

PRESS RELEASE - THE OBSERVATORY

MOLDOVA: Judicial harassment by the Transnistrian Security Committee of Promo-LEX, FIDH member organisation

Paris-Geneva, April 22, 2015 - The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), expresses its concerns after the opening of a criminal case against Promo-LEX, FIDH member organisation based in the Transnistrian region of Moldova.

On April 17, 2015, the *de facto* Transnistrian Committee for State Security (Transnistrian KGB) issued a [statement](#) describing civil society organisations receiving funds from abroad as a threat to Transnistrian security. The statement, which particularly targets the human rights organisation Promo-LEX reveals that a criminal case has been filed against the organisation, following the Committee's conclusions on their subversive activities conducted in the Transnistrian region of Moldova.

“Since its establishment, Promo-LEX has been involved in human rights activities in the Transnistrian region by providing legal protection to human rights defenders, by assisting Transnistrian inhabitants - Moldovan, Russian and Ukrainian citizens - in obtaining justice and by building capacity of local Transnistrian NGOs to promote and defend human rights”, said FIDH President, Karim Lahidji.

The Observatory fears that the exposure of Promo-LEX in the statement will lead to even more obstructions in its work in a region, which is already one of the least accessible territories for human rights defenders in Europe. As of now, there are no efficient mechanisms or institutions to monitor the situation of human rights in the Transnistrian region.

Transnistria's disputed status is a source of serious human rights violations, and the victims often have no access to justice. Last year, FIDH together with Promo-LEX looked into these situations and denounced numerous human rights violations, among them the infringement of the right to freedom of movement, the right to citizenship, the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to property, and the right to health and education. The [report](#) also shed light on numerous cases of arbitrary detention, acts of torture and ill-treatment by the police as well as the critical detention conditions.

The Observatory recalls that it is not the first time that a human rights organisation working for the development of NGOs in the Transnistrian region is described as subversive by the Transnistrian *de facto* administration. Last year, the local *de facto* Parliament initiated a draft law on "foreign agents" that specifically targeted civil society organizations working on election monitoring and receiving funding from abroad. The draft bill was adopted in the first plenary reading back in November 2014 but has been put on hold.

The pressure on human rights defenders working in the Transnistrian region has intensified since 2013. Numerous representatives of the civil society and journalists are being intimidated and subjected to libel on a daily basis for their work to promote and defend human rights in the region.

“This public communication by the Transnistrian Security Committee announcing the criminal prosecution of Promo-LEX is yet another attempt by the de facto Transnistrian administration to curb any independent human rights organisation denouncing the lack of justice in this disputed area”, concluded OMCT Secretary General Gerald Staberock.

The Observatory calls upon the international actors, especially the participants of the Transnistrian conflict settlement talks in the 5+2 format and parties to the Geneva and Minsk processes, to increase the focus on human rights in their relations with *de facto* and *de jure* Transnistrian authorities. This would help advance concrete solutions to challenges faced by human rights organisations which are to a large extent the result of persecution and harassment by the *de facto* Transnistrian authorities.

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (OBS) was created in 1997 by FIDH and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT). The objective of this programme is to intervene to prevent or remedy situations of repression against human rights defenders.

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