



WESTERN BALKANS ASSEMBLY MONITOR PROJECT



FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY IN SERBIA



institut alternativa



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The right to peaceful assembly is one of the freedoms and human rights that have a political dimension and represents the basis of modern democracy. The constitutional framework of freedom of assembly includes substantive and procedural provisions, whose contents are interpreted in accordance with international standards.

Freedom of assembly is listed as basic human right in Serbian Constitution. It says:

Citizen may assemble freely. Assembly held indoors shall not be subjected to permission or registering. Gathering, demonstrations and other forms of assembly held outdoors shall be reported to the state body, in accordance with the law. Freedom of assembly may be restricted by the law only if necessary to protect public health, morals, rights of others or the security of the Republic of Serbia¹.

As Constitution also prescribes that human and minority rights guaranteed by the generally accepted rules of international law, ratified international treaties and laws are implemented directly in domestic legal system, state institutions are obliged to comply with international standards when regulating this right with Law, especially keeping in mind its political and democratic importance.

Exercising the right to free assembly was not easy in Serbia, due to numerous political obstacles and legal gaps. Finally, during the 2015th Constitutional court of Serbia came up with a decision that the Public Assembly Act is not in line with Constitution of Serbia and gave six months period to state institutions to change it. After four months of delay, Serbian Parliament finally adopted the new Law on public assembly, leaving almost the same gaps and problems as the old Law.

This research aims to describe above mentioned problems, experiences in legal protection of freedom of assembly and list recommendations for improvement of actual situation and harmonization existing legal framework with international human right standards. Recommendations are addressed both to Government and Civil society organizations, as the only way to full establishment of freedom of assembly is through the cooperation of these subjects. State institutions are the one with jurisdiction, but CSOs are those with experience, knowledge and obligation to protect human rights.

¹ Constitution of Republic of Serbia article 54 ("The Official Gazette of RS", No. 98/2006)

INTRODUCTION

This study was conducted as part of the regional project ‘The Western Balkans Assembly Monitor’ managed by the European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL), whose goal was to increase the understanding of how the right to freedom of (peaceful) assembly is applied and how it can be protected. The objective of the project is to design and pilot a research methodology for monitoring the legal developments and practical application of FOA in five countries of the Western Balkans. The Western Balkans Assembly Monitor project is made possible by the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law through the Civic Space Initiative, implemented in partnership with ARTICLE 19, CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, and the World Movement for Democracy.

The qualitative cross-country research was conducted in five countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. The project was implemented in the period between October 2015 and June 2016 by Reactor - Research in Action (MKD), Civil Rights Defenders (BiH), Human Rights House Zagreb (CRO), Institute Alternative (MNE) and YUCOM - Lawyers’ Committee for Human Rights (SRB), under the overall coordination of ECNL.

For the purpose of the project and the studies, the right to freedom of assembly is defined as “*the intentional and temporary presence of a number of individuals in a public place for a common expressive purpose.*”² International legal instruments³ recognize that only peaceful assemblies are protected and in this respect “*an assembly should be deemed peaceful if its organizers have professed peaceful intentions and the conduct of the assembly is non-violent. The term “peaceful” should be interpreted to include conduct that may annoy or give offense, and even conduct that temporarily hinders, impedes or obstructs the activities of third parties.*”⁴ Additionally, it should be noted that for the purpose of the research “*all types of peaceful assembly – both static and moving assemblies, as well as those that take place on publicly or privately owned premises or in enclosed structures – deserve protection*”⁵ and were targeted with the research. Finally, the research methodology also covered spontaneous and counter-assemblies.

The aim of the research was to establish the main challenges in the implementation of the national legislation on public assemblies and the exercise of this right. Its main objectives were to assess the level of compliance of the national legislation with the relevant international standards in the field, to map the institutions responsible for implementation, to identify the main challenges for the effective exercise of the right and finally, to identify and examine at least two specific issues that arise from the implementation of the legislation and the exercise of the right in the country. As a final result, the studies provide a set of recommendations for the relevant stakeholders on how to advance the protection of the freedom of assembly in each country and how to provide an enabling environment that allows citizens to freely exercise this right.

The research methodology for monitoring and reporting how freedom of peaceful assembly is exercised and implemented in the targeted countries is based on the OSCE/ODIHR & Venice Commission Guidelines on

² OSCE/ODHR & Venice Commission, Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly Second Edition, 2010, available at <http://www.osce.org/odihr/73405?download=true>

³ Article 20(1), Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 21, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

⁴ OSCE/ODIHR & Venice Commission, Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly Second Edition, 2010.

⁵ *Ibid*

Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, the UN Human Rights Council Resolution 25/38⁶ as well as the UN SR Joint report on the proper management of assemblies.⁷ Based on these guidelines, the data for the qualitative analysis was gathered through desk research, Freedom of Information requests and fieldwork, which included semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders and observations of protests that happened during the time the project was carried out. The conclusions and recommendations from the study are based on the findings from the data gathering phase and were later validated with selected participants in the research.

This study is structured in three parts, followed by conclusions and recommendations and a detailed annex that provides a description of the methodology. In the first part we provide an overview of the national legal and institutional framework and consider its role in protecting and enabling the right to freedom of assembly. The second part looks at the assemblies we chose to analyze for this study and presents the main challenges that were identified in the analysis. In the third part we take a closer look at the two main country specific challenges that were identified for Serbia policing and criminalization. Finally, we provide a summary of the key findings and offer recommendations for improving the implementation of freedom of assembly legislation in the country.

⁶ United Nations (2014). Human Rights Council resolution 25/38. Available at <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Executions/A-HRC-RES-25-38.pdf>

⁷ United Nations (2016). Joint report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions on the proper management of assemblies. Available at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G16/018/13/PDF/G1601813.pdf?OpenElement>

LEGISLATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The legislative and institutional framework of freedom of assembly in Serbia is set by Constitution of Serbia, which is in line with international human rights standards. Serbian parliament recently adopted Law on Public Assembly (5th February, 2016).⁸

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

CONSTITUTION⁹

Freedom of assembly is not an absolute right. There are several limitations set out in Art. 54 of the Constitution which stipulates that citizens may assemble freely (para. 1); assembly held indoors shall not be subject to permission or notification (para. 2); rallies, demonstrations and other forms of assembly held outdoors shall be reported to the state body, in accordance with the Law (para. 3); freedom of assembly may be restricted by the law **only if this is necessary** to protect public health, morals, rights of others or the national security of the Republic of Serbia (para. 4).

LAW ON PUBLIC ASSEMBLY (1992)¹⁰

Freedom of assembly in the Republic of Serbia was regulated by the **Law on Public Assembly** of 1992, which was amended several times during the past 24 years. This Law **did not contain precise definition** of assembly, but only stated that public assembly, for the purpose of the present Law, means *convening and holding a rally or any other assembly in a location adequate for that purpose*. Article 11 of the same Law provided that **“Police can ban** a public assembly if it is deemed as a potential threat to public health, public morals or security of people and their property or to disruption of public traffic” (Art. 11, para. 1). Above stated reason is contrary both to international standards and the Constitution. The Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR in 2010 issued a Joint Opinion on the **Law on Public Assembly** and recommendations on how to improve it.¹¹

On April, 2015 the Constitutional Court of Serbia declared the 1992 **Law on Public Assembly unconstitutional**. The main criticism of the Constitutional Court concerned the regulation of restrictions on freedom of assembly (including the venue of the event) and the effectiveness of legal remedies¹². The decision of the Constitutional Court pointed out that certain constitutional bases of the restriction to freedom of assembly (for example the need to protect the rights of others) may require closer legal regulation, but then the given **reason for the prohibition of public assembly must be brought into direct connection with the constitutional basis of limitation**. In its decision the Constitutional Court further stated that the holding of

⁸ New Law has replaced the Law on Public Assembly (1992) after 24 years of its implementation.

⁹ Constitution of Republic of Serbia (“The Official Gazette of RS”, No. 98/2006)

¹⁰ Public Assembly Act (“The Official Gazette of RS”, No. 51/92, 53/93, 67/93, 17/99, 33/99 and 48/94, “The Official Journal of FRY”, No 21/01 and “The Official Gazette of RS”, No. 29/01 and 101/05).

¹¹ Opinion No. 597/2010 ODIHR Opinion-No.: FOA – SERB/165/2010 CDL-AD (2010)031 Or. English European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) Joint Opinion on the Public Assembly Act of the Republic of Serbia by the Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR Adopted by the Venice Commission at its 84th Plenary Session (Venice, 15-16 October 2010), Strasbourg, Warsaw, 18 October 2010.

¹² The Constitutional court pointed out that peaceful assembly of citizens in an open space may be limited only by a constitutionally established basis, and noted that the disputed Law does not prescribe the bases determined by the current constitution.

public meetings is in principle allowed everywhere, and therefore there is no constitutional basis for determining an area in which the holding of public meetings is allowed. **Excluding a certain area for public assemblies** may be prescribed in order to protect the values that are determined by the Constitution as a basis for restrictions on freedom itself.

The Constitutional Court in its decision further stated that the **entire legal protection procedure** against unlawful banning of gathering was regulated in a way **that did not meet the criteria of effectiveness**¹³.

Constitutional Court has suspended the publication of its decision for six months to give the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoI) time to draft a new law, organize a public debate on it and submit it to the National Assembly for adoption. Given that the MoI failed to act on the Constitutional Court's decision within the specified deadline, the **Law on Public Assembly ceased to be valid on 23 October 2015**, when the Constitutional Court decision was published in the Official Gazette.

LEGAL VACUUM

From October 23rd, 2015 till February 5th, 2016 Freedom of Assembly was partly regulated by other laws (Public Order and Peace Law, Criminal Code, Public Order and Peace Act or the Road Traffic Safety Act). However, **system of notification was not regulated by any law**.

LAW ON PUBLIC ASSEMBLY (2016)¹⁴

New Law stipulates that everyone has a right to organize an assembly and to attend it, in accordance to this Law (Art. 2 Par. 2).

Public assembly is defined by Art. 3: "The assembly, for the purposes of this Law, shall mean the assembling of **more than 20 persons** held in order to express, achieve and promote state, political, social and national beliefs and goals, other freedoms and rights in the democratic society. Other forms of assemblies intended for achieving religious, cultural, humanitarian, sport, entertainment and other interest, shall also represent the assembly, for the purposes of this Law.

Law **defines the place of assembly** and **has a numerous restrictions regarding place of assembly** which are not in the line with the international standards¹⁵: "

The Law bans public assemblies at venues that pose a risk to persons or property, public health, morals, rights of others or the security of the Republic of Serbia, specifically in front of health institutions, schools, preschools, as well as in front of objects of strategic or special importance for the defense and security of the Republic of Serbia. Public assemblies are also banned at venues where their holding violates human and minority rights and freedoms of others, jeopardizes moral or in places closed to public¹⁶.

Restrictions on the location of assembly envisaged by the Law are not in accordance with the **Constitution and international standards** since they are placed *in abstracto*. The location and/or time of the (scheduled)

¹³ The deadline stipulated for fulfilling obligations of both the organizer to notify the assembly and the competent authority to adopt a decision on an eventual ban actually does not allow the conclusion of the decision-making procedure using all legal means against banning a public assembly before the scheduled time of the gathering.

¹⁴ Law on Public Assembly ("The Official Gazette of RS", No. 6/16)

¹⁵ Art. 11 Para. 2 ECHR

¹⁶ Art. 6 Law on Public Assembly ("Official Gazette of RS", No. 6/2016)

assembly of citizens, might be a reason for limiting these freedoms, but only if it is *in concreto* necessary to protect public health, morals, rights of others or the security of the Republic of Serbia. In terms of general limitations, the Venice Commission has defined international standards based on the practice of international bodies for the protection of human rights. Thus, explicitly stipulates that any restrictions on time and place for holding a particular assembly must pass the proportionality test in every single case. General restrictions, such as prohibiting restrictions for specific locations, as a rule, do not allow the application of the principle of proportionality which requires that the competent authorities during the limitation of rights apply the least restrictive measure to achieve legitimate objectives.¹⁷

General restrictions on freedom of assembly are stipulated by Art. 8. Assemblies are not allowed when they pose a risk to persons or property, public health, morals, rights of others or the security of the Republic of Serbia, when they are aimed at causing or inciting violence, violation of human and minority rights and freedoms of others, inequality, hatred and intolerance, when there is risk of violence, destruction of property or other disruptions to public order at a larger scale and when their maintenance is contrary to the provisions of the law.¹⁸

The Law prescribes system of notification on assembly. Outdoor assemblies should be notified to the organizational unit of the MoI according to the place of assembly, or the place of the beginning of assembly in motion.¹⁹ However, **there is no obligation to notify assembly in the case of:** indoor assemblies; religious assemblies in religious buildings and other traditional folk gatherings, fairs, convocations, weddings, funerals; state ceremonies, anniversaries and other gatherings organized by the public authorities; spontaneous peaceful assemblies, without the organizers, as an immediate reaction to a specific event, upon the event, held outdoors or indoors, in order to express opinions and attitudes regarding the generated event.²⁰

Maintenance of assembly shall be reported by submitting a written notification by the organizers of assembly, personally, by registered mail or electronically. The notification must be submitted **not later than five days before the time fixed** for the beginning of the assembly.

Banning procedure and legal protection in new Law is regulated in articles 8 and 16. If the organizational unit of MoI finds the existence of the reasons referred to in art. 8, it will issue the decision that the maintenance of assembly is not allowed. The deadline for issuing the decision is set no later than 96 hours before the notified time of the beginning of assembly. The appeal shall be submitted to the MoI within 24 hours upon receiving the decision. The appeal shall not postpone the enforcement of the decision.

The MoI shall decide on the appeal without delay and at the latest within 24 hours of the receipt of appeal. Administrative dispute can be initiated before the Administrative court against this decision. However, there are no special provisions on the obligation of MoI to notify the organizer of assembly on issued decision, the right for organizer to submit prompt lawsuit in a case of silence of administration or urgent processing on administrative dispute. **Without these provisions, effective legal protection is jeopardized**²¹.

¹⁷ CDL-AD(2008)025 Joint Opinion on the Amendments to the Law on the Right of Citizens to Assemble Peaceably, Without Weapons, to Freely Hold Rallies and Demonstrations of the Kyrgyz Republic by the Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR, §22.

¹⁸ The last restriction set by the Law can be interpreted through other obligations of organizers set by Law (manner and deadline of notification of assemblies and possibility to hold spontaneous assemblies).

¹⁹ Art 12 Law on Public Assembly ("Official Gazette of RS", No. 6/2016)

²⁰ Spontaneous peaceful gathering shall not be considered as spontaneous gathering if some natural or legal person can be marked as the organizer Art. 13 Para. 3 Law on Public Assembly ("Official Gazette of RS", No. 6/2016)

²¹ Part II. Art. 2. 3 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Besides competence to ban assembly, police officers are authorized to prevent or interrupt the assembly, if the circumstances referred to in Article 8 of this Law occur before or during the assembly. The police must deliver in written form the order to the organizer no later than 12 hours after an oral communication. The main characteristic of penal provisions of the Law on Public Assembly is the emphasis on accountability of organizers and high penalties. Misdemeanor liability is not in accordance with the standards of freedom of assembly.

The Law stipulates a cumulative punishment of a legal entity, the responsible person in the legal entity and organizers or leaders of assembly, which represents a disproportionate interference with the freedom of assembly and affect the deterrence of organizing public assemblies.²² **According to the international standards**, organizers of gatherings should not be held liable for failure to perform their duties, if they are put reasonable efforts to carry them out. Organizers cannot be held responsible for the actions of individual participants or for the actions of those who do not participate or agents provocateurs. Instead, there should be individual responsibility of each person who personally committed the violation or has not complied with a legal order of the police.²³

High fines stipulated for legal persons constitute a serious threat to cessation of political parties, trade unions and other organizations. Minimum violations of the law (i.e. late notification), even of a technical character, could lead to the dissolution of the organization. This measure is disproportionate and therefore not in accordance with international standards.²⁴

The bases for misdemeanor sanctions are not in the line with international standards.²⁵ The Law stipulates that the leader of assembly shall be punished if an assembly is held without notifying the competent authority. Illegal situations, such as holding an assembly without prior notification, does not necessarily justify interference with the freedom of assembly.²⁶ Although the rules governing the assembly, such as registration system, necessary for the undisrupted maintaining of the assembly, because they enable the competent authority to minimize disruption to traffic and take other safety measures, their respect cannot become the goal in itself.²⁷ Specifically, in the case where the gathering is not accompanied by any acts of violence, it is important that the authorities demonstrate a certain degree of tolerance towards peaceful assembly. The lack of prior notification cannot be the sole and sufficient reason for restricting the gathering; authorities are still tied with the principle of proportionality under Article 11 of the European Convention.²⁸

BY-LAWS

According to the Art. 24 Law on Public Assembly, city and municipality assemblies shall define the space on which public gatherings according to the Art. 6 are not allowed, within 60 days after getting into the force of

²²The newest example *Paori*.

²³ The ODIHR and Council of Europe's Venice Commission Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/73405?download=true>; CDL-AD (2012)006 OSCE/ODIHR - Venice Commission Joint Opinion on Law on Mass Events in the Republic of Belarus, §114.

²⁴See European court for human rights *Cisse v. France* 51346/99, *Oya Ataman c. Turquie* 74552/01, *Barraco c. France* 31684/05

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ECHR, *Cisse v. France*, application no. 51346/99, judgment of 9th, April 2002; *Oya Ataman c. Turquie*, application no. 74552/01, judgment of 5th December 2006; *Barraco c. France*, application no. 31684/05, judgment of 5th March 2009.

²⁷ ECHR, *Primov and Others v. Russia*, application no. 17391/06, judgment of 12th, June 2014.

²⁸ ECHR, *Kudrevičius and others v. Lithuania*, application no. 37553/05, judgment of 15th, October 2015..

this Act. Deadline for adoption of by-laws has passed. None of the 170 local self-government units have adopted abovementioned by-law by the end of april 2016th.

CRIMINAL AND MISDEMEANOR PROVISIONS

Freedom of peaceful assembly expressed cannot in any way be denied to an individual as long as he/she does not commit an offence punishable under the law.

THE CRIMINAL CODE²⁹

The Criminal Code in its Chapter 31 stipulates offences against public peace and order, causing panic and disorder (Art. 343), violent misbehavior (Art. 344), violent misbehavior at public rallies or sporting events (Art. 344a), involvement in a group committing an offence (Art. 349), involvement in a group preventing an officer from performing his duties (Art. 324), Chapter 14 offences against freedom of individual and citizen, Ch. 16 offences against labor rights, Ch. 28 offences against the constitutional system and security, and Ch. 29 offences against government authorities.

PUBLIC ORDER AND PEACE LAW³⁰

Public Order and Peace Law provides offences which may occur during public rallies in Art. 7, 8, 9: shouting on the public place, endangering the safety of another person by threatening to attack the life or body of that person or someone close to him/her and jeopardizing the tranquility of citizens or disturbing public order and the peace by insulting or abusing another, committing violence against another, provoking a fight or by participating in it. Art. 23 of the Law stipulates the criminal offence - interference with an authorized official in the performance of his/her security or maintenance of public order and public peace duties.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

A number of institutions are directly involved in managing or in other way influencing assembly rights.

Ministry of Interior (Mol) has a main role on maintenance of assemblies. The affairs of protection of safety of persons and property, security of the Republic of Serbia, the protection of public health, morals, protection of the rights of others and all tasks related to the maintenance of assembly, are conducted by the Mol. Police officers are entitled to submit the misdemeanor charges to the Misdemeanor court. Mol receives notification, decides on banning gatherings, decides on appeal. Administrative Court is entitled to issue the judgment on the legality on final administrative decision.

Misdemeanor court decides on the responsibility for breaching the Law on Public Assembly and Public Order and Peace Law.

²⁹ Criminal Code (*"Official Gazette of RS"*, Nos. 85/2005, 88/2005 - corr., 107/2005 - corr., 72/2009, 111/2009, 121/2012, 104/2013 and 108/2014)

³⁰ **Public Order and Peace Law** (*"Official Gazette of RS"*, No. 6/2016)

Constitutional Court decides on constitutional appeal of the organizer that claims that freedom of peaceful assembly is breached by the conduct or decisions of Serbian authorities (Administrative court, Misdemeanor court or MoI).

Municipalities are obligated to determine the area where assembly is not permitted under Article 6 of the Law on Public Assembly within the 60 days from the date of entry into force of this Law.

According to previous experiences the new Law on public assembly is more restrictive than old Law in terms of notification of assembly and misdemeanor proceedings. The new law prescribes that assembly must be notified at the latest 5 days before the date it is scheduled³¹ and misdemeanor sanctions are much higher in the new Law, comparing to the old one. It also prescribes sanctions both for organization (legal person) and responsible person in organization (natural person).

³¹The old Law set this time to 48 hours before the date assembly is scheduled

MAIN FINDINGS, PART I: OVERVIEW OF ASSEMBLIES AND IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

According to the official dates provided from 124 police stations - units of MoI, during 2014 there were 62.198 notified gatherings in Serbia. In 2015, in the first six months (from January - July) there were 30.332 notified gatherings. Police stations of MoI do not have the statistics on types, purpose or organizers of assemblies.

Type of the assemblies: Political parties' election campaigns and trade unions' protests are the most numerous public assemblies in Serbia, especially in 2014. Trade union protests also bring continuity and important social problems into the political discourse of the country.

General overview: Broadly speaking, the conduct of police cannot be assessed as being repressive, and there are no reports on the excessive use of force. Conduct of Serbian police when it comes to public gatherings is seldom repressive indeed, and the police received many compliments in terms of restraint in the use of force when police stepped in to stop the violence, to unblock street blockades, and lengthy public protests, and in terms of their readiness to protect participants of public gatherings from violence. Furthermore, one of the major compliments made to the police was their readiness to establish, in line with the OSCE/ODIHR guidelines, a close and frequent communication with the organizers prior to big gatherings or gatherings tackling controversial topics, aimed at maximum risk reduction and ensuring security at these events, through joint efforts. The police has been fair in securing unregistered, spontaneous gatherings in last 10 years, including such event when protesters on strike had left production plants and took to the streets and squares of their cities, even the capital.

Nevertheless, most of the problems of respecting international standards in Serbia have occurred during: 1. human rights assemblies (specifically, public manifestations of LGBT activism), 2. protests for recognizing and recalling on accountability for war crimes committed by Serbian army forces during the 1990s wars, 3. massive trade union protests (especially those that included blockades of intersections relevant for domestic and international transport).

HUMAN RIGHTS ASSEMBLIES

Public manifestations of LGBT activism³² were problematic until 2014th. Government banned Pride parade 2009th, 2011th, 2012th and 2013th for security reasons. The 2010th Pride was held, but with a lot of problems with extreme groups who attacked attendants, in spite of high police protection.

Since 2014th Pride, LGBT assemblies were fully organized, with collaboration and negotiation with MoI and National Assembly committees. They included key political stakeholders as supporters of highly risk gatherings. Independent institutions gave support in the process of organizing and through direct participation in gatherings.

Women rights assemblies were organized on the occasion of 8th March in 2014, 2015 as well as in May 2014, 2015 - against male violence.

³² May 2014, 2015 IDAHO; September 2014, 2015 Pride Parade; September 2015 Trans Pride; April 2015 Lesbian March

PROTESTS FOR RECOGNIZING AND RECALLING ON ACCOUNTABILITY FOR WAR CRIMES COMMITTED BY SERBIAN ARMY FORCES DURING THE 1990S WARS

Numerous protests for recognizing and recalling on accountability for war crimes, committed by Serbian army forces during the 1990s wars, were organized during 2014 and 2015. Some of them were prohibited on security reasons, because of counter demonstrations were announced.

Antifascist assemblies were organized during 2014 and 2015 by CSOs and left-wing activists, beside previous prohibitions of similar assemblies referring to war crimes.

OTHER TYPES OF ASSEMBLIES

POLITICAL PARTIES' ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

The most numerous assemblies from the beginning of 2014 until the middle of March were assemblies of political parties' regarding election campaigns since the pre-election period for early general elections took 45 days. According to the media reporting as well as data given by political parties, there were not any restrictions or problems.

Some problems occurred during early local elections that were held in few Serbian cities (i.e. Zajecar police in 2014 banned promotional assemblies because supporters of the two parties announced simultaneous assemblies)³³.

Attorney-at-laws organized numerous protests that were performed in every city in Serbia, in the period of their 127 days long protests, from September 2014 to January 2015. They protested against Law on Public Notaries and increase of taxes. *Students* organized protest during October 2014, in all university cities against changes of Law on High Education, which reduced the number of examination periods.

PUBLIC INTERESTS PROTESTS

Public interests protests "Let's not drown Belgrade" against joint Government and Belgrade project "Belgrade on the water" was held, but with significant interfering of police and other local authorities. Several protests were organized by civil activists in April, July and September 2015. Protest of citizens in July against signing agreement between city authorities and foreign investor for realization of the project Belgrade on the water was not prohibited but by acts of police and city authorities the visibility of message was prevented.³⁴

³³ An example that illustrates how the standard of "visibility and audibility" can be jeopardized is the Decision adopted by the City of Zajecar concerning determination of venue of public assemblies that was adopted right before elections, preventing public assemblies from being held at city square.

³⁴ In the middle of the traffic circle, two trams were stopped. Therefore, the delegations that came out of the building who were signing contract according to scheduled, had not been able to see the protestants. This information was confirmed by the driver of one of the trams, who said he was "ordered to stop" there.

FORBIDDEN ASSEMBLIES

According to the official data, during 2014, 16 assemblies were prohibited.³⁵ Media mainly reported on banned assemblies. Most assemblies were banned because they might obstruct the traffic, be threat to public health, public morality or security of people and property, while some were banned because they were aimed at causing and inciting national, racial and religious intolerance and hatred.

³⁵ Belgrade 11, Novi Sad 2, Kraljevo 1, Subotica 1, Zajecar 1.

MAIN FINDINGS, PART II: COUNTRY SPECIFIC ISSUES

Country specific issues regarding the practical implementation of Freedom of Assembly in Serbia are determined through long-term treatment of politically sensitive assemblies.

First, during research, it became apparent that decisions on banning the public assemblies **are always issued without legal reasoning**, regardless of who is organizing the assembly.

Second, it was noticed that when **politically sensitive assemblies are scheduled at the same time, a demonstration and a counterdemonstration, that they are both banned, without legal reasoning, regardless of the goals and messages of the organizers**. Hence, those assemblies that are in line with international human rights standards and have a goal to promote them and those whose acts are aimed at the destruction of the rights and freedoms of others and promote internationally unacceptable values (such as racism, discrimination, etc.) are treated equally.

LACK OF LEGAL REASONING IN DECISIONS ON BANNING ASSEMBLIES

Decisions issued by units of Ministry of Interior - Police stations do not have any determined facts or indicated reason for its prohibition. Most decisions only contain non-specified legal grounds for prohibition of assembly.

Article 11 of the previous Law on Public Assembly³⁶ stated that the Police can ban a public assembly if it is deemed as a potential threat to public health, public morals or security of people and their property or to disruption of public traffic. Most decisions regarding the prohibition of assemblies had stated as their main reason for the decision that these assemblies presented a “potential threat to public health, public morals or security of people and their property or to disruption of public traffic”.

Although decisions do not contain explanations for their reasoning, it is common that the Minister of Interior personally explains the police stations’ decisions in media³⁷. Main reasons are usually high security risks for people and property.

This problem was also noticed by Protector of Citizens (Ombudsman) in the case of prohibition of Falun Gong’s assemblies.³⁸

This practice was declared as unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court of Serbia, when deciding on the ban of International Women's Day event on 8 March 2008. In this case, the subject of the appeal filed by the NGO ‘Women in Black’ is the ban on the public assembly this organization intended to host in 2008, to mark the International Women's Day. The Court found that the disputed decision was not elaborated in an acceptable manner (first-instance authority only “estimated there are grounds in support of the assembly’s ban, under Article 11, Paragraph 1, of the Public Assembly Act, and also that the assembly could obstruct traffic, jeopardize health and safety of persons and property), failing to provide any concrete facts which could have lead the relevant authority to conclude that the aforementioned values would have been violated by holding the notified assembly.

³⁶Valid until 23th October 2015th

³⁷[See more](#)

³⁸ Annual Report of Serbian Ombudsperson, http://www.ombudsman.org.rs/attachments/052_Annual%20Report%202014.pdf

MULTIPLE BANS ON THE PEACEFUL AND COUNTER-ASSEMBLIES

By analyzing the goals of prohibited assemblies in the researching period, it can be concluded that multiple bans occur only in the cases where Government politics is not enough clear regarding values that are promoted.³⁹ In Serbia, there is a 25 year-long resistance of the Government to recognize and confess war crimes committed by Serbian army forces during the 1990s wars. There is no political will to send clear message on this issue, because of citizens' dominant nationalist viewpoints on the events, based on media reporting during and after war.⁴⁰ On the other hand, the European integration process prevented the Government from giving clear support to the supporters of the policy of denying the war crimes. **Hence, authorities chose 'the neutral' solution – to ban all assemblies, regardless of the values that would be promoted.**

On 10 July, 2015 the Ministry of Interior reached a decision, banning for security reasons any assembly in Belgrade announced to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica. **Five assemblies had been announced** by human rights organizations (Youth initiative for Human Rights) and extreme right-wing organizations (Zavetnici, Dveri), all of which were scheduled to be held in front of the Serbian National Assembly on 11 July, all of which were banned.

At the same time, in cases where Government policy is clear (e.g. refugee crisis), **the MoI only banned assemblies that oppose government policy**, with explanations given through media outlets that these gatherings are not in the line with international human rights standards.⁴¹

On 26 August, 2015 Minister of Interior, Nebojsa Stefanovic announced a **ban on all protests and rallies against immigrants and refugees** announced for August 31 by right-wing and other organizations. Stefanovic stated "The Republic of Serbia wants to show it is a good host and that all people who come to receive in a manner that is in accordance with all European standards, true democracy and all the freedoms and all those who are thinking about how to express their hatred towards these people let they do elsewhere, and not in the Republic of Serbia.

The fact that peaceful assembly could be misused by third persons as a pretext for violence does not give the state the right to ban peaceful assemblies.⁴² Non-violent participants can never be banned from peaceful assembly because of threats of violence posed by others. Banning peaceful assemblies of non-violent participants as a result of threats by third persons has no justification in either international standards or the Constitution. The undoubted presence of extremist, violent groups in society that are against holding such events cannot justify the state's failure to provide conditions for assemblies whose participants cannot be expected to be violent on any grounds. There can be no justification, either under international standards or the Constitution, for banning peaceful assembly whose participants are absolutely non-violent on the basis of threats of violence by third persons. The state could and should have banned the assembly of those who

³⁹"State incapable of protecting its citizens from 'Zavetnici' and other extreme right wing organizations" – YIHR – 05.04.2016.available at : <http://www.yihr.rs/en/state-incapable-of-protecting-its-citizens-from-zavetnici-and-other-extreme-right-wing-organizations/>

⁴⁰ Propaganda during the Yugoslav Wars

available at : https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Propaganda_during_the_Yugoslav_Wars

⁴¹Serbian government BANNED all anti immigrant / refugee protests

Read more at http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=9c8_1440623024

⁴²The ODIHR and Council of Europe's Venice Commission Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/73405?download=true;>

had threatened with violence. The state cannot resort to banning non-violent assemblies solely because of violent threats issued against its participants. Even if the state were allowed to ban such assemblies, it could still be held responsible for not having promptly undertaken appropriate measures to prevent possible offenders in their intention and sanction them.

INEFFECTIVE LEGAL REMEDIES

To emphasize the importance of the problem, we illustrate the obstructions by the authorities for effective legal protection during the implementation of previous Law on Public Assemblies (1992). Which continued to 2014th and 2015th.

First, the banning decision was notified to the organizers in oral. The police station officers used to call the organizer to announce the information that the assembly is banned.

Second, although issued and submitted to the party the decision was not clearly explained. Therefore, the appellant was not able to confront the reasoning for prohibition and therefore is deprived from the right to effective remedy.

Third, the decision on appeal was never issued within reasonable time. Due to implementation of the general administrative procedural rules in this case, there were no possibility to submit the law-suit in a case of “silent of administration” before the assembly is scheduled.

Forth, even in a case of submitting the law-suit in front of Administrative court, the decision of the court was issued two years after submission. There was just one case in Serbian practice that showed the use of all legal remedies for protection of freedom of assembly and proved that each legal remedy was non-effective⁴³.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Good practices refer to the active devotion of CSOs and independent institutions to full exercise of the right to freedom of assembly, mutually networking of CSOs in this actions and providing free legal aid to human right defenders and organizers of banned assemblies.

There are examples of good practice when it comes to LGBT assemblies. Public manifestations of LGBT activism were prohibited in 2009, 2011, 2012 and 2013. However, thanks to the coordinated action of activists, in 2014 and 2015, Pride Parade was organized, together with other LGBT manifestations. By coordinated action, political influence on maintenance of public assembly was diminished.

Coordinated action of activists which led to a change in government approach to LGBT assemblies includes:

- **Networking of various NGOs** and collaboration and few months long-negotiation with Ministry of Interior and National Assembly committees. This is necessary, since the high risk assembly means the existence of trustful and open communication between organizers and police.

⁴³See the decision of Serbian Constitutional court [UŽ - 4078/2010](#)

- **Providing open support by the key international political figures that act in the country** (i.e. head of Delegation of EU in Serbia, Head of OSCE Mission, ambassadors of the most influences countries)
- Involving national key political stakeholders as supporters of highly risk gatherings.
- **Specialization in legal protection.** Through there are succesfulstrategic litigation led by specialized human rights NGOs, other actors were in a situation to use the decisions of the highest national institution – Constitutional Court of Serbia, as argument that Serbian authorities are acting unlawful when prohibits the assemblies.
- **Networking with independent institutions.** Independent institutions are also included in advocating the maintenance of public assemblies. The Commissioner for Equality openly accuses some political figures of hate speech, meanwhile the Protector of Citizens is engaged in monitoring the police officers behavior

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on long term observation and monitoring implementation of previous Law and as participants in public discussion during the new Law on public assembly adoption, we came to 4 main conclusions in our research which are supported by proper recommendations:

1. RESTRICTIONS ON THE LOCATION OF ASSEMBLY ENVISAGED BY THE LAW ARE NOT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONSTITUTION AND INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS SINCE THEY ARE PLACED IN ABSTRACTO.

OBSERVED SITUATION:

The legal solution creates a threat for issuing penalty sanctions against i.e. teachers or medical workers who protest in front of the buildings where they work.

During the March and April 2016, in the pre-election period, it has been notified by NGOs that police do not implement the new provisions on the banning or interruption of the assemblies in front of the hospitals and schools, since numerous political assemblies were held on these locations in order to promote the work and investments of Serbian government. This practical example can be used for advocacy activities by NGOs as a situation that clearly shows that there is no need for the absolute ban of the assemblies.

RECOMMENDATION:

Government should adopt new Law to be in line with international human rights standards on the freedom of assembly. The location and/or time of the (scheduled) citizens' assembly, might be a reason for limiting these freedoms, but only if it is in concreto necessary to protect public health, morals, rights of others or the security of the Republic of Serbia.

Civil society organizations should advocate for changing the provision of the new Law in order to be in line with the international standards.

2. LEGAL PROTECTION IS NOT FULLY PRESCRIBED BY THE NEW LAW

OBSERVED SITUATION:

Given the fact that the new Law has retained several mechanisms of the previous law⁴⁴, legal protection for several issues stays unprescribed. This legislation in practice showed that it is necessary to have clear and **special procedural rules** for protection of freedom of assembly both in administrative procedure and administrative dispute.

RECOMMENDATION:

The new Law should be changed in a way that it prescribes **special procedural rules** for protection of freedom of assembly both in administrative procedure and administrative dispute. The Government should adopt this

⁴⁴ Public assembly act „The official Gazette of RS” No 51/92, 53/93, 67/93 and other

procedure in Law amendments and CSOs should use their experience and knowledge and present them to state institutions to help in building new procedure for exercise the freedom of assembly.

3. MISDEMEANOR LIABILITY IS NOT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE STANDARDS OF FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

OBSERVED SITUATION:

There are no accused for misdemeanor according to the provisions of the new Law. During 24 years of implementation of old Law there were many cases of misdemeanor accusations for allegedly violations of Law⁴⁵. It has been noticed that police had notified the organizers who submitted the late notice, that the notification cannot be processed and that public assembly cannot be held, with the instruction that organizers could be sanctioned.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Government should adopt the new Law amendments and change misdemeanor provisions to smaller amendments and milder penal policy. CSOs should participate in this process by advocating for a Law changes and presenting their experience to relevant institutions.

4. IMPACT OF MAINSTREAM STANDPOINTS ON THE MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC ASSEMBLIES

OBSERVED SITUATION:

Most of the problems regarding the respect of international standards in Serbia have occurred during: 1. public manifestations of LGBT activism, 2. protests for recognizing and recalling on accountability for war crimes committed by Serbian army forces during the 1990s wars, 3. massive trade union protests (especially those that included blockades of intersections relevant for domestic and international transport).

RECOMMENDATION:

CSOs should use previous experience and good practice examples such as networking with other CSOs, cooperation with international public figures and institutions, involving political key stakeholders, network with independent institutions and use all available legal remedies to deal with especially sensitive assemblies for which there is a risk to be prohibited to force Government to fully adopt the freedom of public assembly.

⁴⁵[See Falun Gong case](#) , [Woman in black case](#), [Youth initiative for human rights case](#)

METHODOLOGICAL ANNEX

This cross-country pilot research was conducted in five Western Balkans countries: Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia. The main research objectives were to assess the level of compliance of national freedom of assembly legislation with relevant international standards, to map the institutions responsible for implementation of FOA and to identify the main challenges for the effective exercise of FOA. The research methodology is based on qualitative methods and instruments which were used by all of the research teams. The study was conducted in three phases.

In the first phase, all of the countries conducted desktop research that included an overview and analysis of assemblies. National legislation, international treaties and national reports to international bodies as well as reports of relevant organizations were consulted in order to analyze the legal framework for freedom of assembly and its compliance with international standards. This data was additionally used to assess the overall implementation of the legislation related to the right to freedom of assembly and the main challenges citizens face when they exercise the right in practice. In this phase, research teams also conducted an overview of assemblies organized in 2014 and 2015 through analysis of media reports on public assemblies and through Freedom of Information requests. The goal was to identify the most common problems related to the implementation of the legislation, as well as to determine and further examine specific issues (at least two in each country) that most significantly influence freedom of assembly in practice.

The second phase of the research included three steps. Firstly, exploratory interviews were conducted with civil society representatives in order to increase the understanding and the scope of the main problems related to freedom of assembly and their specifics, as well as to further explore the identified country specific issues. The second step was development of a questionnaire for semi structured interviews which was based on the findings from the exploratory interviews and the desktop research. One part of the questionnaire which was used by all countries included questions on main challenges, legal framework and the institutional set up and capacity for enabling FOA, while the second part of the questionnaire examined country specific issues. In the cases where specific issues overlapped in several countries, research teams used the same questions. The last step included administering the questionnaire in all countries through face-to-face interviews with relevant stakeholders such as organizers, leaders and participants of assemblies, members of civil society organizations that monitor assemblies, media, representatives of municipalities, law enforcement agencies, and persons that have been administratively prosecuted (in misdemeanor or criminal procedure) for participation in assemblies.).

Additionally, in countries where public assemblies took place during the course of the research, research teams conducted observations of assemblies. In this way, researchers gathered first hand data regarding the practical implementation of the legislation and challenges organizers and participants face when exercising their right to freedom of assembly.

In the third and final phase, validation of the findings was also completed in all of the countries where the research was conducted. Research teams conducted validation meetings with relevant stakeholders where they presented the main findings and the conclusions, discussed their relevance and consulted on recommendations for the improvement of FOA legislation and practice.

DESKTOP RESEARCH

The desktop research was organized in two stages. In the first stage we gathered relevant documents such as national legislation including laws and bylaws pertinent for freedom of assembly and court decisions related to the exercise of the right. After the materials were collected, we conducted a comparative analysis of the national legal framework against the international standards. Analysis of reports from relevant state authorities, national and international organizations and the EU was also carried out. In the assessment of the national legislation and the court practice, where suitable, relevant international jurisprudence was taken into account as well.

In the second stage of desktop research we carried out, an overview of the assemblies organized in the past 2 years (2014 and 2015). The aim of this overview was to identify most common types of assemblies and their general characteristics in terms of organizers, size, location, any good practices or violations that may have occurred, etc. For this purpose, we conducted content analysis of media and journalist reports, official statements from participants and rulings of relevant authorities. Assemblies included in the overview and then further analyzed were selected on the basis of three main criteria. The first criteria was attracted media attention, which we defined as the protest having been covered/reported on by at least three major media outlets. The reasoning for this criterion is that sufficient media coverage gives protests relevance, as well as contributes to the public discourse. The second criteria was expressed grievances of the organizers and participants in assemblies either publicly or to institutions and organizations that work on the protection of human rights and the third criteria was capacity for mobilization. This overview enabled us to determine the most common problems related to freedom of assembly and to identify particular assemblies with specific features and issues of concern.

DEVELOPMENT OF QUESTIONNAIRES

After the literature review, desktop research and exploratory interviews with assembly monitors and protest organizers, a questionnaire was drafted. The questionnaire was used for conducting formal face to face interviews and it was consisted of 26 mostly open ended questions divided into three main sections. The first section included general questions on the main challenges related to FOA, assessment of the legal framework and its implementation, the institutions relevant for FOA and their capacities. The second section was dedicated to the first specific issue - Policing. It was identified as a specific issue in four countries and researchers used the same questions. It examined the role and the capacities of the police related to FOA, the legislation that regulates policing of assemblies, the manner of policing public assemblies and the accountability of the police. The third section included questions on prohibition of public assemblies. The questions addressed the administrative procedures related to FOA, the role of the criminal justice system and the effects on the exercise of the right. Additionally, a small section on socio demographic questions was also included in the questionnaire.

FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS

In the second stage of the research, we conducted face-to-face semi structured formal interviews for the purpose of gathering qualitative data, The interviews lasted approximately 40 minutes and were conducted by three researchers. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded, while the analyzed data was used to draft findings and develop recommendations..

A total of 13 interviews were conducted. Five of the interviewed were women and eight were men. The relevance of the sample was determined based on experiences in exercising the right of freedom of assembly, educational background and professional affiliation. More specifically, we interviewed: 5 protest organizers from civil society including 3 that have been processed in misdemeanor cases related to protests; 1 representative of trade union; 1 representative of political party, 2 representatives of organizations that monitor freedom of assembly; 3 legal experts - 1 attorney at law that involved in strategic litigation and 2 legal experts from civil society organizations that work on protection of human rights; 1 representative from national ombudsperson.

OBSERVATIONS

In order to gain first hand data on organizing, conducting, possible restrictions and challenges related to public assemblies, structured observations of assemblies were conducted. A total of fifty five observations were conducted by twelve researchers in the period March – April 2016. The observations were conducted in the several cities of Serbia: Belgrade, Novi Pazar, Zrenjanin, Nis, Negotin, Bujanovac, Valjevo, Uzice, Novi Sad. Observations involved observing political pre-election assemblies. Researchers recorded information from the observations in a separate form that included questions on: the legal status of the assembly and possible legal restrictions of the assembly; the organizer, participants, purpose, location/ route, visual and audio displays as well as attitude to the police. Additionally, questions in the observation form are related to the policing of assemblies, including: type and number of units, location and size, gear and equipment, interaction with participants, types of actions of the police and the results of the actions.

VALIDATION OF FINDINGS

Validation of findings was organized after the data were gathered and analyzed and preliminary findings drafted. The validation meetings were used to generate proposals and recommendations for improving different aspects of freedom of assembly included in the report. The preliminary report was sent to two participants in the research including a protest organizer, a legal expert from civil society and a representative from academia. Additionally, the report was also communicated with two legal experts with experience in the field which were not interviewed during the research.

ANNEX II: FORBIDDEN ASSEMBLIES

1. Date: December 16th, 2014 Place: Belgrade

In December 2014, a group of foreign citizens, activists of Falun Gong organization submitted a total of **9 applications for holding public assemblies**. These were supposed to be held immediately prior to and during the Summit of Heads of Government of China and Central and Eastern European Countries in Belgrade, aiming to point to the poor record of human rights and persecution of Falun Gong activists in China. The decision to ban the event was adopted on 11th December 2014 with explanation that conditions for doing so were met in line with Article 11 of the Public Assembly Act, not indicating any specific circumstances regarding the case.

The Protector of Citizens has found out from media reports and notes sent by the Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights (YUCOM) that Stari Grad Police Station of the Belgrade Police Administration had passed a decision to ban a public gathering organized by the Serbian-Chinese Friendship Society, but **no statement of reasons was provided for such decision**. Upon an investigation of this authority, the Protector of Citizens found out that the decision did not state reasons for banning the public gathering based on relevant facts. For this reason he issued a recommendation to the Ministry of Interior where he advised it to improve its work in order to ensure that, in future, every statement of reasons given for a decision to ban a public gathering includes decisive facts and circumstances on which the decision is based. The recommendation and advising are also related to improving the work of MoI after omissions were found in the case of detention and forced expulsion Serbia of eleven foreign nations who were members of the Falun Dafa movement.⁴⁶

2. Date: October 10th, 2014 Place: Novi Sad

Police station in Novi Sad has banned the counter-assembly announced by extremist right-wing organizations "Zavetnici" and "Dveri". They accused the Vojvodina Party for "separatism" and "demolition of "territorial integrity" in northern Serbia". The Vojvodina Party has organized "Walk for Vojvodina" because they were dissatisfied with the position of the province in Serbia. Vojvodina Party advocates the federalization of Serbia and Vojvodina's status as a republic.**3. Date: September, 19th, 2015 Place: Belgrade**

Police banned two assemblies of right-wing organizations "Obraz" and "Nasi", which are intended to be held in Belgrade, during Pride Parade. The president of one of the organizations announced that the decision of MoI is based on the reasoning that these assemblies "may obstruct the traffic, are threat to public health, public morality or security of people and property".

4. Date: October 9th, 2015 Place: Novi Sad

Police station in Novi Sad has banned the assembly announced by extremist right-wing organizations "Nasi" and "Obraz". They have previously said that they want to organize a protest against, as they stated "dictator" Aleksandar Vucic, which approves the most voluble land in Vojvodina to be sold to the Croatian tycoon, while Russian influence is suppressed in every way.

5. Date: July 11th, 2015 Place: Belgrade

The latest ban on all public assemblies and announced counter-assemblies refers to any assembly scheduled in Belgrade for 11th July. Briefly, right-wing organizations opposed the **commemoration of the Srebrenica massacre** in Belgrade. The Ministry of Interior reached a decision, on 10th July 2015, banning, for security reasons, any assembly in Belgrade, announced to commemorate the 20th anniversary of genocide in Srebrenica. **Five assemblies had been announced**, all of them were scheduled to be held in front of the Serbian National Assembly, on 11th July, and they were all banned. Assessments were made on the possibility of keeping police cordons at a distance from assembly participants in order to prevent incidents, particularly

⁴⁶ Annual Report of Serbian Ombudsperson, http://www.ombudsman.org.rs/attachments/052_Annual%20Report%202014.pdf

bearing in mind that some of the Serbian Radical Party fans would not have a problem of being arrested and prosecuted.

Minister of Interior stated at a press conference that the Ministry of Interior had decided, following security and operative investigations, **to ban all assemblies** scheduled for 11th July, in front of the Parliament. According to Minister Stefanovic, the Ministry of Interior also attached importance to the security of all citizens and therefore, would not allow chaos in the streets of any town in Serbia, including Belgrade included.

There were expected 7,000 people to lie down on the plateau in front of the Parliament, according to the action organized by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights and supported by other NGOs, in order to symbolically remind of the number of casualties in Srebrenica. Additional assemblies were announced also for 11th July by organizations "Zavetnici", "Dveri", whereas the Serbian Radical Party stated that they would also respond and join the "Seven Thousand" action, but that they would come with Chetnik flags and banners "In God we trust, freedom or death".

6. Date: August 31st, 2015 Place: Belgrade

Police station in Belgrade banned the assembly announced by extremist right-wing organizations "Nasi" and "Obraz" against "EU's plan of settling 400,000 migrants in Serbia".