

Following the murder of Oleg Horjan, Promo-LEX requests the intervention of the UN Special Rapporteur on the serious situation of freedom of expression in the Transnistrian region

In the context of the murder of political activist Oleg Horjan, but also as a result of serious violations of freedom of expression in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova in recent times, the Promo-LEX Association sent an information note *to Irene Khan, UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression*. Promo-LEX Association requested its prompt intervention and encouraged to send to the constitutional authorities of the Republic of Moldova, but also to the de facto administration, concrete recommendations for ensuring the observance of freedom of expression on the left bank of the Dniester River.

More than 30 years after the declaration of independence of the Republic of Moldova, effective mechanisms for the protection of human rights in the Transnistrian region are completely lacking. This territory is still not accessible to national and international monitoring institutions, and the presence of impunity perpetuates the systemic violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The lack of effective control should not exempt the constitutional authorities from real actions to promote and protect human rights, including by sanctioning individuals guilty of committing serious abuses.

The most recent victim is Oleg Horjan, a political activist from the left bank of the Dniester River, killed on 17 July 2023 in suspicious circumstances in his own home in the municipality of Tiraspol, Transnistrian region (security zone). Oleg Horjan was one of the few public figures who had the courage to fight for the fundamental rights and freedoms of the inhabitants of the Transnistrian region, being released from illegal detention at the end of December 2022.

The violent circumstances of the murder of Mr. Oleg Horjan raise serious concerns about the safety of people expressing dissent against the *de facto* regime in Tiraspol.

Several individual cases and situations occurred in recent years highlight the alarming state of non-observance of freedom of expression in the Transnistrian region. Persons were persecuted for flying the flag of Ukraine, participating in peaceful public meetings, for critical opinions on the *de facto* administration in Tiraspol, for criticizing Russian troops illegally stationed on the left bank of the Dniester River, the peacekeeping mission or the so-called president of the "rmn".

Moreover, the *de facto* administration has made changes to the so-called local legislation, which are contrary to human rights standards. The most recent obstacle to the defense of human rights and fundamental freedoms is the "legalization" of the prohibition to submit complaints and referrals to national and international institutions. In addition, inconvenient persons or those who promote and formulate ideas that contradict propaganda or the messages of the *de facto* administration are immediately passed through the procedures of the repressive system, lacking in legitimacy and elementary guarantees.

Considering the worrying developments in the Transnistrian region, Promo-LEX asked the Special Rapporteur to provide recommendations to the actors responsible for the human rights

situation in the Transnistrian region, as follows:

- **General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Moldova** to ensure a thorough, impartial and transparent investigation of the circumstances of Mr. Oleg Horjan's death. To promote the need for independent, transparent and comprehensive investigations on this case.
- The **international community** to put in place specific sanctions, travel bans and asset freezes in line with international human rights obligations of persons participating in serious human rights violations.
- **The *de facto* administration of Tiraspol** to immediately cease all violations of freedom of expression and association, to revoke the so-called laws and any other regulations limiting freedom of expression, to respect and support international standards on human rights.