

# krokodil

Engaging Words and Community

IN 10 STORIES



... and the story unfolds...

“Certainement qui est en droit de vous rendre absurde  
est en droit de vous rendre injuste.”

• *Voltaire*

“Anyone who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities.”

• *Voltaire*



## SUPPORT TO UKRAINE, FIMI AND DISINFORMATION

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The KROKODIL Association, one of Serbia's few independent, non-partisan civil society organizations, **advocates for responsible conduct regarding Russian propaganda and disinformation**. KROKODIL has developed its capacity to identify and analyze Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) through its program **Fake News from the Past**.

**KROKODIL is the primary CSO in Serbia offering intensive support for Ukraine through various initiatives.**

Following efforts to deliver **humanitarian aid** to the Municipal Perinatal Center in Kharkiv in 2022, the Center for Social Work in Blyzniuky in 2023, and Kherson in 2024 (chronicled in the travelogue “12-to-8”), within its premises KROKODIL established the first **Ukrainian library** in Serbia in 2023, comprising 550 adult titles and 250 for children, made possible by donations from **local publishers**.

Building on KROKODIL's 2023 **research**, which highlights key engagement areas for Serbian and Ukrainian CSOs such as war consequences, accountability, transitional justice, governance, democracy, human rights, and European integration, a **unique platform titled LIBERTE, EGALITE, SOLIDARITE!** for knowledge exchange and partnerships was created. This includes an in-person **December Annual Forum** that took place three times in Palic and Uzhhorod in 2024 and 2025 and an **online platform** bringing together over 250 individuals from Serbia and Ukraine.

To mark the **anniversaries** of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, KROKODIL organized events in collaboration with the international diplomatic corps in Belgrade. KROKODIL also provides shelter and workspace for Ukrainian literary creators, creative workshops for children, and hosts various debates, campaigns, press conferences, networking events and panel discussions.

The organization received the Serbian Philanthropy Forum award in 2022 for its support to Ukraine, the “Hrabri glas” (Courageous Voice) award from CRTA in 2023, and a certificate of appreciation from Ivan Franko National University in 2025 for its assistance to Ukrainians and promotion of Ukrainian culture in Serbia.

*Supported by the Canadian Embassy in Belgrade, ERSTE Foundation, Ukrainian Embassy in Belgrade, Embassy of Poland in Belgrade, Polish Institute in Belgrade.*



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POZORIŠTE

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## FESTIVAL KROKODIL

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Ever since its foundation in 2009, KROKODIL has organised the annual KROKODIL Literary Festival. The festival, which was primarily conceived as a regional affair dedicated to the promotion of dialogue, reconciliation and reconstruction of broken links particularly in the overlapping regions of the Western Balkans and Southeast Europe, soon became more and more international and has grown into one of the most distinctive and popular events in the region, exploring the most important cultural, political and social topics of the day.

Combining different formats such as readings, sofa interviews, panel discussions, workshops, press conferences, film and other audio-visual content, the festival has presented, throughout its 17 annual "editions," hundreds of distinguished writers, artists and public figures from numerous countries.

Among them are: **Bernhard Schlink, Margaret Atwood, Irvine Welsh, Hanif Kureishi, Sara Stridsberg, László Krasznahorkai, Erlend Loe, Georgi Gospodinov, Dubravka Ugrešić, Arnon Grunberg, Hassan Blasim, Mathias Enard, Aleksandar Hemon, Mira Furlan, Boris Buden, Ivan Krastev** etc.

The Festival boasts a large, very loyal, and engaged audience.

- **65.000+** visitors
- **2500+** participants
- **115+** programs
- **25+** in other European cities
- **350.000+** annual reach via traditional media in the region of SEE
- **500.000+** euro media value

Since 2024, KROKODIL has been touring its program **Spaces of Freedom: A Showcase of Contemporary Literary Creativity from Southeast Europe**, presenting the literature of the Western Balkans at different acclaimed European literary festivals. After successful appearances at the Berlin International Literature Festival, Lesen.Hören Festival in Mannheim, and Conrad Festival in Kraków, we intend to remain dedicated to promoting our regional literature in Europe throughout 2026.

*The program is realised in cooperation with the Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb) and European External Action Service.*

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*\*The 17th edition of the KROKODIL Festival became the target of an intense smear campaign, weaponized by authorities to settle scores with dissidents, students, and the opposition. The hostility erupted five days before the event, sparked by the announcement of a program commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide. This triggered an avalanche of manipulative media coverage, which quickly escalated into online harassment, threats, and physical attacks on the KROKODIL Association's premises.*



## STRENGTHENING LOCAL INITIATIVES AND CSOs, NETWORKING AND ADVOCACY

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As a member of the informal network of the self-organized group **8.march.every.day** KROKODIL, along with its “sisters-in-arms,” traditionally marks International Women’s Day by organizing the March for Women’s Labor Rights and Living Wages. This event serves as a powerful platform to continue the struggle for women’s economic and existential issues, leveraging this historically significant date for advocacy.

Throughout 2024 and 2025, KROKODIL has actively participated in the **Serbian National Working Group against SLAPPs**, contributing as the founder of the **SLAPP BACK Fund**. This group encompasses representatives from both civil society and institutional structures, dedicated to addressing SLAPPs and supporting activists in defending their rights.

KROKODIL also plays a vital role in various European and regional networks, including **CELA (Connecting Emerging Literary Artists)**, which unites 66 emerging writers, 99 translators, and 13 organizations across 11 European countries. Additionally, KROKODIL is a founding member of the **European League of Literary Festivals (ELLF)**, with ongoing plans to formalize this collaborative network.

Moreover, KROKODIL is a proud member of the **Association Independent Cultural Scene of Serbia (ICSS)**, a collaborative platform of organizations, initiatives, and individuals engaged in contemporary art, viewing culture as a public good. The ICSS aspires to promote the development of innovative and critical art practices while influencing cultural policy and decentralizing culture in Serbia.

In 2025, KROKODIL was recognized as one of the **official nominators for the council members of the REM** (Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media), underscoring our commitment to fostering an independent media landscape.

Finally, throughout 2025, KROKODIL continued to support civic protests, students, pupils, and their professors, reinforcing shared common values.

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### / SPACES OF RESILIENCE

By providing physical space for activities, a series of educational programs and mentoring sessions, KROKODIL aims to strengthen and develop the capacities of local civil society organisations, initiatives & groups, activists and individuals.

- **4** years of the program
- **70+** organisations supported
- **3** sub-grant scheme
- **35+** training sessions and seminars
- **15+** podcast episodes
- **40+** online campaigns
- **55** public events



## WRITER IN RESIDENCE / WRITER IN EXILE

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KROKODIL's RESIDENCY program was launched in 2012 as the first residential program in Serbia intended primarily for writers, translators and other literary creators. During the years, the program grew to encompass historians, journalists, academics and other experts, as well.

In 2022, with the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, we made a decision to prioritize offering KROKODIL's RESIDENCY as a safe haven for Ukrainian authors and cultural workers affected by the conflict. Over the subsequent three years, 15 Ukrainian writers (often with the members of their families), including some of the most prominent figures in their country's contemporary literature and thought, participated in the program.

- **151 authors, translators, historians and other literary creators from 26 European countries**
- **21 local translations and published works**
- **520 public events in**
- **6 cities**
- **500+ online campaigns**
- **500+ traditional media announcements.**

*Supported by the Swedish Institute, Austrian Cultural Forum, British Council, Polish Institute in Belgrade, Norwegian Embassy in Belgrade.*

*The emergency residency program for Ukrainian literary creators has been supported by the European Cultural Foundation, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Erste Stiftung, Artists at Risk, FRIDA, and Pobunjene čitateljke.*

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RECLAIM  
THE  
STREETS!

ENOUGH  
IS  
ENOUGH

## FREE THE STREETS/FREE THE PEOPLE! AND DISMANTLING THE CULTURE OF VIOLENCE

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For the past four years, the KROKODIL's program Why Do You Say Love but Mean War? has effectively identified instances of undue influence stemming from a 30-year culture of violence and the glorification of war criminals in Serbia. These issues hinder reconciliation and democratic development in the Western Balkans. This problem is particularly acute among young people, who are vulnerable to manipulation by political elites through the media, increasing the risk of radicalization and the adoption of violent behavior patterns.

The program's significance lies in its potential to foster real change in the attitudes and perceptions of citizens, especially youth, regarding the wars of the 1990s, promoting education and dialogue to confront the past.

In Serbia, walls have long served as politically desirable canvases for extreme right-wing expression. Legitimized and supported by authorities, these activities create an urban landscape saturated with graffiti, murals, and other visual messages that endorse hatred, racism, and sexism, thereby spreading toxic narratives and fostering a culture of violence. The objective of the initiative that was founded in 2022 under the name Free the Streets/Free the People! is to actively counter these harmful trends through three main strands of activities: Networking and Citizen Initiatives: Utilizing visual street art interventions, engaging in street protests, and promoting citizen petitions; Transformation of Public Spaces: Revitalizing areas that perpetuate negative social narratives; Advocacy: Working with policymakers at both local and national levels to change legislation concerning the public display of hate speech.

- network of **150+** citizens/activists
- **200+** graffiti removed
- **10** large scale murals in **5** cities and towns across Serbia
- **4** working groups
- **1** official proposal for the legislation changes/public policy
- **1** civic petition
- **15** local protests and advocacy campaigns
- **1** high profile expert research with analysis
- **36** public panel discussions in **22** locations
- **5+** major podcast episodes
- **25+** online and offline campaigns



## COMMON LANGUAGE

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Back in 2015, the LANGUAGES AND NATIONALISMS project dealt with the important question of language misuse for political purposes in the region of the former Yugoslavia. It culminated in the development of the **Declaration on the Common Language** which was signed by over 15,000 people worldwide.

**Avram Noam Chomsky**, famous American professor and public intellectual known for his work in linguistics as much as for his political activism, and social criticism is one of many high-profile academia persons who signed the Declaration.

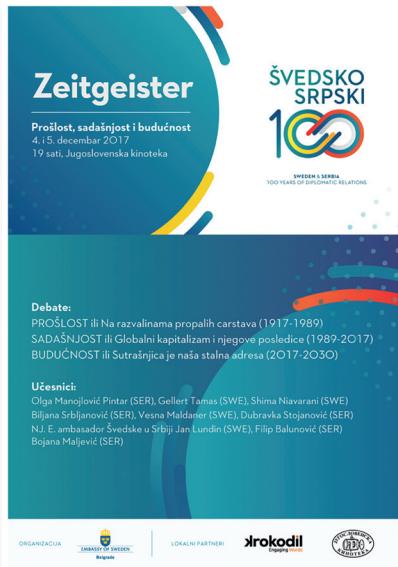
As a continuation, the COMMON LIBRARY edition of nine pocket sized books was published in 2021 by KROKODIL containing essayistic doublets on specific socio-political topics such as Exile, Society, Fascism, Europe etc. signed by some of the most important literary names of XX and XXI centuries. Theatre play "Urotnici" (The Conspirators) was developed in 2023 based on these essays. This play/scene reading is still being staged in theatres around Europe with intense public and critical acclaim.

Another detour of this project to the field of different artistic expression is the theatre play "Urotnici" (The Conspirators) based on the essays and lives of authors presented in the Common Library edition. This play was widely staged in theatres around the region with intense public and critical acclaim.

All these advocacy activities were designed to influence legislative changes when it comes to the recognition of the fact that the 4 "political languages" spoken in the region are actually nothing but equal variants of one and the same (still unnamed) polycentric language.

**This legislative recognition would effectively bring an end to educational, cultural and, consequently, political segregation.**

- **30+** public events in  
4 countries
- **1** Declaration
- **15,000+** signatures
- **20+** online campaigns
- **9** books / **1** edition published in  
3 countries
- **1** theater play developed and played in  
7 countries
- **4** state owned theaters involved and  
6 regional festivals
- **100+** media announcements
- **90,000** euro value of the media announcements



## DEBATES ON EUROPE

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One of the most internationally recognised programs of the KROKODIL Association is DEBATE ON EUROPE. The first one, entitled What We Talk About When We Talk About Europe was held in December 2014 in Belgrade as an integral part of a series of debates in more than 10 European cities initiated by the German Academy of Language and Literature as well as the Cultural and Media Commissioner of the Federal Republic of Germany. The great success of the Belgrade edition, the continuation of the European political crisis as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic that followed, led to the marking of this event as one of the KROKODIL's annual programs. DEBATE ON EUROPE presents a two day long event that offers a platform for regular gatherings of intellectuals who are opening dialogue on the burning issues of the European past, the present and the future aiming to contribute to the development of a better society.

- 4 public events
- 15 days of program realization
- 50+ panels realized
- 85+ intellectuals and experts participated
- 3000+ events attendees
- 15+ online campaigns
- 4 media partnerships
- 85+ media announcements
- 100,000 euro value of the media announcements

*Supported by the German Embassy in Belgrade, The Federal Foreign Office - Foreign Ministry of the Federal Republic of Germany, forumZFD, S. Fischer Stiftung, Allianz Kulturstiftung, Austrian Cultural Forum, Goethe-Institut Belgrad, The Embassy of Sweden in Belgrade.*

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## FIGHTING HISTORICAL REVISIONISM

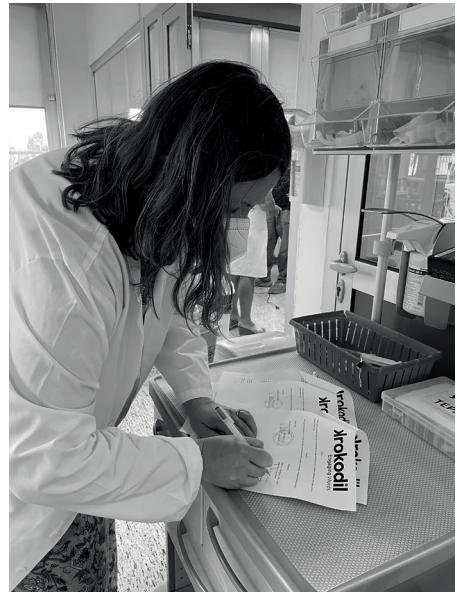
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From 2019 and under the program titled WHO STARTED ALL THIS? – HISTORIANS AGAINST REVISIONISM, KROKODIL was gathering some of the most prominent historians of the post-Yugoslav region. The intention was to actively **fight against revisionist tendencies** in regional historiographies and thus advocate for a multiperspective approach to learning history in official school curricula. The main result was the publication of the **Declaration Defend History**. During the next five years KROKODIL continued the discussion on the importance of inclusive and balanced historical writing and participatory **cultures of remembrance** through the project HISTOIRE POUR LA LIBERTE. By marking events in recent European history, such as the reunification of Germany and the democratic transition of Central and Eastern Europe, but also by correlating them to the breakup of Yugoslavia, this program aims to stimulate debate and reflection on a common culture of remembrance and to promote peace, tolerance, and exchange of experiences and perspectives, in order to further emphasize the dynamic character of European memory.

- **50+** public events in  
**6** countries
- **1** Declaration in  
**9** languages
- **1,000+** signatures
- **25+** online campaigns
- **30+** experts historians involved from  
**6** countries
- **150+** students of history involved
- **3** summerschools
- **4** seminars
- **1** advocacy campaign
- **100+** media announcements

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*Supported by the Europe for Citizens program of the European Commission and German Embassy in Belgrade.*



## CROWDFUNDING AND SLAPP BACK FUND

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The KROKODIL Association is locally and internationally recognised as one of the most dynamic and successful crowdfunding organisations with **more than 750 regular individual donors** that provide financial contribution to different humanitarian causes. Institutions that care for extremely prematurely born babies, children's hospitals at **home** and **abroad**, civilian refugees from **Ukraine** and **Gaza Strip**, even restoration of vandalized monuments in public space... all were supported through different crowdfunding campaigns initiated and managed by KROKODIL.

- **29** fundraising campaigns during **7** years
- **125,000+** euro fundraised
- **750+** individual donors worldwide
- **4** state institutions beneficiaries in **2** countries (Serbia and Ukraine)
- **14** members of one big **Palestinian family** rescued from Gaza and provided shelter in Serbia
- **35** online campaigns
- **15** different charity events

**The main objective is strengthening solidarity among citizens and encouraging empathy and proactive stance towards addressing the issues that individuals, groups or families, whether temporarily or permanently, face.**

Two years into its operations, the **SLAPP BACK Fund** is now widely recognized as a platform providing continuous support to Serbian citizens targeted by SLAPP lawsuits (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation) - baseless and repressive legal actions used by powerful actors to intimidate, silence, and financially exhaust individuals who speak out in the public interest. The strength of this community is reflected in numbers that testify to its vitality and reach.

- **1,131,959 dinars** collected since the Fund's establishment with contributions from
- **535 supporters**
- **10 cases/campaigns** individual donors worldwide

The Fund has provided direct assistance to journalists facing lawsuits aimed at undermining freedom of expression and independent reporting. Our solidarity has extended beyond professional and national boundaries. Today, the SLAPP BACK Fund stands as a stable and trusted institution. Yet its origins remain a reminder of the power of collective resistance and solidarity. In October 2023, following the sentencing of peace activist **Aida Ćorović** to a fine or imprisonment, the campaign developed by KROKODIL and FAMA (Feminist Anti-Fascist Network) **For Aida – on the Frontline** mobilized public support with remarkable speed, raising funds far beyond the immediate need. Citizens then made a decisive choice: the remaining funds would form the foundation of a permanent mechanism to support future victims of repression. From that act of defiance and care, the SLAPP BACK Fund was born.



## KROKODIL Center

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KROKODIL Center is a self-sustainable multifunctional space of 120m<sup>2</sup> divided into three separate units: courtyard, office with conference area with a bar, and a technically equipped venue with stage, microphones, stage lighting, a screen, projector etc.

KROKODIL Center is a pet/baby/kid-friendly non-smoking place. The Center accommodates **up to 30 seated guests** in a conference or presentation setup and **up to 70 standing guests**, making it perfect for panel discussions, public talks, press conferences, and presentations, as well as brunches, cocktail receptions, social gatherings, happy hours, and other informal events. The space can be easily adapted for **lectures, meetings, workshops, training, planning sessions, corporate events, focus groups, small celebrations and parties, cultural programs, and intimate literary evenings**.

Within the KROKODIL Center, the **exhibition space** is open to interested artists and organizations, and the venue also features a **gift shop** offering unique KROKODIL products alongside a carefully curated selection of books and gifts.

**By using our space, you directly support the work of the KROKODIL Association and our programs in the fields of culture, literature, social dialogue, and human rights.**

Since opening in September 2018, more than 740 different events have taken place in KROKODIL Center, including:

- **220+** literary events
- **200+** socio-political events
- **50+** arts and theater programs
- **40+** exhibitions
- **10+** international student visits
- **220+** academic gatherings, roundtables and panel discussions

*...and numerous other projects dedicated to translation, literature, regional and European cultural cooperation, the mobility of cultural workers, cross-border and cross-sector activities funded mainly by the Creative Europe program of the European Commission...*

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## STEERING BOARD

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**VLADIMIR ARSENIEVIĆ** is an award-winning and internationally acclaimed Serbian writer, translator, editor, publicist and human rights activist. He won the 1994 NIN-award for his first novel *In the Hold* (U potpalublju) which was translated into 22 languages. He published 12 books and also writes essays, articles, movie scripts and theater plays. He is one of the founders of the KROKODIL Association.



**MILENA BERIĆ** holds an MA in Communicology and a BSc in North American Economic studies and EU Economic studies. Milena is a researcher and analyst as well as human rights activist dedicated for the past 10 years to KROKODIL's organisational and program development, external affairs and communications. She speaks English, French, German, and Greek from which she also translates. She is a member of the Pacific Council on International Policy.



**BORIS BUDEN** is one of the Europe's most prominent and publicly visible philosophers, cultural theorists and publicists today. He holds a PhD in cultural theory from Humboldt University in Berlin. He writes essays and articles in the fields of philosophy, politics, critique of culture and art. He teaches at Bauhaus University and is also a guest teacher at several European Universities.



**DUBRAVKA STOJANOVIĆ** is a historian and professor at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade. She works on the issues of democracy in Serbia and the Balkans in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, European influences at the beginning of the 20th century, interpretations of history in textbooks, women's history, and the processes of modernization. She is one of the most distinguished public figures in Serbia today.



**IGOR ŠTIKS** is a writer and scholar. He is a professor at the Faculty of Media and Communications in Belgrade. His novels, *A Castle in Romagna* and *The Judgment of Richard Richter* won numerous awards and have been translated into 15 languages. He was honoured with the French distinction Chevalier des arts et des lettres for his literary and intellectual achievements.



**OLGA MANOJLOVIĆ PINTAR** is a senior research associate at the Institute for Recent History of Serbia (Belgrade), and a specialist in memory culture. She is involved in many domestic and international projects, and regularly participates in international interdisciplinary conferences and roundtables. She has published numerous articles, edited three collective volumes, and authored two books.



**OLGA KAVRAN** is the Founding Director of IUSTICOM, the first NGO dedicated to assisting accountability mechanisms in communicating with their diverse stakeholders, including victims and affected communities, civil society, donors, states, intergovernmental organizations, and the general public. She is also a Fellow at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel in Belgium completing a PhD on the topic of international criminal courts' obligation to provide information to the public.

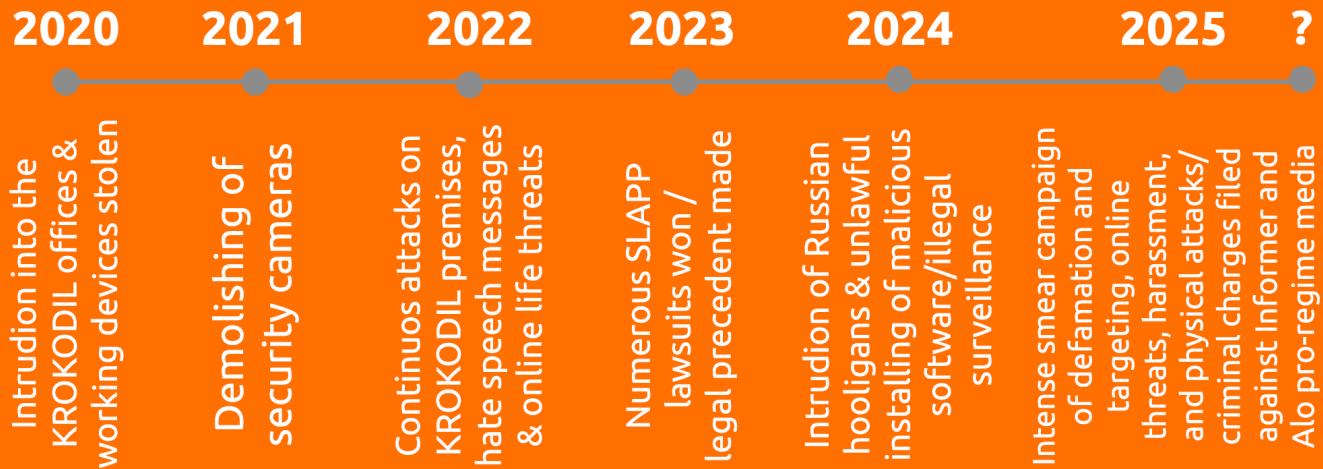
# Medical Center AT THE FRONT LINE

Together with our employees, associates, partners, donors, and, above all, the citizens who support us, we have never compromised on the most sensitive political topics. We have remained on the **front lines**, defending basic human rights and freedoms while advocating for institutional accountability. We stand firm in our commitment to defending democracy. In recent years, particularly since the onset of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, we have faced violence, threats to our lives, and systematic vandalism of our premises. **Although we consistently report these incidents to the police and relevant authorities, we have yet to receive a response.**

Since 2023, KROKODIL employees and activists have faced over twenty SLAPP lawsuits initiated by the Serbian government. These strategic lawsuits against public participation represent a relatively new threat to freedom of speech in Serbia and pose one of the greatest challenges for us to confront and overcome in the years to come. Additionally, more than twenty misdemeanor charges have been filed against eight activists and KROKODIL personnel, resulting in twenty-eight lawsuits, all of which ended with acquittal verdicts. KROKODIL has thus set a legal precedent.

In September 2024, a group of Russian-speaking hooligans secretly entered our premises and cut the ropes that held the Ukrainian flag on our terrace. This intrusion, along with the earlier removal of the Palestinian flag, marked the culmination of over thirty attacks on the KROKODIL Association since the beginning of the invasion of Ukraine. Further, KROKODIL employees were targeted with illegal surveillance through malicious software unlawfully installed by the Serbian Intelligence Services. Furthermore, in June 2025, the 17th edition of the festival became the target of an intense smear campaign of defamation coinciding with the announcement of a program dedicated to commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide. This led to a surge of negative, manipulative, and offensive media reports, followed by online threats, harassment, and physical attacks on the premises of the KROKODIL Association.

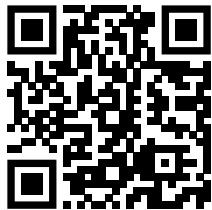
*\* Supported by: FrontLine Defenders, Civil Rights Defenders and ABA Center for Human Rights*





The KROKODIL Association is among the very few independent, non-partisan civil society organisations in Serbia that deal with culture and literature but also actively advocate for the principles of responsible behaviour by the state institutions, civil society organisations and media in Serbia. Committed to developing democratic culture, civic activism and educating citizens on their political rights, KROKODIL, as a think-and-do tank, is dedicated to establishing the rule of law and, bearing in mind both Serbia's specific geopolitical position today and the importance of European security as a whole, thereby strengthening Serbia's movement towards the EU. To this end, KROKODIL is focused on the development of various programs of social and political significance promoting basic human rights and freedoms while strongly focusing on civic engagement.

The KROKODIL Association is equally dedicated to the production of literary, cultural and socio-political programs and projects with the aim of developing audiences among those that are interested in culture and politics as such. It is particularly engaged in promoting a culture of dialogue and reconciliation and the reconstruction of broken links, particularly in the region of the Western Balkans/Southeast Europe, as well as in deepening mutual understanding and acceptance of differences within the wider European and global context.



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[www.krokodilengagingwords.org](http://www.krokodilengagingwords.org)

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