

Freedom of expression in the Transnistrian region in 2016 – A Promo-LEX Study

On 17 February 2017, the Promo-LEX Association organized a discussion panel with the topic: “Freedom of expression in the Transnistrian Region of the Republic of Moldova”. The debate began with a presentation of the findings of a study carried out by the Promo-LEX Association.

According to the study’s findings, a single specific *rule* on freedom of expression does not exist; instead, there are several separate, local *rules* that regulate certain aspects of freedom of expression. In reality, although that freedom is guaranteed, its implementation is not judicially or institutionally ensured. The fact that the so-called Constitution of the PMR does not guarantee residents the right to receive and disseminate certain information is important. In this way, the right of residents to, for example, request information on the activity of public institutions is limited.

In 2016, local mass media as well as social networks remained the most important means of expression and sources of information for the segment of the population interested in finding information and alternative opinions, although that segment continues to be persecuted. The concept of social networks (i.e. online forums) is not regulated; nor is the expression of opinions online, a fact that makes the unimpeded functioning of websites vulnerable. At least 16 informational sites remain blocked since 2012 (dniesterru.ru, tiras.ru, rodinapmr.ru, forum.pridnestrovia.com, forum.dnestra.com, openpmr.info, nistru.net, etc), and, during 2016, many cases of the persecution of people for criticism of the *de facto* administration of the Transnistrian region were recorded.

Also in 2016, a criminal penalty for denying the positive role of the Russian Peacekeeping Mission was introduced in the territory; in fact, experts interpreted this rule as an instrument for the persecution of any message or opinion of a critical nature expressed in the region against the regime's interests or those of the representatives of the Russian Federation[1]. This initiative of the *de facto* administration was motivated by the fact that much discussion on the efficacy of the Peacekeeping Mission and the absence of any changes for the region's population has appeared.

International and national provisions on human rights require that rights be guaranteed throughout the entire territory of a country. Taking this into account, one provocation remains the mechanisms for ensuring fundamental rights and freedoms in the zone outside of control, the so-called "conflict zone" or the region under the *de facto* regime. Up through the present, the administration in Tiraspol has ignored the efforts of the international community and civil society to monitor and to effectively defend human rights in that region.

"Guaranteeing fundamental human rights and freedoms is an obligation of every authority, whether *de jure* or *de facto*. The Tiraspol administration must accept a dialogue about human rights and take measures to ensure that they are respected", maintains Ion Manole, the Executive Director of Promo-LEX.

The Promo-LEX Study in Romanian language [here](#).

This event was organized within the project: "Promoting respect for human rights in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova", implemented by the Promo-LEX Association, with the financial support of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).

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[1] <http://www.vspmr.org/file.xp?file=41706>