



## **PRESS RELEASE**

*Magistrats Européens pour la Démocratie et les Libertés* (MEDEL) has been following the recent developments in the judiciary of the Republic of Serbia with much concern.

Frequent filings of criminal and disciplinary charges, as well as numerous media attacks on judges and public prosecutors, have marked the last few months. These judges and public prosecutors have been either speaking freely on the daily issues and challenges regarding the judiciary and the prosecution, or expressing a critical and constructive view on the proposed amendments to the Constitution.

The already gloomy image of the pressures on public prosecution is further emphasized by the numerous criminal charges and the reports to the Anti-Corruption Agency (the contents of which are diligently reported by the media), filed against the elected members of the State Prosecutors' Council.

It is our belief that these attacks came from two government-organized non-government organizations (GONGO), as well as the media, which is suspected to be close to certain Government officials.

It appears that the Serbian authorities have not yet taken effective measures regarding these developments, in order to prevent the threat to the freedom of expression of judges and prosecutors, which is guaranteed by the laws of the Republic of Serbia, as well as international standards. It also appears that the Serbian authorities have not taken any measures to strengthen the authority of the judicial institutions and facilitate free decision-making of the members of the State Prosecutors' Council, which would be in accordance with the regulations that guarantee that a member of the Council cannot be held responsible for his or her opinion and voting in the Council.

Having these conclusions in mind, MEDEL will, according to its usual practice, approach the Serbian authorities to discuss the possibility of a monitoring mission to the Republic of Serbia, during which the MEDEL representatives would discuss the freedom of expression of judges and prosecutors and the freedom of decision-making of certain judicial institutions. Taking into account MEDEL's observer status in the Council of Europe and its contacts with the European Union, the monitoring report will be expedited to said institutions, if the need arises.

We are hereby taking this opportunity to recall a similar monitoring mission by MEDEL, which occurred after the re-election of judges and prosecutors in late 2009. The results of this mission were extremely useful for perceiving and understanding the process of judges' and prosecutors' re-election and have helped the European Union to complete the picture on the said re-election and take action in order to address the gaps and deficiencies in this process.

***September 13th, 2019***