

PRESS ARTICLES



December 17, 2010

Moldovan Journalist Jailed For 15 Years For Spying

CHISINAU -- A court in the breakaway Transdniester region has sentenced a Moldovan journalist to 15 years in prison after finding him guilty of spying for Chisinau, RFE/RL's Moldovan Service reports.

In a case that sparked international concern, Ernest Vardanean, 30, was arrested in April in Tiraspol on suspicion of spying for Moldova's secret services.

He was charged with high treason, a crime that carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison in the self-styled Transdniester republic.

The Tiraspol court handed down the sentence on December 16.

Alexandru Postica is Vardanean's family lawyer in Chisinau, but hasn't been allowed by the Transdniestrian authorities to represent the journalist in court.

He told RFE/RL today that the sentence could be appealed only by the lawyer assigned to Vardanean by Tiraspol.

But Postica said he was unsure if that lawyer would file an appeal.

"I don't think the sentence against him can be changed because Vardanean's case is political and the so-called minister of justice in Tiraspol has indicated very clearly that he wants Vardanean to be sentenced," Postica said.

Vardanean's wife Irina complained in interviews with RFE/RL during the journalist's eight-month ordeal that the Tiraspol lawyer was doing little to defend her husband and was constantly avoiding her outside the court, saying he was too busy to talk to her.

Reacting to the verdict, Moldovan Deputy Prime Minister Victor Osipov told RFE/RL that Vardanean's case could be defined as an attempt by Transdniester's politicians to undermine the central Moldovan government's efforts to build trust and confidence between Chisinau and Tiraspol.

According to Osipov, Vardanean's sentencing will not prevent further such efforts by Chisinau.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) mission in Chisinau said its representatives were denied access when they tried to enter the courtroom on the opening day of Vardanean's trial in Tiraspol on November 3.

While in prison, Vardanean was shown on Transdniester television confessing to being a Moldovan spy -- a confession family and friends said was made under pressure.

Transdniester, which broke away from Moldova in the early 1990s, is not recognized internationally but has de facto independence.

Read more in Romanian here

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http://www.rferl.org/content/moldova_transdniestrier_journalist_prison_spy/2251410.html



Moldova's Gagauz autonomy elects governor

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BBC Monitoring Ukraine & Baltics

BBCUKB

English

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Excerpt from report by Moldovan news agency Infotag

Chisinau, 27 December: The incumbent governor of Moldova's Gagauz autonomy, Mihail Formuzal, won the runoff of the governor election held on 26 December.

As many as 31,800 voters (51.6 per cent) cast their ballots for him and 29,800 (48.4 per cent) voted for the mayor of the autonomy's administrative centre Comrat, Nicolae Dudoglo.

The voter turnout was 57.6 per cent, which is 0.35 per cent less than in the first round held on 12 December.

Formuzal voted for "the continuation of the line of stability in **Gagauzia**".

"I voted for stability in relations with Chisinau and the international community, for the expansion of **Gagauzia**'s influence, and for large-scale support for **Gagauzia**'s initiatives by other countries, including Russia and Turkey, in order to carry out social projects to support people," he said.

[Passage omitted: background]

Source: Infotag news agency, Chisinau, in Russian 0915 gmt 27 Dec 10

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<http://euobserver.com/?aid=31585>

Pro-EU coalition forms in Moldova

LEIGH PHILLIPS

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EUOBSERVER / BRUSSELS - Moldova's Democratic Party, kingmakers after the country's November general election, has announced it is to join with two centrist parties to support a pro-EU coalition and block the Communist Party from taking power.

The new coalition, christened the Alliance for European Integration, brings together the Liberal Democrats of Prime Minister Vlad Filat and the Liberals, breaking the parliamentary deadlock resulting from the 28 November ballot, which had failed to produce a majority.



Moldovan Prime Minister Vlad Filat has assured himself a governing majority (Photo: Wikipedia)

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The opposition Communist Party, with 42 deputies, had won the largest number of seats in the 101-seat chamber, but following negotiations, the Democrats' 15 deputies on Thursday (30 December) decided to ally themselves with the ruling pro-Western coalition instead.

The move however does not provide for the supermajority of 61 votes required to pick a president.

In the absence of a president, the parliament's speaker will take on the duties of the head of state.

Democratic leader Marian Lupu is to be temporarily appointed speaker.

European Parliament chief Jerzy Buzek was quick to congratulate Mr Filat by telephone on the formation of a governing coalition. "I welcome this long-awaited agreement of the political forces in Moldova. This is the much needed prerequisite of political stability for the country and the continuity of important democratic reforms," he said in a statement. "This is a good day for the people of Moldova and for the European Union."

"The European Union is strongly committed to Moldova. We stand by you," he added.