



TEXTS ADOPTED

P10_TA(2025)0248

Polarisation and increased repression in Serbia, one year after the Novi Sad tragedy

European Parliament resolution of 22 October 2025 on the polarisation and increased repression in Serbia, one year after the Novi Sad tragedy (2025/2917(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Treaty on European Union, in particular Articles 2 and 6 thereof,
- having regard to its previous resolutions on Serbia, in particular those of 8 February 2024 on the situation in Serbia following the elections¹, and of 7 May 2025 on the 2023 and 2024 Commission reports on Serbia²,
- having regard to the Commission staff working document of 30 October 2024 entitled 'Serbia 2024 Report' (SWD(2024)0695), accompanying the Commission communication of 30 October 2024 entitled '2024 Communication on EU enlargement policy' (COM(2024)0690),
- having regard to the previous EU statements on Serbia, in particular the open letter on Serbia of 5 February 2025 by the Commissioner for Enlargement, Marta Kos, and to her subsequent visit to Serbia in April 2025,
- having regard to the interim measure of 29 April 2025 issued by the European Court of Human Rights instructing Serbia to refrain from using sonic devices for crowd control,

¹ OJ C, C/2024/6339, 7.11.2024, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/6339/oj>.

² Texts adopted, P10_TA(2025)0093.

- having regard to the statement made by several UN Special Rapporteurs on 4 August 2025 condemning the Serbian Government's violent crackdown on peaceful protesters,
 - having regard to the numerous reports and statements by domestic and international human rights organisations, independent media and civic groups documenting systemic abuses in Serbia,
 - having regard to the European Convention on Human Rights,
 - having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
 - having regard to Serbia's application for EU membership, submitted on 22 December 2009,
 - having regard to the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States of the one part, and the Republic of Serbia, of the other part³, which entered into force on 1 September 2013,
 - having regard to the European Council Presidency conclusions of December 2006, to the Council conclusions of March 2020 and to the Conclusions of the Presidency of the European Council in Copenhagen of 21-22 June 1993, also known as the Copenhagen criteria,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 12 October 2011 on Serbia's application for membership of the European Union (COM(2011)0668), the European Council decision of 1 March 2012 to grant Serbia candidate status and the European Council decision of 27-28 June 2013 to open EU accession negotiations with Serbia,
 - having regard to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) of 31 October 2003, to which Serbia is a signatory,
 - having regard to Rules 136(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas on 1 November 2024, a newly renovated concrete canopy at Novi Sad railway station collapsed, killing 16 people and injuring others; whereas one year after the tragedy, the investigations have not progressed;
- B. whereas China's presence and influence in Serbia has significantly increased in recent years through large-scale infrastructure investments, raising concerns about transparency, adherence to EU

³ OJ L 278, 18.10.2013, p. 16, ELI:
http://data.europa.eu/eli/agree_internation/2013/490/oj.

standards and environmental compliance; whereas the station project formed part of the Belgrade-Budapest high-speed railway line and was carried out under a Serbia-China intergovernmental agreement, outside the scope of the EU's ordinary public procurement legislative framework⁴, by two Chinese companies; whereas the 2024 Commission report on Serbia had already warned about the circumvention of procurement rules via such agreements; whereas in March 2025, the European Public Prosecutor's Office initiated an investigation into the potential misuse of EU funds allocated to the reconstruction of the Novi Sad railway station;

- C. whereas the canopy collapse triggered unprecedented nationwide protests led by students demanding justice, institutional accountability, transparency, snap elections, electoral integrity, respect for civil liberties, the separation of powers, media freedom, an end to systemic corruption and investment in education; whereas the protests have since spread across Serbian society;
- D. whereas from February to the end of September 2025 more than 10 700 protests took place across more than 630 communities and 1 200 local community assemblies, including the largest demonstration in Serbia's history on 15 March 2025 and the second-largest on 28 June 2025, making this the largest grassroots movement in decades;
- E. whereas the protests organised by the student movement have been largely peaceful, although there were unfortunately a few violent incidents over the summer of 2025;
- F. whereas there were isolated cases of radical symbols being displayed and extreme nationalist, pro-Russian and chauvinistic rhetoric being used during the mass protests, which have faced significant criticism from abroad and from within Serbia;
- G. whereas previous elections, marred by pressure on voters, vote buying and organised busing of voters within Serbia and from abroad, were held under unfair conditions and the decisive involvement of the president and the ruling party's systemic advantages undermined the election process overall; whereas independent observers reported that the recent local elections in Zaječar and Kosjerić were neither free nor fair;
- H. whereas the Serbian authorities have resorted to violence against political opponents and the use of excessive force against

⁴ Directive 2014/24/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on public procurement and repealing Directive 2004/18/EC (OJ L 94, 28.3.2014, p. 65, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2014/24/oj>).

demonstrators across the country; whereas by early 2025, the repression had escalated;

- I. whereas in March 2025, during the largest protest in Serbian history, protesters were attacked by a sonic weapon according to independent sources, raising serious concerns about the proportionality and legality of the use of force; whereas human rights organisations collected testimonies from 3 400 attendees impacted by the incident, despite official denials by the authorities; whereas the Serbian Government invited Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) to investigate the incident; whereas the official investigation into the incident, which includes more than 170 witness statements, remains at an early stage, with no indictments;
- J. whereas since late 2024, protests have been met with repression, including beatings, arbitrary arrests, the use of tear gas, politically motivated detentions, deportations and mass surveillance; whereas more than 1 028 arrests and at least 340 violent incidents have been recorded, some of which caused serious injuries and involved high school students, while independent observers stress that this figure is not exhaustive;
- K. whereas since August 2025 violence has further intensified, including police brutality, torture and sexual violence against students, threats by the police protection service (JZO), politically motivated prosecutions by the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office, and smear campaigns by pro-government media;
- L. whereas security agencies have unlawfully recorded and televised private conversations, some of which were then used to accuse students and activists of preparing attacks against the constitutional order and security of Serbia, while the Cobras elite military unit has been deployed to respond to domestic clashes, even firing live ammunition on one occasion;
- M. whereas pro-government mobs and prior convicts have been shielded by police during violent counterdemonstrations, while opposition figures, students and members of Serbia's parliament have been beaten and abducted by plainclothes officers;
- N. whereas between July and August 2025, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights urged the Serbian authorities to exercise restraint, halt their crackdown on the student movement and uphold human rights and academic freedom;
- O. whereas concerns have been raised by civil society organisations regarding the proposed draft law on amendments to the Criminal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code and the Law of 2005 on Juvenile Offenders and Criminal Protection of Juveniles, which introduce new offences and harsher penalties that could disproportionately restrict

freedom of expression and assembly; whereas such provisions risk criminalising forms of peaceful protest or everyday civic behaviour that do not endanger public safety or constitutional order;

- P. whereas President Vučić, who according to the Serbian Constitution has no formal authority over policing, has framed the protests as ‘colour revolutions’ organised and financed by foreign secret services of Western states, and has transmitted this via pro-government media; whereas Russia’s Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) has supported this narrative and accused the EU of carrying out ‘subversive activities’ to fuel the protests; whereas a number of journalists have been assaulted or denied protection while reporting on the protests;
- Q. whereas President Vučić has also been using dehumanising language towards EU politicians, including Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), who have expressed their support for the protesters;
- R. whereas the government and the ruling elite have normalised repression through pardons for violent attacks committed by government supporters, the suspension of public transport to block protests, the politically motivated expulsion of foreign citizens and the occupation of central Belgrade by pro-government demonstrators;
- S. whereas over 150 foreign nationals with pro-Russian leanings were given shooting training in Serbia with the intention of inciting unrest ahead of Moldova’s 2025 parliamentary elections; whereas perpetrators of this crime, one of whom was linked to a high-ranking Serbian official, were only arrested after a media outcry; whereas the Serbian Government exerted direct pressure on the 2025 parliamentary elections in Kosovo;
- T. whereas a group of Serbian citizens, later arrested by Serbian law enforcement at the request of foreign national authorities, have committed hate crimes among various ethnic and religious groups in France and Germany with the intention of inciting fear and violence;
- U. whereas the Serbian authorities have repeatedly stated that Serbia remains committed to joining the EU and to implementing the necessary reforms, yet the pace of progress in key areas, such as the rule of law, media freedom, judicial independence and the fight against corruption, has rather backtracked;
- V. whereas Commission President von der Leyen visited Serbia on 15 October 2025;

- W. whereas in June 2025, the Commission announced the inclusion, under Regulation (EU) 2024/1252⁵, of the Rio Tinto lithium and boron mining project in Jadar on the list of strategic projects located in third countries;
1. Commemorates, one year after the tragedy, the 16 victims who lost their lives as a result of the collapse of the canopy of the Novi Sad railway station on 1 November 2024 and expresses its solidarity with those who were injured; reiterates its calls for full and transparent legal proceedings following the investigation by the authorities, in order to bring those responsible to justice, in accordance with the rule of law; calls for an independent technical examination of the structural failure, a comprehensive review of construction permits and oversight procedures, and a full assessment of potential corruption or negligence; urges the Serbian authorities to guarantee victims' families effective access to justice and adequate compensation; underlines the need to examine more broadly the extent to which corruption led to the lowering of safety standards and contributed to this tragedy;
 2. Supports the right of Serbian students and citizens to peaceful protests calling for accountability and democratic reforms directly linked to the rule of law, which the EU expects from Serbia; stresses the importance of civic courage, commitment to non-violence and youth engagement for the advancement of Serbia's European path; notes the shortlisting of Serbian students as a finalist for the 2025 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought; supports genuine attempts at dialogue about how the government can meet student demands; is deeply concerned that the situation in Serbia remains fraught with tension and polarisation that could easily lead to violence, which is a direct result of hate speech, promotion of violence, smear campaigns against opponents and anti-EU and pro-Russian propaganda widely spread via government-controlled media and also by government officials, as well as of a gross failure from the official side to face and come to terms with Serbia's past; calls on all political and social actors in Serbia to refrain from such rhetoric and contribute to fostering a climate of mutual respect, democratic dialogue and de-escalation; urges the Serbian Government to promote inclusive political participation and guarantee equal access to media for all political parties and candidates; stresses the importance of depolarising public discourse and fostering a political culture rooted in tolerance, compromise and respect for democratic institutions; calls on civil society, media and educational institutions to play an

⁵ Regulation (EU) 2024/1252 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a framework for ensuring a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials and amending Regulations (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1724 and (EU) 2019/1020 (OJ L, 2024/1252, 3.5.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj>).

active role in bridging societal divisions and strengthening democratic resilience;

3. Expresses concern over the deepening political polarisation in Serbia; calls on all political actors, civil society representatives and relevant stakeholders in Serbia to engage in constructive dialogue, free from external pressure or interference, with the aim of reducing political and social polarisation, building trust among institutions, and finding a sustainable path forward for the country; emphasises that Serbia's sovereignty and political trajectory should reflect the aspirations of its citizens;
4. Condemns in the strongest terms the wave of state-influenced violence, intimidation and indiscriminate arrests against peaceful protesters, journalists, civil society organisations and opposition representatives in Serbia; condemns smear campaigns, intimidation of the media and the abusive use of personal data to discredit protesters, and urges the Serbian authorities to ensure media freedom; calls on senior officials to end inflammatory rhetoric that incites hostility or violence; condemns the use of unlawful surveillance against demonstrators, such as through the use of Pegasus, Cellebrite and NoviSpy; expresses particular concern about the deployment of long-range acoustic devices and the extensive use of tear gas against civilians; urges the adoption and implementation of clear protocols on lawful crowd-control technologies and independent oversight mechanisms; calls on the Serbian Government to fully guarantee and respect the people's right of assembly and freedom of expression in line with the Serbian Constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights; further condemns all forms of hate speech and incitement to hatred, particularly against national minorities;
5. Holds the Serbian leadership politically responsible for escalating repression, normalising violence and weakening democratic institutions; deplores the fact that the highest state officials are actively spreading conspiracy theories about the collapse of the canopy being an act of sabotage or terrorist attack; is concerned about the lack of response from state institutions, including law enforcement and the judiciary, to refute these baseless claims;
6. Warns against the misuse of criminal law to suppress civic participation; stresses that amendments to the Criminal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code and the Law of 2005 on Juvenile Offenders and Criminal Protection of Juveniles must not result in criminalising peaceful behaviour or non-violent forms of protest; recalls that the proportional application of criminal sanctions is a cornerstone of the rule of law and of Serbia's obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights;

7. Is concerned about the illegal arrests made ahead of the protests of 15 March and 28 June 2025, which were preceded by leaked recordings of suspects' conversations published by pro-government media; notes that several political activists and members of the Free Citizens Movement (PSG) opposition party were arrested on these grounds and that some remain under house arrest or in exile; calls for their immediate release;
8. Calls for urgent, impartial and transparent investigations into all allegations of unnecessary and disproportionate use of force, arbitrary arrests, detentions, torture, sexual violence against detainees, politically motivated prosecutions and other grave human rights abuses, including spitting on and beating restrained detainees, verbal degradation and death threats; calls on the authorities to thoroughly examine the allegations that these violations originated from high-ranking officials of the JZO, particularly its commanding officer, Marko Kričak; reiterates that these actions could amount to inhumane and degrading treatment prohibited by international law and policing protocols;
9. Takes note of the resignation of Prime Minister Vučević, which was confirmed by the National Assembly on 19 March 2025, and of the subsequent appointment of the new government led by Đuro Macut on 16 April 2025;
10. Notes the August 2025 arrest, and subsequent release, of former government ministers Tomislav Momirović and Goran Vesić on charges of abuse of office and suspicion of damaging the Serbian state budget by at least USD 115 million in relation to the reconstruction of the Belgrade-Budapest railway line, including the collapsed canopy of the Novi Sad railway station; deeply regrets the obstruction of justice that has prevented those responsible for the railway station canopy collapse from being held accountable; condemns the smear campaigns disseminated through pro-government channels against judges and prosecutors working to enforce the rule of law;
11. Strongly condemns the government's retaliation against employees in the education and cultural sectors for supporting the protests, including job losses, salary reductions, the presence of police on university campuses and the withdrawal of funding for public universities;
12. Calls on the Serbian authorities to immediately restore financing to universities; calls on the competent institutions to ensure the unhindered participation of the academic and research community in projects funded by the EU;
13. Condemns the actions of the members of the ruling party in organising an illegal encampment in Pionirski park in front of the

presidency building and its subsequent expansion into the square overlooking the National Assembly; is gravely concerned about multiple reports of individuals with criminal backgrounds being mobilised by the ruling party in counter-protest activities, attacking protesters with pyrotechnics, further escalating tensions, violence and polarisation in the country; condemns the targeting of members of national minorities, including Slovaks in Bački Petrovac, Romanians, Bulgarians and Croats, and the use of ethnic slurs by pro-government media;

14. Condemns the arbitrary use of presidential pardons for individuals convicted of or prosecuted for violence against students and other citizens participating in peaceful protests, considering such actions to be a direct interference with justice and seriously undermine the rule of law;
15. Calls on the Serbian authorities to enable the safe return of all citizens who have fled the country as a result of political repression, intimidation or fear of persecution, and to guarantee their full protection and reintegration in accordance with the law and Serbia's international obligations;
16. Strongly condemns the unlawful arrest and expulsion of EU citizens who made statements in support of protesting students, and the public disclosure, by convicted war criminals, of the personal data of EU citizens; expresses concern about the rising number of detention cases involving EU citizens at Serbia's borders;
17. Condemns in the strongest possible terms the verbal attacks on MEPs by the highest Serbian officials because of their participation in, or statements made in the context of, the student protests, the most prominent example of which is President Vučić's attack on the MEPs from the Green/EFA Group on 5 September 2025;
18. Condemns the overt Russian Federation interference in the Serbian protests through disinformation spread by its officials, including Vladimir Putin, alleging that the protests form part of a Western-backed 'colour revolution'; rejects all allegations by Serbian officials and pro-government media that the EU and some of its Member States were involved in organising the student protests with a view to triggering a 'colour revolution'; calls on the Serbian authorities to take action against such malign propaganda in domestic media, instead of participating in its dissemination; remains concerned about the nationalist narratives present in parts of the protest movement; deplores the continued use of nationalist narratives, such as the 'Greater Serbia' and 'Serbian World' concepts, which have in the past been promoted by certain members of the Serbian Government; recalls that such rhetoric has no place in EU-Serbia relations and undermines regional stability;

19. Notes with concern that, in parallel to the ongoing protests, the Serbian Government appears to have been negotiating with the owners of the United Media company, to 'weaken' independent media outlets operating under it; warns that, if confirmed, this would represent a serious attack on the already endangered media pluralism in Serbia; calls on Serbia to align with EU policies in countering foreign interference and disinformation campaigns;
20. Calls for the immediate and full implementation of all recommendations of the international election observation missions of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to ensure free and fair elections in Serbia, in particular those concerning an independent audit of the voter register, the transparent and pluralistic appointment of members of the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM) Council and the provision of fair and equal access to airtime on public broadcaster RTS for all political actors;
21. Calls on the Serbian authorities to conduct a fully transparent comprehensive technical safety inspection of all infrastructure facilities, including those on the railway line from Belgrade, through Novi Sad, to the border with Hungary, in order to ensure their structural integrity, safety and compliance with international standards; urges the Serbian authorities not to put into operation any infrastructure facilities that lack the necessary permits and certificates for safe and uninterrupted use, particularly those located on international and regionally important transport corridors;
22. Encourages Serbia to strengthen cooperation with the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) and to fully implement its UNCAC obligations; calls for enhanced transparency of ownership and financing in public procurement for infrastructure projects; stresses that Serbia must safeguard environmental standards and the rights of local and national minority communities when approving such projects;
23. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to closely monitor the implementation of reforms through the EU accession process and the Reform Agenda adopted under the Reform and Growth Facility; acknowledges Serbia's progress in certain areas, including economic growth, regional infrastructure connectivity and cooperation with the EU on migration management and energy security; welcomes Serbia's participation in EU-funded projects under the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans and the Green Agenda; encourages Serbia to continue advancing reforms in alignment with EU standards, and reaffirms the EU's readiness to support the Serbian people in their efforts towards a democratic, prosperous and European future;
24. Underlines its long-standing commitment to Serbia's European perspective and future EU membership, while clearly underlining

that progress on EU accession depends on full respect for the EU's values, a genuinely merit-based process, and adherence to democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights, which are among the Copenhagen criteria;

25. Reiterates that EU accession negotiations with Serbia should only advance on the basis of measurable and sustainable progress in the fundamentals cluster, particularly on the rule of law, the fight against corruption and organised crime, judicial independence, media freedom, public administration reform, full alignment with the EU's common foreign and security policy (CFSP), and sanctions against Russia; recalls that Serbia remains a notable exception in the Western Balkans regarding alignment with the CFSP; emphasises that progressive alignment with the CFSP is a key requirement for all EU candidate countries; calls on the Serbian authorities to foster a fact-based and open discussion on accession to the EU;
26. Reiterates its strong support for Serbian civil society organisations, human rights defenders and independent activists working to strengthen democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights; calls on the Commission to ensure adequate and accessible funding and effective protection mechanisms for civil society actors; condemns any form of intimidation, harassment or administrative pressure against non-governmental organisations and activists; emphasises the vital role of civil society in promoting transparency, monitoring democratic standards and holding public authorities accountable;
27. Supports the prompt deployment of an ad hoc EU fact-finding mission to Serbia, with the participation of the European Parliament, in order to assess, on the ground, the state of democracy, the ongoing protests, attacks on demonstrators and repression targeting students, academics, educators and public-sector employees;
28. Calls on the most senior EU officials to refrain from making unfounded statements praising the reform process in Serbia; welcomes the shift in the Commission President's tone during her recent visit to Serbia, which reflects a more accurate assessment of Serbia's underlying problems and negative track record on fundamental reforms; notes the announced agreement in relation to independent verification of the voter registry and the REM Council media regulator, while underlining that progress is assessed based on implementation of reforms;
29. Invites the Commission to launch an initiative for targeted individual sanctions to be imposed against those responsible for serious violations of law and human rights in Serbia, in line with the EU global human rights sanctions regime;
30. Calls on the EU Member States to strengthen protective measures for those at risk, including emergency visas and relocation

programmes; urges the EU and Member State diplomatic missions to closely monitor all ongoing legal proceedings related to the protests; urges the EU Member States to adopt a united response to Serbia's democratic backsliding, including by considering targeted sanctions against individuals responsible for serious violations of law and human rights in Serbia;

31. Calls on all countries participating in the upcoming Expo 2027 in Serbia to take into account the serious concerns and evidence of widespread corruption linked to the ruling authorities, as well as the reported lack of compliance with basic construction standards and legal requirements in the organisation and construction of the exhibition;
32. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the President of the European Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the President, Government and National Assembly of Serbia, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.