

Transdniester Frees Moldovan Man Jailed For Spying

A lawyer for a man jailed for spying in Moldova's separatist Transdniester region said his client's surprise release may be due to international pressure on breakaway entity's leaders and calls by rights activists, RFE/RL's Moldovan Service reports.

But lawyer Ion Manole cautioned against any public comments that might endanger Ilie Cazac, who lives in the Transdniester town of Bender.

A former Moldovan tax inspector, Cazac was detained in March 2010 and accused of high treason and espionage on behalf of Moldova.

In February, a court in Transdniester sentenced him to 14 years in prison.

Cazac, 26, told RFE/RL upon arriving home after his release that he was pardoned by Transdniester leader Igor Smirnov after repeated appeals for clemency.

Cazac expressed gratitude to those who supported him and who publicized his case, including RFE/RL, whose broadcasts he said he listened to while in prison.

He had previously rejected a pardon deal that would have obliged him to plead guilty.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay was scheduled to begin her first visit to Moldova on November 1.

Moldova's acting president, Marian Lupu, said Cazac's release was the result of efforts by international mediators involved in trying to resolve Moldova's two-decade-old territorial dispute with Transdniester.

In May, Transdniester pardoned journalist Ernest Vardanean, a Moldovan whom the breakaway region had imprisoned for espionage.

The Transdniester region declared independence in 1990 and fought a brief war against Moldovan forces two years later. It has de facto sovereignty but is not recognized by any country.

Source: RadioFreeEurope.org