

STATEMENT

Paris, 15 January 2024

Statement Attacks on BAV Board Members

Recurring Attacks on Members of the Managing Bodies of the Bar Association of Vojvodina in the Republic of Serbia.

The UIA is deeply concerned about the recurring attacks against members of the managing bodies of the Bar Association of Vojvodina (BAV) and against lawyers, generally, in Serbia. On 4 January 2024, the car of the President of the BAV, Vladimir Beljanski, was set on fire. This is yet the most recent attack of many that have been perpetrated against members of the managing bodies of the BAV and against lawyers in Serbia, since 2017.

The [BAV](#) is the bar association that was initially established in 1875 and subsequently reestablished 1921, to advocate for the principles of respect for human rights, constitutionality, and legality. Currently, approximately 1,800 attorneys and 400 apprentices are members of the BAV.

In recent years, the members of the BAV managing bodies have faced continuous threats and attacks. The UIA-IROL suspects these events to be retaliatory measures in response to disciplinary proceedings initiated by the BAV against some lawyers allegedly involved in criminal activity.

In 2017, the car of the then-President of the BAV, Srđan Sikimić, was set on fire. To date, the perpetrator has not been identified. In 2019, Vladimir Beljanski, the current President of the BAV, received threats from another lawyer, who is a member of the BAV, threatening to set his car on fire if the proceedings for the disbarment of another lawyer were not discontinued. [In 2020](#), a hand grenade was thrown at the house of the disciplinary prosecutor of the BAV, Dr Miroslav Đorđević. [In 2022](#), the car of the BAV disciplinary judge, Dragan Konjević, was set on fire. In 2023, a photo montage depicting the burning of the cars of Vladimir Beljanski and another lawyer, Tanja Arsic was published on social media, and on January 4, 2024, this threat became a reality when President Beljanski's car was burned. Since the first attack on former President Srđan Sikimić, in 2017, at least six complaints have been filed by BAV board members. Three of these complaints were dismissed and, with respect to the remaining three complaints, no official response has yet to be issued by the public prosecutor's office. An investigation for the criminal offence of aggravated attempted murder was initiated but the perpetrator of the attack was not found. From May to August 2020, Vladimir Beljanski initiated five private criminal lawsuits alleging criminal offence of insult conducted through social networks against another lawyer. To date, none of the court proceedings have been concluded. However, recently, the Novi Sad police department, working with the Basic Public Prosecutor, arrested two suspects in connection with the most recent attack on President Beljanski's car.

The UIA-IROL strongly condemns these attacks taking place in Novi Sad and urges Serbian authorities to adopt all necessary means to protect BAV managing bodies' members, as well as all lawyers in Serbia, from any threats and/or attacks, and to prosecute the perpetrators in accordance with the principles of due process and fair trial.

The UIA-IROL also expresses its strong support and solidarity with members of the BAV all lawyers in Serbia, who, despite the risks, continue to bravely and fully assume their core role in the defense of Human Rights and the Rule of Law.

The UIA-IROL further takes this opportunity to reiterate its strong support for the Council of Europe's ongoing work on the drafting of a [European Convention on the Profession of Lawyers](#), which is especially important in the face of increasing attacks on lawyers in many Council of Europe's States Parties. This new instrument is essential to ensure the effective protection of the profession of lawyer, whose mission is crucial for the protection of human rights and the rule of law.

More about UIA-IROL

The Institute for the Rule of Law of the International Association of Lawyers (UIA-IROL) promotes the Rule of Law and supports and defends, in particular, (1) lawyers, judges and human rights defenders who are harassed, threatened and/or persecuted in the exercise of their professions, (2) the independence of the legal and judicial professions, and (3) the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, especially in defense of human rights.

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