

President Voronin Fears High-School Children

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» The crackdown against the opponents of [Moldovan President] Vladimir Voronin continues in Moldova's cities. Yesterday, police was arresting high-school students during school hours, even if the children did not participate in the protests.

» To avoid persecution, relatives of opposition politicians left Moldova, seeking refuge in Western countries.

» Two Romanian citizens, including a correspondent of TVR [Romanian National Television], were detained for their involvement in actions intended to destabilize the country.

In North Korea, the authoritarian regime of Kim Jong-il frequently arrests high-school children, who are considered a threat to national security. The Soviets did the same in Romania during the 1940s. In 2009, in Chisinau and in nearby towns, the police sweeps high schools and arrests children during school hours. Vladimir Voronin's regime reacts to opposition protests with a policy that can be summed up in one word: terror.

Located 40 kilometers from the capital, the town Orhei has seen effects of the crackdown. At the "Alecu Russo" high-school, two of the best students, both aged 18, were arrested yesterday by plainclothes officers for allegedly trying to participate in the street protests from Chisinau. "Policemen, dressed in civilian clothes, came to the high school early in the morning. At first they watched carefully what happens, who comes in, who goes out, then they asked for two straight-A students, Alexandrina B. and Olga Sandulescu. The students were told to take their things," teacher Elena Golub told Romania Libera. According to Golub, on Tuesday the two girls, along with other students from several high schools, tried to leave for the capital. "But the roads were blocked, the police asked them to go back, and many children never made it to Chisinau. Some did go, but not the two girls. They walked back from the edge of the town, where the group [of children] had gone" adds Golub. The teacher has consulted a lawyer because, according to the information she has received, the teachers of the arrested students will be targeted next.

Paula T., a student at the same high school, also consulted a lawyer who was called to the school in a hurry. The police officers had come to pick her up as well, but the attorney asked them to show a warrant. Against the common legal practice, the officers wrote a warrant on the spot; however, in the end Paula was not arrested like her classmates. For Mihai S., however, the nightmare does not seem to stop. The police are putting pressure on the teenager, who did not participate in the demonstrations, although he tried. He was taken to the precinct on Tuesday, was released shortly thereafter, and was summoned back yesterday morning at 7 am. Mihai was released again, but neither he nor his teachers know what will follow next.

The Emergency Hospital from Chisinau hides the violence committed by the communist regime's thugs.

The hospital is full of police officers, and the doctors and nurses are intimidated by agents who yell at them and threaten use violence against them. Near the hospital, members of the security forces drag from an ambulance a young man, beaten unconscious. Independent Member of Parliament Valentina Cusnir is here too, after she was beaten on April 7th. She has a cerebral concussion and a broken arm. Not far, handcuffed to the bed, lies Denis Roscot, a 19-year old teenager who was viciously beaten by the police. The young man is guarded by two officers, who have standing orders to fire warning shots if anyone tries to visit him.

“You are Russian! You agitator!”

These days, Moldovan authorities are very vigilant and try to disperse any groups of young people. As in any dictatorship, the Voronin regime feels that people assembled pose a threat to the state. Moldovan students returning from [the Romanian city] Cluj-Napoca to celebrate Easter at home were turned back from Calarasi, 50 km from Chisinau, to the Sculeni border crossing. The only explanation they were given was “Don’t you know what is happening?” Alina P., a student at the "Mihai Eminescu" high-school from Cluj-Napoca, was among those who were sent back. She was going to Cahul, and she says that "we can only go with our parents, but not in a group”.

Evgheni Golosceapov, of Amnesty International, says that minorities feel threatened because of the state of tension and the provocations. Some people, not only Russians, have reported that they fear the wave of Moldovan nationalism. This not because of the first protests, which challenged the election results – it is because of what followed afterwards. “I was verbally abused,” says Golosceapov, “because I am a Russian speaker: «What do you want? You are Russian! You agitator!» ”

Yesterday, the prosecutor’s office from Chisinau announced the arrest of a Romanian citizen, 57-year old Johnattan Jerulalayem Netanyahu. He is accused of undermining the national security. “On April 9th, after searching his residence, we found maps of Chisinau, photographs of the administrative buildings, including the Parliament and the President’s palace, as well as bottles with specially-adapted flammable substances,” said the prosecutor’s office. The investigators have refused to give any further details on the circumstances in which the Romanian was detained.

Politicians’ families, refugees in the West

Because of the witch-hunt, some opposition politicians have already tried to shelter their families. After the 17-year old son of one of the Liberal Democratic Party’s leaders (PLD), Vitalie Nagacevski, was detained and interrogated on Thursday for one hour and a half, the teenager and his mother have left Moldova. “My son and wife went to Great Britain for safety. The [prosecutor’s office] opened a criminal case against me, and they are trying to revoke my law license,” Nagacevski said. The Liberal Democratic politician wished to defend in court some of his friends, whom the prosecutor had started to investigate.

The civil society representatives have not escaped either from the revenge of the regime that they have challenged. Yesterday, several hours after he gave an interview to Romania Libera, the leader of the Civic Association "Hyde Park", Ghenadie Brega, was summoned to the prosecutor, and his house was searched by the police. His brother, cameraman Oleg Brega, was detained for investigations. The previous day,

Amnesty International had warned that several dissidents, including Ghenadie Brega and Natalia Morari, will be put under investigation. The Moldovan Morari also works as an opposition journalist in Russia. Brega and Morari are among the organizers of the peaceful protest on April 6th, when young Moldovans have asked for a recount of the votes cast in the parliamentary elections.

Female journalist kidnapped

A journalist was kidnapped yesterday near the government building in Chisinau. Rodica Mahu is editor-in-chief of “Jurnalul de Chisinau,” a newspaper that criticized Voronin’s regime. According to Val Butnaru, the newspaper’s director, the journalist was taken away by four men who dragged her into their car and then left in an unknown direction. After several hours, Rodica Mahu was released, but she was warned to stop writing about Voronin.

TVR correspondent Doru Dendiu was also arrested yesterday in Chisinau. Moldovan authorities say that the public television in Bucharest is responsible for inciting protesters – an accusation rejected by the TVR. The police did not overlook the reporters working for the “Realitatea” TV station. The 3-person team was detained on Thursday night for several hours. During the past 72 hours more cameramen, reporters and photographers were viciously beaten by plainclothes officers. Yesterday, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) criticized the Moldovan government: “It is clear that these journalists are victims of the political crisis in Moldova,” says a press release from IFJ.

“Morari and Brega do not know that they are manipulated”

Yesterday, some opposition politicians distanced themselves from the civil society representatives. Liberal Democratic Party leader Vitalie Nagacevski claims that NGOs, which appear to be opposed to Voronin’s regime, are in fact controlled the [Moldovan] secret service, as indicated by the escalation of violence on Tuesday. “It would have been better if the protests had been organized by the opposition parties, and not caused by Voronin & co. We could have had peaceful protests. But on April 6th and 7th it was the agitators who organized the demonstrations,” said Nagacevski. According to the politician, the communists are using NGOs to impress the Western countries. “It is possible that even Natalia Morari and Ghenadie Brega do not know that they are manipulated. I believe this because of what happened” concludes the Moldovan politician. Contacted yesterday by Romania Libera, first deputy prime-minister Igor Dodon said that nobody is being prevented from reaching the capital. “This is not a special situation. Anyone who wishes to enter Chisinau can do so. From my office window I can see 100-150 protesters who demonstrate freely and peacefully,” assured us the Communist official yesterday at noon.

<http://www.romanalibera.ro/a151189/elevii-spaima-lui-voronin.html>

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