Citizens movement for rule of law and democracy in Serbia – child rights perspective

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Introduction 3
Methodology 4
Definition of a Child 5
Definition of Child Human Rights Defenders 6
Context 6
The Role and Forms of Children Engagement in the Protests 7
Regime Response to the Protests in Schools 8
Official Condemnation and Threats 8
Presidential Overreach 9
Government Moves to Shorten the Semester 9
Attacks and Intimidation of High-School Students in Secondary Schools in Serbia during Protests 10
The case of Karlovac High School in Sremski Karlovci 10
Pattern Summary: Attacks against High-School Students in Serbia 11
Annex Examples of Attacks and Retaliation against High-School Students across Serbia 13
1. Leskovac High School: Punished for 15 Minutes of Silence 13
2. Knife Attack During Student Protest in New Belgrade 13
3. Political Retaliation and Provocation at Jovan Jovanovic Zmaj High School, Novi Sad 13
4. Police Surveillance and Intimidation of Student Assemblies 13
5. Physical Assault on Graphic Media School Students 14
6. Driver Attempts to Break Through Student Protest in Novi Sad 14
7. Academic Retaliation Against Students in Mitrovica 14
8. Students in Indjija Summoned by Police 14
9. Belgrade's Fifth Gymnasium Locked Down by Acting Principal Amid Student and Teacher Protests 14
10. Student Protests and Police Intervention at "Laza Kostic" Gymnasium 15
11. Attacks High School Protesters in Rakovica, Assaults Police Officer 15
12. Students and Teachers at Belgrade's Sports Gymnasium Report Threats from Politicized School Board 15
Bibliography 16

Introduction

This report was developed by the Network of Organizations for Children of Serbia (MODS) in April and May 2025, in response to the ongoing civic protests taking place across Serbia since November 2024. It provides an overview of the participation of children (high school students) in these events, emphasizing the key issues they have encountered and the risks to which they have been exposed. The report is based on information documented in the media between November 2024 and April 2025. It aims to highlight violations of children's rights within the broader context of the protests and to contribute to public awareness and advocacy efforts regarding the significance of child participation in civic and democratic processes.

In the context of the ongoing civic protests across Serbia since November 2024, children, mostly high school students, who have actively participated in demonstrations and public expressions of dissent are recognized as **Child Human Rights Defenders** (CHRDs). According to the Child Human Rights Defenders Implementation Guide developed by Child Rights Connect, CHRDs are defined as children who take actions to promote, protect, and fulfill human rights—even if they are not formally recognized or do not use that term themselves (Child Rights Connect, 2020).

This definition aligns with the findings of the 2024 Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders Report (2024 SRHRD Report), which underscores that child human rights defenders launch initiatives worldwide demanding changes (societal, economic, political) in areas that are relevant both to them and to society as a whole. They often work at local and grassroots levels, advocating for justice and democratic rights without formal recognition and in spite of pervasive age-based discrimination (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2024).

In line with this, children–the high school students–in Serbia have publicly advocated for justice, accountability, and democratic rights–clearly engaging in human rights defense. Their participation has not only been peaceful and purposeful, but also aligned with core civil and political rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (United Nations, 1989), such as freedom of expression (Art. 13), peaceful assembly (Art. 15), and the right to be heard (Art. 12).

However, as highlighted in the 2024 SRHRD Report, child defenders frequently face structural and societal barriers, including intimidation, harassment, and legal restrictions. In addition to these challenges, child and youth human rights defenders often encounter slander, propaganda, cyberbullying, and defamation—particularly in online spaces and on social media. Their work is frequently misrepresented or undermined by biased traditional media coverage, and their voices are often mediated or replaced by adult perspectives. In some cases, young defenders are excluded entirely from media narratives due to government control. These conditions contribute to the silencing and marginalization of youth voices in public discourse, despite their critical role in advancing human rights.

The children in Serbia, as defenders, have encountered significant risks. As documented in media and civil society sources, they have been subjected to intimidation, threats, physical and verbal attacks—from high-ranking public officials to local authorities and school administrations. Particularly alarming was the deliberate targeting of children by some adult citizens—provoked by the aggressive rhetoric of powerholders. These experiences directly reflect the forms of stigma, retaliation, and abuse identified in the Implementation Guide as common risks faced by CHRDs globally. The Guide highlights that children acting as defenders often encounter adult resistance, are dismissed as "too young to understand," and are discouraged or punished for challenging authority. In Serbia, children have been labeled as manipulated, politically naïve, or disruptive, rather than recognized as legitimate civic actors. In some cases, their participation in protests has been met with disciplinary measures by schools or public denunciation by political figures—clear violations of their rights under both the CRC and the **UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders** (United Nations General Assembly, 1998), which obliges states to protect defenders from retaliation for the peaceful exercise of their rights.

CHRD experiences in Serbia reflect the global challenges described in the 2024 SRHRD Report, which highlights how child defenders are frequently dismissed as 'manipulated' due to political narratives that exploit their age—and how they face reprisals for speaking out against authority. The 2024 SRHRD Report further emphasizes the need for states to adopt specific laws and policies to protect child defenders and to create safe environments for their participation. Recognizing these children as CHRDs is essential to uphold their agency and ensure their protection. This aligns with the report's call for systemic inclusion and support for child human rights defenders. It urges states to establish formal mechanisms that involve children and youth in policymaking, provide accessible systems for reporting violations, and collect data on their participation. The report also highlights the responsibility of UN agencies and civil society to support child and youth-led initiatives through dedicated platforms, child-friendly resources, and spaces that allow child and youth organizations to collaborate without being overshadowed by larger, adult-led groups.

Recognizing these children in Serbia as CHRDs is therefore essential not only to accurately reflect their role and agency, but also to demand that the state fulfill its obligations to protect and empower children who are peacefully advocating for human rights. This recognition is a crucial step toward ensuring that children are not silenced, punished, or placed at risk for engaging in democratic action.

Methodology

This report is grounded in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which serves as the normative framework guiding the analysis of children's participation in the civic protests in Serbia. The report also draws from the Child Human Rights Defenders Implementation Guide developed by Child Rights Connect, which clarifies the rights of children acting as human rights defenders (CHRDs) and offers guidance on how those rights can be realized and protected. Additionally, the report reflects the principles of the United Nations

Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which reaffirms and contextualizes existing human rights norms for individuals—including children—who engages in the promotion and protection of human rights.

The analysis is further informed by the 2024 Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders (2024 SRHRD Report), which provides a global framework for understanding the risks and structural barriers faced by child human rights defenders. The 2024 SRHRD Report's findings—particularly regarding academic sanctions (34–40), restrictions on freedom of assembly (75–81), and the criminalization of youth activism (92–95)—offer critical context for interpreting the Serbian case. By applying this lens, the report identifies patterns consistent with global trends, such as the dismissal of child defenders as "manipulated" (47) and the use of schools to suppress dissent (36). This alignment underscores the universal relevance of the CRC and UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders in protecting children's civic participation, even as the report acknowledges the need for localized, context-specific responses.

Data presented in MODS report were collected through a systematic review of publicly available information published in national and local media outlets between November 2024 and April 2025. Supplementary insights were gathered from inputs provided by MODS member organizations actively engaged in child rights monitoring during this period. The examples included in the report are intended to be illustrative rather than exhaustive. Due to methodological limitations, the current version of the report does not include direct testimonies or perspectives from children and adolescents themselves.

Definition of a Child

For the purposes of this report, and in accordance with Article 1 of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)*, a *child* is defined as:

"Every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier."

This legal definition is the basis for the recognition of all individuals under 18 as rights-holders entitled to the full protections of the CRC, regardless of how they self-identify. The *Child Human Rights Defenders Implementation Guide* further clarifies that:

"Those under the age of 18 do not always use the terms 'child' or 'children' to describe themselves (e.g. it would be rare for a 16 year old to refer to themselves as a 'child'), but the protections apply nonetheless." (Child Rights Connect, 2020, p. 6)

This is particularly relevant in the context of civic protests in Serbia, where many high school students involved in public advocacy and demonstrations may perceive themselves as adolescents or young citizens rather than "children." Nonetheless, their legal status as children remains, and with it, the full scope of rights under the CRC applies—including protections related to participation, expression, and freedom from retaliation for acting as human rights defenders.

Definition of Child Human Rights Defenders

In line with the *Protecting and Empowering Children as Human Rights Defenders Report* (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2018) and *Child Human Rights Defenders Implementation Guide* developed by Child Rights Connect, this report adopts the following definition:

"*Children who take actions to promote, protect and fulfil human rights, including children's rights, are human rights defenders, even if they do not see themselves as such, or are not considered and called as such by others*" (Child Rights Connect, 2020, p. 7)

This definition reflects a rights-based understanding that the status of a child as a human rights defender is based on their actions—not their age, legal status, or whether they or others use the term. Children may engage in the defense of a wide range of human rights, including but not limited to those affecting children directly. Recognition of children as human rights defenders affirms their agency and aligns with international human rights law, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

Context

On November 1, 2024, 15 people lost their lives when the railway station canopy in Novi Sad collapsed. Unfortunately, an 18-year-old student later died from injuries, bringing the death toll to 16. Citizens believe this tragedy was a consequence of government corruption and call responsible institutions to account.

In response to this tragic event, citizens—including students—began holding a daily 15-minute moment of silence at the exact time of the collapse to honor the victims. However, the ruling regime organized attacks on these peaceful tributes to the Novi Sad victims.

On November 22, 2024, a group of people—some of whom were public officials—physically attacked students and professors in front of the Faculty of Dramatic Arts (FDU). This prompted widespread protests and led to the blockade of all state universities across Serbia.

Students formulated 4 demands from the relevant institutions:

- Publish the complete documentation related to the Novi Sad railway reconstruction and investigate those responsible for the collapse.
- Prosecute perpetrators of attacks on students and citizens on the 22 November protest.
- Dismiss charges against those arrested in the previous protests.
- Increase Higher-Education Budget.

Two new demands were added to the list by students after 5 months of the nationwide protests:

- Identify the technology allegedly used during the March 15 protest—which many believe was an illegal "sound cannon"—and hold accountable those who ordered and operated it.
- Investigate who authorized Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic to enter the intensive care unit of burn victims in North Macedonia, accompanied by media crews, despite strict medical protocols that restrict access to protect critically injured patients.

The Role and Forms of Children Engagement in the Protests

A large number of schools across Serbia, in both major cities and smaller towns, joined the ongoing wave of civic protests through various forms of action, with high school students playing a key and highly visible role[1]. In many secondary schools, including gymnasiums, teachers suspended classes in solidarity with university students, while high school students independently organized school blockades, protest marches through towns, and street demonstrations in front of schools and in public spaces. Their engagement included symbolic actions such as 15 minutes of silence, schoolyard assemblies, humanitarian initiatives, and local mobilizations. In some towns, high school students hosted student groups from other parts of the country, further reinforcing intercommunity and intergenerational solidarity.

A particularly important aspect of their engagement was the joint marches undertaken by high school and university students through various parts of Serbia, including rural and small-town areas. These marches served to directly inform local citizens about the reasons behind the protests and blockades, and to raise awareness about the broader societal and political issues at stake. Through this effort, children played a role in civic education and mobilization on the ground.

Crucially, this movement has been genuinely student-led. High school students have taken the initiative to organize plenums and assemblies to make collective decisions, coordinate protest actions, and articulate their demands publicly. Their statements on social media, videos, and local outreach efforts show a high level of political awareness and independent organizing. In line with the *Child Human Rights Defenders Implementation Guide*, these children clearly act as child human rights defenders—peacefully, purposefully, and in defense of democratic values and fundamental rights. Their actions demand not only public recognition but also institutional protection and support for their right to participate in civic life.

The strike by educators and teachers, which was part of a broader push for better working conditions, lasted for about four months before the student-led protests gained momentum and public support in December 2024. In an attempt to prevent the merging of the educators' strike with the students' protests, the Ministry of Education abruptly ended the first academic semester on 20 December 2024, just one week before the scheduled end[2]. This decision was officially justified as a safety measure due to the ongoing protests and school blockades.

[1] https://eurochild.org/news/childrens-right-to-protest-strikes-corruption-and-the-fight-for-democracy-in-serbia/
[2] https://zadecu.org/en/the-rights-of-children-under-threat-in-serbia/

However, this disrupted students' academic progression, as they were left without grades for the semester, thereby violating their right to an official assessment of their performance.

Classes resumed on 20 January 2025, with the start of the new semester, but the Ministry failed to communicate adequately regarding the safety of schools or any improvements.

The educators and teachers found themselves overwhelmed by mounting pressure from various sources, including inspections, threats, and the unlawful cuts to their salaries[3]. These salary reductions were not only unjust but also unlawful, exacerbating the already tense situation.

Increasing threats and violence as the protest gained momentum culminated on March 15, during a peaceful protest in Belgrade. Authorities denied using any weapons or harmful devices, however, media reports, eyewitness testimonies, and evidence gathered by civil society organizations (CSOs) suggest the possible deployment of an unauthorized sonic device—a tool with no legal basis under Serbian law. If confirmed, such an act would represent a grave violation of human rights, particularly those of children present at the protest. The use of indiscriminate crowd-control measures endangers the lives, safety, and well-being of children. Exposing children to potentially harmful devices during public assemblies not only disregards their physical and psychological safety but also undermines Serbia's obligations under international law.

Regime Response to the Protests in Schools

In late 2024, the Serbian government's reaction to student-led protests revealed deep tensions between state institutions, constitutional principles, and political power.

Official Condemnation and Threats

On November 29, 2024, Serbia's Minister of Education, Slavica Djukic Dejanovic, publicly condemned what she described as the political exploitation of children. She warned that those allegedly pressuring children into participating in protests would face legal consequences and

[3] The right to strike, protected under Article 8 of **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (**ICESCR), must not be rendered meaningless by domestic legislation. While Serbia has ratified this treaty, its labor laws contradict international standards by improperly restricting strikes in education - a sector the ILO explicitly excludes from essential service limitations. The legal hierarchy in Serbia's Constitution (Articles 16(2) and 194(5)) establishes that ratified treaties supersede domestic laws, making current restrictions on teachers' strike rights unlawful. Recent Ministry of Education instructions to cut February 2025 salaries for striking teachers lack legal basis, as no Serbian law authorizes such deductions for protected strike actions. The Association of School Secretaries warns that these unlawful pay cuts expose school directors to personal liability, noting the inconsistency with full January salaries being paid during similar work suspensions. The situation highlights systemic violations of both international labor standards and Serbia's constitutional obligations.

announced that educational inspections would be deployed to schools. Djukic Dejanovic insisted that schools must remain spaces free from political influence, focusing solely on education and protecting students' rights to free choice. However, this response framed legitimate children's expression as manipulation, casting doubt on the Ministry's commitment to respecting children's rights under international conventions.

Presidential Overreach

The situation escalated on December 17, 2024, when President Aleksandar Vucic used a government session—an act beyond his constitutional role—to publicly reprimand ministers for their handling of student protests. Vucic's intervention showcased his disregard for institutional boundaries, reinforcing Serbia's hyper-centralized governance. He accused teachers of politically manipulating children during memorial protests, despite no evidence supporting these claims. While he conceded that university students could protest, his disproportionate focus on children in high schools revealed a clear objective: to suppress dissent from an early age and discredit children as social and political actors by denying children rights and agency (capacity to decide and act on own decisions).

The context highlights significant challenges faced by children in Serbia, particularly in relation to their fundamental freedoms. Publicly, children are being denied their rights to freedom of expression, association, and assembly, with leading government representatives taking a stance that stifles their voices. The media landscape further complicates matters, as key media outlets are controlled by the president, often adopting a tabloid approach to reporting that sensationalizes rather than informs. This has resulted in a lack of space for critical discourse, especially when it comes to issues concerning children's rights. Critical media outlets, which might otherwise serve as a platform for these voices, often lack the capacity—whether in terms of knowledge, motivation, skills, or tools—to engage directly with children. Many fear backlash or accusations of contributing to the political exploitation of children.

Furthermore, while some critical media do report on the involvement of high-school students, the focus tends to be on graduates rather than high-school students, with little acknowledgment that many of these individuals are, in fact, children. The coverage often offers only brief statements from graduates or high school students but rarely provides in-depth reporting or broadcasts that allow children to speak directly about their experiences during the protests. The lack of comprehensive, child-centered media coverage leaves their voices underrepresented and their struggles insufficiently highlighted in the public discourse.

Government Moves to Shorten the Semester

In an attempt to neutralize unrest, the Government of Serbia on December 20, 2024, adopted a conclusion requiring the early closure of the first school semester. The Ministry of Education ordered all primary and secondary schools to abruptly end classes on December 23, 2024, citing health, safety, and a deteriorating educational environment caused by strikes, blockades, and protests. The decision lacked transparency, legal grounding, and sufficient

communication with parents and schools. Children did not formally complete the semester, and many did not receive final grades.

The Belgrade High Schools Forum issued a stern warning on December 19, 2024, stressing that the government's move to shorten the semester was illegal[4]. The Law on the Foundations of the Education System allows changes to the school calendar only in exceptional circumstances and exclusively by the Minister of Education—not by the government. The Forum criticized the inconsistency of the authorities, who demanded uninterrupted education during strikes but sanctioned school closures when politically convenient.

Even after the scheduled resumption of classes on January 20, 2025, significant unrest persisted, with strikes and protests continuing across Serbia.

Attacks and Intimidation of High-School Students in Secondary Schools in Serbia during Protests

The case of Karlovac High School in Sremski Karlovci

A troubling pattern of intimidation, harassment, and violence against high school students has emerged in Serbia during protest activities, raising deep concerns about the safety of children exercising their democratic rights. The case of Karlovac High School in Sremski Karlovci starkly illustrates these developments.

On **November 29, 2024**, during a peaceful act of remembrance for victims of the Novi Sad tragedy, children and teachers of Karlovac High School were attacked by unidentified men in front of the school. The attackers verbally and physically harassed the group, directing particular threats toward children, including death threats against a youth activist from the group SOMA. Witness testimonies have implicated local government officials, including Mayor Drazen Djurdjic, in the November assaults—no substantial action was taken to hold the attackers accountable.

Violence escalated further on **December 18, 2024**, when two explosive devices ("topovski udari") were thrown at children gathered on the steps of the school. The perpetrators, brothers Filip and Nenad Savic—previously known for harassing the same children—were identified, but again faced no consequences.

On **December 19, 2024**, the school community—including high school students and teachers—jointly denounced the attacks. They emphasized the severe psychological impact on the high school students and the broader societal message being sent by the authorities' inaction: that peaceful dissent and even **acts of empathy could be met with violence without repercussion**.

Despite the school filing a **criminal complaint in January 2025**, supported by over 260 teachers, parents, and alumni, no protective measures were implemented. On March 19, 2025,

[4] https://www.fbg.org.rs/odluka-vlade-o-eventualnom-skracenju-prvog-polugodista-suprotna-zakonu/

the school publicly released footage showing the perpetrators freely moving in Belgrade's Pioneer Park - where the regime had installed a camp of people with criminal backgrounds to occupy the park, provoke, and confront student and citizen protests - underscoring the ongoing impunity

Teachers such as Professor Jovana Vujic voiced alarm over the absence of institutional protection, stating:

"We are horrified because nothing has been done to protect us or our students."

These incidents represent a broader trend of repression against children's and youth voices critical of the government, with institutions failing to safeguard children's rights to safety, free expression, and peaceful assembly. The ongoing intimidation of high-school students involved in the protests—carried out openly and without legal consequences— further exemplifies the rapidly shrinking civic space in Serbia.

Pattern Summary: Attacks against High-School Students in Serbia

Across Serbia, a disturbing trend has emerged in the wake of peaceful student protests, particularly those related to the Novi Sad train station tragedy. These incidents reflect increasing intimidation, physical violence, and legal threats targeting children and young people asserting their right to protest. The following recurring patterns emerge:

1. **Interference, Intimidation and Pressure by school and/or local authorities:**
    - High-school students often face threats from school leadership, such as disciplinary actions or intimidation by local powerholders. Examples include the Leskovac High School and Jovan Jovanovic Zmaj High School incidents, where students faced political pressure for peaceful protests.
    - Authorities frequently use threats of academic consequences, such as grade manipulation (Mitrovica High School) or blocking students' access to school facilities (Fifth Gymnasium in Belgrade), to deter activism.
2. **Physical Violence and Threats:**
    - Students have faced violent confrontations from external actors, such as the knife attack in New Belgrade, the physical assault in Rakovica, and an attempted vehicular assault in Novi Sad. These incidents highlight the physical dangers children face during protests, exacerbated by insufficient police response.
3. **Police Surveillance and Legal Intimidation:**
    - **Surveillance and Threats**: Police presence at children's protests is increasingly common, instead of providing protection, this contributes to a climate of fear. In cases such as the Leskovac blockade and Indjija children

summons, authorities have used police to intimidate protesters, including recording personal data without justification or summoning children for questioning.

- **Criminalization of Protest**: Legal and police interventions aim to prevent protests, exemplified by police summons in Indjija and retaliatory measures in schools like Belgrade's Sports Gymnasium, where powerholders pressured teachers and students.

4. **Suppressing Freedom of Expression:**

    - **Blocking Children's Voice**: A consistent theme is the suppression of children's voices through both direct threats and legal measures. In several cases, children's protests have been increasingly labeled as "terror" as seen in the reaction to protests at Belgrade's Fifth Gymnasium.

    - **Threats to School Property and Academic Rights**: Protests are sometimes met with extreme measures such as the threat of permanently losing school buildings (Sports Gymnasium in Belgrade), further weaponizing education against dissent.

Annex Examples of Attacks and Retaliation against High-School Students across Serbia

1. Leskovac High School: Punished for 15 Minutes of Silence

On December 2, 2024, a senior class at the Leskovac High School organized a 15-minute silent protest in the schoolyard to honor the victims of the Novi Sad tragedy. Despite the peaceful nature of their action, school authorities responded harshly: an emergency meeting with parents was convened, and students faced threats of disciplinary measures. The incident sparked outrage, with critics highlighting the hypocrisy of punishing mourning students while no accountability was established for the deaths themselves. This case exemplifies the state's broader tendency to criminalize acts of empathy and silence dissent, even when manifested through simple, non-disruptive gestures.

2. Knife Attack During Student Protest in New Belgrade

On December 18, 2024, during a peaceful blockade organized by students of the Graphic Arts School in New Belgrade, the protest was marred by violence. A man later identified as Ratko Adzic—a figure with a controversial wartime past—pulled a knife on the students. Although bystanders intervened and no injuries were reported, the incident underscored the real physical dangers faced by protesting youth. Authorities' failure to immediately and adequately address such threats further highlights the vulnerability of students engaged in civic action.

3. Political Retaliation and Provocation at Jovan Jovanovic Zmaj High School, Novi Sad

At Jovan Jovanovic Zmaj High School, a series of troubling events unfolded:

November 29, 2024: Students and teachers participated in a memorial protest.

December 2024: Following Prime Minister Milos Vucevic's claim that his son was "forced" to participate, the school director demanded written explanations from teachers, raising concerns about political blacklists.

December 2024: Students initiated a school blockade demanding a public apology from the director. The situation escalated when Zeljko Radocaj, a local SNS party member, forcibly entered the school premises under false pretenses, pushing students in the protest.

These developments illustrate both direct political pressure on educational institutions and attempts to physically intimidate student activists.

4. Police Surveillance and Intimidation of Student Assemblies

In Leskovac, students from the Gymnasium and Economics School organized a silent tribute followed by a school blockade. Prior to these actions, police officers appeared at the schools, recorded the personal data of some students without providing clear justification, and contributed to a climate of fear. Despite the protests being entirely peaceful, the presence and

actions of law enforcement authorities served to intimidate young participants rather than protect their rights.

5. Physical Assault on Graphic Media School Students

On January 21, 2025, students from the Graphic Media School were attacked with a wooden stick by an unidentified man after a peaceful protest in New Belgrade. The situation escalated when the assailant, after being disarmed, continued to threaten the students from his apartment window with a knife. Despite clear video evidence of the attack, there was no immediate police intervention. This incident, coupled with earlier threats and intimidation (such as those reported in Sremski Karlovci and explosive devices found in Karlovac High School), highlights a growing trend of violence against protesting youth, largely met with institutional inaction.

6. Driver Attempts to Break Through Student Protest in Novi Sad

On February 3, 2025, during a 15-minute silent protest outside the Bogdan Suput School of Design in Novi Sad, an aggressive driver verbally and physically confronted students and teachers before attempting to drive through the crowd. After failing, he parked nearby, returned on foot to provoke protesters, and was subsequently arrested. This incident mirrors a similar attempt 10 days earlier, when another driver tried to run through students protesting near the same school.

7. Academic Retaliation Against Students in Mitrovica

In early February 2025, students at Mitrovica High School reported that certain teachers were retaliating against those who participated in class blockades by lowering their grades, while rewarding non-participants with artificially inflated marks. This practice of grade manipulation represents an insidious form of repression, undermining students' educational rights and using academic achievement as leverage against civic engagement.

8. Students in Indjija Summoned by Police

On March 17, 2025, seven students from the Technical High School in Indija were summoned by police for questioning after planning to block their school in solidarity with nationwide protests. They were called in following a report from pro-government parents. Although not arrested, they were ordered to provide statements by the public prosecutor's office, effectively preventing the protest. The incident reflects growing pressure on high-school student protesters through legal intimidation.

9. Belgrade's Fifth Gymnasium Locked Down by Acting Principal Amid Student and Teacher Protests

On February 27, 2025, students and teachers at the Fifth Belgrade Gymnasium were locked out of the school by acting principal Danka Nesovic, citing "security concerns" after recent tensions. Nesovic formally banned entry without her invitation following student protests against her leadership. Teachers, students, parents, and colleagues from other gymnasiums

gathered outside, demanding access. Critics accused Nesovic of abusing power and disrupting the school environment, while President Vucic publicly defended her and condemned the students' actions. The lockdown marks the latest escalation in ongoing protests since January 20 over controversial administrative changes imposed by the Ministry of Education.

10. Student Protests and Police Intervention at "Laza Kostic" Gymnasium

On March 21, 2025, during a peaceful protest at "Laza Kostic" Gymnasium in Novi Sad, a Ministry of Internal Affairs officer escorted a graduating student to the school administration, prompting accusations of intimidation. The student group "Lazina.se.budi" condemned the police involvement as fear-mongering and stressed their commitment to non-violent protest and freedom of expression.

11. Attacks High School Protesters in Rakovica, Assaults Police Officer

On March 26, 2025, A.Z. (43) was detained after attacking students and striking a police officer during a protest near Patrijarh Pavle High School in Rakovica. Video footage captured her attempting to snatch a megaphone from an 18-year-old girl, assaulting a 22-year-old protester, and hitting an intervening officer. The Ministry of Internal Affairs confirmed her arrest and announced an ongoing investigation. This incident appears to be a direct consequence of the inflammatory language used by government officials, whose aggressive rhetoric has incited violence against protesters and escalated tensions

12. Students and Teachers at Belgrade's Sports Gymnasium Report Threats from Politicized School Board

On April 4, 2025, students and teachers from the Sports Gymnasium in Belgrade reported threats from a newly appointed School Board tied to the ruling SNS party. The board, including political figures, a known enforcer, and a journalist, threatened that continued student blockades could result in the school losing its building permanently. The gymnasium has been without its own premises since 2024 due to delayed renovations, with no clear updates despite promises. Students also reported pressure on the principal to resign. The situation highlights growing political interference and intimidation tactics aimed at suppressing student activism in Serbian schools.

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