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The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Serbia to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations at Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and, in reference to the joint communication from special procedures **AL SRB 2/2025**, dated 2 April 2025, has the honour to enclose herewith the response from the Government of the Republic of Serbia.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Serbia to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva, 2 June 2025



Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Special Procedures Branch
Palais des Nations, 1211 GENEVA 10

Comments by the Republic of Serbia

**on the Joint Communication sent by the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; the Special Rapporteur on the right to Education, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and punishment
(ref: AL SRB 2/2025)**

Respect, protection and promotion of human rights is one of the priorities for the Republic of Serbia, both nationally and internationally. In this regard, we take this opportunity to emphasize the importance we attach to cooperation with the UN human rights system and in particular to special procedures as an important instrument of the Human Rights Council.

In their activities, the state authorities of the Republic of Serbia consistently comply with the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia and the laws enacted in accordance with the Constitution, while respecting the generally accepted rules of international law and ratified international treaties, which, in accordance with Article 16 of the Constitution, are an integral part of the legal order of the Republic of Serbia and are directly applicable.

In relation to the allegations made in the letter, including violations of the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights or the provisions of the Convention against Torture, the relevant state authorities of the Republic of Serbia have no knowledge that any violations of the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights or the provisions of the Convention against Torture have occurred.

Adhering to the highest international standards of human rights protection, the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, freedom of opinion and expression, they are making maximum efforts to protect protesters from any physical attacks or injuries.

The relevant state authorities of the Republic of Serbia (personnel of the Ministry of the Interior), in accordance with their legal powers, undertake legally prescribed measures and actions for the purpose of unhindered and safe holding of public gatherings, respecting the constitutionally guaranteed right to freedom of assembly of citizens, with full support for the rule of law. Likewise, in accordance with their competences and scope of work, they undertake activities aimed at the security protection of persons and property, as well as activities to preserve stable public order and peace.

The manner of holding a public gathering and the obligations of natural and legal persons involved in the organization are defined by the provisions of the Public Assembly Act ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 6/2016).

Units of the Ministry of the Interior competent for the location of a gathering, in each specific case, make a security assessment, which involves examining the security risks and threats related to the holding of the gathering. Based on the security assessment, adequate security measures are planned, with the engagement of personnel of the Ministry of various profiles, depending on the level of security risks.

In this regard, the police officers of the Police Department of the City of Belgrade, on the occasion of the public gathering (protest) held on 15 March 2025, despite the fact that it was not registered, took all measures and actions within their jurisdiction in order to safely hold the unregistered public gathering, i.e. to protect the safety of all gathered citizens and prevent violations of public order and peace as well as criminal offenses.

When it comes to the aforementioned public gathering held on 15 March 2025, there was no use of physical force, or use of force by the engaged police officers of the Police Department of the City of Belgrade against the participants of the gathering, and therefore, no injuries to the participants of the gathering were caused by the actions of the police officers of this organizational unit.

As regards injuries of the participants in the gathering during the protest, six events were recorded, as a result of which 10 people suffered minor bodily injuries. Among them are three persons who were injured in the area of the City Municipality of Čukarica during the traffic blockade, when they were hit by a vehicle by a person who was ordered to be detained for up to 48 hours and criminal charges were filed for the criminal offense of causing public danger under Art. 278 of the Criminal Code.

We would like to point out that the police officers of the Police Department of the City of Belgrade have taken appropriate measures and actions within their jurisdiction in consultation with the competent prosecutor's office regarding all reported cases of injuries to participants in the gathering. In addition to the above, several attacks on police officers of the Police Department of the City of Belgrade have been recorded, during which unidentified persons threw stones, pyrotechnics and a bottle filled with acid at them, during which one police officer was injured.

The Ministry of the Interior, Internal Control Sector, is acting in cooperation with and upon request to collect the necessary information from the First Basic Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade. In connection with the events at the student protest held on 15 March 2025, the Internal Control Sector has received 5 petitions related to the aforementioned events. These are petitions that were submitted electronically, and which are treated as anonymous, considering that the petitioners did not sign the submitted petitions-complaints.

With regard to the events with elements of a criminal offense and misdemeanors that occurred during the public gathering, we note that the police officers of the Police Department of the City of Belgrade took appropriate measures and actions within their jurisdiction towards all participants, in consultation with the competent prosecutor's office.

In this connection, on 15 March 2025, 31 persons were brought in, against whom three criminal charges and 24 misdemeanor charges were filed.

The criminal charges were filed for the criminal offenses from Art. 278 of the Criminal Code (Causing of General Danger), Art. 357 of the Criminal Code (Forgery an Official Document) and Art. 246a of the Criminal Code (Unauthorized Possession of Narcotics).

The misdemeanor charges were filed for violations of the Law on Public Order and Peace (Art. 8, Art. 9, Art. 22), the Law on Weapons and Ammunition (Art. 48), the Law on Identity Cards (Art. 30) and the Law on Trade in Explosive Substances (Art. 37).

The competent authorities of the Republic of Serbia are taking measures to determine what happened at the demonstrations. In this regard, the First Basic Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade has requested information from the Ministry of the Interior and the Police Directorate about the alleged use of a so-called "sound cannon" during the aforementioned public gathering in Belgrade. The Public Prosecutor's Office has requested information on whether a weapon, pyrotechnic device or any other means that pose a general danger were used, which led or could have led to a threat to the life or physical integrity of the citizens present.

On 18 March 2025, the Public Prosecutor's Office issued a statement that, based on reports from the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Health and the Security and Information Agency, it had determined that none of the aforementioned organizational units or their members who participated in securing the protest heard, saw or used the so-called sound cannon. Therefore, there is no evidence to support the allegations that state authorities caused an immediate and irreversible risk in terms of the reasons causing the behavior of citizens during the aforementioned event, and the most famous and most authoritative world security services (the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB)) were invited to conduct independent investigations, that is, to assist domestic authorities with expert analysis based on the knowledge and experience they possess in the field of using devices that emit sound waves. This means that the necessary steps are being taken to determine all the circumstances of the event.

During the aforementioned gatherings on 15 March, all tertiary healthcare institutions in Belgrade, including those on emergency duty, acted professionally, impartially and in accordance with the law, providing emergency medical assistance to all persons in need. The provision of health services was carried out in accordance with the highest ethical and professional standards, while respecting patients' rights and prescribed procedures for the protection of personal data.

We note that the allegations that any of the protest participants died during these events are incorrect.

Sound weapons, i.e. "sound cannon", are not prescribed as a means of coercion or any other type of means by the Law on Police (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 6/16, 24/18 and 87/18) or any other law.

All means of coercion and technical means used by the Ministry of the Interior in its activities are applied in accordance with the Law on Police and the Regulation on Types of Weapons, Ammunition, Means of Coercion and Equipment of Police Officers.

All evidentiary and special evidentiary actions applied by the Ministry are applied exclusively in accordance with the Criminal Procedure Code ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 72/2011, 101/2011, 121/2012, 32/2013, 45/2013, 55/2014, 35/2019, 27/2021 - decision of the Constitutional Court and 62/2021 - decision of the Constitutional Court), the Law on Police and other applicable legal regulations of the Republic of Serbia.

When it comes to the protective measures regarding the use of the device in question, we emphasize that they can be found in the form of publicly available information, i.e. on the device manufacturer's website.