

Promo-LEX: restrictions on freedom of movement, kidnappings, the fight against “extremists” or the situation – the worst human rights issues in the Transnistrian region in 2020

Today, May 21, 2021, during a press conference, the Promo-LEX Association launched the Annual Report – “**Human Rights in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova**”. The document includes findings on the situation on the left bank of the Dniester River in the field of human rights, as well as an analysis of the actions of relevant actors during 2020.

Background. In 2020, the territory on the left bank of the Dniester River became even more isolated than in previous years. If previous reports revealed a lack of access for human rights monitoring institutions or missions, by 2020, the situation has worsened as a result of additional restrictions. The COVID-19 pandemic was used by the *de facto* administration of the region as a screen for a series of actions to limit fundamental rights and freedoms.

Pandemic as an argument. Under the pretext of the epidemiological situation, at least 37 illegal checkpoints were abusively installed and the access of the population, and also of the economic agents in the region was blocked. Even though the number of checkpoints has been reduced to 11, the situation regarding freedom of movement has not improved.

Kidnapped for “betrayal of the fatherland”. Another problem

that has returned to the present day is the phenomenon of kidnapping, committed by the force structures in the Transnistrian region. During the months of August-October 2020, at least 7 cases were registered in the Security Zone when the force structures kidnapped people invoking various reasons, but most frequently reasons for collaboration with the law structures of the Republic of Moldova were invoked. Two of them are illegally detained by the alleged bodies in the region.

Extremist activists? These actions were preceded by the adoption of actions to restrict political freedoms such as the adoption of a *Strategy to prevent extremism in Transnistria for the years 2020-2026* [\[1\]](#). This document gave free rein to intimidation of activists in the region, and during 2020 there were several cases of restriction of the right to free expression and assembly.

In the context of these abusive actions of the *de facto* administration of the Transnistrian region, the authorities of the Republic of Moldova, but also the external partners involved in the negotiation process were unable to solve, even partially, the identified problems.

According to Promo-LEX lawyer Pavel Cazacu: “The fact that the human rights situation worsened considerably in the Transnistrian region once again demonstrates the imperative need to identify mechanisms for individual sanctions against persons responsible for serious human rights violations in this territory.”

Promo-LEX recommendations:

- Active involvement and immediate reaction in order to solve individual cases of serious human rights violations;
- Promoting the need for unconditional access for international human rights monitoring institutions on

- the territory of the Transnistrian region;
- Adoption by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova of the draft law on the mechanism for sanctioning persons responsible for human rights violations (Magnitsky Law);
 - Coordination between state institutions for strategic activities in the field of human rights in the Transnistrian region.

[1] Strategy to prevent extremism for the years 2020-2026, <http://president.gospmr.org/pravovye-akty/ukazi/ob-utverjdenii-strategii-protivodeystviya-ekstremizmu-v-pridnestrovskoy-moldavskoy-respublike-na-2020-2026-godi.html>