

Serbian Lawyers Suspend Work for Month in Support of Protests

Milica Stojanovic | [Belgrade](#) | [BIRN](#) | February 3, 2025 13:32

After a weekend of blockades and rallies all over Serbia, lawyers have downed tools for a month in support of anti-government protests, effectively bringing the justice system grinding to a halt.



Protesters gather to block the Freedom Bridge in Novi Sad, Serbia, February 1 2025. Photo: EPA-EFE/ANDREJ CUKIC

Lawyers in Serbia have started a 30-day work stoppage in support of the student protests that have shaken Serbia for over two months, triggered by the deadly collapse of the canopy at Novi Sad railway station canopy and the ruling Progressive Party's aggressive response to public attempts to commemorate the 15 victims.

The strike is due to last to March 4.

During that time, Serbia's Bar Association Assembly said lawyers "will not enter or remain in the premises of courts, prosecutor's offices, police and/or administrative bodies ... will not attend hearings and main examinations before the courts, will not appear before the prosecutor's office in investigative proceedings and proceedings for negotiations regarding the

application of opportunities [postponement of criminal prosecution] or plea agreements, and will not appear before the police in pre-trial proceedings”.

This means that lawyers will not work even in cases where defendants are in custody, and that effectively the whole justice system in Serbia will be blocked.

Denis Beciric, one of the Bar Association Assembly delegates who participated in the vote on Sunday, said such pressure may be effective. “The pressure of [all] who are participants in all these procedures will spill over, practically ... to the state, so I believe there will be an effect”, Beciric told BIRN.

“This is just one of the protests of one profession, [and] when all the others who did not [halt work] join, and those who are protesting [in other professions join], I believe that this is a serious pressure on the state,” he added.

The Assembly’s Sunday decision also said that lawyers will seek the resignation or dismissal of the Justice and Interior ministers, the Constitutional and Supreme Court presidents, the Supreme Public Prosecutor as well as the presidents of the High Judicial Council and High Prosecutorial Council.

Lawyers halted work during previous weeks, but for a shorter period of time.

The student protesters have four demands: the publication of all documents concerning the renovation of Novi Sad railway station, which partly collapsed on November 1, killing 15 people; the prosecution of all those involved in attacking students and professors during their protests over the disaster and their dismissal if proven to be public officials; a halt to the prosecution of students arrested during the protests; and a 20-per-cent increase in the budget for higher education.

Over the weekend, another wave of protests and blockades was held across the country. Beside a 27-hour-long blockade of Freedom Bridge in Novi Sad, where Novi Sad students welcomed their colleagues from Belgrade but also citizens from various parts of the country, protests were held in the cities of Nis and Cacak.

Other protests were held in small towns, such as Surdulica, Bojnik, Merosina, Smederevska Palanka, Krupanj and others.

Dozens of schools are not working, as both pupils and teachers – either all or some of them – suspend classes in support of the student demands.

Students have been blockading university buildings for almost two months since a protester was attacked in front of the Belgrade Faculty of Dramatic Arts on November 22.

Commemorative silent protests lasting 15 minutes have been held regularly in Belgrade, Novi Sad and other towns in memory of the Novi Sad railway station victims.

The collapse of the canopy at the station followed major renovation works that began in 2021 as part of a Chinese-led upgrade of Serbia’s railway infrastructure.

The works were unveiled in 2022 during that year’s election campaign but the reconstruction then continued until July 2024, when the authorities declared the station had been rebuilt “according to European standards”.

-
- About us
 - The Team
 - Letters to the Editor
 - Newsletters
 - BIRN Consultancy

-
- Subscribe to Premium
 - Awards
 - Institutions and Partners
 - Contact us
 - RSS Feeds

Follow us

