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Serbia: Threats to members of Citizens' Association of Women For Peace

Since 7 July 2022, members of human rights organisation [Zene za mir \(Citizens' Association of Women for Peace\)](#) have been facing a number of threats and cyber attacks.

The Citizens' Association of Women for Peace is a human rights organisation founded in 2007 in Leskovac, Serbia. The human rights organisation runs a hotline for women and child victims of domestic violence and works with empowering women survivors. Their mission is to promote, educate and protect women's rights, with a commitment to building peace and non-violence. **Ljiljana Nešić** is a woman human rights defender and the president of the of Citizen's Association of Women for Peace, **Marija Trajkovic** is a woman human rights defender and Co-ordinator for the SOS hotline.

Since 7 July 2022, both [Ljiljana Nešić](#) and [Marija Trajkovic](#) have faced threats and cyber attacks. The threats are believed to be linked to the criticism expressed by Women for Peace towards a new hot line for victims of domestic violence inaugurated in Leskovac and operated by U-Tim mama i tata (U-team of Fathers and Mothers). On 7 July, Ljiljana Nešić wrote an open letter to the head of U-team of Fathers and Mothers, Miodrag Stanković, after he publicly labelled her organisation discriminatory as it provides support to women only. In her letter, Ljiljana Nešić wrote about almost 3 decades of experience in working with victims of domestic violence and welcomed other human rights initiatives in joining this important work but wondered whether the members of the new hotline team have received the adequate training. She also expressed her astonishment by the fact that the new SOS team is lead by Miodrag Stanković, a man who received two convictions for domestic violence in 2016, and that public funding was allocated to his project. After this information became public, Ljiljana Nešić received a call from an acquaintance who asked her to talk to Miodrag Stanković, that he was ready to personally apologize to her, so that the story would not spread any further. Ljiljana Nešić refused the meeting stating that Miodrag Stankovic should publicly apologise to all the victims of violence, and not just her. Marija Trajkovic began receiving threats regarding the loss of all funding, her job and that she would be sued if she asked questions regarding the accreditations and competencies of the U-team of Fathers and Mothers' new Leskovac branch. On 11 July 2022, the human rights organisation's email was hacked, and some emails addresses and bank statements were deleted.

On 7 July 2022, at 3.00 pm, while passing the parking lot in Moše Pijade Street, an unknown individual shouted "Rockefeller whores" at Ljiljana Nešić and Marija Trajkovic. On 10 July 2022, at 3.10 pm, in Moše Pijade Street, an unknown man addressed Ljiljana Nešić with words of "I know you have a daughter". On 12 July 2022, around 3.20 pm, an unknown man approached Marija Trajković stating "we will fuck you". On 15 July 2022, at 3.10 pm at Moše Pijade street, an unknown man told Ljiljana Nešić, "I know you have grandchildren". 10 minutes later in Radanska street, an unknown man approached Marija Trajković stating, "I know you live alone". On 16 July 2022, in Moše Pijade Street at 2.20 pm, an unknown young man intercepted the woman human rights defenders and addressed Ljiljana Nešić with the words "You talk a lot". On 18 July 2022, at Radanska street, an unknown man threatened the woman human rights defenders - "you will never get finance again, we will shut you down". On 21 July 2022, Ljiljana Nešić and Marija Trajkovic reported threats to the local police department.

This is not the first time this organisation has faced harassment. On 24 May 2016 in Leskovac, the Citizens' Association of Women for Peace organised a peace march to celebrate the International

Day of Women's Action for Peace and Disarmament with support of the Women in Black Network. During the peace march, a group of 10 men harassed, threatened and threw eggs at the activists – the police did not react. Despite several criminal charges filed against perpetrators, no one has been arrested to this date.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about threats and cyber attacks on the organisation Citizens' Association of Women for Peace and its members. Front Line Defenders believes they are being solely targeted as a result of their legitimate work in defence of women victims of violence. Front Line Defenders condemns the intimidation and targeting of the human rights organisation, which may have a chilling effect on civil society, and is not conducive to the creation of a safe and enabling environment in which human rights defenders can carry out their work in Serbia.

Front Line Defenders urges the Serbian authorities to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the assault and threats against the human rights organisation, Citizens' Association of Women, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Strongly condemn the ongoing smear campaign against human rights organisation Citizens' Association of Women for Peace;
3. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological safety and security of the human rights organisation Citizens' Association of Women for Peace;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Serbia are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.