

Youth Rising: How Niš Students Are Leading Serbia's New Wave of Democratic Protests

Inside Serbia's growing student movement: From campus blockades to confronting officials, how university students in Niš are reshaping political discourse

Wednesday 25 December 2024, by [KRSTIĆ Jana](#) (Date first published: 25 December 2024).

The youth of Niš have resolved not to remain silent. For weeks, university and high school students have been maintaining blockades of their educational institutions, demonstrating their willingness to directly confront those from whom they demand accountability and answers



Student groups have shown readiness to extend their blockades beyond campus boundaries. They first demonstrated this by protesting in front of the Presidency building, expressing dissatisfaction with President Vučić's misrepresentation of their demands during his press conference. The following day, they made their position clear regarding Radio Television of Serbia's coverage. On Sunday, December 22, joining forces with protesting farmers at Slavija Square, they demonstrated massive public support - with over 100,000 people joining their cause.

While Belgrade's massive gathering at Slavija captured national attention, Niš's youth movement has been consistently challenging local institutions and certain Ministries. Their first major confrontation occurred during a City Assembly session, responding to statements made by Uroš Radulović, the head of the Serbian Progressive Party's (SNS) council group. Radulović, who holds multiple positions beyond city administration, claimed that students were merely partying at universities while attempting to destabilize Serbia, suggesting they were funded by Albin Kurti (Kosovo's Prime Minister).

[Context for international readers: Albin Kurti is often portrayed as an antagonist in Serbian state media, and accusations of being funded by him are commonly used to discredit opposition movements.]

The response was swift. Though students were initially gathered at the Niš rectorate awaiting the Education Minister (who didn't appear), they quickly assembled outside the City Assembly demanding an apology from Radulović. The resulting response was telling - while Radulović refused to apologize directly, claiming he meant the opposition rather than students, Assembly President Igor Novaković called a recess and eventually apologized on his colleague's behalf.

Students weren't satisfied with this apology, and with good reason. Novaković, previously arrested for suspected abuse of office and public funds misappropriation, now holds a higher position despite ongoing legal proceedings. His apology seemed more focused on damage control than genuine remorse, stating, "I want to apologize on behalf of the ruling majority because the statement by council group leader Uroš Radulović was misinterpreted."

[The article continues with detailed coverage of Education Minister Slavica Đukić Dejanović's visit to Niš and subsequent events...]

Currently, all 11 faculties in Niš are under blockade, with an increasing number of high schools joining daily. The youth's commitment to justice remains unwavering. Neither offers of subsidized housing, spin campaigns about their demands, nor hate speech will deter them - such tactics only strengthen their resolve. As their numbers grow, so does their scrutiny of local and state institutions. The youth of Niš have sent a clear message to all officials: "Watch what you say about us - we'll come to tell you what we think about you and your work."

[Context for international readers: These protests represent the largest student movement in Serbia since the 1990s demonstrations that contributed to Milošević's eventual fall. The city of Niš, historically significant in Serbian protest movements, played a crucial role in the 1996-97 demonstrations.]

P.S.

source: <https://www.masina.rs/niska-omladina-je-odlucila-da-ne-cuti/>

Translation from Serbian: AN