

Civil society and media will not give up the fight for a democratic and free Serbia

The media and civil society organizations demand from the Ministry of Finance and the Administration for the Prevention of Money Laundering to immediately present the grounds for suspicion due to which they ordered the extraordinary collection of information about organizations, media, and individuals from the commercial banks. The article of the law, referred to by the director of the Administration for the Prevention of Money Laundering, states that such inspection should be performed exclusively for organizations for which there are grounds for suspicion of their involvement in the financing of terrorism. Since the list includes numerous organizations and individuals dealing with investigative journalism, protection of human rights, transparency, film production, development of democracy, rule of law and philanthropy, the conclusion is that this is a political abuse of institutions and a dangerous attempt to further collapse the rule of law in Serbia.

The abuse of legal mechanisms and institutions to unlawfully put pressure on the media and civil society organizations is a drastic attack on freedom of association and freedom of information. For years, the government in Serbia has been facing serious criticism from both international and domestic organizations regarding the threat to these two important freedoms. Such an attack on organizations that advocate for establishing Serbia as a state governed by the rule of law with respect for the law and a genuine fight against corruption, is an additional argument that these values are seriously endangered in Serbia. Organizations, media and citizens will not give up the fight for a free and democratic state, regardless of threats and pressures. Such and similar moves by the authorities only further motivate us as citizens to persevere in the defense of our own country.

The media and organizations will take all appropriate legal actions against those involved in this abuse, including the prosecution of those responsible, but above all they will insist on complete and clear answers on how this could have happened. We remind the public that the organizations and media from the list are subject to various types of regular state control, including inspections and rigorous checks of financial operations by the Tax Administration and the National Bank of Serbia, as well as by their own donors. Any legal inspection of the work of organizations is welcome and we will always support it. On the other hand, we will fiercely oppose the abuse of institutions and procedures, because that is our mission - the fight for a democratic and legal state.

Signatories: