

# **DEGRADATION OF POLITICAL REGIME CONTINUES IN MOLDOVA**

**To the European Parliament**

**To the European Commission**

**To the Council of the European Union**

**To the Czech Government, Presidency of the Council of the European Union**

29 April 2009

Following our Statement on the Political Crisis in Moldova (10 April 2009), new signs have emerged indicating a severe political deterioration in the country, in particular the increasingly anti-democratic nature of the political regime in Moldova. The government authorities are now impeding the work of independent civil society and independent media at a time when independent voices are essential to witness and investigate human rights abuses carried out by the police authorities since the elections of 5 April 2009.

As Members of the PASOS Network, we are very concerned at the lack of progress in curbing the escalation of the political crisis in Moldova, and the lack of impetus from the side of the European Union, at the very moment when core civil liberties are being threatened, especially the access to free media, the right to associate and other fundamental liberties and rights, enshrined in the key treaties ratified by the Republic of Moldova.

We have now learned that Moldovan non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and media that monitored the elections of 2009, have come under intense pressure from the Ministry of Justice to 'present their official appraisal of the post-election protest actions of 6-7 April, 2009', presumably to demonstrate their political stance, disapproval or loyalty to the authorities. They have been asked to release a report of their actions to stop the riots. We would like to read a report on actions taken to stop the riots, but one written by the authorities.

## **Ultimatum delivered to civil society groups by fiscal authorities to declare sources of funding**

Since 24 April 2009, the day of the visit to Chisinau of the EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, the Communist-controlled Fiscal Tax Inspectorate of Moldova has sent letters of summons to at least ten organisations, demanding the presentation of their sources of funding, and a financial report for 2009 in a form that is usually required of political parties, accompanied by a warning that their bank accounts might be frozen.

Three of these organisations, Institute for Development and Social Initiatives (IDIS) "Viitorul", Association for Participatory Democracy - ADEPT, Institute for Public Policy, are independent policy centres and members of PASOS (Policy Association for an Open Society), a network of 39 independent think-tanks in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia committed to promoting and protecting open society values, in particular democracy, the rule of law, good governance, and respect for and protection of human rights.

## **Independent media urged to disclose confidential sources**

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Interior has cracked down on independent media that investigated post-election cases of human rights abuses, including torture, committed by the Moldovan police. On 24 April, three independent media outlets, "Timpul", "Jurnal de Chisinau", and "Ziarul de Garda", were urged by the authorities to release the names of the confidential sources they quoted in their journalistic investigations, so as to silence the witnesses who reported about the police brutalities and

torture committed against arrested persons in police custody. There is no scope for considering that the timing of this step was a pure coincidence!

We believe that the attempt to uncover the names of anonymous sources is unacceptable, considering the real concern for their individual safety and freedom. Their disclosure would be an infringement of journalistic ethics. Furthermore, the Ministry of Internal Affairs itself should collect evidence concerning the abuses committed against arrested persons by the police force, and should co-operate with journalists to establish the facts, not interfere in their work.

### **Coalition 2009 accused by the Ministry of Justice of organising the protests**

It seems that the Communist Party leaders are turning a deaf ear to both domestic and international criticism, attempting to curb the efforts of watchdogs and to silence think-tanks that provided their own views about the protest actions and the response of the authorities in Moldova. This is not the first case of intimidation of civil society groups in Moldova, but the threat has reached a dangerous new level. On 21 April, Coalition 2009 sent an open letter to the Ministry of Justice, expressing bewilderment about an accusation put forward by the Ministry - that Coalition 2009 was allegedly one of the organisers of the 7 April protest events in the centre of Chisinau. The Coalition wrote that it was not an organiser of the aforementioned protests, and criticised acts of violence from both sides, the protesters and the police. We are very concerned at this attempt to mislead the public.

All these facts show that the political regime in Moldova is rapidly abandoning its democratic commitments, and turning Moldova into a state where the rule of law is not upheld, where human rights abuses, including torture, go unpunished, and where pluralism of opinion and civil liberties are under threat. In order to stop the intimidation of independent media and civil society, we appeal for democratic solidarity and more effective involvement of the key EU institutions and representatives to bring about an end to the violent behaviour of the authorities against democratic groups. We urge the Government of Moldova to allow an international investigation mission to report on the atrocities and abuses that have been committed, and to co-operate in a wide-ranging, inclusive dialogue to arrive at appropriate responses to the overarching crisis.

On behalf of our centres and institutes, we would like to see more support provided to the people in need in Moldova, those who are subjected to daily harassment through political repression, and we urge less 'business as usual' on vaguely defined strategic considerations of the EU.

### **EU intervention essential to support human rights and civil liberties**

We appeal to the Czech Presidency of the European Council, the European Commission, the EU Special Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, to the EU member-state governments, and to Members of the European Parliament carefully read this statement, and to respond with effective action to renew the commitment of the EU towards respect for and protection of human dignity, political freedoms and civil liberties. We call upon the EU to condemn autocratic, one-party control of political and economic institutions in the neighbouring countries of the EU. We appeal for human solidarity with the democratic forces of civil society in Moldova, and urge both international media associations and political institutions of the European Union in Moldova to take a strong, principled position in defence of human rights and freedom of association and expression.

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