Subject: Urgent call to address safety conditions ahead of Serbia's early parliamentary elections on 25 October 2026

Dear Sir or Madam,

We write on behalf of 44 informal groups of Serbian citizens worldwide to draw your urgent attention to the electoral situation in Serbia ahead of the parliamentary elections on 25 October 2026. Our foremost priority is the safety of people in Serbia before, during, and after the elections. We respectfully ask you to consider whether the legal mechanisms available to you can be used now to build confidence in the process among all citizens and electoral contestants.

What is on record so far

ODIHR Interim Report

This report of 9 October describes a prolonged political crisis and deep polarisation, pressure on voters, misuse of public resources, weak oversight of campaign finance, threats to journalists, and isolated acts of violence. It also identifies the accuracy of the unified voter register (a little less than 6.5 million voters) as a major point of contention, citing unusually high numbers of voters registered in certain municipalities and at individual addresses.

PACE delegation press release

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) pre-electoral delegation visited Belgrade from 12 to 13 October 2026 to assess the political circumstances ahead of the elections.

In its press release, the delegation stated that the electoral campaign in Serbia was taking place in a "referendum" atmosphere. It also noted that May 2026 amendments to four electoral laws fell short of earlier ODIHR and Venice Commission recommendations, reported widespread complaints about unequal campaign conditions and media coverage that disproportionately favoured the ruling party, and raised concerns that inaccurate voter lists and arrangements for voting abroad could open the door to manipulation. Uncertainty about the post-election period was voiced across the political spectrum, and the delegation urged all political actors to avoid inflammatory language and intimidation and to protect a peaceful and democratic electoral process.

The delegation recognised the importance of domestic and international observation and urged the authorities to grant observers access to the entire electoral process.

PACE will deploy a fully-fledged observation mission to observe the elections on 25 October 2026 alongside the ODIHR, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament.

EU delegation's statement

On 13 October, the European Union Delegation to the Republic of Serbia issued a statement saying it was closely monitoring the campaign. It emphasised that free, fair, and transparent elections that meet international standards are a prerequisite for Serbia's progress towards EU membership.

The delegation called on political leaders to keep the campaign free from disinformation, aggressive rhetoric, and violence. The EU urged authorities to protect all contestants, domestic and foreign journalists, and observers. It expressed concern about several reported incidents of violence and called for swift, transparent, and credible follow-up to bring those responsible to justice. It also expects institutions to respond quickly to potential irregularities and promptly address complaints.

Out-of-country voting

A record number of Serbian citizens abroad have registered to vote, reportedly more than 102,000, but too few polling stations have been approved, and the approved stations are unevenly distributed. Furthermore, out-of-country voting hours align with Serbia's 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. schedule, without regard for time zone differences, forcing many Serbian diaspora voters worldwide to vote overnight.

These conditions effectively restrict Serbian citizens abroad from exercising their constitutional right to vote.

Diplomats' open letter to the diaspora

Prompted by irregularities in the out-of-country voting arrangement, thirty-one Serbian diplomats addressed an open letter to the diaspora, urging the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to revise its proposals and thus protect the voting rights of Serbians abroad and uphold the reputation of Serbian diplomacy.

Serbian experts' open letter

Serbian experts living and working abroad issued an open letter calling for a peaceful, democratic resolution to the political crisis and for equal voting rights for Serbians abroad. Although diaspora professionals are increasingly interested in working with Serbia, cooperation depends on the rule of law, reduced corruption, and appointments based on competence and integrity rather than political loyalty.

Previous election-related violence and allegations of organised intimidation

Numerous incidents of violence and intimidation during recent elections also raise serious concerns about safety on 25 October. Among documented examples, election watchdog CRTA reported attacks and intimidation in Zaječar and Kosjerić (June 2025), withdrew its observers from Mionica following threats, reported police inaction (November 2025), and documented further violence against students, journalists and observers during the March 2026 local elections.
On 13 October, BIRN published testimony by former SNS activist Momčilo Marjanović alleging that paid groups were organised to intimidate and attack protesters and provoke clashes with police. He also claimed to have witnessed approximately 100 men carrying handguns in the pro-government "Ćacilend" camp during the mass protest of 15 March 2025, and alleged coordination with police. This pattern of documented violence and reported failures of police protection underscores the urgent need for preventive measures.

Why this matters to Europe

The upcoming parliamentary elections in Serbia are relevant to European security not only because EU subjects and EU citizens (some with dual nationality) will be among the voters and observers on the ground, but also because Europe, already managing multiple protests on its territory and with stretched security resources, has little capacity to absorb another source of instability. Protecting the electoral process and everyone involved is therefore in the interests of both Serbia and Europe.

Our requests

We ask you to encourage the Serbian authorities to protect all election participants, domestic and foreign journalists, and domestic and international observers throughout the electoral process, and to ensure police act impartially and proportionately. We also ask you to press the authorities to launch swift, transparent and credible institutional follow-up on all instances of violence so that those responsible are brought to justice.

Furthermore, we urge you to use your diplomatic channels and legal instruments, within the bounds of international law and full respect for Serbia's sovereignty, to help protect the integrity of the electoral process, while making clear that the foremost concern is the safety and physical security of Serbian citizens — voters, election workers, journalists, and peaceful protesters alike — before, during, and after the 25 October 2026 elections, given credible indications of heightened risk of unrest and violence.

Thank you in advance for recognising the urgency and importance of the situation. We remain at your disposal for any questions you may have.

Respectfully,

1152 Paris @1152paris

Atina uz studente @1152atina

Berlin uz studente @berlinstandswithstudents

Blokada Beč @blokada.bec

Frankfurt za studente @frankfurt_za_studente

NRV uz studente Srbije @studenti_nrw

Palac gore @palac_gore_brisel__

Podrška studentima Budimpešta @budimpesta.uz.studente

Podrška Ženeva i Lozana @podrška.lozana.zeneva

UK uz studente @uk_uz_studente

Ulm je uz studente @ulm.je.uz.studente

Neformalna grupa građana iz Tuluza

Luksemburg @luksemburguzstudente

Neformalna grupa građana Solun @grckauzstudente

Bratislava uz studente @bratislava_uz_studente

Grenoble uz studente @grenoble.uz.studente

Malta uz studente @malta_uz_studente

Hamburg uz studente @hamburg.je.uz.studente

Švajcarska uz studente @1152.svajcarska

Karlsruhe uz studente @karlsruhe.uz.studente

Dijaspora uz studente Španija @1152_spain

Minhen uz studente, minhenuzstudente@gmail.com

1152 Holandija @1152holandija

Support for Serbian Students Prague @1152ceska

Linz uz studente @linzuzstudente

Canada

1152 Otava @ima_nas_u_otavi

Alberta supports students @alberta_uz_studente

Montreal uz studente @montreal_with_students

Toronto uz studente @1152toronto

Vancouver stands with students @vankuver.je.uz.studente

USA

Austin for students @austin.uz.studente

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Podrška studentima Čikago @podrska_studentima_chicago

San Dijego podrška studentima @sandijegopodrskastudentima

San Francisco Bay Area uz studente @sf.bay.area.uz.studente

Sijetl uz studente @sijetl_uz_studente

Srpska zajednica u Hjustonu @hjuston.uz.studente

Washington DC uz studente @washigtondc.uz.studente

Ujedinjeni Arapski Emirati uz studente @3_palme