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Macedonia: “We are pumping together!”: Student rebellion spreads across the Balkans

Monday 24 March 2025, by [ANTANASIJEVIĆ Anastazija Govedarica](#) (Date first published: 21 March 2025).

“Everyone to the plenum!”, called out Macedonian students who, just a few days after the tragedy in Kočani, set about organising. On this occasion, we spoke with two student groups that have quickly attracted significant public attention: the Independent Student Union of the University of Skopje and the “Student Plenum” page. The first plenum of students from the University of Skopje is scheduled for Monday.

Thousands of people attended the last commemorative gathering in Skopje on 18 March. On the streets, alongside grief, anger prevails. There is talk of plenums, protests are being announced, and support is arriving from students under blockade in Serbia. From the tragedy that has enveloped North Macedonia, a new movement is being born - and students are leading it.

Behind the “Student Plenum” Instagram page are students whose goal is to encourage their colleagues from all faculties in North Macedonia to self-organise into plenums. In just a few days, this page has gathered over 3,000 followers and support from students under blockade in Serbia.

As they tell Mašina, through plenums, students can collectively formulate demands towards the Government and decide how faculties will continue to function.

“For now, our profile has an informative function - it serves as a resource for all students and citizens who support our movement and who are aware of our role in this struggle. We also want the profile to be a means of communication about events at the faculties and about future actions”, state the students behind the “Student Plenum” page.

As they add, they currently do not plan to formally unite with any other organisation.

“We emerged from the need for students to gather and inform themselves, more as an incentive for unity than as an organisation seeking institutional connections with others”, they say from the Student Plenum, adding that they wish success to all and believe they share the same struggle. However, their current focus is on building an autonomous student network through direct communication and independent action.

“We are pumping together!”

Regarding the protests in Serbia, they tell Mašina that they are one of their biggest role models.

“Student protests in Serbia are one of our biggest role models. We have been following and supporting them from the very beginning, and deeply believe that we are fighting against the same structural problems - in different but related forms. Trans-Balkan solidarity is a key part of our initiative. The struggle led by our colleagues in Serbia shows us what it means to be persistent, politically aware and committed to the common good. They have shown unity, cohesion and courage,

and for us, they are an example of civic responsibility in practice. We are pumping together!", proclaim the Student Plenum.

To the question: "Why a plenum?", students respond that they believe the plenum is currently the most effective mechanism of direct democracy within student organising. According to them, it is a space where every voice has equal weight and where all students can participate equally in decision-making.

"We believe it is crucial for students to understand how powerful their collective voice is and how much political power they actually possess. For a long period, we feel that institutional mechanisms, such as student parliaments and assemblies, do not represent our interests. They have largely become instruments of party agendas and have lost connection with the real needs of students. Therefore, we believe that the plenum is currently the only space in which students can express themselves freely and in solidarity, and together articulate political demands and reactions - especially in times of social crisis, such as the one we are currently going through", they tell Mašina from the Student Plenum.

First plenum already on Monday

After the tragedy in Kočani and the student gathering at the university plateau in Skopje, the Independent Student Union of the "St. Cyril and Methodius" University in Skopje (NSS-UKIM) was also formed - a counterpart and response to the University Student Parliament of the same university (USS-UKIM), which you could read about on Mašina.

This group of students has already called for the first plenum of all UKIM students on Monday, from 1 pm at the University plateau. "These are our faculties - our right to decide", proclaimed the NSS-UKIM.

"NSS-UKIM emerged from the need for students to have their independent body through which they could self-organise because the current student organisation USS has proven to be an extended arm of the government, which was best demonstrated in the recent incident where the USS president, Aleksandar Nikolovski, shouted and silenced students while they were booing the Minister of Education and Science, Vesna Janevska, who continued to give a speech while students were fainting and seeking help", the NSS-UKIM tells Mašina.

Unlike, as they say, the bureaucratised and partisan USS, NSS will operate horizontally and through plenums, where everyone's voice will have the same weight and everyone will be able to express their opinion.

"The dissatisfaction of students is best shown by the fact that the Student Parliament of the Faculty of Philosophy UKIM (FSS) has voted no confidence in the leadership of USS-UKIM. We have information that other student parliaments will follow this example and will be organised in the same way - through plenums", add the NSS-UKIM.

The NSS-UKIM also emphasise that they are inspired by the sacrifice and courage of colleagues from Serbia, and that they will not give up until they gain their autonomy.

Anastazija Govedarica Antanasijević

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P.S.

Mašina

<https://www.masina.rs/pumpamo-zajedno-studentska-pobuna-se-siri-balkanom/>

Translated for ESSF by Adam Novak