03 2025

Appeal by the International Academic Community in Support of Serbian Students & Professors

Members of the Academic Community from Serbian Universities

Dear Colleague,

We write to you as members of the academic community, gravely concerned
about the escalating repression targeting participants in peaceful students-led protests that have now persisted for four months.

From the very beginning, students and citizens have faced systematic state intimidation, culminating in a shocking act of violence during a mass protest on March 15 — a moment intended for solemn silence in memory of 15 fellow citizens who tragically lost their lives. **In that very moment of commemoration, an unidentified device emitting a powerful sound and shock wave was unleashed against peaceful demonstrators without warning.** The resulting pressure wave triggered mass panic, causing injuries and widespread distress. This deliberate deployment of such a device constitutes a flagrant violation of the Police Law of

the Republic of Serbia. The intentional use of tactics designed to instil fear, panic, and chaos represents a grave breach of fundamental human rights — including the right to life itself. The report from Earshot confirming this is available **HERE.**

Equally alarming is the campaign of intimidation that followed. Witnesses have been threatened with prosecution under the pretext of "inciting panic and disorder" if they speak out about the incident. This attempt to silence citizens not only deepens the violation of fundamental rights but also exposes a dangerous disregard for the rule of law. The targeted attacks against the rector, who has stood in defense of academic integrity and students' rights, have escalated into an open campaign led by pro-regime public figures calling for his arrest.

This tragic event did not occur in isolation. These student-led mass protests were ignited by the tragic collapse of the canopy at the recently renovated Novi Sad railway station — a preventable disaster that claimed 15 lives, including several students. This tragedy has come to symbolize something far greater: decades of negligence, corruption, and systemic mismanagement, where public funds disappear into dubious projects at the cost of citizens' safety. For many, the canopy collapse stands as a devastating reminder of the human cost of a political system that prioritizes power and profit over accountability and public welfare.

Outraged by this tragedy and the deeper crisis it exposed, students at universities in Novi Sad, Belgrade, Kragujevac, and Niš have organized blockades and demonstrations, demanding transparency in the reconstruction process, accountability for those responsible, and justice for the victims.

We stand at a critical moment. The repression of peaceful protest and the silencing of those who speak out against injustice threaten the very principles of democracy and human dignity. We therefore call on you to stand in solidarity with Serbia's students and academic community in their courageous pursuit of truth and accountability.

Universities have long been spaces of free thought and critical inquiry — and it is our shared responsibility to defend those who peacefully resist repression in the name of justice.

Please read and sign the appeal here: https://forms.office.com/e/jnVLs00DLW

Sincerely,
Members of the Academic Community from Serbian Universities