



YUCOM

Lawyers' Committee
for Human Rights

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Excessive Use of Force on Protesters in front of the City Hall of Belgrade

On the occasion of the recent violence by the police against citizens protesting at the City Hall on Sunday, December 24th, 2023, the Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights – YUCOM is highlighting concern about the excessive use of force by police officers. This disproportionate use of force evident in multiple videos circulating on social media and in the news overtly violates citizens' fundamental rights to freedom, security, and peaceful assembly.

Police are authorized to use coercion strictly within legal bounds and in prescribed conditions – ensuring its proportionality to the situation at hand. When exercising power, the least damaging method to achieve the goal within the shortest timeframe is prioritized. Coercion is a final resort, used only when no other police power can effectively address the situation.

The widely circulated videos from the night of December 24 to 25 portray multiple police officers wielding batons and striking protesting citizens outside the City Hall. These visuals clearly illustrate an excessive and disproportionate use of force by the police, rather than the appropriate use of their powers against citizens.

It is crucial to stress that the police are expected to operate under fundamental principles – such as impartiality, non-discrimination, respecting human rights and providing medical assistance. These principles dictate that individuals in custody have specific entitlements. They can inform a chosen person about their detention, receive medical evaluation away from police presence, and seek legal aid.

We urge immediate action from all relevant bodies, especially the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Protector of Citizens, to thoroughly investigate the use of force during the December 24th, 2023 protest. Additionally, we encourage citizens to familiarize themselves with their rights through the guide [My Rights in Case of Identification, Search, and Deprivation of Liberty](#), before participating in any future public assembly.

Should any uncertainties arise regarding the respect or extent of your rights in these situations, feel free to contact the Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights – YUCOM, directly at 0113344235 or via email at office@yucom.org.rs.

