

**HUMAN RIGHTS
IN THE TRANSDNIESTRIAN REGION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA**

**DREPTURILE OMULUI
ÎN REGIUNEA TRANSNISTREANĂ
A REPUBLICII MOLDOVA**

**ПРАВА ЧЕЛОВЕКА
В ПРИДНЕСТРОВСКОМ РЕГИОНЕ
РЕСПУБЛИКИ МОЛДОВА**

Interdepartmental Commission for Co-ordination of the State
Policy in the Settlements on the Left Bank of the Dniester River

Comisia interdepartamentală pentru coordonarea politicii
de stat în localitățile din stînga Nistrului

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HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE TRANSDNIESTRIAN REGION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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The situation is reported as of March 2002.

2nd Edition, updated.

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Introduction

Eleven years after its declaration of independence, the Republic of Moldova is still a divided country.

Following the collapse of the USSR, conflicts of interests among political elites and those over language issues emerged and in early 1990 referendums were conducted in a number of towns and villages on the left bank of the Dniester River and in Tighina (Bender) on the right bank. The intention to create the “Transdnestrian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic” was announced. However, shortly after, on 2 September 1990 the pro-autonomy movement changed to proclaiming the independence of the “Transdnestrian Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic”.

Transdnestria adopted its own “constitution”, established executive, legislative, administrative and other bodies, created its economic, banking, financial, customs, taxation, educational and other systems, as well as its own law-enforcement bodies. Since its creation, Transdnestria has applied the 1961 Penal Procedural Code of the MSSR¹ amended and supplemented (MSSR PPC) as well as the 1964 Civil Code with reservations (MSSR CC) and the 1964 Civil Procedural Code (MSSR CPC)².

It may be observed that the situation in Transdnestria has slightly changed as compared to 1990 to 1998. The use of severe methods by authorities in respect of various opposition movements decreased. The close attention paid by international organisations and diplomatic missions played a positive role in this respect. However, the situation remains difficult and often unpredictable, especially prior to elections at different levels, when Transdnestrian authorities take direct actions against opposition forces.

This report aims at reflecting the actual status of human rights in Transdnestria as of March 2002.

As stated by the President of the Republic of Moldova Vladimir Voronin, the non-settlement of the Transdnestrian conflict, along with poverty and corruption, is one of the most important problems of the country.

The authors of the report refer to the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR)³. While ratifying the ECHR, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova made the following statement: “*The Republic of Moldova states that it will not be able to ensure observance of the Convention in respect of omissions and*

¹ Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic.

² The 1st part of a new Transdnestrian Civil Code entered into force on 1 May 2001.

³ The ECHR was ratified by the Moldovan Parliament on 24 July 1997.

actions made by the authorities of the self-proclaimed Transdniestrian republic in the territory, which is de facto controlled by such authorities until final resolution of the Transdniestrian conflict”⁴. The Transdniestrian “Supreme Soviet” did not react in any manner.

However, the European Court on Human Rights decided in 2001 “that the Republic of Moldova ratified the Convention with effect throughout the whole of its territory” and stated that “the Court considers that the aforementioned declaration cannot be equated with a reservation within the meaning of the Convention, so that it must be deemed invalid”⁵.

References to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) of 1966 were made due to the universal significance of such instruments⁶.

The report also contains references to documents of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)⁷, given that the Republic of Moldova acceded to the 1975 CSCE Helsinki Final Act on 10 September 1991 and signed OSCE documents stipulating human rights commitments.

Although the Transdniestrian “supreme soviet” issued a decree on 22 September 1992⁸, declaring readiness to observe a number of international human rights documents (e.g. ECHR, ICCPR, ICESCR) and the new edition of the “constitution” stipulates a list of human rights and freedoms, these rights and freedoms are frequently violated by the Transdniestrian authorities, while offenders are seldom prosecuted.

To compile this report different sources were used, including the following:

- Amnesty International reports;
- US Department of State Reports on Human Rights;
- information provided by international and non-governmental human rights organisations from Moldova and the Transdniestrian region;
- the report of the Helsinki Committee on Human Rights in Moldova “Human rights and freedoms in Transdniestria” (Chisinau, 1999, 2000-2002);
- mass media information;
- OSCE Reports;

⁴ “The decree of the Moldovan Parliament on the ratification of the European Convention on Human Rights and additional Protocols thereto” No. 1298-XIII of 24 July 1997, published in “Monitorul Oficial al Republicii Moldova” No. 54-55/502 of 21 August 1997.

⁵ Decision of the ECHR of application no. 48787/99, 4 July 2001.

⁶ Moldova ratified the International Covenants on 26 January 1993.

⁷ Until 1994 – Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).

⁸ “Dnestrovskii meridian”, No.39 (110), 25 September – 1 October 1992.

- international legislation;
- confidential interviews.

Legislation in force in Moldova as well as in the Transdniestrian region was used in this report.

While reporting the actual state of affairs concerning human rights in Transdniestria, the authors strived to avoid subjective conclusions and leave this discretion to the reader.

The non-settlement of the conflict gives rise to the following question: If Chisinau authorities are not able to exercise their jurisdiction in the Transdniestrian region, who is then responsible for violations of human rights committed in the area controlled by the Transdniestrian authorities?

According to the former Head of OSCE Mission to Moldova, Ambassador John Evans “the de facto authorities of the Transdniestrian region are fully responsible before the international community and before their own people for observing accepted human rights standards. The fact that Transdniestria is an unrecognised entity does not release its authorities, including particularly those responsible for public order and the respect of rights and liberties of the population, from awareness, publicising and acting in accordance with international human rights standards. Otherwise, the fact that Transdniestria as a territory does not enjoy a right of secession does not mean that people living in the Transdniestrian region should not enjoy certain rights or that the de facto authorities in that region should not bear certain responsibilities”⁹.

A major challenge in drafting the report, alongside the difficulty in accessing data sources, was the fear of persecution by the Transdniestrian authorities faced by many “citizens”.

The authors of the report would appreciate receiving readers’ feedback.

⁹ “Human Rights in the Republic of Moldova”, UNHCR Moldova, Chisinau 1999, p.74.

Right to Life, Physical and Mental Integrity

In accordance with Article 2 of ECHR, “everyone’s right to life shall be protected by law”. Article 1 of the Additional Protocol No. 6 to ECHR provides that the death penalty shall be abolished and no-one shall be condemned to such penalty or executed. In conformity with Article 6 of the ICCPR, every human being has the inherent right to life. Article 1 of the Second Optional Protocol to ICCPR provides that no-one within the jurisdiction of a State Party to the present Protocol shall be executed. In conformity with Article 24 of the Moldovan Constitution, the state shall guarantee everyone’s right to life, physical and mental integrity.

Capital punishment was abolished by the Law No. 667-XII of 8 December, 1995, and excluded from the Penal Code of the Republic of Moldova.

In 1999 the “president” of Transnistria issued a decree on the introduction of a moratorium on the death penalty including Court decisions, dated before 1 January 1999, which were not carried out¹⁰.

Members of the “Ilascu group”, A. Ivantoc, T. Petrov-Popa, A. Lesco were accused of terrorism and sentenced by the Transnistrian court to different terms of imprisonment. I. Ilascu was sentenced to capital punishment¹¹. In contradiction to Article 3 of the ECHR, Article 7 of the ICCPR and the Convention for Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Punishment (1984)¹², during the first years of imprisonment I. Ilascu was exposed to mock executions four times and the defendants were subjected to humiliating treatment during cross-examinations.

The execution of the death penalty in relation to I. Ilascu was postponed, while he refused to submit a request for mercy to I. Smirnov. In 1996 the Moldovan Deputy Prime Minister Valentin Cunev was granted access to I. Ilascu. Ilascu was also allowed to talk to the press. He declared that he was a prisoner of war.

Ilascu was not released even after he had been elected a Member of Moldovan Parliament in 1994 and 1998, and a Romanian senator later on. Only in 2001, at the request of the Moldovan President V. Voronin, I. Ilascu was released. Other defendants, except V. Garbuz, are still imprisoned.

¹⁰ See “Decree No. 263”. Until now two persons were condemned to death, but no executions were carried out.

¹¹ “U.S. Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1993” (http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights).

¹² Republic of Moldova signed the Convention on 1 October 1995.

Contrary to Article 20 of the ICCPR, which stipulates that “any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law”, the newspaper “Trudovoi Tiraspol” of 28 November 1991 published the names and home addresses of some police workers in Tiraspol, who refused to join the separatist cause.

In January 1993, in Tighina (Bender) leaflets were distributed inciting the population against V. Gusleacov, commissar of the municipal police department, who obeyed the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova¹³.

Right to a Fair Trial

Article 6 of the ECHR and Article 14 of the ICCPR guarantee to everyone the right to a fair and public hearing within reasonable terms by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law. Article 2 of the Additional Protocol No. 7 to the ECHR provides that any defendant of a criminal offence is entitled to have his conviction or sentence revised by a higher court. Article 26 of the Moldovan Constitution guarantees the right of citizens to defence. The independence of judicial bodies is guaranteed by the state and consolidated by the Constitution and national laws. All state and other institutions are obliged to respect and observe the independence of judicial bodies¹⁴.

In Transnistria there is no possibility to challenge the legality of arrest in higher courts. The Transnistrian “constitution” provides for this right, but as long as the MSSR PPC is in force in Transnistria, it does not guarantee this right to detainees in this region. The residents of this region, given the territorial and political division of the country, are deprived of the right to appeal the decision of local and regional courts to higher judicial instances of the Republic of Moldova (the Supreme Court of Justice and the Court of Appeal), as well as international courts (for instance, the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg).

Until now in Transnistria, Article 206 of the PPC of MSSR provides for the institution of returning criminal cases from the courts for additional examination, which does not allow for examination within reasonable terms. In the PPC and CPC currently in force in Transnistria, there are no provisions guaranteeing the realisation of the principle of equality of arms in legal proceedings.

¹³ Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in the Republic of Moldova, “Human Rights and Freedoms in Transnistria”, Chisinau 1999, 2000-2002, p. 7.

¹⁴ “Main principles on independence of judicial bodies” approved by the UN General Assembly Resolutions 40/32 of 29 November 1985 and 40/146 of 13 December 1985.

In contradiction to Article 14 (d) of the ICCPR, as well as to “Main principles concerning lawyers’ role”¹⁵, on 28 October 1998 the lawyer Mr. V. Turcan was denied the ability to defend Mr. P. Ceh. The Public Prosecutor’s Office and the “Ministry of Justice” of Transnistria confirmed Mr. V. Turcan’s right to defend Mr. P. Ceh, but he was prevented from exercising the defence, because he was a citizen of the Republic of Moldova and was not registered as a lawyer in Transnistria¹⁶.

Mr. N. Tcaci lodged a claim against the Transnistrian “Ministry of State Security” (“MSS”) for outlawing the decision of the military medical board on establishing his diagnosis as a “paranoid schizophrenia” which served as the reason for his discharge. Yet, the court refused to accept his claim for the reason that there was no provision under the law for the right to appeal the orders of the “MSS”¹⁷.

The Transnistrian “Supreme Court” did not settle the claim of Mr. Tcaci to review the decision of the city court, whereby he referred to article 46 of the Transnistrian “constitution” and article 2.3 (a) of the ICSPR, nor did it change the decision of the Tiraspol city court.

Mr. G.Valovoi lodged a claim for outlawing both the order for his dismissal from the position of president of the Trade-Union Coordinating Council in Tighina (Bender) and the revision act which served as reason for his dismissal. Yet, the Tiraspol city court refused to review his claim while referring to the USSR legislation which was in force before the adoption of the Transnistrian “constitution”, which stipulated in article 46 the right to appeal “*illegal decisions and actions of the state bodies, public officials, public associations*”. The Transnistrian “Supreme Court” did not settle Mr. Valovoi’s claim, nor did it change the decision of the Tiraspol city court¹⁸.

As noted in the examples above, “*the right to a judicial defence of rights and freedoms and the right to appeal illegal decisions and actions of the state bodies, public officials, public associations*” are not granted in full.

As to the right to appeal the legality of arrest or detention, which is expressly stipulated in article 9.4 of the ICCPR, such a right is not granted to people in Transnistria for the reason that the exercise of such a right shall be possible only

¹⁵ “Main principles concerning the lawyers’ role”, approved by the eighth UN Congress on prevention of criminality and treatment of delinquents, Havana, 27 August - 7 September 1990.

¹⁶ Interview with V. Turcan, lawyer at the Bar of the Law Faculty, Moldovan State University. 4 November 1998.

¹⁷ Materials on the case of the Tiraspol city people’s court, 1997-2001.

¹⁸ Materials on the case of the Tiraspol city people’s court, 1999-2001.

after amending the penal procedural “legislation” in force, although such a right is guaranteed and article 2 of the Transnistrian “constitution” stipulates that it “*shall have supremacy and direct application*”.

Right to Elect and be Elected

Article 25 of the ICCPR states that every citizen shall have the right and opportunity, without unreasonable restrictions, to vote and to be elected through genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the electors’ will. Article 38 of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova guarantees the right to vote, elect and be elected.

Article 31 of the Transnistrian “constitution”, adopted on 24 December 1995 with further amendments and supplements, also guarantees the above-mentioned rights.

In fact Transnistrian authorities do not allow for residents’ participation in the elections held by the Republic of Moldova (1994, 1998 and 2001 parliamentary elections; 1996 presidential elections), by prohibiting the creation of polling stations in the region for the reason that those elections belong to a different state¹⁹. During eleven years no polling station was ever created in Transnistria for the election of different levels of Moldovan authorities. Cases are documented when people who participated in the organisation of election campaigns in Transnistria were subjected to persecution.

On 15 November 1996 the employees of the Transnistrian “MSS” arrested Mr. M. Korabelnikov, a resident of Tiraspol, leader of the non-governmental organisation “Union of liberal youth” which is registered with the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Moldova, for his involvement in the pre-election campaign in Moldova. The Deputy “Minister of State Security”, Mr. O. Gudimo, informed the representative of the Helsinki Committee in Moldova that Mr. Korabelnikov was arrested on the grounds of Article 104 of the MSSR PC for distributing leaflets with the intention to incite mass disturbances. As a matter of fact on 15 November 1996 a meeting of the organisation led by Mr. Korabelnikov was convened, at which they had to take a decision on participation in the elections. Mr. Korabelnikov was released from detention only on 30 December 1996²⁰.

¹⁹ “U.S. Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1998”. (http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights).

²⁰ Materials on the case can be found in the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Moldova.

The resident of Tiraspol N. Podreadov, member of the Social Democratic Party of the Republic of Moldova and candidate of this party in the 1998 parliamentary elections of the Republic of Moldova, was involved in pre-election activities. However, he and some other people were repeatedly threatened. In order to evade arrest, Mr. Podreadov had to move to Chisinau²¹.

In contradiction to Article 5 of ECHR and Article 9 of ICCPR the Transnistrian “president” issued the “decree” No. 222 dated 30 September 1994 to “fight gangsterism”. According to this “decree”, local policemen and employees of the security authorities were empowered to search (without due warrant) any enterprise or organisation, and to inspect the transport, drivers and passengers. Given such “decree”, “citizens” could be subjected to administrative penalties and a 30-day arrest without trial, based on accusations of distributing false information. Only on 5 October 2001 did the Transnistrian “president” I. Smirnov cancel the “decree” no. 222.

Though Transnistrian “legislation” provides that all the normative acts adopted by the higher authorities must be published, the given “decree” was not officially published²². This contradicts the CSCE Final document of the Vienna meeting (1989), paragraph 14.4 and the document from the CSCE Copenhagen Conference on Human Dimension (1990), paragraph 5.8.

Several times, when the presidential and parliamentary elections in Moldova were held, a “state of emergency” was declared. For example, during the presidential elections in Moldova in 1996, a “state of emergency” (from 12 January 1996 until 1 July 1997) was declared by “Presidential decree” No.6 issued by the Transnistrian “president” on 11 January 1996. Such measures frustrated the participation of Transnistrian residents in the elections.

All the “presidential”, “Supreme Soviet”, district and local elections in Transnistria are held on the basis of contradictory laws, which do not comply with international standards. The hostile attitude of the Transnistrian authorities towards potential opposition forces and their representatives does not allow for free and impartial elections.

Intervention of district and local authorities, security authorities in nominating and registering candidates in election campaigns, as well as in voting and counting, are characteristic for all elections in Transnistria²³.

²¹ “*Moldavskie Vedomosti*”, No. 21 (127), June 1998.

²² “*Dnestrovskaja Pravda*”, No. 242, October 1994. The decree has not been published in “*Ofitsialnij Vestnik*”, “*Dnestrovskii Meridian*” or “*Pridnestrovie*”.

²³ From a diplomatic source.

The latest local elections of March 2000 cannot be said to have been free and impartial. The pre-election campaign was characterised by a broad and fierce intervention of officials and mass-media, allegedly controlled by the “MSS” against leading opposition figures, their allies and all candidates suspected to be “not enough republican” (i.e. those who do not promote sovereignty and independence of Transnistria), and are not therefore loyal to the actual executive power.

Furthermore, from constituencies of opposition candidates, instances were reported when “MSS” and even police visited residents who took part in meetings with those candidates. As a rule these activities seem to have been directed to intimidate residents to withdraw their signature from participant lists of nominating meetings to challenge the validity of candidate’s nominations.

Violations of the election “legislation”, respectively the right to elect in Transnistria, were committed at all stages of the election procedure – from the nomination of candidates up to the review of judicial challenges of election results.

Elections of local councils were held in Transnistria in April – May 2000. In the first voting round at the polling station no. 44 in Tiraspol the candidate O. Horjan won 62% of votes. However, the election results were cancelled on false grounds. In the second election the candidate won 78% of votes of all five candidates. The election results were cancelled again. Subsequently, he was three times denied registration as a candidate²⁴. It should also be noted that the “president” of the “election commission” is the former officer of the Transnistrian “MSS”, Mr. D. Osadciuc.

Mr. O. Horjan was sued three times. The first time he was indicted for terrorism, when the police officer Mr. I. Tkachenko claimed to have seen him with a grenade; the second time he was sued for slandering the Transnistrian “president” Mr. I. Smirnov; the third time he was sued for evading military service, although Mr. Horjan repeatedly presented medical certificates of his health problem, chronic hepatitis.

As stated by Mr. Horjan, the reason for his persecution was his opinion that there was no need to amend the Transnistrian “constitution”, which increased considerably the role of the executive power and gave Mr. I. Smirnov the opportunity to be elected for an unlimited number of terms of office, despite the previous limitation of two terms.

A typical breach of law in the election procedure is the voting of a person on behalf of a number of voters. Such a violation is easily identified by reviewing the original

²⁴ “*Glas Naroda*” 2000-2001.

list of voters, which is then signed upon receipt of ballots. However, while reviewing a case related to elections of the “supreme soviet” in Transdnistria held at polling station no. 34 in 1999, the courts refuse to satisfy the claim of reviewing original lists of voters in a public hearing, and the Transdnistrian “Supreme Court” preserves the validity of decisions adopted under such circumstances²⁵.

The validity of elections, which should be proved by the ballots, list of electors, reports of election commissions on the election results and the review of claims during the elections, is not ensured in Transdnistria, as all the above-mentioned documents and the stamps of the district and regional polling stations are submitted not to the “state” archive under the “law” but to the “Central Election Commission” (“CEC”), which in this way becomes free to make any manipulation with the election papers and the stamps to certify them. It should be noted that the press informed that the Transdnistrian “CEC” was chaired by Petr Denisenko, who was discharged in 1987 from the Soviet Army for embezzlement of money from families of his dead pilot-fellows²⁶.

On 20 October 2001 the Transdnistrian “Edinstvo” movement at its 2nd Congress in Tighina (Bender) decided to support in the “presidential” elections the candidature of Tom Zenovich, the head of the Bender administration. The reaction of authorities was instant. On 31 October the “president” of Transdnistria Mr. Smirnov called Mr. Zenovich to his office and handed him the “presidential decree” of his dismissal. When Mr. Zenovich returned to Bender, he discovered that the guards at the “state” administration building had been changed. He was not even allowed to enter his office. Thus, he could not exercise the standard hand over to his successor A. Posudnevski, who was appointed by Smirnov’s “decree”.

A particular fact is that the decree stipulated only the non-compliance of the Bender “state” administration with the Transdnistrian “laws”. The pension and salary debts of the Bender administration, which is also common to all territorial and administrative units of the region, were given as arguments by Smirnov’s supporters. I. Smirnov himself denied any connection between Mr. Zenovich’s dismissal and the ongoing election campaign.

Nonetheless, Mr. Zenovich was in Moscow in early November. As reported by mass media of Russia, Moldova and Transdnistria, and as reported by Mr. Zenovich himself and the members of his pre-election headquarters, one morning in November

²⁵ Materials on the case of the Tiraspol city people’s court.

²⁶ “*Novaia Gazeta*”, December 2001.

he was informed that the Transdnistrian Special Service intended to arrest him. He managed to leave his apartment in the centre of Bender a few minutes before a car with “MSS” officers entered the courtyard of his house. It was also reported that Mr. Zenovich’s car had to be driven in loops while leaving the city. Finally, it was removed from Transdnistria by the Russian military.

On 2 November Mr. Zenovich conducted a press-conference with the “Interfax” agency in Moscow. He severely criticised Mr. Smirnov and accused at the same time regional authorities of corruption, re-creation of the 1973 environment and delivery of weapons to Chechnya. It is assumed that such broad publicity changed the minds of Transdnistrian authorities to not arrest Mr. Zenovich. After that he returned to Transdnistria and was registered as a candidate for “presidential” position (as reported by Transdnistrian “CEC”, he won 7.2% of votes in the elections on 9 December 2001).

It is worth mentioning that, according to the official position of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the elections on 9 December 2001 were, inter alia, considered not more than elections of the head of regional administration, since the Russian Federation does not treat Transdnistria as subject to international law²⁷.

Soon after the press conference held by Mr. Zenovich in Moscow, repressive actions were taken against the Transdnistria “Edinstvo” movement. “MSS” officials occupied the office of the movement in Tighina (Bender), searched it, confiscated and removed all the assets, including the office equipment and documentation, and sealed up the office. The “Ministry of Justice” cancelled with immediate effect the registration certificate of the “Transdnistrian Edinstvo” and concurrently registered under the same name an organisation, which supported unconditionally the candidature of Mr. Smirnov in the elections. At present the “Edinstvo” activists try to vindicate their rights in court.

Freedom of Opinion and Expression. Right to Information

In accordance with Article 10 of ECHR and Article 19 ICCPR, everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression. Article 32 of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova guarantees the freedom of opinion and expression as well as the freedom of publicly expressing thoughts and opinions by way of word, image or any other means possible. Article 34 of the Constitution guarantees the right of access to information.

²⁷ “*Kisinevskie Novosti*”, April-December 2001.

Since the early 1990s, by virtue of the non-settlement of the Transnistrian conflict, the region's authorities have exercised administrative pressure on every type of mass media.

The "Dnestrovskaia Pravda" newspaper published between 1992-1995 a series of materials criticising the Transnistrian leadership. By the end of May 1995, the editor, Mr. A. Peciul, was discharged and critical publications ceased.

Also between 1992-1995 the independent channel "Asket" gave the floor not only to supporters but also to opponents of the power. The studio was subjected to every kind of search, while the employees were exposed to threats, including anonymous threats of physical reprisal. As a result, "Asket" ceased to prepare programs on social and political issues²⁸.

The Ribnita newspaper "Dobrij Deni", which criticised the authorities, received a series of claims amounting to some ten thousand dollars from the latter. Soon after, they decided to confiscate the newspaper equipment as a means of paying the claim, and thus paralyse the issue of the newspaper. This was avoided, however the threat is still pending.

In January 1999 "MSS" officials withdrew a print run of the Transnistrian newspaper "Novaja Gazeta" without documented reasons. All in all, in January-August 1999 4 print runs and 2 models of the newspaper were illegally withdrawn. "MSS" officers ignored the protests of the newspaper founders A. Safonov and G. Volovoi and took them to the "MSS" premises for interrogation where they threatened to send them to jail cells with criminals. The founders, the editorial staff and their families were exposed to anonymous threats for several months, while the "MSS"-sponsored newspaper "Molodezhnij Marsh" wrote that the newspaper founders "pollute the Transnistrian land" with their existence²⁹.

For legal considerations, the founders published "Samaja Novaja Gazeta" (lit. "The Newest Paper") from September 1999 to March 2000. However, on the eve of the local elections which were to be held on 26 March 2000 in Transnistria, authorities withdrew the editions of 16 and 23 March of the newspaper, which has not been issued ever since.

The founders of "Novaja Gazeta" sued the "MSS" in the Arbitration Court and won the case. "MSS" paid the fine, while "Novaja Gazeta" renewed its issue beginning in August 2000³⁰.

²⁸ From materials of programmes aired by "Asket" TV Company.

²⁹ "Molodezhnij Marsh", June 1999.

³⁰ "Novaja Gazeta", 4 August 2000.

Shortly before the Transnistrian "presidential" elections of 9 December 2001, the newspaper of the left opposition "Glas Naroda", which criticised the authorities, was shut down by the police. The newspaper is no longer published.

An unique experience was faced by the newspaper "Delo", published by the Transnistrian company "Sheriff". "Delo" began publication in early 1999. The Moldovan weekly "Argumenti i fakti" stated in its issue of 8 September 1999 that the violent actions of "MSS" against "Novaja Gazeta" aimed at cleaning the informational market in Transnistria for "Delo" newspaper. In due time the editorial staff tried to have a relatively independent conduct, as "Delo" was chaired by the former editor of "Dnestrovskaia Pravda", Alexei Peciul. In 2001 a lot of information emerged about the non-satisfaction of Transnistrian authorities with the analytical materials in the paper. One of the correspondents fearing persecution had to leave temporarily for Russia, while another journalist was beaten by unknown individuals. In January 2002 the "Sheriff" company announced the termination of the newspaper publication for financial reasons. However, independent observers in Tiraspol believe that the reason for such actions lies in the non-satisfaction of the region's executive power with the "Delo" journalists.

The mass media "legislation" is under consideration in Transnistria: pro-"presidential" deputies of the "Supreme Soviet" submitted for review the draft "law on printed and other mass media" in exchange for the "law" in force since 16 March 1993, as the current power considers that such a "law" is in many respects, "extremely liberal for a small state, threatened by Moldovan nationalists and their protectors from the West"³¹.

Freedom of Religion

Article 9 of the ECHR and Article 18 of the ICCPR provide that everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching. Article 31 of the Constitution guarantees the freedom of conscience and religious cults organised in accordance with their own charters under the current legislation.

In Transnistria, freedom of religion is formally guaranteed, though at the official level the Orthodox Church, which is subordinated to the Russian Orthodox Church, is

³¹ From materials of the periodical press and programs on social and political topics aired by the Transnistrian TV.

in a dominant position³². Other religious groups (referred to as sects), face problems in organising their activity. Registration of religious groups is practically impossible. Without registration, any religious activity can be declared illegal, which gives the Transnistrian authorities a formal ground to interdict meetings and confiscate religious materials.

The Methodist church was denied registration in Transnistria. Initially, registration was allowed by the Transnistrian authorities, but later it was revoked. According to the Transnistrian authorities, the reason for denial was the fact that five members of the church were not “citizens” of Transnistria, although they lived in Transnistria. An attempt on the life of one pastor was committed in July 2000. He was slightly wounded, but did not report the incident to police, as he feared it would aggravate the situation³³.

Freedom of religion in Transnistria is subject to considerable limitations.

For instance, the religious community “Jehovah’s Witnesses of Tiraspol”, registered officially on 22 January 1994 are subjected to constant persecutions. Without a judicial decision, by order of the Transnistrian “Ministry of Justice”, they have withdrawn the Statute and the registration certificate from the religious community “Jehovah’s Witnesses of Tiraspol”. At the same time, the withdrawn documents were outlawed. Similar actions were taken against the formally registered religious community “Jehovah’s Witnesses of Ribnita”. The representative of the Transnistrian “president” for religious and cult issues, Mr. P. Zalozhkov, submitted letters to the “Ministry of Interior”, the “MSS” and other “state” organs, where he stated that the activity of religious communities of Jehovah’s Witnesses relating to preaching and the distribution of religious literature is illegal and their registration is cancelled. Given the instructions, the border control authorities, the “MSS” border-guards, withdrew the religious literature from Jehovah’s Witnesses upon entry to Transnistria, while the police draft reports on members of religious communities of Jehovah’s Witnesses, who preach and distribute religious literature. Further to such reports, administrative commissions and “state” administrations impose administrative penalties upon members of religious communities of Jehovah’s Witnesses. The directorate for architecture in Tiraspol refused to review the application of the religious community “Jehovah’s Witnesses of Tiraspol” for the construction site of a new “cult” building, by referring to Mr. Zalozhkov’s letter, whereby the activity of the religious community “Jehovah’s Witnesses of Tiraspol” is prohibited³⁴.

³² The Transnistrian leaders are decorated by the Russian Orthodox Church.

³³ From a diplomatic source.

³⁴ The letter from Mr. Zalozhkov no. 01-22/452 of 19.10.01 and the letter no. 01-35/460 of 19.10.01.

Mr. Zalozhkov repeatedly expressed his extremely negative opinion on a number of religious communities, pointing out that the intervention in Transnistrian territory of religious cults and groups, which are not traditional, i.e. Orthodox or Catholic (there is a long-standing Polish Catholic Diaspora in the North of Transnistria), is a way of preaching foreign western or eastern political ideas and is therefore unacceptable in Transnistria for political reasons³⁵.

Freedom of Movement

Article 2 of the Additional Protocol No.4 to the ECHR and Article 12 of the ICCPR provide that everyone lawfully within a territory of a state shall, within that territory, have the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his residence. Article 27 of the Constitution also guarantees the freedom of movement.

Article 25 of the Transnistrian “constitution” also stipulates the “citizens” right “to move freely and choose a place of residence within the republic, leave the republic and return without restriction.”

However, the above rights are not guaranteed to their full extent, as the right “to choose the place of residence” is in fact limited by the regulations “on the passport system in USSR”, approved by the decision of the USSR Soviet of Ministers of 28 August 1974, which compels citizens to register for a permanent or temporary place of residence, while “propiska” itself has a nature of authorisation.

Thus, without permission of authorities, a “citizen” cannot register for a chosen place of residence while the residence without registration is liable to administrative sanction and, therefore, the right to “choose a place of residence” is in fact violated.

Article 5 of the “*Agreement on principles of peaceful settlement of the armed conflict from the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova*” as of 21 July 1992 provides that “*any obstacle in movement of goods, services and people will be immediately removed*”.

In contradiction to the above mentioned article, the Transnistrian authorities created their own border and customs’ posts at all entrances in the region, thus obstructing the freedom of movement of goods and people by introducing a strict passport control, registration of the transport and “citizens”.

³⁵ From materials of the periodical press, May-June 2001.

From 16 January 2002 on, the entry of OSCE representatives to Transnistria has been denied for about a month. The access was granted only several weeks later. OSCE was also denied access to the ammunition depot in Colbasna.

In 1996 the Republic of Moldova provided the customs authorities in Transnistria with customs seals and stamps for official registration of goods originating there³⁶. The same agreement, paragraph 1, provides that the Transnistrian authorities should remove the customs posts at the “border” between Transnistria and the Republic of Moldova. The Transnistrian authorities have not complied with these provisions.

Given the accession of the Republic of Moldova to the World Trade Organisation, under the WTO Statute, a new customs insurance has been introduced in the territory of the country since 1 September 2001. Despite the proposals of Chisinau authorities to regulate customs relations, the administration of the Transnistrian region refuses to conduct any negotiations. Thus, according to the new customs regulations, the Transnistrian economic agents, which do not carry out any foreign economic activity, are deprived of the possibility to export their production abroad. The authorities on the left bank of the Dniester River have made an allegation that Chisinau organised an economic blockade. It should be mentioned, however, that economic agents, registered in the Transnistrian region, are only liable to the fee for customs clearance - 0.18% of the cost of declared goods. Other payments (customs taxes, excises etc.) contribute to the regional budget.

Private persons travelling from one bank of the river to the other have to present their passports, fill in customs declarations, and pay different duties.

Owners of motor vehicles driving into Transnistria are given special registration coupons, which are withdrawn upon exit.

On 13 May 2001 Transnistrian border-guards did not allow the entry to Tighina (Bender) of the car of the Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin, who drove to Chitcani monastery.

Every year people from villages under Moldovan jurisdiction, which are located on the left bank of the Dniester River, have to coordinate with the Transnistrian authorities the transportation of their agricultural goods from their fields, for their procession etc.

³⁶ According to the “Protocol Resolution on Settlement of Customs Service Problems in the Republic of Moldova and Transnistria” of 7 February 1996.

At the Transnistrian border posts foreign citizens have to present international passports and are obliged to register with the local authorities within 3 hours. Otherwise they face administrative penalties.

The representative of the International Committee on Fighting the Organised Crime and Corruption in Russia and CIS, Mr. I. Godunov, was detained on 16 April 2000 by the “MSS” officers near Dubasari. He was brought to Tiraspol under military escort, where he was detained for 30 days under administrative arrest, until his identity was established³⁷.

In contradiction to the Convention on Diplomatic Relations (Vienna, 1961) and the UN Convention on Privileges and Immunities (1946)³⁸, members of the OSCE Mission to Moldova were several times refused to enter Transnistria. On 6 June 2000 an official of the UNHCR Branch Office in Moldova, who was on mission to Transnistria, was denied entry and only after negotiations with the Transnistrian customs authorities, was he granted access.

Transnistria introduced its own car registration numbers, which are not recognised and do not correspond to international standards. This does not allow the residents of the region to drive outside the Republic of Moldova. Therefore, they have to register their vehicles both in Transnistria and the Republic of Moldova.

In January 2001 and February 2002, Transnistrian border-guards denied the access of the UNHCR vehicle with diplomatic number plates to Transnistrian region at the Dubasari bridge, as they insisted on inspecting the identity of each passenger, thus, violating the freedom of movement.

Freedom of Assembly and Association

Article 11 of the ECHR and Article 21 of the ICCPR provide that everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association with others. Article 41 of the Constitution guarantees freedom of assembling in parties and socio-political organisations.

Article 33 of the Transnistrian “constitution” also stipulates this right.

³⁷ Bassa Press News, 1 June 2000.

³⁸ Moldova ratified the Convention on Diplomatic Relations (Vienna 1961) on 25 February 1993, and the UN Convention on Privileges and Immunities (1946) on 12 April 1995.

In Transnistria there have been established a number of non-governmental organisations, whose supporters promote the bridging of the two banks of the Dniester River. In 1996 the “MSS” blocked the activity of the “For Confidence Building” Foundation in Transnistria. During 1995-1996 this NGO organised several meetings with young people from both sides of the Dniester River, also attended by the chairpersons of the highest legislative bodies of Moldova and Transnistria Mr. P. Lucinschi and Mr. G. Maracuta, as well as a remarkable businessman, Mr. V. Constantinov, who was murdered on 8 May 1997. However, in autumn 1996 persons who supported and participated in the Foundation’s events (e.g. Ms. V. Lisenko, a student of Tiraspol University), were subjected to pressure by the “MSS” (home visits by employees of security bodies, threats to be dismissed from the University etc.)³⁹.

The attempt to establish in Transnistria a women’s NGO led to a campaign of discreditation of this organisation by the local mass media. In their appeal to the “General Public Prosecutor”, published in the “Respublika” newspaper on 28 November 1997, members of one of the “patriotic” movements, which support Transnistrian authorities, demanded resolute measures in order to ban this organisation on the territory of Transnistria. In their opinion, it constituted a “Fifth Column” of the Republic of Moldova⁴⁰.

Although there are many registered organisations in Transnistria, only those that support the Transnistrian authorities are tolerated. At the same time it is forbidden to establish in Transnistria parties and political movements that act in Moldova because they are considered organisations of another state under the Transnistrian “law”.

In September 2001 an application was lodged in the Transnistrian “Chamber of Registration” for the registration of a branch office of the Moldovan socio-political movement “Plai Natal”. The branch office has not yet been registered.

Transnistrian authorities obstructed in every possible way the registration of the human rights organisation “Amnesty”. Although, according to the law, non-governmental organisations have to be registered within two months, the process of registration of this organisation lasted almost nine months. A letter was issued by the “MSS” “*on inexpediency of the human rights organisation in Transnistria*”. Only in March 2000, after a decision of the court of arbitration, “Amnesty” was registered as an NGO⁴¹.

³⁹ Oazu Nantoi. “Report on the Problem of Internally Displaced Persons”, Chisinau, 1999, page 18.

⁴⁰ See footnote 13.

⁴¹ NGO “Amnesty”, Tiraspol.

On 7 December 2001 the Tiraspol city court decided to abolish the NGO “Leninskij Kommunisticheskij Sojuz Moldodezhi Pridnestrovja”. The reason was that this NGO supported the Moldovan Communist Party at the parliamentary elections⁴².

Equal Employment Opportunities and Conditions

Article 7 of the ICESCR provides that the state parties to the present Covenant recognise the right of everyone to enjoy just and favourable conditions of work.

In contradiction to Article 26 of the ICCPR, the right to work is violated through discrimination of citizens on the basis of their political opinion in Transnistria. In the region administrated by the Transnistrian authorities, those who are in opposition to authorities are often dismissed from work.

Thus, in particular, Mr. N. Buceatchi, one of the leaders of the socio-political movement “Vlasti – narodu! Za sotsialinuju spravedlivosti!” and the political party “Partija narodovlastija”, had to resign from his latest position, deputy director of the Tiraspol employment centre. Thereafter he has not been accepted to work anywhere because of his political opinion, which is in opposition to authorities⁴³.

In January 2001 during the elections of the Moldovan Parliament, Ms. N. Kruglikova was registered as a candidate in the list of the socio-political movement “Plai Natal”. However, she was put under pressure in order to violate her right to be elected as she was dismissed from her position of deputy director general of AOZT “Tizar”. At the same time, her son-in-law Mr. V. Makarov, captain of the volleyball team “Dinamo-Serif”, was dismissed for the mere reason that his mother-in-law is a candidate for the Moldovan Parliament, and consequently, according to Transnistrian authorities, he was in opposition. Ms. Kruglikova’s claim for reinstatement in her position has been under review since May 2001⁴⁴.

The Transnistrian authorities have a negative approach to any attempt to teach in the Latin script in the official educational institutions from this region. Further to the order of the Education Department of 17 March 1999, Ms. Lidia Pocitarencu, a teacher of the Moldovan Pedagogical College from Bender, was dismissed for “*serious breach of the linguistic legislation of Transnistria*”, as she used the Latin script while teaching⁴⁵.

⁴² Materials on the case of the Tiraspol city people’s court, 7 December 2001.

⁴³ Information provided by N. Buceatchi.

⁴⁴ “Komsomoliskaja pravda”, 19 April 2001.

⁴⁵ Information provided by UNHCR Moldova.

Right to Property

Article 1 of the Additional Protocol No 1 ECHR provides that no one can be deprived of his possessions except in the public interest and subject to the conditions provided for by law and by the general principles of international law. Article 46 of the Constitution guarantees the right to private property.

The “legislation” of Transnistria provides for partial privatisation, but it does not provide for the privatisation of land, which is only subject to lease. The Government of the Republic of Moldova developed a programme on land privatisation and its transfer into private ownership. The Transnistrian authorities do not recognise this programme and obstruct its implementation in the region. There is no reference to the notion of “private land ownership” in the draft “Land Code”, which has been reviewed for adoption by the Transnistrian “supreme soviet”.

The Dubasari administration does not allow for the privatisation of land that belongs to villages under the jurisdiction of the Republic of Moldova, threatening its confiscation.

In October 1990 the Tiraspol plant “TIZAR” concluded an agreement with the USSR Ministry of Agricultural Machinery on the lease of the company with option of anticipated redemption.

Since 1997 the policy conducted by the Transnistrian administration in respect to the collective enterprise “TIZAR” was in fact directed at abolishing the status of the enterprise.

On 19 May 1998 the “court of arbitration” decided on the case No.479/98-03-0205 and cancelled the lease agreement of 1/10/90, designated the restitution, i.e. the Transnistrian administration had to return all the redemptions made by leasees and pay all the leasehold improvements (leased industrial complex), while the leasees had to return the leased property. The redemption costs and the leasehold improvements costs amounted to 56 million US dollars.

In its decision, the Transnistrian “arbitration court” committed violations of both the substantive and the procedural laws, as well as the owners’ rights.

The administration did not make the restitution. In fact the property was withdrawn from the leasees and they were not paid any redemption costs.

Such actions were made by the Transnistrian executive power in respect of about 30 enterprises, whose property was fully paid by the leasees. Enterprises were trans-

ferred to “state” property without a full restitution to owners of the redemption costs and the cost of property purchased on their own account⁴⁶.

A typical case of disrespect and violation of property rights is the case of Moldovan metallurgical works (MMW). The Russian company “ITERA” invested some 100 million US dollars in the MMW and was granted the right of property in the amount of 75% shares of the enterprise under the agreement with Transnistrian administration. However, in three years Transnistrian authorities declared that they do not acknowledge the share of the “ITERA” company in the MMW, since allegedly the “state” property in the amount of 53 million US dollars was not accounted for while determining the shares of the shareholders⁴⁷.

Right to Education

Article 2 of the Additional Protocol No 1 ECHR and Article 13 ICESCR (1966) provide that no person shall be denied the right to education and the state shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions. According to Article 28 of the Convention on the Right of the Child (1989), the member-states recognise the children’s rights to education.

In Transnistria there are 32 schools (9969 pupils), which teach in Moldovan (Cyrillic script) and another 15 mixed schools. In addition, 7 Moldovan schools exist (about 5000 pupils) which use the Latin script, according to the curriculum of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Moldova. They are situated in Tiraspol (school No. 20), Tighina (Bender) (school No. 19), Ribnita, Grigoriopol, Roghi and Corjova. The school from Dubasari was moved to neighbouring Cocieri village⁴⁸.

Three “official languages” were proclaimed in Transnistria - Russian, Ukrainian and Moldovan (in the Cyrillic script). At the same time, there is no provision for official teaching using the Latin script. It means that pupils of “Moldovan” schools are obliged to use the Cyrillic script.

⁴⁶ From materials of the Transnistrian “arbitration court” 1995-2001 and materials of the periodical press 1998-2002.

⁴⁷ Materials of the press-conference of Transnistrian “president” I. Smirnov of 31 August 2001.

⁴⁸ Information provided by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Moldova.

Under the influence of public opinion and international organisations, including OSCE, which visited many times the schools studying Moldovan in Latin script and discussed their position in respect to local authorities, according to the Protocol Resolution of 15 February 1995, the Transdnestrian authorities permitted the activity of some Moldovan schools with usage of Latin script. However, such schools were assigned the status of “alternative” (private) schools, to be financed from the budget of the Republic of Moldova (i.e. the above-mentioned 7 schools).

At the same time, the uncertain legal status of such schools has been preserved until now. For instance, pupils of one of those schools (Tiraspol, Director – Mr. I. Iovcev) study in three shifts as there is not a sufficient amount of classrooms⁴⁹.

The local administration of Grigoriopol used police and Cossacks to stop the activity of Moldovan School No.1. On 28 September 1996 the police occupied the building of the school and on 2 October 1996 the teachers M. Harcaiala, E. Jmacova and N. Bistрова were arrested and brought to Tiraspol. After they had been detained for several hours in the Department of Internal Affairs, they were transferred to the “MSS”. On 7 October 1996, as a result of a demarche by the President of the Republic of Moldova and the OSCE Mission, the teachers were released⁵⁰.

The “presidential decree” No.145 of 5 April 1999 introduced the re-registration of all educational institutions located on the territory of Transdnestria. There are continuous problems with re-registration of Moldovan schools teaching in the Latin script.

In April 1999, Ms. F. Negru, a resident of Tighina (Bender), wrote an application to the Chisinau Mayor’s Office for the allocation of a dwelling. She founded her request on the fact that she had been dismissed and was subjected to continuous attacks because her elder daughter studied in Romania and her younger child attended a school teaching in the Latin script⁵¹.

⁴⁹ Moldovan schools face great difficulties with educational space, since they are qualified as private schools and therefore have to pay the rent and apply for a license (all the schools have to be licensed). The Tiraspol school no.20, attended by 782 pupils, who study in 3 shifts, avails of only 9 classrooms, whereas 33 classrooms are required. Nevertheless, as stated in its decision of 25 September 1997, the Tiraspol City council refused to provide additional space for the above school. About 2000 pupils study in the Bender Moldovan school no.19, which is divided into 3 separate sectors of the city; 752 pupils study in classrooms that do not comply with elementary sanitation standards; 180 children have to study in Hagimus village (a suburb of Bender).

⁵⁰ See footnote 13.

⁵¹ The facts of this case were reported to the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Moldova.

During the 1998 winter holidays a folk group of the school No1 from Grigoriopol arrived in Chisinau on the invitation of the «SOROS-Moldova» Foundation, for a musical programme. As soon as children returned home, “MSS” started persecuting them in hope of finding out who their parents are and who initiated the trip. The head of the Regional Department of National Education made Ms. S. Jitariuc, the teacher of Music who accompanied the group to Chisinau, write a letter of resignation. An order was issued, whereby it was forbidden to organise future trips for pupils outside the borders of Transdnestria, without permission from the Regional Department of National Education⁵².

Compulsory Military Service

The Transdnestrian “legislation” provides for “dual citizenship” but the Transdnestrian authorities consider all the permanent residents also “*ex lege*” as “citizens” of Transdnestria. In contradiction to the European Convention on Nationality (1997, Article 21 (3b)), permanent residents of Transdnestria, who have Ukrainian, Russian or other citizenship, face compulsory military service. The “legislation” of Transdnestria does not provide for alternative civil service, which obliges all the Transdnestrian residents to serve in the Transdnestrian “army”.

In 1998 B. Rotari was called to the “army” of Transdnestria, although he was a citizen of Ukraine living in Transdnestria. He has never been a “citizen” of Transdnestria, but as the “legislation” of Transdnestria provides that all the residents of Transdnestria are its “citizens”, they are obliged to serve in the “army” of Transdnestria. For refusal to serve in the Transdnestrian “army”, he was convicted and sentenced to two years imprisonment for “desertion and disobedience”⁵³.

Soldiers often become the victims of cruel treatment by seniors, which makes them leave the barracks. On 16 June 1998 the Moldovan Helsinki Committee for Human Rights was approached by a native of the Taslic village, Grigoriopol district, who was called to the Transdnestrian “army” on 3 June 1997. He was often beaten and was twice hospitalised. After hospital treatment, he left his unit and went to Chisinau where an NGO helped him find a job. However, after some time, “MSS” officials tried to find him in the hostel where he lived. At present, this person is forced to hide in Chisinau⁵⁴.

⁵² See footnote 13.

⁵³ From a diplomatic source.

⁵⁴ Oazu Nantoi, ditto p. 23.

Fighting Trafficking in Human Beings

The Convention on fighting trafficking and exploitation, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 2 December 1949, stipulates that prostitution and trafficking in human beings endanger the well-being of the individual, family and society. This Convention is not acknowledged by the Transnistrian authorities and thus no actions are taken against those who violate it.

Trafficking in women for sexual exploitation is a black market that circulates a great number of US dollars. In the last seven years a great number of women from Transnistria appeared on the market for the sex-business⁵⁵.

Ms. Inna B., 21 years old, was pimped to Greece. Her passport was taken upon arrival. She was forced to work in a brothel and was sold every night from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. However, she managed to escape. At present she lives with the fear of being punished.

Ms. Natasha S., 28 years old, left for Turkey in 1993 to work as a dancer. Her passport was taken and she was sent to a brothel, in 1996 she was sold in a village. 8 years passed, yet she cannot return to Tiraspol⁵⁶.

Transnistrian authorities fail to mention trafficking in human beings. According to a sociological study on the prevention of trafficking in women held amongst the young people in Transnistria (August-October 2001), and considering the experience of the victims of trafficking in Transnistria, who entrusted their passports to doubtful people, the authorities' statement that "there is no women trafficking problem in Transnistria" has been denied.

From September 2001 to January 2002 the psychologist of the Chisinau centre for rehabilitation of victims of trafficking in women provided assistance in rehabilitation of 18 young women (born between 1968 and 1983), who were trafficked from Transnistria. Most of them came from Ribnita, Tighina (Bender) (5%), Tiraspol (35%), and adjacent villages (15%)⁵⁷.

Unfortunately, Transnistrian authorities have not yet taken any measures to fight trafficking. No actions were taken in respect to crimes or amendments of the Penal Code in order to punish the traffickers. No medical, psychological and other social services to deal with victims of trafficking have been introduced.

⁵⁵ Information was provided by the Fund "Human Rights Centre in Transnistria".

⁵⁶ Idem.

⁵⁷ Data was provided by the international organisation for the prevention of trafficking in women, the Centre for the Protection of Women's Rights La Strada, Moldova.

DREPTURILE OMULUI ÎN REGIUNEA TRANSNISTREANĂ A REPUBLICII MOLDOVA