Urgent Response Needed About the Assault on the Islamic Center in Novi Sad

The human rights organizations from Serbia call on the authorities to urgently come out with an official statement about, and an equally urgent response in finding those responsible for, the assault on the Islamic Center in Novi Sad. The authorities are due to promptly respond to an event that constitutes the clearest possible manifestation of religious hatred and that took place on the eve of Ramadan, the great Islamic holiday.

In the night of July 31 the assailants used baseball bats to smash the glass on the entrance door of the Islamic Center in Novi Sad, as well as the window of the Muslim Youth Club premises. At the moment of the assault, a number of members were in the building and witnessed the attack, too scared to do anything.

We remind the public that this is not the first such assault on a religious edifice in Serbia. On March 17, 2004 the Bajrački Mosque was torched in Belgrade, along with the Islam-Aga’s Mosque in Nis. In June 2010, during the assault on the Roma family in the village of Jabuka, the Methodist Church was stoned. The legal procedure in the case of Bajrački Mosque is not yet over.

We call on the police, the prosecution and the Serbian Ministry of Human and Minority Rights to take effective and systematic measures in order to locate and prosecute those responsible for the last night’s assault. The authorities must send a clear, unambiguous message that they will no longer tolerate the violent acts of religious hatred and intolerance, nor those that contribute to the atmosphere of fear and insecurity among the members of minority communities.

Signatory organizations:

1. Vojvodina Civic Center
2. Humanitarian Law Center
3. Civil Rights Defenders
4. Center for the Advancement of Legal Studies
5. Women in Black
6. Lawyers’ Committee YUCOM
7. Regional Minority Center
8. Youth Initiative for Human Rights