



UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE

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Belgrade, 3 April 2026

URGENT STATEMENT Arrests of Students at the University of Belgrade

To the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, European and international universities, and the international press:

Today, on the eve of Student Day in Serbia, police are conducting door-to-door arrests of students of the University of Belgrade. Students are being taken from their homes, in front of their families.

This follows a pattern of systematic escalation against the academic community:

31 March 2026: Police raided the Rectorate of the University of Belgrade without prior notice, seizing computers and equipment while state media broadcast the operation live as political spectacle.

31 March 2026: Thousands of students and citizens gathered peacefully at the University in response. Police used force against unarmed civilians.

3 April 2026 (today): Police are arresting students in their homes, door by door, on the eve of the 90th anniversary of the death of Žarko Maričić — a law student killed in 1936 by agents of an authoritarian regime for defending a fellow student during protests against the introduction of police on university grounds.

The historical parallel is not a metaphor. It is a repetition.

For fifteen months, students across Serbia have peacefully demanded truth and accountability for the collapse of the Novi Sad railway station canopy, which killed sixteen people. They have been met with criminal charges, financial penalties against their universities, media campaigns branding them as terrorists, police raids, and now — arrests today in their homes.

These are not criminals. These are students.

They are being arrested for exercising their fundamental right to protest peacefully, to demand accountability from their government, and to defend the autonomy of their university.

These are rights protected by the Serbian Constitution, the European Convention on Human Rights, and the Magna Charta Universitatum, to which the University of Belgrade is a signatory.

The University of Belgrade urgently calls upon:

- 1. The European Commission and Commissioner Marta Kos to publicly condemn the arrests and demand their immediate cessation.**
- 2. The European Parliament to convene an emergency discussion on the state of academic freedom and civil liberties in Serbia.**
- 3. The Council of Europe to initiate an immediate monitoring mission to assess the treatment of detained students.**
- 4. Universities across Europe to issue statements of solidarity and to consider the implications for Serbia's participation in European academic programmes.**
- 5. The international press to document what is happening today in Belgrade and to hold the Serbian government accountable before the international public.**

To every student arrested today: the University of Belgrade stands with you. Our legal resources are at your disposal. You will not be abandoned.

To the government of Serbia: ninety years ago, on this same date, a regime sent its forces against students. That regime no longer exists. The University still stands. History does not forgive those who silence their own children.

Today, it is Belgrade. Tomorrow, it may be any university in Europe that dares to stand with its students. Silence today is permission tomorrow.

Professor Vladan Đokić, PhD
Rector, University of Belgrade