik.parlament.gov.rs/doc/izbori-2016/rezultati/1.%20Zbirni_rezultati.pdf

²⁷ “Republic of Serbia: Early parliamentary elections 24 April 2016”, OSCE/ODIHR, 29 July 2016, p.19

²⁸ See: <http://www.apr.gov.rs/eng/Home.aspx>

²⁹ Sasa Dragojlo, “Serbian Protesters Say Authorities Were Behind Demolitions”, Balkan Insight, 12 May 2016, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/thousands-serbians-protest-accusing-authorities-for-masked-demolition-05-12-2016> ; Milan Nešić, “Građani ponovo na ulicama: Ručimo vlast, a ne Beograd”, [Citizens on the streets again: Fifth protest against Savamala demolitions held], Radio Slobodna Evropa/Radio Free Europe, 25 May 2016, <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/gradjani-ponovo-na-ulicama-rusimo-vlast-a-ne-beograd/27757519.html> ; Emma Krstić, “25,000 Attend Savamala Demolitions Protest in Belgrade”, Balkan Insight, 25 June 2016, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/25-000-attend-savamala-demolitions-protest-in-belgrade-06-25-2016> ; D. Katanić, “Hoćemo ostavke: Održan peti protest protiv rušenja Savamale” [We want resignations: Fifth protest over Savamala protests held], Blic, 13 July 2016, <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/beograd/hocemo-ostavke-odrzan-peti-protest-protiv-rusenja-savamale/9h935xl> ; “Novi protest Inicijative Ne Davimo Beograd” [New protest of the Lets Not Drown Belgrade Initiative], Beta News Agency, 28 September 2016, <http://beta.rs/vesti/drustvo-vesti-srbija/42023-sutra-protest-inicijative-ne-davimo-beograd> ;

³⁰ Sasa Dragojlo, “‘Mercenary’ Accusations Limit Demolition Fallout for Serbian Govt”, Balkan Insight, 10 June 2016, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/mercenary-accusations-serves-serbian-government-for-cutting-damage-06-09-2016> ; “Evo ko zapravo stoji iza protesta protiv Beograda na vodi!” [Here is who is really behind the Belgrade Waterfront protests], Informer, 2 June 2016, <http://informer.rs/vesti/politika/74307/SOROS-KANDICKA-ROKFELER-HOCE-UVALE-PATKU-zapravo-stoji-protesta-protiv-Beograda-vodi> ; “Evo kako Šiptarski lobisti plaćaju vođu patkara Radomira Lazovića” [Here is how Albanian lobbyists are paying the duck leader Radomir Lazović], Informer, 28 August 2016, <http://www.informer.rs/vesti/politika/88899/FOTO-PATKA-ZUTA-KES-PRLJAV-Evo-kako-SIPTARSKI-LOBISTI-placaju-vodju-patkara-Radomira-Lazovica>

³¹ Ljudmila Cvetković, “Za ‘Savamalu’ nema krivca, prijave za demonstrante” [No suspects for ‘Savamala, charges for protesters], Radio Slobodna Evropa/Radio Free Europe, 18 July 2016, <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/slucaj-savamala-jos-bez-krivca-demonstrantima-prijave/27865270.html> ; Ognjen Zorić, “Policija saslušala aktivistu inicijative ‘Ne da(vi)mo Beograd’ [Police question Lets Not Drown Belgrade activists], Radio Slobodna Evropa/Radio Free Europe, 19 July 2016, <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/policija-saslusala-aktivistu-incijative-ne-davimo-bgd/27867091.html>

- ³² Dušan Komarčević, “Policijsko zastrašivanje zbog protesta protiv ‘fantomki’” [Police intimidation over protest against ‘balaclava’], Radio Slobodna Evropa/Radio Free Europe, 30 September 2016, <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/savamala-policija-saslusanja/28024516.html>
- ³³ See: <http://www.preugovor.org/rs/Naslovna>
- ³⁴ B.Č.B., “Smenjeni svi urednici Radio-televizije Vojvodine”, Danas, 18 May 2016, http://www.danas.rs/danasrs/drustvo/smenjeni_svi_urednici_radiotelevizije_vojvodine_55.html?news_id=320716
- ³⁵ Miloš Stanić, “Brojne javne ličnosti dale podršku smenjenim urednicima RTV” [Numerous public personalities gave support to purged editors of RTV], Blic, 23 May 2016, <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/drustvo/protest-brojne-javne-licnosti-dale-podrsku-smenjenim-urednicima-rtv/s4sjkzg>; Norbert Šinković, “Protest ‘Podrži RTV’: Hajka protiv novinara još traje” [‘Support RTV’ protest: Campaign against journalists still in progress], Radio Slobodna Evropa/Radio Free Europe, 13 June 2016, <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/protest-podrzi-rtv-hajka-protiv-novinara-jos-traje/27795690.html>; A. Latas, “Održan četvrti protest ‘Podrži RTV’” [Fourth ‘Support RTV’ protest held], Blic, 4 July 2016, <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/drustvo/minut-cutnje-za-nastradale-odrzan-cetvrti-protest-podrzi-rtv/wh94wx2>
- ³⁶ Maja Živanović, “Vojvodina’s New Rulers Use Phantom NGOs to Silence Protests”, Balkan Insight, 17 June 2016, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/vojvodina-s-new-rulers-use-phantom-ngos-to-silence-protests-06-17-2016>
- ³⁷ “Parada ponosa protekla bez incidenata”, Danas, 18 September 2016, http://www.danas.rs/drustvo.55.html?news_id=327935&title=Po%C4%8Dela%20Parada%20ponosa
- ³⁸ Gordana Knezevic “Serbia’s First Openly Gay Minister Makes History”, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 10 August 2016, <http://www.rferl.org/a/serbia-gay-minister-brnabic/27912738.html>
- ³⁹ Tanja Jakobi (ed.), Meka cenzura: Promene u medijskom sektoru – sa goreg na lošije [Soft censorship: Changes in the media sector – from better to worse], Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, 2016
- ⁴⁰ Tanja Jakobi (ed.), Meka cenzura: Promene u medijskom sektoru – sa goreg na lošije [Soft censorship: Changes in the media sector – from better to worse], Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, 2016
- ⁴¹ B.Č.B., “Smenjeni svi urednici Radio-televizije Vojvodine”, Danas, 18 May 2016, http://www.danas.rs/danasrs/drustvo/smenjeni_svi_urednici_radiotelevizije_vojvodine_55.html?news_id=320716; “NUNS i NDNV predstavnicima OEBS-a i EU: Smene na RTV-u su otvoreni politički pritisak”, [NUNS and NDNV to representatives of OSCE: Sackings on RTV are open political pressure] NUNS/NDNV, 19 May 2016, <http://www.nuns.rs/info/news/27833/nuns-i-ndnv-predstavnicima-oeps-a-i-eu-smene-na-rtv-u-su-otvoreni-politicki-pritisak.html>
- ⁴² Miloš Stanić, “Brojne javne ličnosti dale podršku smenjenim urednicima RTV” [Numerous public personalities gave support to purged editors of RTV], Blic, 23 May 2016, <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/drustvo/protest-brojne-javne-licnosti-dale-podrsku-smenjenim-urednicima-rtv/s4sjkzg>; Norbert Šinković, “Protest ‘Podrži RTV’: Hajka protiv novinara još traje” [‘Support RTV’ protest: Campaign against journalists still in progress], Radio Slobodna Evropa/Radio Free Europe, 13 June 2016, <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/protest-podrzi-rtv-hajka-protiv-novinara-jos-traje/27795690.html>; A. Latas, “Održan četvrti protest ‘Podrži RTV’” [Fourth ‘Support RTV’ protest held], Blic, 4 July 2016, <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/drustvo/minut-cutnje-za-nastradale-odrzan-cetvrti-protest-podrzi-rtv/wh94wx2>
- ⁴³ “CINS: Nepoznate osobe pratile i fotografisale novinarke” [CINS: Unknown persons followed and photographed journalists], Euractiv, 2 November 2016, <http://www.euractiv.rs/mediji/10633-cins-nepoznate-osobe-pratile-i-fotografisale-novinarke?params=LTK8TghqSF9486iNzmL10602sYjdU10323FCxaH10137iAbZQN8835IdQXb10137AOKmFW9021nkkLHi9765nSjUG10044WOOMFf5394KvBEk10137EtcYWQ9765JlcpC10044ndqLY10323ipNhGpRNRMS414GUP9310695RGFJib9300pDWOCp5208mSCdvQ4743LCAAlm5952DYereR9579IjJSV10137KghdpO9021tXUSYz9765RXoim10044MWQWpH4278AijmKx9207vmLzK10323HTCIU10137QFIJQ54873MA0>
- ⁴⁴ “Pretnje novinarima: Plivaćete Dunavom, žive ćemo vas drati” [Threats to journalists: You will float down the Danube, we will skin you alive], B92, 16 September 2016, http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2016&mm=09&dd=16&nav_category=16&nav_id=1177601
- ⁴⁵ “Sado-mazo francuski špijun: Ko je zapravo glavni urednik KRIK?!” [Sado-maso French spy: Who is the editor in chief of KRIK really?] Informer, 18 March 2016, <http://www.informer.rs/vesti/drustvo/61690/FOTO-SADO-MAZO-FRANCUSKI-SPIJUN-zapravo-glavni-urednik-KRIK>

- ⁴⁶ Milan Nešić, “Napad na istraživačke novinare: Srbija kao crna medijska rupa” [Attacks on investigative journalists: Serbia as a media black hole], Radio Slobodna Evropa/Radio Free Europe, 18 March 2016, <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/posle-nunsovig-zahteva-policiji-srbija-postaje-crna-medijska-rupa/27620887.html>
- ⁴⁷ Tanja Jakobi (ed.), Meka cenzura: Promene u medijskom sektoru – sa goreg na lošije [Soft censorship: Changes in the media sector – from better to worse], Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, 2016, p.10
- ⁴⁸ Branka Trivić “Bivši novinar TV Pančevo: Posao uslovljen ulaskom u SNS” [Former TV Pančevo journalist: Employment conditioned upon membership of SNS], 26 January 2016, <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/bivsi-novinar-tv-pancevo-posao-uslovljen-ulaskom-u-sns/27512950.html>
- ⁴⁹ “SNS: Izložba ‘Necenzurisane laži’ kao dokaz da nema censure” [SNS: ‘Uncensored lies’ exhibition as proof that there is no censorship], Blic, 18 July 2016, <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/sns-izlozba-necenzurisane-lazi-kao-dokaz-da-nema-cenzure/64k1sme>; Milivoje Pantović, Dušica Tomović “Serbian Ruling Party Makes Exhibition of ‘Media Lies’”, Balkan Insight, 19 July 2016, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/government-making-exhibition-of-the-work-of-journalists-07-18-2016>
- ⁵⁰ Ljudmila Cvetković, “‘Necenzurisane laži’ drugi deo: Vučić na izložbi o sebi” [‘Uncensored lies’ part two: Vučić na izložbi o sebi], Radio Slobodna Evropa/Radio Free Europe, 25 July 2016, <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/necenzurisane-lazi-drugi-deo-Vucic-na-izlozbi-o-samom-sebi/27879935.html>
- ⁵¹ “Izveštaj o ukupnim rezultatima izbora za poslanike u Skupštini autonomne pokrajine Vojvodine održanih 24. aprila 2016. godine” [Report on the final results of the elections for delegates in the Assembly of the Autonomous province of Vojvodina held on 24th April 2016], 13 May 2016, <http://pik.skupstinavojvodine.gov.rs/docs/2016IzvestajUkupniRezultati.pdf>
- ⁵² “Izabrana Pokrajinska vlada” [Provincial government elected], Radio-Television Serbia, 20 June 2016, <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/9/politika/2359115/izabrana-pokrajinska-vlada.html>
- ⁵³ “SNS na vlasti u svih 45 opština i gradova u Vojvodini” [SNS in power in all 45 municipalities and towns of Vojvodina], N1, 23 July 2016, <http://rs.n1info.com/a/179260/Vesti/Vesti/SNS-na-vlasti-u-svih-45-opstina-i-gradova-u-Vojvodini.html>
- ⁵⁴ Milivoje Pantovic, “Picturesque Eastern Serbian Town Reveals Extent of Election Fraud”, Balkan Insight, 25 May 2016, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/picturesque-eastern-serbian-town-reveals-extent-of-election-fraud-05-24-2016>
- ⁵⁵ “Izveštaj posmatračke misije CRTA-Građani na straži” [Report of the CRTA-Citizens on guard observation mission], CRTA/Građani na straži, p.72-74
- ⁵⁶ Gordana Bjeletić, “SNS osvojio 24 od 29 mandata u Beloj Palanci”, [SNS wins 24 of 29 seats in Bela Palanka], N1, 18 September 2016, <http://rs.n1info.com/a/194508/Vesti/Vesti/Lokalni-zbori-u-Beloj-Palanci.html>
- ⁵⁷ Miodrag Sovilj, “Nestanak radikala u Apatinu: Otmica ili stokholmski sindrom?” [Disappearance of Radical in Apatin: Kidnap or Stockholm syndrome], 11 May 2016, <http://rs.n1info.com/a/159404/Vesti/Vesti/Nestanak-odbornika-radikala-u-Apatinu.html>
- ⁵⁸ “Poslanici usvojili izmene Zakona o finansiranju lokalne samouprave” [MPs adopt changes to the Law on financing of local authorities], Radio-Television Serbia, 7 October 2016, <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/9/politika/2480151/poslanici-usvojili-zakon-o-finansiranju-lokalne-samouprave.html>
- ⁵⁹ “Serbia 2016 Report”, European Commission, p.12-13
- ⁶⁰ Miroslav Milićević, “Izveštaj o stanju u pravosuđu” [Report on the state of the judiciary], Savet za borbu protiv korupcije
- ⁶¹ “Viši sud po tužbi Nebojše Stefanovića kaznio NIN sa 300.000 dinara” [High Court fines NIN 300.000 dinars in case brought by Nebojsa Stefanovic], Blic, 4 January 2017, <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/visi-sud-po-tuzbi-nebojsa-stefanovica-kaznio-nin-sa-300000-dinara/yt8hfqy>
- ⁶² J. D., “Srbija 11 meseci bez tužioca za ratne zločine” [Serbia without war crimes prosecutor for 11 months], Danas, 2 December 2016, http://www.danas.rs/drustvo.55.html?news_id=333629&title=Srbija+11+meseci+bez+tu%C5%BEioca+za+ratne+zlo%C4%8Dine; “Najava za najavom, tužioca za ratne zločine i dalje nema” [Announcement after announcement, there is still no war crimes prosecutor], B92, 25 January 2017, http://www.b92.net/video/vesti.php?yyyy=2017&mm=01&dd=25&nav_id=1223958

-
- ⁶³ “Najava za najavom, tužioca za ratne zločine i dalje nema” [Announcement after announcement, there is still no war crimes prosecutor], B92, 25 January 2017, http://www.b92.net/video/vesti.php?yyyy=2017&mm=01&dd=25&nav_id=1223958
- ⁶⁴ Nikola Radišić, “Veliki broj starih predmeta prelazi u nadležnost izvršitelja” [Large number of old cases to be handed over to bailiffs], N1, 27 April 2016, <http://rs.n1info.com/a155554/Vesti/Vesti/Novi-Zakon-o-izvršenju.html>
- ⁶⁵ “Kuburović: Do kraja godine biće rešeno 900.000 starih izvršnih predmeta”, Blic, 10 October 2016, <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/drustvo/kuburovic-do-kraja-godine-bice-reseno-900000-starih-izvršnih-predmeta/b8gxzq>
- ⁶⁶ “Kuburović: Cilj nam je da skratimo trajanje postupka”, [Kuburović: Our aim is to reduce the length of proceedings], Tanjug, 16 September 2016, <http://www.tanjug.rs/full-view.aspx?izb=270539>
- ⁶⁷ “Otvorena poglavlja 23 i 24 u pregovorima Srbije i EU”, [Chapters 23 and 24 opened in negotiations between Serbia and EU], Radio-Television Serbia, 18 July 2016, <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/9/politika/2390308/otvorena-poglavlja-23-i-24-u-pregovorima-srbije-i-eu.html>
- ⁶⁸ “Serbia 2016 Report”, European Commission, p.15
- ⁶⁹ “Šta očekivati od Vlade Srbije u borbi protiv korupcije?”, [What to expect from the Serbian government in the fight against corruption?], Transparency Serbia, 30 August 2016, <http://www.transparentnost.org.rs/index.php/sr/aktivnosti-2/saoptenja/8662-sta-ocekivati-od-vlade-srbije-u-borbi-protiv-korupcije>
- ⁷⁰ “PrEUgovor – Izveštaj o napretku Srbije u poglavljima 23 i 24”, [PrEUgovor – Report on progress of Serbia in chapters 23 and 24], Grupa 484, p.14
- ⁷¹ “Serbia 2016 Report”, European Commission, p.15
- ⁷² “PrEUgovor – Izveštaj o napretku Srbije u poglavljima 23 i 24”, [PrEUgovor – Report on progress of Serbia in chapters 23 and 24], Grupa 484, p.21-22
- ⁷³ Dorotea Čarnić, “Miškoviću pet godina zatvora za utaju poreza”, [Mišković sentenced to five years in prison for tax evasion], Politika, 20 June 2016 <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/357548/Miskovic-nije-dosao-na-izricanje-presude>
- ⁷⁴ “Serbia 2016 Report”, European Commission, p.16
- ⁷⁵ Ibid.